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Iranian EFL Teachers' Motivational Strategy Use in the Classroom: Do Teachers' Work Engagement and Gender Predict It?

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Abstract

A large body of research has investigated the role of motivational strategy use in EFL learners' language achievement, teachers' work engagement, and creativity. However, there have been very few studies on EFL teachers' status quo of these variables and the correlation among them. This study was an attempt to investigate the Iranian EFL teachers' status quo regarding these variables and to explore the correlation among them. To this end, 100 Iranian EFL teachers of both genders were selected. To explore the objectives of this study, the Motivational Strategy Use Questionnaire, Creativity Style Questionnaire, and Work Engagement Scale Questionnaire were employed. Data were analyzed through t-tests and multiple regression. Results revealed that EFL teachers have acceptable levels of motivational strategies usage, work engagement, and creativity. The results of Multiple regression analysis proved a statistically significant relationship between motivational strategy use and creativity in the classroom and no significant relationship was found between motivational strategy use and teachers ' work engagement. Teachers' gender was found to have no contribution to teachers' work engagement, creativity, and motivational strategies usage. This study has theoretical and practical implications for teachers.

Keywords: motivational strategies, creativity style, work engagement, EFL teachers, teachers'

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1. Introduction

Motivation has incredible power, and it is "recognized as an important component of successful second language learning" (Lamb, 2017, p. 1). Literature review shows that motivation for learners and teachers is so important that it can override the influence of other individual variables and characteristics and act as a cure for cognitive deficits (Alshehri & Etherington 2017; Casba, 2018; Abbasabadi & Shakerkhoshroud, 2018; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014; Schumann, 2015). In addition to the learning motivation of the learners, strategies used by the teachers to motivate the language learners are essential. It is assumed that teachers can highly contribute to the students' academic progress (Bernaus et al., 2009; Suryanti Tambunan et al., 2016). Consequently, it is important to know that teachers must teach and motivate students. Therefore, it is a fact that motivation in general and teacher strategies are crucial for students most particularly learners of foreign languages.

The main finding of the relevant studies on teachers' and learners' motivation (e.g., Bernaus et al., 2009; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) is that one aspect of knowing how to assess the students' motivation for learning is a component of teacher competence and cognition. Over the past two decades, several researchers have attempted to conduct studies on motivation and its impact on learners' academic success. For example, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) argued that motivated teachers could motivate students to do their best to learn better. There is a need to motivate the second language to help learners to expand and continue their second language learning efforts, which can span a long period of time. Several researchers have studied L2 motivation, examining its complexity and how it may contribute to L2 learning (e.g., Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Schumann, 2015).

It is assumed that motivational strategies which EFL teachers employ might be affected by some affective, cognitive, and educational variables. One of the variables is the teachers' work engagement, which is assumed to be a positive work behavior or attitude that causes positive work-related outcomes. As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, (2000) believe, employees with appropriate work engagement levels are energetic, committed, and engaged in their work. Work engagement is a concept related to positive psychology, a field of psychology that focuses on ways to increase well-being; rather than diagnosing or treating mental illness.

The second variable that might influence the teachers' use of motivational strategies in classrooms is creativity, which has been defined by different scholars in different contexts. For instance, Sarsani (2005) explained it as a complex nature. Matsouka et al. (2003) have argued that creativity is a multifaceted emotion. Sawyer et al. (2003) have defined it as a problem-solving technique rather than a personal trait. Likewise, Boden (2004) suggested that it seems to be a productive concept. However, Carter (2004) claimed that it looks like a new function having different natures. This study addresses Iranian EFL teachers' status quo of motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity. It also attempts to investigate whether male and female teachers

have the same level of motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity. Finally, it investigates whether work engagement and creativity can significantly predict teachers' use of motivational strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies on Motivational Strategies

Several researchers from different contexts have studied teachers' motivation and the types of motivational strategies they use in EFL classes. The contexts include Saudi Arabia, Hungary, Iran, and Taiwan. Some of the reviewed studies laid emphasis on the macro and micro motivational strategies used by EFL teachers for fostering Language learners' motivations (Alavi & Mehmandoust, 2011; Abbasabadi & Shakerkhoshroud, 2018). However, fewer studies have attempted to compare the learners' and teachers' motivations (Ruesch et al., 2012). Among, the related studies are some that only investigated the impact of teachers' use of teaching motivational strategies on language learners' progress and motivations for learning (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011). Mezei and Csizér (2005) investigated the association between teachers' use of motivational strategies and language learners' behaviors. They confirmed that teachers' motivational strategies have a critical role in improving learners' motivation. Roth et al. (2007), Radel et al. (2010), Chan (2014), Ruesch et al. (2012), Mezei (2014), and Lamb and Wedell (2015) similarly found that if teachers are motivated, they can increase their learners' motivation for learning. However, it seems that within the educational field, the teachers' role in changing the learners' motivation and attitudes has remained an inappropriately investigated area (Dewaele et al., 2018), and "empirical studies on the issue of teachers' role in motivating language learners have mostly focused on demotivating factors rather than motivating factors" (Rahimi & Hosseini, 2015, p. 64).

Sucuoglu (2017) examined motivational strategies employed by English teachers teaching students in secondary schools. Results showed that teachers use motivational strategies in their lessons. Similarly, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2012) investigated the motivational strategies employed by EFL teachers in Oman. They reported that motivational strategies are most frequently used by Omani EFL teachers. Furthermore, they suggested teachers' behaviors in the classroom were the most favored strategies among the teachers and most closely related to the teacher's teaching activities and performances in the classrooms. Alizade (2016) explored the effect of teachers' motivation on language learners' language achievement, and compared teachers' and learners' perceptions of motivations. Findings revealed that there were mismatches between students' and teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies most particularly the culture-dependent strategies.

In another study, Vala and Sanavi (2015), analyzed the motivational strategies used by EFL teachers. They found that teachers' and learners' cultures affect the types of motivational strategies

employed by teachers and some strategies can be generalized to other schools but some strategies are severely context bounded. Moreover, they found that teachers' teaching experience to some extent affected teachers' use of strategies. Solak and Bayar (2014) examined the influence of gender, years of instruction, type of school attended, and status of presence abroad on the use of motivational strategies by non-native English teachers in Turkey. They reported no significant differences between macro and micro motivational strategies used by male and female teachers and found that teacher experience did not affect teachers' use of motivational strategies. In another study in Saudi Arabian, EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of types of motivational strategies and the matches and mismatches between their perceptions were explored (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017). In doing so, they employed a mixed-methods research design. They reported that language learners and teachers highlighted the significant roles which teachers' use of motivational strategies play in EFL classrooms to motivate language learners. However, teachers and language learners did not have the same perceptions of how to motivate language learners. Teachers believed that language learners preferred types of motivational strategies which foster their academic and language achievement.

Moreover, the main sources of English language teachers' motivations for teaching at language institutes were explored by Alavi and Mehmandoust (2011). They concluded that the main sources of motivation included: extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic, and subject matter motivation. Moreover, Alam and Farid (2011) explored the traits which contributed to secondary school teachers' motivation for teaching at schools in Rawalpindi city. Likewise, Christopher (2013) using a quantitative research method delved into teachers' level and degree of motivation, and explored the correlation between teacher motivation and language learners' language attainment.

2.2. Studies on Creativity Style

There is a substantial body of research on creativity. Almeida et al., (2008) have maintained that creativity consists of the attitudes and skills that people need to generate ideas that are "(a) relatively novel (b) high in quality; and (c) appropriate to the task at hand (p.5)." Richards (2013) states:

> "Creativity is said to provide a powerful way of engaging learners with their learning. Creative teaching is said to increase levels of motivation and self-esteem on the part of learners and to prepare them with the flexible skills they need for the future" (p. 20).

Reilly et al. (2011) have suggested that teachers' creativity is related to their efficacy, success, and job satisfaction. They also mentioned that creative teachers are the most effective ones. Noorafshan and Jowkar (2013) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity among students. They claimed that the learners' emotional intelligence, particularly emotional awareness and optimism sub-scales were the positive predictors of their creativity. The findings of the studies on the creativity of male and female teachers are not conclusive. While the

findings of half of the related studies indicate individuals' gender is not a determinant of their creativity, about fifty percent of the related studies revealed that male and female teachers do not have the same degree of creativity (Baer & Kaufman, 2008). Bender et al. (2013), for instance, reported that women are more creative than men. Tsai et al. (2015) reported that while positive learning environments are associated with intrinsic motivation and creativity, negative learning contexts negatively impact intrinsic motivation and creativity. Farajzadeh and Alavinia (2022) examined the relationship between creativity, motivation, and job satisfaction of English language teachers in Iran, taking into account the role of gender, background, and teaching location. They also explored the role of factors such as gender, teaching experience, and teaching context were explored. The selected teachers in the statistical sample had diverse teaching experiences from both genders, male and female, and from both educational environments. To collect data, three types of questionnaires were used in this research: The job creativity questionnaire, the teachers' work motivation questionnaire, and the teachers' job satisfaction questionnaire. The findings of the research showed a significant relationship between teachers' work motivation and job satisfaction, and it was also found that teachers' work motivation has a greater effect on teachers' job satisfaction compared to their job creativity. However, no significant relationship was found between demographic factors and teachers' job satisfaction.

Mahmoodi et al. (2015) explored the association between teachers' quality of life and their creativity at work. They reported a significant positive association between teachers' creativity and quality of work life. In addition, they reported a strong correlation between teachers' decision-making tasks and their creativity. Hemmati and Sadeghi (2015), in another related study, examined the relationship between EFL learners' multiple intelligences and their performance on foreign language tasks. They showed that verbal intelligence could foster language learners' performance on foreign language tasks.

2.3. Studies on Teachers' Work Engagement

Work engagement is assumed to be the degree and level of teachers' and learners' investment and commitment to their performance (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2013). They also suggested that work engagement looks like an umbrella term consisting of learners' and teachers' degrees of devotion and commitment to using approaches, activities, abilities, and skills to improve their performance. It is also claimed that "in primary or secondary education, teacher engagement refers to a teacher's psychological investment in an effort toward teaching the knowledge, skills, and crafts he or she wishes students to master" (Louis & Smith, 1992, p. 120). Literature review shows that some factors might affect teachers' engagement. For instance, Raina and Khatri (2015) mentioned that learners' aptitude, educational experience, classroom management, school location, class size, classroom contexts, novelties in teaching, colleagues' feedback, and interaction with principals and co-workers play key roles in teachers' work engagement.

Many studies investigated teacher engagement and addressed its association with some variables (e.g., Faskhodi & Siyyari, 2018; Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010; Greenier et al., 2021; Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018; Topchyan & Woehler; 2021). For instance, Topchyan and Woehler (2021) reported that female teachers who have higher levels of social involvement with students have higher levels of job satisfaction and work engagement. Moreover, they maintained that there is a statistically significant association between teachers' work engagement and their work experience. Similarly, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) maintained that positive affectivity like hope and enjoyment are important in shaping teachers' engagement. Benesch (2018) also argued that language teachers' feelings could potentially act as the teachers' work engagement antecedents. Similarly, Greenier et al. (2021) reported that teacher emotional regulation strategies and well-being are correlated with work engagement. Also, they suggested the emotional regulation strategies teachers employ in their classes affect their involvement in performing classroom tasks. Recently, in a Chinese context, Zeng et al. (2019), showed that teachers' well-being positively predicts their job engagement. Likewise, Diener et al. (2020) have maintained that positive feelings affect teacher performance in language instruction along with long-term work engagement, positive attitude, resourcefulness, operational instructional strategies, and teacher-student relationships. They argued that positive feelings trigger upward spirals because the positive outcomes predict an impending surge in positive feelings and lead to work engagement and well-being, and resilience are an important predictor of work engagement. As Sonnentag et al. (2008) maintained, work engagement is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion. Recently, Han et al. (2021) named teaching-research conflicts, difficulties, and challenges in a teacher-learner relationship as the main reasons for teachers' exhaustion and low work engagement. In contrast, Similarly, Faskhodi and Siyyari (2018) explored the correlation between teachers' work engagement and burnout and reported that there is a significant association between teachers' burnout and their level of work engagement.

3. Research Questions

While previous studies have added to our knowledge of teachers' motivational strategies, they provide little information on what types of motivational strategies Iranian EFL teachers employ while teaching foreign language learners. Moreover, the number of studies that explored the correlation between EFL teachers' creativity, work engagement, and motivational strategies seems to be scanty. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the status quo of the Iranian EFL teachers' motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity?
2. Do male and female language teachers have the same level of motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity?
3. Which of the two variables of creativity and work engagement is the best predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' motivational strategy use in the classroom?

4. Materials and Method

4.1. Participants

The participants were 50 male and 50 female Iranian EFL teachers at schools and institutes in Zahedan, Iran. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 15 and their age ranged from 25 to 35. All 100 participants took part in the study. The participants were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were informed about the aims of the research. They were assured that the data would be kept confidential and analyzed anonymously.

4.2. Instrumentation

4.2.1. Teachers' Motivational Strategies Scale (TMSS)

The researcher employed a Teachers' Motivational Strategies Scale (TMSS) developed by Abbasabadi & Shakerkhoshroud (2018). This scale consists of 36 items which are measured on a five-point Likert scale. The scale consists of 6 components: Elaborating on values of L2 (9 items), Teacher behavior/teaching style (9 items), learner autonomy (6 items), and Classroom atmosphere (5 items), increasing learners' confidence (3 items), appreciating learners' efforts (4 items). The reliability of the scale will be measured by running Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the instrument and its sub-scales was estimated by using Cronbach's alpha.

4.2.2. The Creativity Styles Questionnaire

The second instrument was a questionnaire on creativity style, developed by Horng et al. (2005). The questionnaire included eight factors and consisted of 45 items. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's Alpha was used for estimating the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire and it was reported to be 0.92.

4.2.3. Work Engagement Scale

To assess the teachers' work engagement level, the questionnaire developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) was used. The scale included 17 items and each was measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The internal consistency of the scale was estimated to be .88.

4.3. Data Collection Procedure

The teachers were asked to fill out the three questionnaires of Work Engagement Scale, Creativity Questionnaire and Teachers' Use of Motivational Strategies Use.

5. Results

Results including the reliability indices for the reliability, normality assumptions, findings for research questions 1, 2, and 3 are presented in the following sections.

5.1. Reliability Indices of the Scales

Reliability indices for the scales were measured by running Cronbach's alpha. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Internal Consistency of the Motivational Strategies Scale

	Cronbach' alpha
Elaborating on the values of L2	0.86
Teacher behavior/teaching style	0.85
learner autonomy	0.88
Classroom atmosphere	0.90
Increasing Learners' Confidence	0.83
Appreciating learners' efforts	0.84
Total scale	0.88

5.2. Normality Assumptions

Prior to testing the research hypotheses, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for each variable was used to prove the normality of distribution. Table 2 represents the results.

Table 2

Normality Tests of the Variables

	statistic	df	Sig.	Sig.
work engagement scale	.111	100	0.5	1.247
Teachers' use of motivational strategies	.069	100	.200*	.069
Creativity	.109	100	0.5	.109

As seen in Table 2, the participants' scores on the variables of the study are normally distributed (p>0.05). Therefore, the normality assumption was met.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 addressed the respondents' status quo of motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity. The scores were submitted to one sample-t-tests. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

T-tests for Comparing the Means of the Sample and Population

Variables	Mean	Hypothetical mean	t	df	p
Elaborating on the values of L2	35.75	22.5	100.87	99	.001
Teacher behavior/teaching style	36.75	22.5	101.1	99	.001
learner autonomy	23.09	15	89.279	99	.001
Classroom atmosphere	17.76	12	49.349	99	.001
Increasing Learners' Confidence	10.18	7.5	49.147	99	.001
Appreciating learners' efforts	14.29	10	64.993	99	.001
Motivational strategies usage total	134.82	90	150.74	99	.001
Work engagement	28.88	42.5	73.993	99	.001
Creativity style	140	110	160.74	99	.001

As seen in Table 3, the participants' mean scores of the sample on the subcomponents of motivational strategies: elaborating on the values of L2 (M=35.7, t=100.8, p<0.001), teachers' behavior (M=36.7; t=101.1, p=0.001), fostering learner autonomy (M=23.09; t=89.27, p=0.001), and using strategies for classroom atmosphere (M-17.76; t=49.34, p=0.001) are statistically different from the means of the population. It is also seen that the differences between the mean scores of the sample and population on increasing the language learners' confidence (M=10.8, t=64.49, p=0.001), appreciating the learners' efforts (M=14.29, t=64.99, p=0.001), and the sum of motivational strategies (M=134.48, t=150.74, p=0.001) are statistically significant. Results also verify that the mean scores of the sample and hypothetical means of the population on work engagement (M=28.88, t=73.9, p=0.001), and creativity style (M=140, t=160.74, p=0.001) are statistically different. Exceeded the hypothetical means of the population. Results of t-tests also verified that the means of the sample are statistically different from the mean scores of the population (p=0.001), suggesting that the sample (Iranian EFL teachers) have an acceptable level of work engagement, creativity, and motivational strategies usage.

Research Question 2

Question two aimed at comparing the male and female teachers' mean scores on teachers' use of motivational strategies, work engagement, and creativity. The mean scores were compared statistically. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

T-tests for Comparing Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores on the Variables of the Study

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	P
Elaborating on the values of L2	.008	.928	1.370	98	.174
Teacher behavior/teaching style	.008	.928	1.370	98	.174
learner autonomy	.005	.943	.811	98	.420
Classroom atmosphere	.003	.960	.721	98	.473
Increasing Learners' Confidence	.062	.805	.192	98	.848
Appreciating learners' efforts	2.361	.128	1.139	98	.258
Motivational strategies usage total	.024	.878	1.927	98	.057
Work engagement	.12	.9	2.12	98	.85
Creativity style	2.42	.0.14	1.139	98	.32

As seen in Table 4, the results of Levene's test for equality of variances revealed that the variances of male and female teachers on all variables were equal (p>005). Therefore, the assumption of the equality of variances was observed. Results also show that the male and female teachers' means on all variables of the study are not statistically significant (p>0.05). Furthermore, it can be argued that both male and female teachers have the same status quo of motivational strategies usage, work engagement, and creative style.

Research Question 3

A Pearson production analysis was used to explore the correlation between the participants' work engagement and creativity style and their motivational strategies usage. The results showed that work engagement was positively correlated with participants' motivational strategies usage ($r=0.25$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, the correlation between creativity styles and motivational strategies was positive ($r=-0.46$, $p<0.01$). The multiple regression model produced $R^2=.31$, $F(2, 98)=104$, $p<.001$. As can be seen in Table 6, creativity style had significant positive regression weights, indicating language teachers with a higher score on creativity styles were expected to have higher motivational strategies usage. The work engagement had no significant weight. Results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

Model Summary of the Variables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	SEM
1	.564[a]	.318	.304	11.552

Table 6

Results from the Regression Analysis

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	35.453	9.836		3.604	.000
work engagement scale	.065	.295	.020	.220	.826
creativity questionnaire	.658	.109	.555	6.016	.000

Dependent Variable: Teachers use of motivational strategies questionnaire

6. Discussion

The first research question aimed at investigating the motivational strategies which Iranian EFL teachers use to motivate language learners. The results of one-sample t-tests employed to compare the means of the sample and the population revealed that the mean scores of the sample on L2 values exceeded those of the population. Therefore, it can be strongly argued that Iranian EFL teachers highlight the values of L2 acquisition by Iranian language learners. It was also found that behavioral/teaching style strategies used by teachers are motivational strategies that Iranian teachers use in their classes. In particular, it was found that teachers show enthusiasm for teaching English, use interesting audiovisual materials such as cartoons, use interesting materials and tasks in class, and use technology and social networks to motivate students. They also try to reduce learners' anxiety and stress by providing understandable input, listening to, and paying attention to their comments and suggestions.

The findings are in line with the conclusions made by Abbasabadi and Shakerkhoshroud (2018) who suggested that proper teacher behaviors were important macro-motivational strategies. The findings also echo the conclusions made by a number of similar studies (e.g., Alrabai, 2011;

Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). It is clear that teachers' roles might be perhaps powerful and effective instruments for motivating students. The findings echo the claims made by Dörnyei (2001, p. 120) that "[a]almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher behavior the most powerful. The use of instrumental motivational strategies, such as the role of the English language in students' personal and academic lives, accurately reflects the results of studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, which suggest that students in Saudi Arabia are mainly instrumentally motivated (Alqahtani, 2016; Al-Otaibi, 2004; Alrabai, 2014). The same result has also been reported by several related studies (e.g., Cheng & Drnyei, 2007; Drnyei & Csizer, 1998), which reinforce the importance of teachers as role models across cultures and confirm the important role of EFL teachers in language learning classes. Indeed, the present study has verified the significant and key role of teachers' behavior, teaching styles, and activities in motivating students.

The next finding of the study is that Iranian teachers through using strategies that promote the learners' autonomy, motivate the language learners. This finding confirms the suggestions made by Kumaravadivelu (2003) who believes that learner autonomy is a valued and widely recognized educational goal. The findings are also consistent with some of the previous studies (Alqahtani, 2016; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Brophy, 2004) which have argued that promoting learners' autonomy for increasing their motivation for learning a foreign language has become an interesting issue since 2000. The findings verify the theory proposed by Dörnyei (2001) who suggested that the students' freedom to choose rather than being forced to behave in line with someone else's desire, seems to be a requirement for motivation.

It was also found that EFL learners use strategies to increase the learners' confidence. Teachers through increasing raising language awareness of the values of the efforts which they make and explaining the nature of the mistakes to the students and telling the students that it is not difficult to learn a foreign language increase the language learners' confidence directly and high self-confidence will indirectly lead to the language learners' motivation and language achievement. Therefore, in line with the findings of the previous studies, it can be argued that some learners are afraid of making mistakes and feel anxious about their performance in language skills in front of the teacher and other classmates. The micro strategies used by teachers highlight the importance of learners' self-confidence which also acts as an essential motive (Alrabai, 2011). Findings also showed that EFL teachers appreciate the language learners' efforts to motivate the language learners. To be more precise, they tell the students the language learners' progress is important to them. They appreciate the learners' participation by offering rewards, they use successful LLS as models, and encouraging cooperative learning. Therefore, Iranian EFL teachers recognize the significance of their attention to the students' efforts.

Findings related to the second question revealed that teachers' gender does not affect their work engagement, creativity, and the use of motivational strategies in the classrooms. The findings are consistent with the findings reported by He (2009) also found that the gender dimension had no

significant effect on the motivational strategy used by students and teachers at Kent University. The findings are also consistent with the results of the study undertaken by Sharma et al. (2017) who maintained that demographic information such as teachers' experience and gender do not affect their work engagement degree. In this study, it was found that all types of motivational strategies are equally used by male and female teachers; whereas, Ali (2016) found that male and female teachers both use motivational strategies but their macro and micro-strategies are not the same.

Results are in contrast with the findings of some related studies (e.g., Budak 2009; Ceyhan 2014; Kurşunoğlu et al., 2010) which indicated that gender is a determinant of work engagement and male and female employees do not have the same level of work engagement. With regard to the differences between male and female teachers' creativity, we found both male and female teachers have the same level of creativity. However, Arifani and Suryanti (2019) and Khodabakhshzadeh et al. (2018) showed that female teachers showed a higher level of creativity for learner involvement. However, the findings echo the commonality among the findings undertaken by a few researchers (Ari; 2011; Kavgacı, 2014; Sezen, 2014) who highlighted that gender does not make a difference in the employees' work engagement level. One reason for the inconsistency between the findings of this study and the other related studies may be due to the context of the studies. As work engagement and motivational strategies are context-bound and culturally relevant, we should not expect the same findings.

Multiple regression results, relating to the third research question, showed that work engagement cannot predict teachers' use of motivational strategy in the classroom, but creativity style can. The results of the present study are consistent with the findings of Deci and Ryan (1985) who examined that there are strong links between cognitive motivation and creativity. They found that individuals with intrinsic motives, such as cognitive motivation, tend to look for cases that interest them and that require the use of their creative abilities. Similarly, the results are consistent with those of Al-Areimi (1999) who found a positive correlation between cognitive motivation and creative thinking. Similarly, Radwan (2004) reported that students with higher cognitive motivations outperformed their peers with lower cognitive motivations in creative thinking skills, fluency, and originality. The results are also consistent with Arifani and Suryanti (2019) and Khodabakhshzadeh et al. (2018) who claimed that teachers' creativity is positively correlated with their ability to engage language learners and their creative and effective teaching.

7. Conclusion and Implications

It can also be concluded that EFL teachers in Iran use both integrative and instrumental micro-strategies to motivate EFL learners. Firstly, it can be concluded that behaviors, teaching styles and tasks can be used by teachers as motivational strategies. Therefore, teachers need to pay attention to their behavior, teaching style, and activities and adapt them to the students' situation in order to increase their motivation. Also, boosting EFL learners' confidence by using an

interesting and negotiated curriculum can positively contribute to motivating EFL learners to learn a foreign language. It can also be concluded that learner-centered educational approaches particularly promote learner autonomy, as suggested by Alibakhshi (2015), since students play a role in determining course content, making decisions about lesson time, assessment, and the length of each classroom is one good macro strategy to boost EFL learning motivation. The next conclusion mentioned by Abbasabadi & Shakerkhoshroud (2018) is that teachers can motivate students by making the classroom atmosphere pleasant and interesting, and a supportive climate in the classroom can be used as strategies to motivate EFL learners. Regarding the importance of using motivational strategies in the classroom, it can be concluded that work engagement fails to predict the use of motivational strategies by Iranian EFL teachers in the classroom. However, the creativity style can predict the teacher's use of motivational strategies in the classroom. In other words, there was a weak positive correlation between work engagement and the use of motivational strategies that was not significant. The correlation between work engagement and creativity was positive and moderate. Finally, there was a positive significant correlation between creativity style and the use of motivational strategies. Taken together, the results of this study proved that teachers' creativity style can predict the use of motivational strategies. In addition, the results showed that there was no significant difference between female and male teachers when using motivational strategies. Therefore, teachers with high levels of creativity and engagement will definitely favor motivational strategies in the classroom. Since learner motivation is one of the key factors for success in learning a foreign language, the use of motivational strategies by teachers in the classroom will effectively affect learner motivation.

The findings have theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, educational psychologists and teacher trainers will be informed of the significant effect of creativity style on the prediction of teachers' use of motivational strategies in the classroom. The study's findings indicated that creativity style could predict teachers' use of motivational strategies in the classroom. Also, textbook designers are recommended to bring creativity into existing curricula and textbooks for teachers to make teachers use more motivational strategies. Teachers can try using students' favorite motivational strategies and avoiding their least favorite ones to increase their students' motivation to study languages. Furthermore, language teachers who are well informed of the significance of these research findings can implement various motivational strategies to enhance the quality of learning. The curriculum design should be reevaluated so that teachers could see something different concerning the activities, content, topics, teaching practices, and the use of more motivational strategies. More importantly, teachers could be suggested to use various motivational strategies as a potential vehicle for the introduction of active learning in a classroom setting. This shows that Iranian EFL teachers can improve their creativity to better use motivational strategies.

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