An Investigation into the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Teaching Style and their Attitudes towards Online Teaching

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Abstract. With the accelerated development in technology, it seems that online education will become the primary agent for education. A potential factor which seems to be influential in teachers' attitude towards online teaching is their personal characteristics and behaviors that determine how teachers conduct their classes, i.e. their teaching style. Notwithstanding, it seems the role of teaching style in teachers' attitudes towards online teaching is quite unexplored among EFL teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was, first, to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. The second aim of this study was to explore what type of teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. Furthermore, this research was an attempt to see if Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style modify their attitudes towards online teaching. The last objective of this study was to investigate if there is any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. To this end, 92 Iranian EFL teachers (40 males and 52 females) were selected through convenience sampling. To explore teachers' teaching styles, Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory was employed. A modified version of attitude questionnaire developed by Liaw, Huang, and Chen (2007) was utilized to gauge teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. To analyze the data, the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, one-way ANOVA and independent samples t-test were used. The findings demonstrated the participants had positive attitudes towards online teaching. Moreover, based on the results, there were positive and significant relationships between three teaching styles (personal model, facilitator, and delegator teaching styles) and teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. It was also found that compared to teachers with expert teaching style, teachers with inclination toward facilitator teaching styles

had more positive attitudes towards online teaching. Finally, the results showed that there was not any significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to their attitudes towards online teaching.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, technology plays a significant role in our lives and in numerous ways influences it. Communication around the world has been changed by the Internet. It also plays a prominent role in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. As technology has advanced, innovative programs have been used to create a more immersive and interesting atmosphere than conventional language classes for language learners and instructors.

Online teaching has become very popular in the educational field and with the prevalence of different applications and programs, it can be useful to learn a language via Internet. Nowadays, the integration of internet technology in educational process has changed the way instructions are delivered to learners.

However, some teachers still prefer the traditional way of teaching as opposed to online teaching. Teachers' attitudes toward online teaching is considered as a determining factor which can facilitate or hinder their use of technology in the educational environments (Kim, 2002). Teachers' attitude toward a new educational technology such as online teaching, is a key element in its diffusion (Rogers, 2003). Accordingly, according to Baylor and Ritchie (2002), regardless of the quantity of technology and its complexity, technology will not be employed unless instructors have the requisite skills, expertise, and attitudes to incorporate it into the curricula.

Furthermore, one of the most highly debated issues in the domain of teachers' individual differences concerns "teaching style" and its effects on different aspects of teaching process. Regarding the importance of teaching style, Jarvis (2004) indicated that the teaching style encompasses the application of philosophy; it incorporates evidence of

views about values associated to and attitudes toward all aspects of the teaching-learning interaction.

While previous studies of internet-based instruction predominantly explored teachers' or learners' attitudes (Almekhlafi & Almeqdadi, 2010; Kia Heirati & Ahmadi Alashti, 2015; Nosrati, 2015; Nachimuthu, 2020), little is known about the relationship between teachers' teaching style preference and their attitudes towards online teaching.

Considering the importance of teachers' attitudes, this study is primarily concerned with inquiring Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. Additionally, the current study sets out to shed more light on the question of what type of teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. The third aim of the study is to explore whether teachers with different teaching style preferences have different attitudes towards online teaching. It also attempts to find out if there is any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical considerations

The exponential development and proliferation of the internet in the field of language learning science is a significant concern. In terms of the role of the internet in English teaching and learning as a second language, some researchers (Murray & McPherson, 2004; Son, 2008) stated that the internet provides authentic materials and can help with language learning and teaching. As a result, it's important to figure out how to use the internet safely and effectively.

As Kern (1995) pointed out, incorporating computers and internet technologies into learning experiences will change the type of interaction between teachers and students.

The advancement of technology in the field of education has accelerated a transition in language learning and teaching from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches. In fact, the use of computers and the internet will make the learning experience more student-centered. To address the needs of digitally mature students, teachers

must develop a new role. Instead of being conventional bench-bound instructors, they should be facilitators. They can also assist and mentor students in their studies.

Online teaching, online learning, e-learning, internet learning, and other terminologies are used to describe online education (Sangwan, Sangwan, & Punia, 2021). Shelton and Saltsman (2005) also defined online education as "a platform for delivering educational content and facilitating instructor-student interaction over a computer network" (pp. 3-4).

Some scholars claim that online education is the best alternative for classroom instruction because it removes the barriers of accessing education (Garrison, 2011; Weller, 2007).

The attitudes of teachers and students toward incorporating the Internet into their language classes is one critical aspect that affects the effectiveness of online courses. Psychologists developed the concept of attitude as a hypothetical model to describe some condition of interest. It is the ability to make decisions based on one's emotional, affective, and behavioral experiences (Schwarz, 2007). Attitude is defined in a variety of ways. According to Albarracin, Johnson, Kumkale, and Zanna (2005), attitude is a psychological tendency to see a certain thing or action with a degree of like or dislike.

Teachers are seen as active actors in the process of transition and adoption of new ideas in educational contexts, because their views and attitudes may promote or hinder the progress of any educational reform, such as the use of an advanced technology program (Levin & Wadmany, 2006). Teachers' views and attitudes toward teaching and technology, as Kim (2002) indicated, can be viewed as a promoting or inhibiting factor, giving them more trust or acting as a significant barrier to technology use. According to Lam (2000), teachers' personal views about the importance of using technology in language teaching influence their willingness to use it.

Teaching style is the second variable of the present study. Teaching style was described by Bennett (1976) as "the teacher's pervasive personal behavior and media used during interaction with learners. It is a teacher's characteristic approach whatever the method used" (p. 27). To

Fischer and Fischer (1979), teaching style consists of a widespread way of approaching learners that could be consistent with a variety of teaching methods.

A new definition for teaching styles was proposed by Heimlich and Norland (1994). They defined teaching styles as "predilections toward teaching behavior and congruence between educators' teaching behavior and teaching beliefs" (p. 34). Kaplan and Kies (1995) also defined teaching style as "a teachers' personal behavior and the media used to transmit data to or receive it from the learner" (p. 2).

Grasha (1996) stated that teaching styles are the lasting personal characteristics and behaviours that show up in conducting the classes. According to Grasha (1996) teaching styles not only define teachers, but also guide and direct the educational processes, and have a significant impact on students' learning abilities.

Teaching style has been classified in a variety of ways. For example, Grasha (1996) described five types of teaching styles, each of which represents the typical orientations and strategies that teachers employ in their classes. This model includes five categorizations:

A. Expert
Expert-style teachers are concerned with retaining their position as an expert among learners by transmitting information that they need. In essence, they are skilled at demonstrating thorough expertise and challenging learners to improve their skills.

B. Formal authority
Teachers who teach in a formal authority style are similar to faculty members. They stress adequate standards as the center of the class, offer feedback, formulate learning objectives, and monitor learners toward standard practices.

C. Personal model
Teachers who have a personal model style behave in such a manner that they set an example for their students' thought and behavior. They serve as models for students, encouraging them to observe and apply what appears to be successful from a teacher's perspective.

D. Facilitator

This teaching style stresses the relationship between the teacher and the students. Teachers assist students in making informed decisions by asking questions, designing options, recommending alternatives, and persuading them to develop criteria. The main aim is to help learners grow the ability to take autonomous action, effort, and responsibility.

E. Delegator

Teachers with delegator teaching style are interested in creating learners who can work independently and autonomously. They serve as resources and are available to assist learners when they require assistance.

The theoretical background of this categorization can be linked to the traditional dichotomy of teacher-centered and student-centered teaching styles (Grasha, 1996). The expert style, the personal model style, and the formal authority style are considered as teacher-centered styles while the facilitator style and the delegator style are attributed to student-centered styles (Grasha, 1996).

2.2. Empirical studies

Concerning the importance of online teaching, a plethora of research has been conducted to examine teachers' attitude towards online education. For instance, Kia Heirati and Ahmadi Alashti (2015) also carried out a study to investigate the attitudes of Iranian English teachers and learners toward using the Internet for language learning. 100 language teachers and 100 language learners studying English at different language institutes were selected as the participants of the study. To collect the data, the researchers used two questionnaires as the study instruments. The findings showed that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards using the Internet for language learning. The results also showed that there was no difference in attitudes toward the use of the Internet for language learning between learners and teachers.

Alodail (2016) explored the teachers' attitudes toward the use of e-learning (online learning) in the College of Education at Albaha University. The results showed that gender, perception of computer attributes, perception of computer competence in education, and perception of cultural of using computer in education, significantly affected teachers' at-

titudes towards online learning.

Nachimuthu (2020) also assessed the student teachers' attitudes towards the online teaching with regard to their gender and context of teaching (private and state schools). The results revealed that teachers' attitudes did not significantly differ as a function of gender and context of teaching.

Assareha and Bidokht (2011) conducted a comprehensive literature review of research and survey study to investigate the barriers to e-teaching and e-learning. They reported four types of barriers: 1) barriers related to learners which include financial issues, motivation, evaluation of their success, alienation from peers, inadequate distance learning skills and knowledge, affection, and social realm, 2) barriers related to teachers which involves inadequate knowledge of e-teaching, difficulty evaluating various domain progress, 3) barriers related to curriculum including ambiguity, resource, teaching method, and assessment, and 4) barriers related to school which has subdivision like structural and organizational factors.

One of the most contentious topics in this field is teaching style. Previous research in educational psychology has explored the role of teaching style in comparison to a variety of other factors. For example, Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2016) used a path analysis approach to explore the role of teachers' creativity in their teaching styles, as well as the effect of teaching styles on teachers' burnout levels. 193 Iranian EFL teachers and 1,710 Iranian EFL learners constituted the sample of the study. The researchers found that model, facilitator, and delegator teaching styles were effective in preventing the teachers' burnout. The results also showed that teachers' creativity influenced their preferred teaching style. More precisely, the findings indicated that teachers' creativity positively predicted facilitator and delegator styles, but negatively predicted authority and expert styles.

Heydarnejad, Fatemi, and Ghonsooly (2017) who investigated the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style and the emotions they experience in their classes found that there was a significant relationship between the teachers' teaching styles and their emotions. The researchers reported that facilitator and delegator styles were

the most prevalent styles among Iranian teachers. The findings also revealed that 'enjoyment' and 'anger' were respectively the most and the least frequent emotions the Iranian EFL teachers experienced in their classes.

As the literature indicated, teachers' attitude toward a new educational technology such as online teaching, is a key element in its diffusion (Rogers, 2003). One factor that can potentially influence teacher's attitudes towards online teaching is teacher's style due to the multimodality of online teaching. Therefore, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching?

2. What type of teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching?

3. Do Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style modify their attitudes towards online teaching?

4. Is there any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching?

3. Method

3.1. Design
A correlational design was used to undertake this study because this study dealt with estimating correlation coefficient between several variables (teachers' teaching style preferences and their attitudes towards online teaching). A correlational study can be considered as a type of quantitative methods of research. In correlational studies, the researcher attempts to find out if there is any relationship between two or more quantitative variables from the same group of participants (Tan, 2014).

3.2. Participants
92 Iranian EFL teachers (40 males and 52 females) with their age ranging from 22 to 50 from different private language institutes in Shiraz were selected to participate in the study. The participants were native speakers of Farsi. They were selected through convenience sampling and

were informed about the study. Ethical issues were also considered by the researcher.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Teachers' attitude questionnaire
In measuring teachers' attitude pertaining to online teaching, a modified version of attitude questionnaire from Liaw et al. (2007) was used as the first instrument. The questionnaire included two major components: (a) demographic information including gender, teaching experience and the field of study, and (b) attitudes toward online teaching encompassing 19 Likert-type items on a five-point scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1 point) to 'strongly agree' (5 points).

3.3.2 Teaching style inventory (TSI)
The researcher used the Grasha-Reichmann Teaching Style Inventory (Grasha, 1996) as the second instrument of the study. The questionnaire included forty Likert type items with five points. It identified five basic teaching styles (Expert, Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, Delegator) on a single dimension of teacher vs. student oriented, i.e. "Expert" being totally teacher oriented, and "Delegator" being totally student oriented.

3.3.3 Reliability and validity of the instruments
The reliability of the instruments was estimated through a pilot study. A small group of teachers (N=20) were selected to participate in the pilot study. As the questionnaires included Likert items, the researcher ran the Cronbach's Alpha analysis to estimate the reliability of the questionnaires. The results revealed that the reliability coefficients of the Teachers' Attitude Questionnaire (r =.87) and Teaching Style Inventory (r =.89) were greater than .70 highlighting the instruments to be highly reliable. The questionnaires were assessed for face validity by two experts before distribution to the participants.

3.4. Data collection procedure
In the first step, the researcher evaluated the reliability of the questionnaires through a pilot study. To this end, the researcher administered the questionnaires to twenty teachers who were identical to the target

respondents of the study. Afterwards, Cronbach's alpha analysis was run to estimate the internal consistency of the questionnaires.

After ensuring the reliability of the questionnaires, the researcher administered the questionnaires on social media networks, Whatsapp and Telegram. Utilizing social media networks for completing the survey could save time and capture a wide run of EFL instructors in topographically assorted areas in Iran. The questionnaires were presented in the electronic forms. The purpose of the study and instructions regarding answering the questionnaires were presented on the first page of the questionnaires. By clicking the interface to continue to the study questions, the participants agreed that they were willing to take part in the study. It took them 20 minutes to finish the surveys.

3.5. Data analysis

For data analysis, SPSS software (version 24) was utilized. To answer the first research question, the mean of participants' responses to the items of attitude questionnaire was calculated. Next, the correlation analysis was run to investigate the relationships between teachers' teaching style preferences and their attitudes towards online teaching. Afterwards, to answer the third research question, a one-way ANOVA was performed to see if there is a difference between expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator teachers' attitudes toward online teaching. Finally, to explore the role of gender in teachers' attitudes towards teaching style, an independent samples t-test was run.

4. Results

To answer the first research question, the researcher ran the descriptive statistics. The results are displayed in Table 1.

The items of the attitude questionnaire were on a five-point Likert scale extending from "strongly agree =5" to "strongly disagree =1". Since average score for each item just as the whole questionnaire fell between 1 to 5, the point 3 was considered as the mid-point. It means that the mean scores above 3 address the positive attitudes and those below 3 represent the negative attitudes.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers' Attitudes

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived self-efficacy					
1. I feel confident making online instruction.	92	2	5	4.11	.763
2. I feel confident using the Internet	92	2	5	3.92	.975
3. I feel confident using online teaching environments.	92	1	5	3.83	.933
Perceived enjoyment					
4. I enjoy using computers as a teaching assisted tool.	92	2	5	3.80	.964
5. I enjoy using online environment for teaching purpose.	92	2	5	4.09	1.034
6. I enjoy using online instruction for teaching.	92	2	5	4.00	.812
Perceived usefulness					
7. I believe using online environments is helpful for learning.	92	2	5	3.63	.910
8. I believe using online environments is helpful for teaching.	92	2	5	3.68	1.079
9. I believe using online instruction is useful for teaching.	92	2	5	3.84	.986
Behavioral intention to use online teaching					
10. I intend to use online environments to assist my teaching.	92	2	5	4.15	.889
11. I intend to use online instruction to assist my teaching.	92	2	5	4.00	.994
12. I intend to use the Internet to assist my teaching.	92	1	5	3.85	1.231
Perceived system satisfaction					
13. I am satisfied with using online environments.	92	1	5	4.04	.913
14. I am satisfied with using MS-Word, MS-PowerPoint files as multimedia instruction.	92	1	5	3.98	.902
15. I am satisfied with using online instruction	92	1	5	4.03	.966
Multimedia instruction					
16. I like to use voice media instruction	92	2	5	3.83	.945
17. I like to use image media instruction	92	1	5	3.53	1.190
18. I like to use animation media instruction	92	1	5	3.87	.904
19. I like to use colorful text media instruction	92	1	5	3.89	.988
Attitude	92	2.32	5.00	3.89	.615

According to Table 1, the mean score of teachers' attitudes is more than the neutral point (M = 3.89, SD = .61). It shows that school teachers hold favorable attitude towards online teaching. Furthermore, the teachers' responses to items of the questionnaire showed that they agreed with all of the statements presented in the questionnaire suggesting that Iranian EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards online teaching.

With regard to perceived self-efficacy, the results showed that the teachers feel confident making online instruction (M = 4.11, SD = .76), using the Internet (M = 3.92, SD = .97) and online teaching environments (M = 3.83, SD = .93).

Concerning the perceived enjoyment, the mean scores revealed that the teachers enjoy utilizing computers as a teaching assisted tool (M = 3.80, SD = .96) and online environment for teaching purpose (M = 4.09, SD = .10). They are also interested in employing online instruction for teaching (M = 4.00, SD = .81). As evident in Table 1, the teachers agreed that using online environments is helpful for learning (M = 3.63, SD = .91) and teaching (M = 3.68, SD = .01). They also conceded that using online instruction is useful for teaching (M = 3.84, SD = .98).

Regarding the Behavioral intention to use online teaching, the teachers attempt to employ online environments (M = 4.15, SD = .88), online instruction (M = 4.00, SD = .99) and the Internet (M = 3.85, SD = 1.23) to assist their teaching. Furthermore, the results presented in Table 1 demonstrated that the teachers are pleased with using online environments (M = 4.04, SD = .91) and online instruction (M = 4.03, SD = .96). According to Table 4.1, they are also satisfied with using MS-Word, MS-PowerPoint files as multimedia instruction (M = 3.98, SD = .90).

When it comes to media instruction, the findings indicated that the teachers like to use voice (M = 3.83, SD = .94), image (M = 3.53, SD = 1.19), animation (M = 3.87, SD = .90), and colorful text media instructions (M = 3.89, SD = .98). As shown in Table 4.1, Items 10, 1, and 5 elicited the highest mean scores, respectively. Based on the mean score of teachers' responses to Item 10, the teachers intended to use online environments to assist their teaching (M = 4.15, SD =.88). Additionally, in Items, 1 and 5, the teachers agreed that they feel confident making online instruction (M = 4.11, SD =.76) and enjoyed using online environment for teaching purpose (M = 4.09, SD =1.03).

In the next step, to find out what type of teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching, the correlation analysis was run. As previously mentioned, the participants answered the Grasha-Reichmann Teaching Style Questionnaire. The questionnaire included five teaching styles (expert, authority, personal model, facili-

tator, and delegator). Every participant received a mean score for each teaching style.

Prior to this procedure, initial analyses had been accomplished to verify that no violation of the assumption of normality occurred. The normality of the data turned into assessed via way of evaluating the ratios of skewness and kurtosis indices over their standard errors. To meet the normality assumption, skewness and kurtosis ratios over their relevant standard errors must fall within the ranges of +/- 1.96 (Field, 2009). Table 2 depicts the results of Normality tests.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Tests of Normality

	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	*Std. Error*	*Statistic*	*Std. Error*
Attitude	-.296	.251	-.373	.498
Expert	-.808	.251	1.528	.498
Formal Authority	-.100	.251	-.734	.498
Personal Model	.193	.251	-.575	.498
Facilitator	.473	.251	-.117	.498
Delegator	.631	.251	1.051	.498
Teaching Style	.092	.251	.136	.498
Valid N (listwise)				

As demonstrated in Table 2, the absolute values of the ratios of the skewness and kurtosis were smaller than +/- 1.96. Therefore, it could be asserted that the data, i.e. the overall attitude mean score and the teaching styles experienced normality. Table 3 represents the results of correlation analyses.

Table 3: Correlation between the Teachers' Attitudes and Their Teaching Styles

	Expert	Formal Authority	Personal Model	Facilitator	Delegator	Teaching Style
Pearson Correlation	.141	.196	.232*	.241*	.334**	.332**
Attitude Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.061	.026	.020	.001	.001
N	92	92	92	92	92	92

Table 3 suggests a statistically significant and positive relationship between teachers' attitudes and their teaching styles (r =.33, p=.00). Based on the correlation coefficients, it can be inferred that compared with

other teaching styles, the delegator teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching (r =.33, p= .00). The results also revealed there were significant and positive relationships between teachers' attitudes and facilitator (r =.24, p= .02) and personal model teaching styles (r =.23, p= .02).

To answer the third research question, i. e. do Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style modify their attitudes towards online teaching, the One-way NOVA was run. In other words, One-way ANOVA was performed to know if there was any significant difference among the attitudes of the teachers with expert, authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator.

To this end, the participants were divided into five groups (expert, authority, personal model, facilitator, delegator) based on their responses to the teaching style questionnaire. As mentioned earlier, each participant received five mean scores for five teaching styles. Among the five teaching style mean scores, the highest one was considered as the teacher's preferred teaching style. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of attitudes of teaching style groups.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes of Teaching Style Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expert	28	2.32	4.47	3.5677	.58474
Formal Authority	13	2.63	4.53	3.8623	.54761
Personal	10	2.47	5.00	3.8526	.69284
Facilitator	31	3.37	5.00	4.1613	.52066
Delegator	10	3.37	5.00	4.1053	.62275

As revealed in Table 4, facilitator group gained the highest attitude mean score (M= 4.16, SD= .52) and expert group had the lowest one (M= 3.56, SD= .58). Table 5 summarizes the results of One-way ANOVA.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA to Compare the Teaching Style Groups in terms of Their Attitude

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.671	4	1.418	4.287	.003
Within Groups	28.774	87	.331		
Total	34.445	91			

Table 5 revealed a significant difference among the teaching style groups concerning their attitudes towards online teaching (F (4, 87) = 4.28, p= .00, partial eta squared= .16 representing a large effect size). In the next step, to specify the differences between the five groups, Scheffe post hoc test was run. Table 6 depicts the results of Scheffe post hoc test.

Table 6: Scheffe Post Hoc Test

(I) Teaching Style	(J) Teaching Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Expert	Authority	-.29468	.19301	.676
	Personal	-.28496	.21186	.770
	Facilitator	-.59362*	.14994	.006
	Delegator	-.53759	.21186	.179
Authority	Expert	.29468	.19301	.676
	Personal	.00972	.24190	1.000
	Facilitator	-.29894	.19003	.650
	Delegator	-.24291	.24190	.908
Personal	Expert	.28496	.21186	.770
	Authority	-.00972	.24190	1.000
	Facilitator	-.30866	.20915	.703
	Delegator	-.25263	.25719	.914
Facilitator	Expert	.59362*	.14994	.006
	Authority	.29894	.19003	.650
	Personal	.30866	.20915	.703
	Delegator	.05603	.20915	.999
Delegator	Expert	.53759	.21186	.179
	Authority	.24291	.24190	.908
	Personal	.25263	.25719	.914
	Facilitator	-.05603	.20915	.999

Based on the post hoc analysis in Table 6 and the descriptive statistics depicted in Table 4, facilitator group (M= 4.16, SD= .52) significantly gained higher attitude mean score than expert group (M= 3.56, SD= .58), suggesting that compared with the teachers preferring expert teaching style, the teachers with the inclination toward facilitator teaching style had more positive attitude towards online teaching. As evident in Table 6, no significant difference was observed between other teaching style groups.

The last research question intended to explore if there is any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes toward online teaching. To this end, the independent samples t-test was run. Table 7 demonstrates the results of the descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Female and Male Teachers' Attitude

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude	Females	52	3.9474	.60756	.863	90	.390
	Males	40	3.8355	.62709			

As shown in Table 7, the independent samples t-test on the attitude mean scores did not show any statistically significant difference between the male and female teachers, t (90) = .86, p=.39.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion on the first research question

As mentioned earlier, the first objective of the present study was to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. The results demonstrated that they held positive attitudes towards online teaching. More specifically, the teachers had highly positive attitudes toward different aspect of online teaching including perceived self-efficacy, enjoyment, usefulness, and behavioral intention of use.

The results also showed that the teachers were satisfied with online teaching and preferred to use multimedia instruction in the online teaching environment. As a result, most teachers have positive attitudes towards online teaching environments, indicating that they intend to continue teaching online in the future.

The findings of this study are in line with Suri and Sharma 's (2016) study. They found that teachers held positive attitudes toward online learning. In the same vein, Liaw, et al. (2007) who explored instructors' attitudes toward e-learning concluded that they hold very positive perceptions towards employing e-learning. In addition, as Al-Mekhlafi

(2004) indicated, the use of Internet facilitates both teaching and learning processes and EFL teachers do consider it as a motivational, enabling and empowering tool that could benefit both EFL teachers and students.

5.2 Discussion on the second research question

The second research question asked what type of teaching style is more associated with teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. The results of the correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and their teaching styles. The results also demonstrated that teachers' attitudes associated positively with three teaching styles: two student-centered styles (facilitator and delegator teaching styles) and one of teacher-centered teaching styles (personal model).

The results of the present study can be justified based on the characteristics of online education and the teachers' roles in online teaching. Since there is a distinction between online and face-to-face communication, teachers are required to play new roles in online environment (Liu et al., 2005). In this regard, Coppola, Hiltz, and Rotter (2001) asserted that changes in communication patterns necessitate teachers adjusting their personal understanding of their roles to respond to an online educational environment that keeps remotely distributed students involved in the learning process at all times.

Teachers are required to adopt specific roles in online education and their teaching styles may help them to fit their roles. Therefore, the correspondence between teachers' teaching styles and their roles in online teaching may justify the relationship between teachers' facilitator, delegator, and personal teaching style preferences and their attitudes towards online teaching. As Grasha (1996) asserted, teachers with inclination toward facilitator teaching style attempt to develop students' capacity to function autonomously. Berge (1995) and Liu et al. (2005) considered the facilitating students' learning and communication as one of the most important pedagogical roles of teachers in online education.

In addition, teachers with delegator teaching style are interested in creating autonomous students. They serve as resources and are available to assist students when they need help. Therefore, teachers with delega-

tor teaching style encourage students to reply to each other's questions and to work in teams. Concerning the social role of teachers in online education, Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) argued that instructors are required to motivate and engage students in a community of inquiry.

According to Benson (2001), technology has the ability to promote autonomous behaviour in learners because it promotes self-access in learning and provides learners with many opportunities to self-direct and monitor their learning. Rahimi, Ebrahimi, and Eskandari (2013) also indicated that a technology-enhanced language learning environment is more learner-centered. Similarly, Darasawang and Reinders (2010) indicated that using technology-based materials gives students more responsibility for learning. Thus, teachers with student-centered teaching style (facilitator and delegator teaching styles) may feel more comfortable teaching online.

Additionally, in personal teaching style, the main goal is to direct and guide the students to observe and emulate teachers' approach. Mason (1998, as cited in Liu et al., 2005) advocates that online teachers are required to play the role of a strong leader in shaping online interaction through setting clear programs and goals and setting up procedural rules.

5.3 Discussion on the third research question

The third research question asked if Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style modify their attitudes towards online teaching. The results of the One-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of facilitator and expert groups. Based on the findings, in comparison with the expert teaching style group, teachers with facilitator teaching style held more positive attitude towards online teaching.

The difference between the attitudes of facilitator and expert groups can be justified based on the role of teachers in online classrooms. In fact, the online teacher's role changes from information transmitter to learning guide (Juan et al., 2011). In online teaching, teachers facilitate student learning.

Other studies also support the shift in the teacher's role by empha-

sizing the ability to convey content and transfer from teacher-centered to student-centered education (Neely & Tucker, 2010; Syverson & Slatin, 2010). In addition, Berge (1995) argued that although teaching online necessitates teachers to perform different roles, the educational roles of online teachers revolve mostly around facilitating pedagogical processes for learners.

5.4 Discussion on the fourth research question

The fourth research question asks if there is any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. The results of the independent samples t-test demonstrated that males and females were not different in terms of their attitudes towards online teaching.

The results of the current study are in line with those of the research conducted by Suri and Sharma (2016). Suri and Sharma (2016) explored teachers' attitudes towards e-learning and found that gender did not have a determining role in teacher's attitude towards e-learning. Similarly, Nachimuthu (2020) concluded that teachers' attitudes did not significantly differ as a function of gender.

6. Conclusion

The results gathered were interpreted to mean that Iranian EFL teachers held positive attitudes towards online teaching. Only positive attitudes toward online education will increase online learning and teaching efficiency. Understanding users' attitudes toward online education, including teachers' attitudes, allows them to improve the effectiveness, performance, and attractiveness of teaching (Liaw et al., 2007). Essentially, understanding teachers' attitudes towards online environments is of paramount importance for improving their teaching performance. The findings of the current study confirm that Iranian EFL teachers are willing to use online environments for teaching.

The results also showed that there is a positive the relationship between teachers' teaching style and their attitudes towards online teaching. More specifically, facilitator, delegator and personal model teaching styles were significantly associated with teachers' attitudes towards on-

line teaching. Therefore, it's time for teachers to evaluate their own teaching styles, as well as their own strengths and shortcomings, in view of the online environment's effectiveness measures.

Additionally, the findings revealed that compared with teachers with expert teaching style, teachers with an inclination toward the facilitator teaching style hold more positive attitudes towards online teaching. In fact, teachers with facilitator teaching style follow a student-centered model for teaching. They tend to take on the role of advisors or resource personnel and they are more concerned with improving the learners' ability to work independently. While the facilitating approach helps students see themselves as individual learners, teachers are required be careful to provide enough feedback and direction so that students do not find themselves floundering aimlessly. Emphasizing student-centeredness, interactivity, and cooperation, this style will probably best exemplify the approach required in the online environment.

The findings of this study can be useful for both teachers, educational authorities, and teacher trainers. Current findings also ascertain that teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching online courses. Since this study indicated that teachers have positive attitudes towards online teaching, educational authorities can take the teachers' attitudes in to account and provide more teaching opportunities for them.

The results of the study could be beneficial to language teachers. In fact, such knowledge provides EFL teachers with a greater understanding of how to gain more positive attitude towards online teaching. Furthermore, the results could aid in the advancement of teacher recruitment and training programs for online education. The results of the current study showed that there is a difference between the attitudes of teachers with facilitator and expert teaching styles towards online teaching. Therefore, teacher trainers can inform teachers of the effect of teaching styles on their attitudes towards online teaching.

Finally, several limitations need to be considered. First, regarding the unique context of this survey, the results may not be generalizable to other cultures and countries. The number of participants was relatively small. Thus the results of this study could not be generalized for all the EFL teachers. Therefore, it might be a good idea to do the same

research with the teachers of other languages or a larger sample size from different educational contexts. Moreover, the data was collected solely by questionnaires; to be more comprehensive, data collection instruments such as observation or interview may be added.

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