

## The Effect of Burnout on Teaching Performance of Male and Female EFL Teachers in L2 Context

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### Abstract

The male-female differences in burnout and its possible effect on EFL teachers' performance has not received much attention in the literature of burnout. To address this issue, the researchers conducted this study to investigate the effect of burnout and, more specifically, its three subcomponents—Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)—on the teaching performance of male and female EFL teachers in an L2 teaching/learning context. The participants of this study were 30 (15 males and 15 females) English teachers of five private language institutes and 150 students of the same teachers. The data were collected through the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES) and Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis, independent-samples *t* test and descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis process. The results showed that burnout does not influence the teachers' performance in a significant way. Additionally, it was revealed that there was no significant difference between the levels of burnout in male and female teachers. The findings challenge the common belief that burnout can greatly affect the teachers' performance and that female teachers are more likely to experience burnout than male teachers, revealing instead that burnout does not significantly affect the performance of teachers and there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their levels of burnout.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Reduced Personal Accomplishment, Teacher's Performance, EFL Teachers

### Introduction

Teaching is among the most stressful jobs in the world. Teachers experience a lot of stress due to the nature of their profession. This is particularly true when it comes to teaching a foreign language in an L2 context. According to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), professional stress can have deep psychological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects such as fatigue and lack of activity. While some teachers are able to handle the stress in an appropriate way, others fail to overcome the work stress and it can lead to a chronic stress condition that causes emotional and physical problems. This condition is generally known as burnout.

Initially coined by Freudenberg in 1974, the term burnout is defined by Maslach (1993) as “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity.” According to Maslach et al. (2001), burnout consists of three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, which involves feelings of being depleted of one's emotional and physical resources, as a consequence of intense physical, affective and cognitive strain, i.e. as a long-term

consequence of prolonged exposure to certain job demands; (b) depersonalization, which originally refers to distancing oneself emotionally from service recipients, it is a state of detachment from students, parents, and other teachers that disturbs a teacher's personal and professional life; and (c) a reduced sense of personal accomplishment which is described as a person's negative self-evaluation regarding his or her job performance. Burnout in teaching is a response of teachers who have trouble coping with the challenges of the job. It comes about when the teacher feels he has invested a lot in his work, trying by all means to make his work meaningful, but finds himself running empty and in vain (Dewe 1986; Jackson, Rothman, & De Vijver, 2006; Ngeno, 2007; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982).

Recent changes in the language teaching perspectives highlight the great role teachers play on the learners' success. Moreover, emotions and feelings can have a great effect on teachers' professional life. Teachers being highly emotional can bring enormous breakthroughs in their profession. Therefore, the best should be done to carry out studies which aim at improving this facet and recognizing the effects of elements which can result in decreasing this emotionality; and burnout is one of such elements.

In order to get a clear picture of the burnout process, an extensive number of investigations have been carried out. Different sources have been associated with the phenomenon of burnout. Background (e.g., educational level, type of graduation school, etc.), individual attributes (e.g., age, gender, number of children, etc.), and organizational factors (e.g., class size, work environment, workload, etc.) are involved in burnout occurrence (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Research shows symptoms of teacher burnout in four separate forms, namely physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral (Cunningham, 1983; Belo, Bullorg and Baughman, 1997; Tronman and Woods, 2001). According to these sources, physically a burnout teacher may suffer from chronic fatigue, frequent headaches, nausea and weariness. Mental burnout is manifested in a teacher's negative thought patterns. He may have low self-concept; feelings of inferiority and inadequacy may prevail in his life making him feel not good enough to do anything right. Such teachers eventually experience low self-efficacy (Eggen & Kauchak, 2008).

Reviewing the relevant studies conducted to investigate this phenomenon, the researchers found a vast number of studies throughout the world. However, the number of studies in Iran is not considerable. Some studies tried to investigate the relationship between burnout and the other phenomena in teaching including efficacy, creativity, reflective teaching, critical thinking, etc. Other studies have been conducted in Iran regarding the different factors causing burnout in teachers including background, individual attributes, and organizational factors. However, a few studies have focused on the level of burnout among teachers of English with respect to their gender and its possible effect on their teaching performance. So, it is clearly necessary to conduct more studies to investigate the nature of burnout in Iran context and its possible effects on teachers' performance in L2 context. The present study was intended to investigate the effect of burnout on the teaching performance of male and female EFL teachers in an L2 context. The purpose of the study was also to examine whether there was a difference in the level of burnout of EFL teachers with respect to their gender.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does burnout influence the teaching performance of EFL male teachers in Iran?
2. Does burnout influence the teaching performance of EFL female teachers in Iran?
3. Is there any significant difference between EFL male and female teachers with respect to level of burnout?

## Methodology

### Design of the Study

The current study was an ex-post facto research study and the paradigm was a quantitative one. The reason why this research design was selected was that it employed statistics which were considered scientific and because quantitative methods are objective, systematic, and present real outcomes. Quantitative methods involve precise measurement and produce reliable and replicable data which are generalizable to other contexts, and from a practical perspective, the research process is relatively quick.

### Participants

This study consisted of two groups of participants. Since the effect of burnout on the teachers' performance was to be analyzed, the first group of participants was selected from EFL teachers. They consisted of 15 females and 15 males with different ages and various years of experience. In order to see the performance of the above-mentioned teachers, the second group of participants was chosen to complete questionnaires about their teachers' performance. This group consisted of 150 EFL learners (students of the above-mentioned teachers). They were both males and females whose age varied from 14 to 50. They were from different educational levels and their language proficiency varied from elementary to advanced level.

### Instrumentation

To measure the participants' level of burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (Maslach & Jackson 1986), was used. In the inventory, there are 22 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging between never and every day. This inventory measures the three different dimensions of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson (1981) examined the reliability of MBI with the use of alpha Cronbach alpha and the following results were gained: emotional exhaustion ( $r = 0.90$ ), depersonalization ( $r = 0.79$ ), and reduced personal accomplishment ( $r = 0.71$ ). Iwanicki (1983) also reported Cronbach alpha estimates of 0.90 for EE, 0.76 for DP, and 0.76 for PA. In this study the reliability coefficients were found to be 0.84 for EE, 0.79 for DP, and 0.75 for PA.

The Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire by Moafian and Pishgaman (2009) was applied to get information from the second group of participants. The researcher employed this questionnaire to evaluate language teachers' performance and success in language teaching. The questionnaire includes 47 items ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The results of reliability analysis showed that the total reliability of the questionnaire was very high (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94). The results of factor analysis indicated that the questionnaire measured 12 constructs: teaching accountability, interpersonal relationships, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). The total reliability of the questionnaire in this study was 0.92, as estimated via Cronbach's alpha, too.

### Procedure

The study was conducted in several private institutes such as Shegerf, Omide Javan, Bartar, Ranginkaman and Afagh in Isfahan. The researchers selected them because of their feasibility and credibility criteria. The teachers were asked to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey. At the same time, the Characteristics of the Successful EFL Teachers' Questionnaire was given to the teachers' students. The questionnaires were filled at

home by them and were delivered back to the researchers then. The researchers explained the aim of completing the questionnaire because she wanted to receive the reliable evaluation by the learners, and also researchers assured the learners that their views would be confidential; moreover, teachers' and students' questionnaires were coded numerically and participants were asked not to write a name on them. In analyzing the results of this study data were subjected to SPSS. The statistical tests used in order to answer research questions were Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and independent-samples *t* test.

## Results and Discussion

### Results for the First Research Question

The first research question of the study asked "To what extent does burnout influence the teaching performance of EFL male teachers in Iran?" Since teacher burnout was considered to be a composite variable (consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement), the relationship between this composite variable and teaching performance was investigated through Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses. The results of this analysis are shown in the tables below.

**Table 1.** Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationship between Burnout (EE, DP, RPA) and TP for Male Teachers

	TP	EE	DP	RPA
Pearson Correlation TP	1.00	-.26	-.008	.01
<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed) EE	-.26	1.00	.64	-.71
<i>N</i> DP	-.008	.64	1.00	-.75
RPA	.01	-.71	-.75	1.00

Abbreviations: Teacher Performance (TP), Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Reduced Personal Achievement (RPA)

The relationship between Teaching Performance (TP) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE) was a weak negative one ( $r = -.26$ ). Based on Pallant (2010), a relationship is weak if it falls between 0 and .30, moderate if ranges from .30 to .50, and strong if it is larger than .50. The same type of relationship held true for teaching performance and Depersonalization (DP) since  $r$  equaled  $-.008$ . Finally, the relationship between teaching performance and personal accomplishment was a very weak positive one ( $r = .01$ ). Since the relationships between burnout components and teaching performance were weak, it is highly unlikely that these components could account for and predict teaching performance. To make sure such a proposition holds true, one need to examine the multiple regression analyses.

**Table 2.** Model Summary for Multiple Regression for Male Teachers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	.37	.14	-.22	31.32

In Table 2, the value given under the R Square column shows how much of the variance in teaching performance is explained by teacher burnout. The value here is .14. This means that teacher burnout explained only 14 percent of the variance in teacher performance scores. To examine the statistical significance of this result, Table 3 should be consulted.

**Table 3.** Statistical Significance of the Multiple Regression Results for Male Teachers

	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	1124.75	3	374.91	.38	.76
Residual	6870.62	7	981.51		
Total	7995.37	10			

In Table 3, *Sig.* equalled .76, which was greater than the alpha level ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the model did not reach a statistical significance. In other words, teacher burnout (as a composite variable) could not significantly predict TP. Now it is high time we looked at the Table 4 to see which of the components of burnout contributed more to the prediction of teaching performance.

**Table 4.** Predictive Power of Burnout Components for Teaching Performance of Male Teachers

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>Sig.</i>	Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		Collinearity Statistics		
	B	<i>Std. Error</i>	Beta	<i>T</i>		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance VIF	
EE	-3.44	3.22	-.55	-1.06	.32	-11.05	4.17	-.26	-.37	-.37	.45	2.18
DP	1.56	5.93	.14	.26	.80	-12.46	15.59	-.08	.09	.09	.40	2.47
RPA	-1.01	2.25	-.27	-.45	.66	-6.34	4.34	.01	-.16	-.16	.33	2.95

To compare the predictive power of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA), the values under the column standardized coefficients should be checked. Looking down this column, one could notice that the largest value, irrespective of any negative marks, was the one for emotional exhaustion (EE = -.55). Emotional exhaustion thus made the strongest unique contribution to explaining teaching performance. The relevant *Beta* value for reduced personal accomplishment was the second highest value out there (RPA = -.27), indicating that it made less of a contribution. Depersonalization had the least predictive value so far as teaching performance was concerned (DP = .14).

For each of these variables, the value under the column marked *Sig.* must be checked. This shows whether this variable was making a statistically significant unique contribution to the equation or not. None of the components of teacher burnout had a *Sig.* value less than the significance level (.05); it could thus be concluded that among emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, none could significantly predict teaching performance.

### Results for the Second Research Question

The second research question of the study asked “Does burnout influence the teaching performance of EFL female teachers in Iran?” Multiple regression analysis was used again to see whether different components of burnout could account for female teachers’ teaching performance or not. Table 5 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients for the relationship between teaching performance of female teachers and their burnout components.

**Table 5.** Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationship between Burnout (EE, DP, RPA) and TP for Female Teachers

		TP	EE	DP	RPA
Pearson Correlation	TP	1.00	.33	-.06	.02
Sig. (2-tailed)	EE	.33	1.00	.19	-.36
<i>N</i>	DP	-.06	.19	1.00	-.22
	RPA	.02	-.36	-.22	1.00

The relationship between TP and EE was a positive moderate one ( $r = .33$ ). However, TP was negatively correlated with DP, and the relationship was very weak ( $r = -.06$ ). The relationship between TP and RPA was also very weak, but positive ( $r = .02$ ). As it was the case with male teachers, it is highly unlikely that burnout components could account for and predict teaching performance. However, to make sure such an assumption is true, one needs to look at the multiple regression results.

**Table 6.** Model Summary for Multiple Regression for Female Teachers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.38	.15	-.06	24.76

The value given under the R Square column was .15. This means that variance in teacher burnout account for only 15 percent of the variance in teacher performance scores. Table 7 examines the statistical significance of this result.

**Table 7.** Statistical Significance of the Multiple Regression Results for Female Teachers

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	1298.35	3	432.78	.70	.56
Residual	7362.08	12	613.50		
Total	8660.44	15			

The *Sig.* value in Table 7 was .56, which was greater than the level of significance ( $p > 0.05$ ). This would mean that teacher burnout (as a composite variable) could not significantly predict teaching performance. A quick look at the Table 8 shows which of the components of burnout contributed more to the prediction of teaching performance.

**Table 8.** Predictive Power of Burnout Components for Teaching Performance of Female Teachers

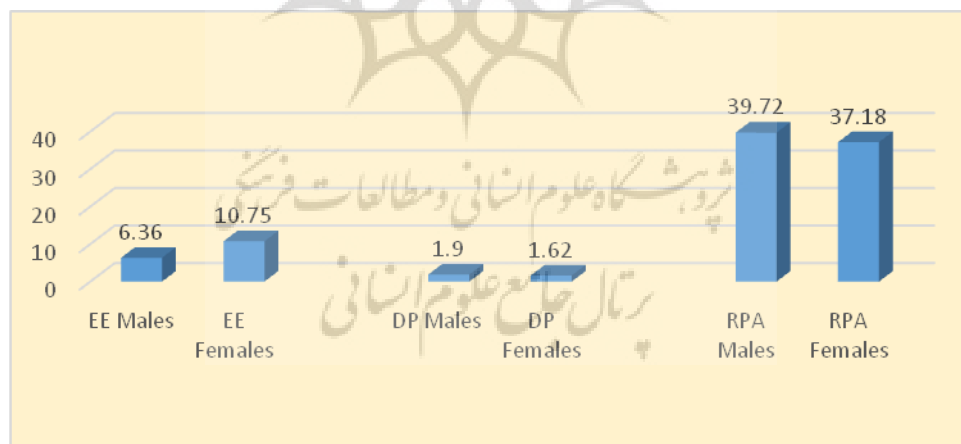
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>Sig.</i>	Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	<i>T</i>		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part Tolerance	VIF	
EE	1.39	.97	.41	1.43	.17	-.72	3.51	.33	.38	.38	.85	1.17
DP	-1.22	3.06	-.11	-.39	.69	-7.91	5.46	-.06	-.11	-.10	.93	1.07
RPA	.63	1.24	.14	.51	.61	-2.06	3.35	.02	.14	.13	.84	1.18



								Lower	Upper
Emotional Exhaustion	2.01	.16	1.80	25	.08	4.38	2.43	-.62	9.39
Depersonalization	.03	.86	-.30	25	.76	-.28	.92	-2.18	1.61
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	1.03	.31	-1.00	25	.32	-2.53	2.53	-7.75	2.67

According to Table 10., there was not a statistically significant difference in emotional exhaustion scores for males ( $M = 6.36$ ,  $SD = 4.54$ ) and females ( $M = 10.75$ ,  $SD = 7.10$ ),  $t(25) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .08$  (two-tailed). This is so because the  $p$  value is greater than the specified level of significance (i.e. .05).

The same result was obtained for depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. That is, there was not a statistically significant difference in depersonalization scores for males ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 2.62$ ) and females ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ),  $t(25) = -.30$ ,  $p = .76$  (two-tailed). In the same vein, there was not a statistically significant difference in reduced personal accomplishment scores for males ( $M = 39.72$ ,  $SD = 7.56$ ) and females ( $M = 37.18$ ,  $SD = 5.61$ ),  $t(25) = -1.00$ ,  $p = .32$  (two-tailed). The results of the  $t$  test analyses are also graphically shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Mean scores of Female and Male Teachers for EE, DP, and RPA

As it could be noticed in Figure 1, the man scores of female and male teachers were not substantially different for emotional exhaustion. This was also the case for their mean scores for depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

The results of this study are in line with Demerouti, Bakker, and Leiter (2014), who demonstrated a low association between the burnout and the job performance. The results of the current study also lend support to the study by Psychol Rep (1991) which stated that there was no



significant association between the measure of burnout and the actual performance.

Contrary to the results of the current study, some other researchers reached to the opposite results investigating the relationship between burnout and the job performance. In a study on the relationship between job burnout and work performance in a sample of Iranian mental health staff by Ashtari, Farhady, and Khodae (2009), it was evident that there was a significant correlation between job burnout and inability for job performance. In another study of the relationship between burnout and the self-rated and supervisor-rated job performance in the nurses, Parker and Kulik (1995) found that higher burnout levels were significantly associated with poorer self-rated and supervisor-rated job performance. A cross-sectional study by Weinreich (2014) also resulted in the opposite conclusion that the teachers with higher levels of burnout experienced more workload, were less satisfied with their jobs, and their work performance was poorer compared to the work of engaged teachers.

The results of analyzing the third research question revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers with respect to three dimensions of burnout, which in turn supports Soltanabadi Farshi and Omranzadeh's (2014) findings that showed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers as for their burnout level. These finding also supported those of other studies that revealed no significant gender differences in main levels of stress and burnout (Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2002; Hastings & Bham, 2003).

There are some contrary reports to the findings of the current study indicating a difference between the levels of burnout with respect to the gender. Lippel (1999) argued that women are more under stress since their work is considered to be banal, unimportant, or not unusual which was parallel to the finding of the study conducted by Van Dick and Wagner (2001). The present study also shows the opposite view to Greenglass, Pantony, and Burke (1988) who reported a higher rate of burnout among women than men.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This research focused on burnout and the performance of EFL teachers to illuminate whether there was a relationship between the teaching performance and the burnout dimensions. Based on the data presented above, there were some weak and somehow moderate correlations between the variables, which were not statistically significant. It was evident from the results that burnout seemed to predict a small amount of variance of the teaching performance of both male and female teachers. This can imply that contrary to the common belief that burnout is a main predictor of job performance; a different result can be seen in EFL teachers in Iran. A probable justification for these findings can be the fact that teachers use adaptive strategies that help them to maintain their performance at acceptable levels despite experiencing burnout. They use some coping strategies to deal with their burnout symptoms in order to achieve satisfactory job performance. The teachers try to eliminate the negative involvement of burnout in their performance in the classroom receiving the positive feedback from their students.

The results of the present study carry significant implications for EFL teachers that can recognize their burnout level and use the coping strategies to deal with in order to improve their teaching performance. Thus, it can be said that the present study modestly contributed to the teacher burnout studies by the qualitative investigation of the effect of teacher burnout on the teaching performance since this kind of study has generally been neglected in the literature. The results can also make the administrators of the language institutes investigate the factors that influence the level of burnout in their teachers to provide a less stressful work environment and turn their schools institutes into more effective ones.

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**Appendix A**

<b>Maslach Burnout Educators Survey</b>						
<b>How Often:</b> 0	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

**How Often  
0-6****STATEMENT**

1.....	I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2.....	I feel used up at the end of the work day.
3.....	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4.....	I can easily understand how my recipients feel about things.
5.....	I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6.....	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7.....	I deal very effectively with the problem of my students.
8.....	I feel burned out from my work.
9.....	I feel I am positively influencing other people's live through my work.
10.....	I have become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11.....	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12.....	I feel very energetic.
13.....	I feel frustrated by my job.
14.....	I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15.....	I don't really care what happens to some students.
16.....	Working with students directly puts too much stress on me.
17.....	I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18.....	I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19.....	I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20.....	I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21.....	In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22.....	I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

**Appendix B****Characteristics of successful EFL teachers' questionnaire designed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009)**

Completely disagree (CD), disagree (D), to some extent agree (SEA), agree (A), and completely agree (CA)

My teacher....

01 Has a good knowledge of subject matter.

02 Has up to date information.

03 Is friendly towards learners.

04 Respects learners as individuals.

05 Understands learners well.

06 Has the ability to manage the classroom well.

- 07 Is good-tempered.
- 08 Is patient.
- 09 Has a sense of humor.
- 10 Is aware of new teaching methods and strategies.
- 11 Uses extra instructional materials such as tapes, movies, etc.
- 12 Enjoys teaching.
- 13 Is interested in the subject matter he/she is teaching.
- 14 Has self-confidence.
- 15 Has the ability to stimulate learners in learning.
- 16 Knows his/her learners well (talents, abilities, weaknesses).
- 17 Uses good learners to help weaker ones.
- 18 Gives sufficient number of assignments.
- 19 Holds adequate number of tests.
- 20 Is prompt in returning test results.
- 21 Is well-prepared for the class.
- 22 Is careful and precise in answering learners' questions
- 23 Emphasizes important materials and points.
- 24 Is a dynamic and energetic person.
- 25 Pays attention to all students.
- 26 Is willing to help learners in and out of the classroom.
- 27 Encourages learners in different ways.
- 28 Speaks clearly with a correct pronunciation.
- 29 Has clean and tidy appearance.
- 30 Presents materials at learners' level of comprehension.
- 31 Enters the classroom on time.
- 32 Leaves the classroom on time.
- 33 Respects all ideas.
- 34 Accepts constructive criticisms.
- 35 Has the subject matter well-organized according to the number of sessions and hours
- 36 Is impartial in grading.
- 37 Has creativity in teaching.
- 38 Involves all students in learning.
- 39 Creates equal opportunities for learners' participation in the classroom.
- 40 Creates opportunities for discussion and asking questions.
- 41 Avoids discriminating against learners.
- 42 Attends to the learners problems in learning.
- 43 Divides class time appropriately for the different language skills according to the purposes of the course.
- 44 Avoids making fun of the learners.
- 45 Avoids being too strict.
- 46 Creates self-confidence in learners.
- 47 Emphasizes the presence of students in the classroom.