

## Comparing Language Teachers' Immunity in Iranian Private and State Schools

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Research Paper

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**Abstract:** Language teacher immunity (LTI) as a defensive system in reflex to high-threatening disturbances profoundly impacts language teachers' professional demeanor. Contextual factors could influence LTI development either towards adaptive/productive or maladaptive forms. Although teachers' immunity in Iranian schools has been probed in a number of studies, the two different contexts of private and state schools have not so far been considered in the investigations despite their contextual distinctiveness. This study is an attempt to probe teachers' immunity in these two contexts to identify the dominant type of LTI and the disturbances that might trigger them. Through a mixed-methods approach, the LTI questionnaire was answered by a total 62 state and private secondary high school teachers; moreover, ten teachers were interviewed. The results indicated that the dominant LTI among state school teachers was adaptive while among private school teachers was maladaptive. Furthermore, some common disturbing factors in both contexts were identified, such as paltry payment for a highly demanding job and demotivated students. In contrast, some others were exclusively pertained to one context or were pointed in one context more severely and frequently. For example, the deficit in educational supplementary aids and inappropriate teaching materials caused more disturbance in the state schools, while short-time occupational contracts and job insecurity were more pressuring in private schools. The results of this study might help macro policymakers, managers of educational systems, and other EFL teaching stakeholders to increase the quality of language pedagogy by eliminating disturbing factors that might prevent teachers from constructing adaptive immunity.

**Keywords:** Adaptive Language Teacher Immunity, Language Teacher Immunity, Maladaptive Language Teacher Immunity, Private Schools, State Schools EFL

### Introduction

Foreign/second language learning can be conceptualized as a triangle consisting of language learners, language teachers, and theories of language/language learning. A brief search indicates that research on language teachers has received less attention than the other two components, albeit language teachers' centrality in maintaining the dynamics of language classrooms as an ecology (i.e., a classroom's setting as an instructional society) (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Hiver and Dörnyei (2017), by adopting a psychological perspective, attempted to investigate language teachers' behavior in relation to classrooms' realities. They identified an adaptive and developed protective system in language teachers in reacting to the high-pressuring threats in educational contexts. This phenomenon was likened to the biological immunity which an organism acquires and develops to protect itself against the threatening factors in its environment (Hiver, 2015; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Hiver (2017) introduced this phenomenon as language teacher immunity (LTI). He used the metaphor of "a double-edged sword" to indicate the two directions in which LTI could develop; adaptive and maladaptive.

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The adaptive form of LTI leads a teacher to thrive in the occupation. A teacher by experiencing threats creates an inventory of possible reactions to similar conditions in the future in a way to protect her/his psychological well-being while maintaining a high level of self-efficacy, emotional regulation, teacher resilience, and openness to alteration (Noughabi et al., 2020). On the opposite side of adaptive LTI, the maladaptive form stands, where experiencing unpleasant events in a teaching context steers a teacher to act conservatively to avoid any distasteful consequence (Hiver, 2017). This may result in teachers' burnout and attrition in their careers (Rahimpour et al., 2020).

Attempting to comprehend more about LTI, Hiver (2017) incorporated seven subconstructs of instructors to LTI: "attitudes to teaching, coping, openness to change, burnout, classroom affectivity, teaching self-efficacy, and resilience" (p. 673). All subcomponents of LTI may indicate strong sensitivity to the different contexts' attributes as explained in the following. In an investigation, the first subconstruct of LTI (attitude towards teaching) has been indicated to alter in formal and informal EFL teaching contexts (Ghaemi & Mohammadbeigi, 2013). Bahrami and Moradkhani (2019) compared language teachers' burnout concept in public schools and private EFL institutes. They observed discrepancies in context could alter EFL teachers' burnout. Self-efficacy as the other subconstruct of LTI is dominantly influenced by contextual factors (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017). Resilience as the seventh subconstruct of LTI fluctuates in reacting to contexts' diversity (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Suttles (2024) indicated that teachers' coping as a product of their coping strategies is not static but rather adapted to the changing demands of the teaching context. Furthermore, teachers' classroom affectivity is indicated to be alterable by contextual macro factors (Fried et al., 2015). Fullen's Change Theory (2006) stated the importance of contextual factors such as leadership, professional development, and school culture in influencing instructors' openness to change.

Since LTI was introduced to the SLA field, many studies have tried to discover the dominant types of LTI in different contexts such as schools, universities, and private language institutes (e.g., Haseli Songhori, et al., 2018; Mousavi et al., 2024; Pourbahram & Sadeghi, 2020). Schools' teachers' immunity and private language institutes' teachers' immunity in Iran were investigated and compared as well (Pourbahram & Sadeghi, 2020). One salient difference, possibly influencing immunity in language teachers and neglected in previous studies, is the discrepancy between private schools and state schools. Many factors such as expectations of language teachers, the process of their recruitment, and job-related duties are different in private and state schools affecting the LTI. This study is an attempt to compare LTI in private and state school teachers to identify their dominant immunity types. Furthermore, the study aims at exploring the triggering factors in this regard.

The results of this study might provide some awareness about the dominant type of LTI and the activating factors, which may lead to the maladaptive form of LTI in teachers of different types of schools and might help macro policymakers and managers of educational systems to increase the quality of language teaching by eliminating the disturbing factors in each context and leading teachers to construct adaptive immunity.

## Literature Review

### Language Teacher Immunity

Trying to reveal the reasons why some teachers prosper and thrive in their careers while some others abandon the profession after a short time of futile effort, Hiver (2015) conducted a survey to scrutinize some Korean language teachers' behavior closely. He observed degrees of insecurity and vulnerability in teachers, who experienced disturbances in the teaching context. The disturbances ranged widely from receiving discouraging evaluations to being reprimanded or dismissed by the managing department. Reflecting on some disturbing situations led teachers to construct a protective mechanism to cope with similar situations in the future with less psychological damage to their well-being. With regard to this protective mechanism or as it was labeled by Hiver

(2015) as “teacher immunity” (TI) (p.225), teachers are classified into four categories: immune-compromised (i.e., having not developed any coherent formal immunity mostly in novice teachers), partially immunized (i.e., developing half-way features of immunity), productive/adaptive immunized and maladaptive immunized. Adaptive, also addressed as productive form by Hiver (2015, 2017) and maladaptive types are the main kinds of immunity and have received the most investigative attention. Since the immune-compromised and partially immunized types of LTI are not stable positions and the instructors who continue their practice probably transit to the main types of LTI, the focus of this study is on the main types.

Maladaptive immunity functions like chemotherapy; while destroying cancer cells it destroys healthy cells as well (Rahmati et.al., 2017). In a conservative manner, a language teacher who develops maladaptive immunity presents an apathetic practice by teaching in a traditional framework of rules and avoids any innovations (Hiver, 2015, 2017; Hiver & Dornyei, 2017). Productive immunity, as the counter form of maladaptive LTI, assists teachers to thrive by helping them achieve equilibrium in disturbing situations (Hiver, 2017).

Researchers have so far identified four emerging phases of LTI: “triggering, linking, realignment, and stabilization” (Hiver & Dornyei, 2017, p.214). According to Hiver (2017), high-threatening events may eventuate in the triggering stage. If those events do not trigger it, then, it is highly probable that a teacher ends up with exhaustion, severe cynicism, and finally burnout. Being exposed to triggering elements, language instructors attempt to establish a coping strategy repertoire to favor themselves in unpleasant situations to act protectively. This phase is known as the linking phase. The realignment stage is the third phase, in which a teacher reaction’s mechanism works productively along the disturbing situations reflexing frequent prior exposure to adversaries. ultimately, through the fourth stage, the stabilization emerges and instructors grow as a result of the new repertoire of reaction to disturbances. Teachers nurture this new system as a construct of their professional identities.

### **The Effective Context on Language Teacher Immunity**

Several scholars have tried to identify possible affiliations between LTI and various facets of personality traits. Dobakhti et.al (2002) recognized the impact of the effective factors of EFL instructors on LTI. They observed that “emotional intelligence along with neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness personality traits significantly predict the instructors' teacher immunity” (p.81). In another study, Azari Noughabi et.al (2020) recognized EFL teachers’ autonomy, emotion, and engagement as remarkable predictors of their LTI. Yet in another study, Wang et.al (2022) investigated 1135 EFL language teachers in four Asian countries. The outcomes of the study illustrated that Asian EFL instructors’ psychological well-being and occupational engagement positively impacted their immunity and well-being was a better factor to predict the target group’s immunity.

Haseli Songhori et.al (2018) studied 230 Iranian instructors and found that the dominant form of Iranian EFL school teachers’ immunity was the maladaptive form. Furthermore, the study identified several disturbing factors affiliated with the development of that type of immunity in the participants including demotivated learners, low financial payment in teaching occupation, lack of proper social respect for teachers’ job status, and lack of supportive principles in educational systems. In a comparative investigation, Pourbahram and Sadeghi (2020) studied the motivation and LTI of teachers in public schools versus private language institutes in Iran. The study revealed that in public schools the most disturbing issues which may trigger LTI are disruptive and demotivating behaviors of students, lack of proper teaching materials, and lack of teacher confidence. The study results listed the most problematic issues in private institutes: teaching at a variety of levels and grades, severe controls by supervisors and institutes’ managers, lack of self-confidence, and low income.

There are two types of public schools in Iran: state schools and private schools, which have different contextual attributes. Most teachers in state schools are graduates from universities related to teacher training or/and are qualified through some compulsory pre-service and in-service teaching

courses; moreover, they are usually hired on long-term formal contracts which provide them with some degrees of job security. State schools' language teaching materials and duration of teaching time per week are predetermined by the ministry of education officials. In comparison with private schools, the payment of state schools is relatively higher and encompasses some other extra benefits that are mostly absent in private schools. On the other hand, in private schools, the process of instructors' recruitment is generally supervised by school principals; the qualification of teachers are judged subjectively, teachers' contracts are short-term (i.e., mostly for nine months), and the schools usually provide students with the formal curriculum for language education as well as extra language instructions and materials. Although the private language institutes and public schools in LTI studies in Iran were considered as different contexts and were assessed separately, the private schools and state schools were not ever segregated, albeit the obvious contextual discrepancies in them, which might trigger LTI in different directions and forms. The current study strives to compare private versus state school teachers' LTI and determine the dominant type of LTI in them. Furthermore, the researchers made an attempt to identify the triggering disturbances of LTI in these two contexts. The questions of this study were formulated as:

**Research Question One:** What is the dominant immunity type of language teachers in state schools in Iran?

**Research Question Two:** What is the dominant immunity type of language teachers in private schools in Iran?

**Research Question Three:** What are the triggering disturbances of LTI in state schools in Iran?

**Research Question Four:** What are the triggering disturbances of LTI in private schools in Iran?

## Methodology

### Design of the Study

The study employed an exploratory mixed-methods design. Data collection involved two phases: administering a questionnaire and interviewing a sub-group of participants. In the first part, the entire participants were required to answer the L2 instructors' immunity scale, created by Hiver (2017). The questionnaire was translated into the first language of teachers (Persian) to obviate any language ambiguities. The translated questionnaire was also back-translated by another translator to evaluate the accuracy of the translation. Then it was distributed through Google Forms. To analyze the gathered data by questionnaire, SPSS software was deployed. Furthermore, to analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaire, statistical clustering was carried out to classify the participants into two groups of teachers with productive or maladaptive LTI. After clustering the composition of teachers along with their immunity type (i.e., whether they are positioned in the group of teachers with adaptive LTI or maladaptive LTI) and the type of school that they practice in, was probed. It was done in order to determine the dominant type of teacher in state and private schools.

In the second phase of data collection, semi-structured interviews with 5 EFL teachers of state high schools and 5 EFL teachers of private high schools were conducted to gain insight into the factors that might cause professional pressure. The interviews, which lasted for 40 to 50 minutes, were conducted in the first language of the teachers to let them state their answers without any impediment. The interviews were recorded by a recording cellphone application to be analyzed later. To analyze the collected qualitative data from interviews in a more systematic way MAXQDA software version 2020 was utilized. The scripts of the recorded interviews were extracted from audio files of the interviews. To fulfill the analysis the analyzer and the other assistant with sufficient experience and knowledge in teaching language as a foreign language (TEFL) field but distance enough to offer an outsider perspective cooperated. An adjusted form of thematic analysis, which is a systematic approach to qualitative data to identifying, organizing, and offering awareness into patterns

of constructions (i.e., themes) (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was applied to answer questions 3 and 4 of the study.

The thematic analysis method is conducted through six steps; 1) holistic familiarizing with the gathered data, 2) generating rudimentary codes by considering the purposes of the analysis, 3) searching for themes in the emerged codes 4) reevaluating potential patterns, 5) presenting definitions and labeling the constructs, and 6) revealing the report to elaborate on the ultimate created themes. In the first phase, familiarizing with the data transpired. The analyzers immersed themselves in the data by reading through the entire scripts, discussing and debating about the overall perceptions in the texts, and sharing their general perception of the pressuring factors on teachers. The initial identified codes in the interviews were extracted based on Hiver's (2015, 2017) and Hiver and Dörnyei's (2017). However, several more codes were identified and added to the codes list that was not mentioned in the initial code list. The initial agreement rate on the recognized codes by the two coders was 90.7 %. The coders debated about the items they differed on and accepted or rejected some until they obtained a perfect agreement on all items resulting in 84 recognized codes that were labeled into 18 types of codes. Then the codes were classified into four general themes, labeled as; 1) student-related elements, 2) teacher-related elements, 3) educational system-related factors, and 4) environment-related factors. The next phase was reviewing the themes. The analyzers return to the data set and compare the constructed themes against it to ensure that the themes and codes are precise and accurate representations of the data. During this step, the analyzers debated, detached, coalesced, discarded, and created new code and theme arrangements to optimize themes' accuracy in representing the data. Finally, the ultimate result of the analysis was presented visually. Further debate over the results is presented in the following chapters.

## Participants

Participants, who consisted of 31 state secondary high-school EFL teachers and 31 private secondary high-school EFL teachers in Tehran, districts 4, 8, 1, and 7, were recruited through availability sampling. It should be mentioned that although the Google Form link of the questionnaire for answering was shared with 113 instructors, only 65 of them answered it and three of the participants did not fully answer the questionnaire, and their answers were deleted. The participants were from both genders and possessed background educational degrees either BS/BA or MA/BA. Participants' demographic information is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participants' Demographics (N= 62)*

Demographic characteristic	n	Percentages
Sex		
Male	22	35.49%
Female	40	64.51%
Experience of teaching		
1to5 years	13	20.97%
6 to10 years	21	33.87%
11 to 15 years	23	37.10%
More than 15 years	5	8.06%
Level of background education		
BS/BA	51	82.26%
MS/MA	11	17.74%

## Instruments

### *Second Language Teachers' Immunity Scale*

The first applied instrument in the process of data collection was the L2 teachers' immunity scale, created by Hiver (2017). The questionnaire encompassed 8 parts. The first part was to collect demographic information of the participants, including gender, the level and major of the background education, and the duration of experience in teaching EFL. The other seven parts of the questionnaire were 5-point Likert-type queries encompassing a spectrum of options from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", which were allocated to investigation of the subconstructs of LTI, which are in order; 1) teachers' self-efficacy (7items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .82$ ), 2) burnout of language instructors (5items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .80$ ), 3) resilience of language teachers (5items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .82$ ), 4) teachers' attitude toward teaching(5items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .85$ ), 5) openness to change in practice (6items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .74$ ), 6) classroom affectivity (6items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .81$ ), and 7) coping mechanisms in language instructors (5 items, with the reliability of  $\alpha = .78$ ).

### *Semi-structured Interview Protocol*

The second instrument which was used to gather qualitative data was an interview protocol. The initial segment of the interview protocol determined the concise and unified explanation of the interview's topic and purpose which was presented to the participants prior to the questioning. The interviewees also were ensured the confidentiality of the gathered data. The second part of this instrument encompassed questions that inquired about the factors that cause professional pressure on teachers and might trigger the LTI mechanism.

## Results

In order to probe the reliability of the scale administered to the target participants, Cronbach's alpha value was calculated for the subcomponents of LTI, as well as for the entire questionnaire, the numbers of the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

### *Reliability Analysis*

Subconstructs of LTI	Cronbach's alpha / $\alpha$ value
Teaching self-efficacy	.502
Coping	.688
Resilience	.625
Attitudes to teaching	.600
Openness to change	.783
Burnout	.641
Classroom affectivity	.650
Total	.611

According to Table 2, Cronbach's alpha value of one of the subconstructs (openness to change) is over 0.7 which can be considered acceptable. The values for five subconstructs including; coping, resilience, attitudes to teaching, burnout, and classroom affectivity were over 0.6 which can also be considered acceptable. Cronbach's alpha value for one subconstruct (teaching self-efficacy) with seven items in the questionnaire was below 0.6, which is a relatively low level of reliability. To solve the problem, one item (question 3), which was the origin of the reduction of alpha value, was eliminated. Then the amount of alpha value increased to 0.613. The total Cronbach's alpha value was

found to be 0.611 which is located in the acceptability scope. Therefore, as a whole, we can consider the questionnaire reliable for the proposed population of teachers in this study.

The first and second questions of the current study concern the dominant type of LTI in public and private high school teachers. To discover the answers to these questions, data cluster analysis was conducted. The proper kind of cluster analysis in this case was a two-step cluster analysis. In this analysis, five subconstructs of LTI, that are; attitudes to teaching, openness to change, classroom affectivity, teaching self-efficacy, and resilience, which could act as the predicting roles in LTI (Hiver, 2017), were specified as clustering variables. Two other subconstructs of LTI including coping and burnout were considered as criterion variables.

As Table 3 shows, the cluster analysis of the data results in two clusters with the most possible homogeneity of participants in each cluster and the highest heterogeneity between the two clusters. 25 teachers which are 40.32% of participants from cluster 1 and 37 teachers which are 59.68% of participants from Cluster 2. The means and standard deviations of the cluster variables for both clusters are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Determined Clusters*

	Cluster 1 (n =25) 40.32%		Cluster 2 (n =37) 59.68%	
	M	SD	M	SD
Openness to change	2.97	1.31	2.82	1.70
Classroom affectivity	4.07	.89	3.65	1.73
Teaching self-efficacy	4.18	.66	4.00	.50
Resilience	3.61	1.94	3.13	1.17
Attitude to teaching	4.52	.63	4.18	.59

In the current research, the two subcomponents; coping and burnout, that were not encompassed in the determining cluster types, are perceived as the criterion variables. They serve the purpose of confirming the validity of divergence between the two clusters. In order to probe the clusters' disparity power regarding the criterion variables a T-test was applied. This test could be used to illustrate significant divergence between teachers in two clusters in relation to their burnout and coping. In the following Table 4 presents that as well as the means and the criterion variables' standard deviations.

**Table 4**

*T-test Results Comparing Burnout and Coping of Two Clusters*

Item	Cluster	N	Mean	SD	t	p	$\eta^2$	df
Coping	Cluster 1	25	4.18	.73	1.88	.043	.060	60
	Cluster 2	37	2.84	1.10				
Burnout	Cluster 1	25	1.95	1.69	-1.92	.020	.062	60
	Cluster 2	37	3.03	1.56				

According to Table 4, in cluster 1 the mean of coping (4.18) is higher than in cluster 2 (2.84). Moreover, the t-test result indicates that the calculated p (.043) in the case of coping is less than .05, which means this difference in the means of the two clusters is statistically significant. In the case of burnout of teachers in cluster 1, the mean is 1.95 which is lower than the burnout's mean in cluster 2 (3.03). As the t-test shows,  $p=.020 < .05$ , indicating a significant difference in means of teachers' burnout in the two clusters. Then, we could consider the two made clusters as an apt designation to discern teachers with high coping capability and low burnout rate (i.e., adaptive LTI) from teachers with low coping ability and high burnout rate (i.e., maladaptive LTI).

After clustering, the composition of participants in relation to other coordinates including gender, length of teaching time, the level of background education, and the type of high school in which they are teaching along with the determined clusters could be assessed. The summary of the composition is represented in Table 5.

**Table 5***Composition of the Two Clusters*

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
	N (%)	N (%)
Sex		
Male	9 (36%)	13 (35.14%)
Female	16 (64%)	24 (64.86%)
Experience of teaching		
1 to 5 years	4 (16%)	9 (24.32%)
6 to 10 years	7 (28%)	14 (37.84%)
11 to 15 years	10 (40%)	13 (35.13%)
More than 15 years	4 (16%)	1 (2.70%)
Level of background education		
BS/BA	19 (76%)	32 (86.49%)
MS/MS	6 (24%)	5 (13.51%)
Type of high school		
Teachers of state schools	14 (56%)	17 (45.95 %)
Teachers of private schools	11 (44%)	20 (54.05%)

According to Table 5, Cluster 1, which represents adaptive LTI, is an amalgam of 56% of state schools' teachers and 11% of teachers of private schools. Cluster 2, which represents maladaptive LTI, has a composition of 45.95 % state schools' teachers and 54.05% private schools' teachers. After awareness of the composition of the cluster, it is possible to detect the dominant type of LTI in each group of teachers. Table 6 represents the percentages of maladaptive and adaptive LTI in teachers' groups.

**Table 6***Composition of Teachers in Different School Types*

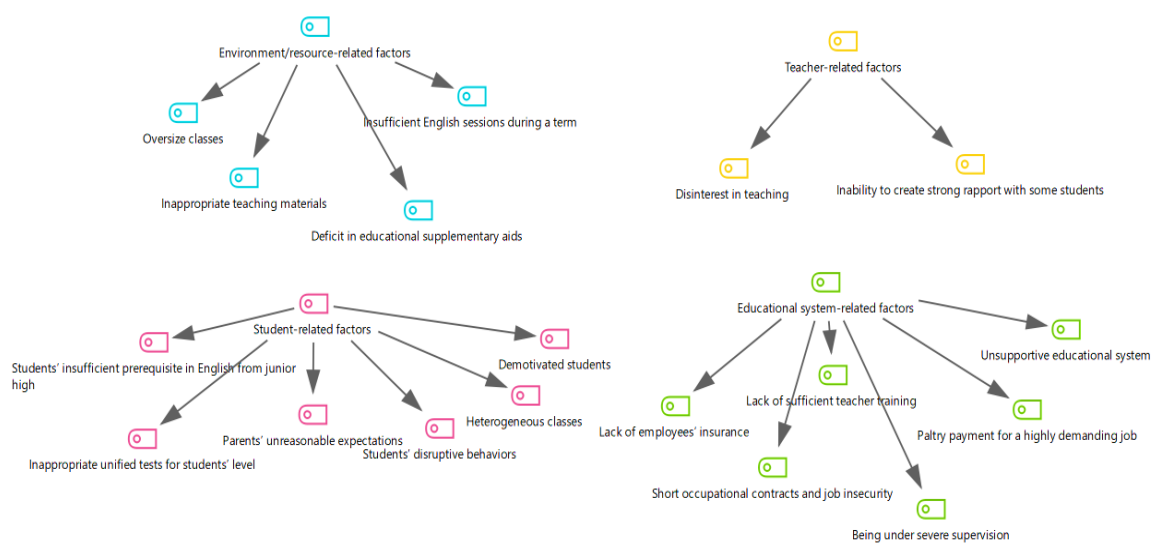
	Cluster1 (adaptive LTI)	Cluster2 (maladaptive LTI)	Sum
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Instructors of state schools	14 (45.16%)	17 (54.84%)	31 (100%)
Instructors of private schools	11 (35.48%)	20 (64.52%)	31 (100%)

According to Table 6, 45.16% of state schools' teachers possess adaptive LTI, while 54.84% of them have developed maladaptive LTI. So, the predominant type of LTI in teachers of state schools is adaptive. In private schools, 35.48% of teachers have developed adaptive LTI, which is less than the teachers in the same schools with maladaptive LTI (64.52%). Then, the dominant type of LTI in private schools is maladaptive.

To answer questions 3 and 4, the analysis of 10 teachers' interviews is presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Figure 1 represents the categories of codes into four themes. Figure 2 represents the codes' frequencies in the interviews as well as the severeness of their mentioning in the scripts.

Figure 1

The Disturbing Factors' Themes



According to Figure 1, 18 extracted subordinate codes from interviews could be categorized into four themes. Each theme is connected to its constructing codes by arrows in the illustration. In Figure 1, we can observe that the Student-related factors and the Educational system-related factors encompass more diverse disturbing codes. Although Figure 1 indicates the themes constructions, it does not inform us about the codes' frequency and severeness. To access this information codes' matrix is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Triggering Disturbances Resulting in LTI

Code System	Int 1	Int 2	Int 3	Int 4	Int 5	Int 6	int 7	Int 8	Int 9	Int 10	SUM
Environment/resource-related factors											0
Oversize classes			■			■			■	■	4
Inappropriate teaching materials			■		■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Insufficient English sessions during a term							■				3
Deficit in educational supplementary aids				■		■	■		■	■	6
Teacher-related factors											0
Disinterest in teaching				■							2
Inability to create strong rapport with some students	■							■			1
Educational system-related factors											0
Short occupational contracts and job insecurity		■	■	■	■				■		6
Lack of employees' insurance	■	■			■						3
Being under severe supervision					■						1
Lack of sufficient teacher training		■									1
Paltry payment for a highly demanding job	■		■		■	■		■	■	■	12
Unsupportive educational system	■			■	■			■			5
Student-related factors											0
Students' insufficient prerequisite in English from junior high		■	■			■	■			■	7
Inappropriate unified tests for students' level		■						■			4
Heterogeneous classes	■	■		■					■		4
Parents' unreasonable expectations					■			■			2
Demotivated students		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	9
Students' disruptive behaviors		■					■			■	4
Σ SUM	8	9	6	7	10	9	9	12	7	7	84

In Figure 2, columns 1 to 10 are presenting 10 corresponding interviewees. Interviewees 1 to 5 were private high school teachers and interviewees 6 to 10 were state high school teachers. The rows of the figure present the coded triggering disturbances that were mentioned in the interviews. 18 codes were

extracted which were mentioned 84 times altogether. In this figure, the themes and their subcomponent codes are segregated from other themes and codes by different color tags. According to the SUM column in Figure 2, the most frequently mentioned disturbing factors were paltry salary for a highly demanding work, inappropriate teaching materials, demotivated learners, and students' insufficient prerequisite in English from junior high school. Extracts 1- 4 are in order presenting translated examples of these mentioned disturbing points in the interviews.

*Extract 1: ...teaching my subject needs more preparation before the class, I don't suppose other subject teachers provide illustrations and games for teaching their students, at least not as much as I do .....I almost talk, teach, and check my students in every moment of my class, although there is no difference between my payment and other subjects' teachers' payment....the salaries hardly covers the expenses of the life.*

*Extract 2: The pace of introducing the language in the book is so slow and boring. Most of the students already learned a lot more from out-of-school English courses, they get bored in class if I only use the books, so I have to use extra lesson materials..... Books are not attractive to the students, they possess old pictures, accompanied by unnatural dialogue.*

*Extract 3: English for sure is not the favorite subject of many of students...they are not into learning English for its own sake. Many times I was asked why they (Students) should learn English.*

*Extract 4: .....I have to teach previous years' lessons on top of the present year's English book otherwise students are baffled and cannot follow new lessons.....*

Furthermore, paltry payment for a highly demanding work and inappropriate teaching materials were mentioned more severely than other disturbances. It could be observed that while some of the mentioned unpleasant factors were common among all the teachers regardless of their contexts, some exclusively existed in one context and were absent in the other or the severeness and frequencies of them changed along with the contexts. For instance, the lack of employee insurance was just mentioned by teachers of private schools (see Extract 5) and insufficient English sessions during a term were mentioned only by state school teachers (see Extract 6).

*Extract 5: I have been teaching in this private school for almost six years and the school still does not insure me ..... I get my insurance as a self-employed.*

*Extract 6: .... the secondary high school books are voluminous. To cover all the books aptly more class time is needed.... I used to hold extra classes to finish the book and practice some testing without being paid....*

It could be concluded from the points mentioned above that the different contexts of state and private schools could create different disturbances with different severeness for the EFL teachers, so it is not unexpected that the teachers of these contexts may develop different types of LTI.

### Discussion

This study set out to discover which type of LTI was dominant among private and state EFL secondary high school teachers and what disturbances might trigger LTI in them. The results of the analysis indicated that 45.16% of state schools' teachers possess adaptive LTI and 54.84% of them possess maladaptive LTI. Thereupon, the dominant type of LTI in participants of state schools is adaptive. This result contradicts those of a study by Haseli Songhori et. al (2018) on state school teachers. They traced the existence of maladaptive LTI in a majority of Iranian state school teachers who participated in their study. In private schools, 35.48% of teachers developed adaptive LTI, while the rest of them (64.52%) developed maladaptive LTI. Then, the dominant type of LTI in private schools is maladaptive. So, the context of teaching in private and state schools might be an effective factor in determining the direction in which a teacher may develop LTI.

Maladaptive immunity contributes to a higher rate of burnout in comparison with adaptive LTI (Hiver, 2017). A similar manifestation of coping and burnout rate was observed in private school

EFL teachers, who developed maladaptive immunity. Piechurska-Kuciel (2011) believed that burnout signifies a defective occupational and institutional environment; meanwhile, personal attributes contribute to the creation of the phenomenon. Then the high level of burnout in private school teachers, which was a determining factor in the creation of maladaptive LTI, might contribute to both the personality of the teachers as well as the setting of EFL teaching.

Maladaptive immunity could be associated with a low coping rate while adaptive LTI indicates a higher rate of coping (Hiver, 2017). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) delineated time scarcity as an effective factor that could impose emotional stress and workload on teachers and could frustrate them. It stands in line with the results of this study, which identified the time limitation of the EFL classes in state schools as one of the disturbing factors, playing a role in imposing negative immunity creation in teachers. In the case of private schools, providing learners with extra English class time seems to alleviate this pressure from EFL teachers.

Short occupational contracts and job insecurity were among the frequently mentioned disturbing factors as perceived by private school teachers. De Witte (2005) described a position of being between employment and unemployment as job insecurity. While sensing the threat of unemployment, employees are susceptible to reacting negatively to occupational situations (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Çetin and Çolak (2020) stated that job insecurity in EFL teachers might be associated with the increase in burnout in them. Then offering short occupational contracts in private schools might lead to a high rate of burnout and, as a consequence, maladaptive LTI.

As indicated in the results section of this study, although some disturbing factors alter along with the two different teaching contexts, there are some common disturbing elements in both kinds of instructors regardless of their teaching contexts, such as paltry salary for a highly demanding occupation and demotivated learners. Haseli Songhori et. al (2018) identified the stages Iranian school EFL teachers experienced to develop LTI. They also recognized some of the same disturbing points in the triggering stage, for instance demotivated learners and teachers' financial dissatisfaction.

The results of this study also illustrate that some of the mentioned disturbing points exclusively pertained to one environment were pointed out in one context more severely and frequently than another. For example, the deficit in educational supplementary aids and inappropriate teaching materials created more disturbances in the state schools. This should not appear surprising since private schools provide their students with better educational supplementary aids and teach them other English materials besides the curriculum-based English books. Furthermore, by comparing the different disturbing points in two contexts, and considering the dominant types of LTI resulting from them, the impact of the context on the LTI could be better realized.

### Conclusion and Implications

The current study was designed to probe LTI in EFL school teachers who were practicing in private and state schools. The results indicated that the dominant LTI among private school teachers was in maladaptive form while in state school teachers it was manifested in adaptive form. The study also attempted to explore the factors which might trigger immunity mechanisms in the participants. While some of these recognized factors were common in both contexts of state and private schools, some others were exclusively occurring in only one context. These context-dependent disturbing factors were the possible variables that created the difference in the form of LTI in two groups of EFL teachers.

The literature and the results of this study indicate that, despite adversities, teachers with productive immunity usually maintain positive motivation, commitment to teaching, innovation, as well as emotional well-adjustment. This finding can assist teachers to gain productive immunity and it can benefit instructors, learners, teaching practice, and the whole educational system. A possible way of serving this assistance is to raise teachers' awareness with regard to their maladaptive immunity and its counterproductive results. This process might hopefully encourage teachers to explore their negative emotions originating from their prior unpleasant experiences. This self-inquiry might be the

first changing phase in maladaptive immunized teachers. They might ponder what would have happened if they possibly had reacted differently to disturbing factors. The findings of this study are hoped to serve as one minor step to help teachers gain this awareness. It is not claimed, though, that awareness alone would be adequate in resolving the issue. Moreover, introducing productive strategies is a valuable adjunct to help language teachers create constructive immunity. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) suggested that these strategies should be presented as attractive options to maladaptive immunized teachers rather than deployed as dictated impositions.

Although the awareness of maladaptive immunity and the consequent disturbances is essential to aid teachers in constructing adaptive immunity, they are by no means sufficient, as teaching is a sophisticated phenomenon that takes place in an interwoven system of a variety of factors. Macro policymakers, educational managers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers are the other parties that might benefit from this awareness, leading them to provide more pleasant teaching environments with less pressure on instructors and higher quality pre-service and/or in-service instructor training courses.

This study was limited by some factors. The number of participants, which puts a limitation on the generalizability of the findings, was one of them. Further studies on more EFL teachers from diverse educational contexts and backgrounds in state and private schools would be recommended. Furthermore, this study only applied two data-gathering methods. Future studies could employ multiple data-gathering instruments to provide more credible data.

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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