

To Be or Not to Be an Empathic EFL Teacher: a Correlational Analysis of Empathy and Classroom Management Orientations

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Abstract

This study examined Iranian EFL teacher's empathy level and their classroom management orientations. Furthermore, the relationship between these two variables was probed. To this end, 245 male and female Iranian EFL teachers between 20 and 55 years old participated. Data were collected through classroom management and empathy questionnaires. Results indicated that the teachers had a relatively high level of empathy and they tended toward behavioral management orientation. In addition, the two variables were correlated. The analysis of the written structured interviews revealed the teachers' perception about empathy. They perceived that students can feel more at ease and more relaxed when their teachers empathize with them, thus increasing their motivation for language learning. Moreover, behavior management acts as a pre-requisite for instructional management. The more teachers empathize with students, the more and the better control they have in over their classroom management.

Keywords: classroom management orientations; effective teaching; EFL teachers; empathy

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza los niveles de empatía de docentes iraníes de Inglés Lengua Extranjera y sus orientaciones relativas al manejo del aula. Además, analiza la relación entre estas dos variables. Con estos fines, se trabajó con 245 profesores/as iraníes de ILE de entre 20 y 55 años de edad. La información se recolectó a través de cuestionarios sobre manejo del aula y empatía. Los resultados indican que los/as docentes exhibían un relativamente alto grado de empatía y que hacían un manejo del aula orientado al control de la conducta. Además, existía correlación entre estas dos variables. El análisis de las entrevistas escritas y estructuradas reveló cuál era la percepción de la empatía de los/as docentes. Percibían que los estudiantes podían sentirse más cómodos y relajados cuando sus docentes empatizaban con ellos, y que de esa forma se podía incrementar la motivación para aprender el idioma. Quedó claro además que el control de la conducta actúa como un prerrequisito para el diseño de la enseñanza. Cuanto más empatizan los docentes con sus estudiantes, más control tienen sobre el manejo del aula.

Keywords: classroom management orientations; effective teaching; EFL teachers; empathy

Introduction

The concept of *effective teaching* might be either the same or different depending on whether you are a foreign language teacher or a foreign language student. Schulz (1996) stated that what foreign language students expect is not always parallel with what foreign language teachers expect; thus, students' dissatisfaction with the language class may cause it to be discontinued. Learning about students' and teachers' expectations regarding the course of study and about what it means to them to be dedicated to the class and being presented with the chances to enjoy success and satisfaction with their language learning program are in an evident association with their opinions concerning language learning (Horwitz, 1988). Williams and Burden (1997) asserted that achievement in learning is substantially affected by learners' understanding and inference and that sometimes students' conceptions of the teachers' manners are not consistent with their teachers' objectives. Furthermore, it could be a good idea to give teachers some information about students' attitudes toward the various teaching styles as well as about the disparate characteristics of the students who are to be educated (Cotterall, 1999). Also, teachers manage their instruction according to their opinions, notions and presumptions about teaching and teacher effectiveness (Chacon, 2005).

Students' academic accomplishment and outcomes are tied with their teachers and the quality of their role in the classroom (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs & Robinson, 2004; Lasley II, Siedentop & Yinger, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). The crucial role of English language teachers in effective language learning is undeniable. In countries like Iran, language learning prominently occurs in pedagogical classrooms; therefore, the relationship between teachers and students must be considered substantially (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007). Moreover, the only principal source of language from which students receive input is their teachers; thus, they have an immediate impact on learning. Since teachers are key elements in the teaching context, their characteristics should be considered important in teaching and learning. Among all characteristics—including rapport, personality, adaptability, etc. (Harmer, 2007)—, empathy and classroom management orientations are of significance in teaching effectiveness. To contribute to this, this study examined Iranian EFL teacher's empathy levels, their classroom management orientations and the correlation between the two variables.

Theoretical Background

Empathy is defined as the individual's capability to recognize what emotions others bear at a specific moment (Preston & de Waal, 2002; Buck, Powers, & Hull, 2017). Teacher empathy refers to the potential a teacher is endowed with to put themselves in students' shoes and thus feel the issues they might be facing and think from their perspective. Empathy is among the many factors that provide the teacher with the ability to select appropriate teaching techniques and to propose applicable guidelines for students to progress academically and emotionally (Li, Ding, Sun, & Yu, 2015). Stojiljković, Stojanović, and Dasković (2011) considered empathy as a main attribute in a teacher with a professionally powerful identity, which in turn leads to a positive classroom environment and to an acceptable teacher-student relationship. This feature is supposed to enhance students' accomplishments and teachers' success in their occupation (Li et al., 2015; Peck et al., 2015).

As reported by Makoelle (2019), in an instructional context, it is inevitable for teachers to take an empathic approach, since teachers need to create a positive relationship as well as a motivational and humanitarian environment for students. Consequently, the more teachers

empathize, the less trouble they face in the school and in the classroom. In addition, empathy positively affects teacher effectiveness and school or classroom atmosphere and security. Ultimately, when teachers empathize with students, their manner is spread among the students themselves. And a person who empathizes has the ability to imagine themselves in a seen setting (Cooper, 2004; O'Neill, 2020). Mirror neurons, in fact, empower the person to perceive empathy through not only experiencing it but also observing another one while behaving empathically (Ramachandran, 2011). When someone observes someone else during an experience, they can outline a structure in which a similar situation is created as if they are/ or were in it (O'Neill, 2020). Dereli and Aypay (2012) assert that it's a good idea for students to adopt an empathic disposition in order to develop some of qualities such as accountability, companionship, peacemaking, reverence, rectitude, and forbearance, as well as some moralities required for collaboration and cooperation which are influential elements of teamwork.

To build an effective atmosphere for teachers and students, classroom management can probably be a fundamental requirement (Brophy, 2006; Chandra, 2015; Emmer, Evertson & Worsham, 2000; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classroom management integrates teacher's personality, their teaching conduct, and the consequence of what they do in class (Bru, Stephens, & Torsheim, 2002; Watkins & Wagner, 2000). Needless to say, classroom management speaks about providing a secure and encouraging setting for students' learning. An effective teacher is responsible for establishing a proper learning atmosphere so that the students are encouraged to develop learning.

In this study, classroom management is viewed as a concept composed of two separate constructs, namely *Behavior Management* and *Instructional Management*. The endeavor a teacher makes to prevent students' misconduct and to react to such behavior in a smooth manner is termed *Behavioral Management* (BM). More explicitly, this type of management involves formulating regulations, rewards and guidelines (Martin & Sass, 2010). One of the main discrepancies between effective and ineffective teachers, as far as classroom management is concerned, was recorded by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980), referring to the ways they established the class regulations and how they applied them. It is worth noting that if students are not willing to observe the rules, these will be of no value, and that rewards can pave the way for the observation of classroom rules and for the avoidance of misconduct. *Instructional Management* (IM), on the other hand, by and large focuses on the instructional aspect of the class. It deals with teaching objectives and techniques along with individual assignments, teacher lectures and instructional interactions among the students and between teachers and students. The amount of students' interaction and willingness to interact, taking into account the students' needs while developing the syllabus, and how the teacher addresses tasks play an important role in instructional management (Burden, 1995; Reeve & Jang, 2006; Weinstein & Mignano, 1993). Concerning the degree of control exerted by the teachers, Wolfgang (1995) maintained that there is a continuum for classroom management within which every teacher may fall; however, based on the importance they give to BM or to IM, they are probably more inclined to one of the two.

Literature Review

Plenty of studies have explored the integration and effects of empathy in higher education (e.g. Marx & Pray, 2011; Zembylas, 2021; Jiang & Wang, 2018). Marx and Pray (2011) conducted a qualitative research with English language learners in Mexico. They discovered that teacher empathy helped students put an end to their failures in terms of cultural, linguistic, and racial discrepancies. According to Hassanpour Souderjani, Heidari

Darani and Hosseinpour (2021), teachers' and students' happiness could grow as the consequence of teachers' empathy towards students. Once students understand that their teacher is sensitive about their status, particularly their economic status, which is the main source of difficulty these days, they will be encouraged to study hard and contribute to teachers' wellbeing. Additionally, this happy feeling establishes such a positive atmosphere in the classroom that students are encouraged and motivated to learn English in the time to come. Empathy can contribute to a large extent to a rise in the number of English Language Learners (ELL) in the US. Moreover, empathy is involved in the establishment of forthcoming teaching strategies (Washburn, 2008) because the US proposes that the number of ELL grow a 40% by 2030 (Herrera & Murry, 2005).

Classroom management is referred to as a process to increase learners' engagement and cooperative activities (Roelofs & Veenman, 1994). The teachers' procedures in the classroom, which are in turn the results of their views about learners' behavior, affect this process (Martin & Baldwin, 1992). For example, it was shown by Savran and Cakiroglu (2004) that pre-service Science teachers are prone to dominance over the learners for instructional management, while Duman, Gelişli and Çetin (2004) found that the high school teachers they worked with preferred the *interventionist approach* over the *constructive approach*. Concerning classroom management orientations, in two studies Rahimi and Asadollahi (2012) revealed that Iranian EFL teachers mainly show a tendency to the interventionist approach. Future Turkish EFL teachers are oriented to interventionist and interactionist approaches on instructional management, while they are inclined to interventionist approach on people Management (Caner & Tertemiz, 2015).

Gürçay (2015) unraveled pre-service Physics teachers' management orientations in terms of instructional and people management. She found that teachers followed interventionist approaches as far as instructional management was concerned, whereas they showed an inclination to non-interventionist approaches when it came to people management. Cerit and Yüксе (2015) noted that Turkish and Latvian teachers had a greater tendency towards an interactionist approach, while Çakmak (2019) claimed that Turkish EFL teachers were more likely to adopt an interventionist approach, thereby applying more dominance over the students in the classroom. In a study to investigate teachers' opinions about classroom management, Egeberg, McConney and Price (2021) realized that there is no crystal clear boundary between management approaches; more precisely, no particular cut-off score is available to differentiate an interventionist teacher from an interactionist one or an interactionist teacher from a non-interventionist one. Higher scores in both instructional and behavioral managements made them suggest that teachers preferred to be more interventionist.

In Cooper's study (2004) it was asserted that the empathic model proposed by teachers may be distorted by some restrictions which may lead to weaknesses in the model and affect learning. Usually, economic concerns are responsible for the emergence of these restrictions and they have an impact on teachers' behavior in a way that inhibits them from having a deeply empathic behavior with children. The chief issues contributing to these restrictions are whether the classroom is big or small, when the class is held, the curriculum, syllabus and how the class is controlled. Ikiz (2009) studied the relation between guidance counselors' empathic degree and the degree of violent behavior among students. They came to the conclusion that empathic teachers were capable of increasing students' welfare by helping them manage their anger, thus decreasing violence in the classroom. Barr (2011) indicated that learning about students' reasons to behave in a specific way enables the teachers to better relate to them and that empathy is greatly involved in such knowledge. Makoelle (2019) asserted that there is a negative relation between teacher's empathy and

students' violent behaviors in the classroom. Teachers' more empathic behaviors cater for a better classroom management, for increased student-teacher confidence and for more time for learning; it contributes to teacher efficacy, since it boosts classroom environment and security. Additionally, the teachers' empathic actions influence teacher-student interactions, thereby strengthening teachers' ability to handle the class.

Undoubtedly, more empathic teachers have a better perception of what makes learning complicated for students. Being empathetic with students leads to addressing some psychological problems which students suffer from. Obviously, through the solutions offered and once those learning obstacles are removed, better learning occurs. As a matter of fact, language teaching and learning success is greatly dependent on a successful classroom management. By and large, learners' problems and difficulties will not probably be discovered unless EFL teachers' level of empathy is high enough and classroom management orientations be recognized.

These days, learning English as a foreign language has become an asset; thus, the Ministry of Education in Iran has been required to take this educational field into account. The individuals in charge of English language teaching have attempted to find its shortcomings and thus make improvements in this field of study. Nonetheless, there still exist plenty of obstacles to reach efficient English language teaching programs, which entails effective teaching (AzariNoughabi, 2017). In the course of the past years, educational psychologists' attention has been drawn towards what contributes to effective teaching and learning. Several studies have considered the teacher as a component of note in effective teaching (e.g. Stojiljkovic et al., 2012) and among the characteristics of effective teachers, empathy (Stronge, Tucker & Hindman, 2004) and classroom management (Stojiljkovic et al., 2012) are of importance. But as far as we know, there has not been any research into Iranian EFL teachers' empathy in correlation with their classroom management orientations. Accordingly, in this paper we explore Iranian EFL teachers' empathy and their classroom management orientations as well as the relationship between these two variables to bridge this gap in the literature.

Methodology

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL teachers' level of empathy and classroom management orientations?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' level of empathy and classroom management orientations?

Research Method and Design

A quantitative-qualitative research method with a correlational design was used in this study. It investigated empathy and classroom management orientations among Iranian EFL teachers. Furthermore, the relationship between the two variables was studied. It is worth mentioning that gender was not considered as the main focus of the study.

Participants

Two-hundred and forty-five male and female Iranian EFL teachers participated in this study. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) and Dörnyei and Csizér (2012), more than 50 participants must be included in correlational studies in which questionnaires are used. Their age ranged between 20 and 55. Participants were selected from universities around Iran and three English language institutes in Isfahan, Iran, via convenience sampling procedure. Data collection was both paper- and internet-based; therefore, it was possible to have access to the Iranian EFL teachers throughout the country. All EFL teachers were Iranian and they spoke Persian as their mother tongue. One hundred and eighty-five teachers

held either Master of Arts (MA) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and 60 of them both IELTS certificate and MA and PhD degrees in TEFL. They had English teaching experience ranging from 5 to 30 years. English teaching experience of some of them was limited to only English Language Institutes, while the rest had teaching experience at both language institutes and universities. Since the participants were supposed to be selected randomly for the structured interview and there would probably be teachers who could not take part in in-person interviews, the interview questions were sent to the selected participants. Among the people who participated in the study, 15 male and female participants were selected for the interview. They were emailed the interview questions and were given one to two weeks to respond.

Data Collection Instruments

The data required for this study were collected through two questionnaires and one interview. One questionnaire addressed how teachers' classroom management orientations and another one looked into how empathic teachers perceive themselves to be in the classroom. The structured interview contained questions about empathy and classroom management. Participants received the English version of the two questionnaires and the interview.

Classroom Management Questionnaire

The Classroom Management questionnaire was a slightly modified version of the one developed by Martin and Sass (2010) and includes 24 items and four possible responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Appendix A). Out of these 24 items, 12 items asked about BM and 12 items about IM. Taken as a whole, the minimum and maximum scores a participant could get on IM or BM were 12 and 48. Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) suggested that the scores given by the participants reflect the amount of control they exert. The higher the score they choose, the more control the teacher prefers to exert. Thus, the higher scores are indicators of an interventionist approach, while the lower scores are signs of a less interventionist approach (Krapu, Meinke, Kramer, Friedman & Voda, 2006). The reliability analysis of this questionnaire was done following Martin and Sass (2010, p. 1130) and the reliability coefficient was reported as follows: an analysis of the Behavior Management subscale revealed good internal consistency (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) for the six items ($\alpha = .774$), with an average inter-item correlation of .377. The average corrected item-total correlation for this subscale was .529, which suggests the items have good discrimination. Moreover, the findings of the Instructional Management section demonstrated that the six items carried an acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .770$), whose mean for inter-item correlation was .365. All these findings were indicators of good internal consistency, based on Nunnally's (1978) standards, as well as a powerful item discrimination. Concerning the validity of the questionnaire, it was confirmed by three experts in the field.

Empathy Questionnaire

The Empathy Questionnaire (EQ) developed by Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) including 60 items used in this study (Appendix B). The items were assumed to be short, easy to use and to score. The items encompass 60 questions divided into two types: 40 questions specifically related to empathy and 20 questions as distractors. Each item has four responses ascending from "strongly agree" to "slightly agree". Two points were assigned for "Strongly agree" responses and 1 point accounted for "slightly disagree" responses. Put differently, "slightly disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses were scored as zero. 50% of the items were assumed to be responded as "disagree" and 50% to be answered as "agree". This distribution helped the items be free from a response bias. On the whole, the scores participants could get ranged between 0 and 120. The reliability analysis

of this questionnaire followed Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) and was reported to be $r = 0.97$. Regarding the degree of validity, the questionnaire was verified and confirmed by three experts in the field.

Structured Written Interview

A structured written interview was carried out to enrich the data collected from the questionnaires. This interview required the selected participants to provide more information about empathic teachers and their effects on students as well as about classroom management orientations and the relationship between empathy and classroom management in an EFL classroom. According to Whetzel, Baranowski, Petro, Curtin, and Fisher (2003), a structured written interview has several advantages and can be successfully used in certain situations where access to the selected participants is not feasible. The interview contained four questions as follows:

1. What is your teaching context? What sort of students are you teaching?
2. What are the consequences of being an empathic teacher? How can an empathic teacher affect the students?
3. Which classroom management orientation is more important? Behavioral management, instructional management, or both? Why?

Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, 245 Iranian EFL teachers who were teaching English as a Foreign Language in universities around Iran and three English language institutes in Isfahan, Iran were provided with the paper-based and online questionnaires. Those who lived in Isfahan were given paper-based questionnaires, while those who resided out of Isfahan were requested to respond to the online questionnaires. All necessary instructions were given at the beginning of the process. The participants were asked to read the questionnaires carefully and express their points of view. Each participant was given one week to complete the questionnaires, which were then collected and scored by the researchers, who then prepared the data for statistical analyses. After the participants responded to both questionnaires, 15 EFL teachers were selected randomly and emailed the structured interview questions. They were told their responses were confidential and were given one to two weeks to send them. They were also reminded that if they needed more time, the deadline could be extended.

Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, three types of statistical tests were applied. Normality of the data was checked via running Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. A one-way ANOVA as well as a paired-samples t-test were calculated to explore the statistically significant difference between the domains of the empathy and classroom management orientations. A correlation analysis was performed to answer the second research question. Eventually, their responses to the interview questions were transcribed and processed following the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach.

Results

Normality of the Data

Before data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics and to decide about the type of statistical analysis run on the data, tests of normality were used. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 1 shows the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality. Since the sample size was greater than 50, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov results are reported (Yap & Sim, 2011). As the p -value was lower than the significance level ($.000 < 0.05$), the data were not normally distributed and non-parametric correlation test should be run on data related to the empathy of the Iranian EFL teachers.

Table 1

Test of normality of the data related to Iranian EFL teachers' empathy

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Empathy	.094	245	.000	.962	245	.000

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality are shown in Table 2. It is seen that the sample size for the data related to Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management was also greater than 50; therefore, according to Yap and Sim (2011), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov results are used. Since the p -value was lower than the significance level ($.000 < 0.05$), the data were not normally distributed and non-parametric correlation test should be run on data related to the classroom management of the Iranian EFL teachers.

Table 2

Test of normality of the data related to Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Classroom Management	.097	245	.000	.961	245	.000

As the data of the two questionnaires were not normally distributed, the non-parametric Spearman's rank-order correlation test was run on the data to answer the second research question. The results are to be found below.

Addressing the First Research Question

The first research question explored Iranian EFL teachers' empathy and classroom management orientations. The mean scores as well as the minimum and maximum scores obtained from the two questionnaires responded by the participants were calculated. The results are showed in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of the two questionnaires

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
Empathy	245	79.01	8.83	61.00	96.00
Classroom Management	245	70.07	8.64	54.00	87.00

As shown in Table 3, as the mean scores of the two questionnaires were closer to the maximum scores, the participants of the study seemed to be empathic teachers and to have a relatively good classroom management.

The empathy questionnaire comprises three domains: importance of others, coincidence with others, and being in others' shoes. Classroom management orientations questionnaire contains two domains: behavioral management and instructional management. The following tables show the descriptive statistics of the individual domains.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of the domains of empathy questionnaire

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Importance of Others	245	19.02	7.00	5.00	28.00
Coincidence with Others	245	25.52	3.48	13.00	30.00
Being in Others' Shoes	245	14.58	2.92	8.00	22.00

Our findings show that *coincidence with others* was considered to be the most important among the three domains in the construction of Iranian EFL teachers' sense of empathy. To identify whether certain domains in each questionnaire were significantly different, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. The results are shown below.

Table 5

One-way ANOVA analysis for domains of empathy

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14832.133	2	7416.067	319.322	0.000
Within Groups	17000.294	732	23.224		
Total	31832.427	734			

As shown in Table 5, the differences were statistically significant. To recognize which domains bore significant differences, the post hoc Tukey test was.

Table 6

Tukey test results of empathy domains

(I) Domain	(J) Domain	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Importance of Others	Coincidence with Others	-6.50204*	.43542	.000	-7.5246	-5.4795
	Being in Others' Shoes	4.43673*	.43542	.000	3.4142	5.4593
Coincidence with Others	Importance of Others	6.50204*	.43542	.000	5.4795	7.5246
	Being in Others' Shoes	10.93878*	.43542	.000	9.9162	11.9613
Being in Others' Shoes	Importance of Others	-4.43673*	.43542	.000	-5.4593	-3.4142
	Coincidence with Others	-10.93878*	.43542	.000	-11.9613	-9.9162

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As indicated above, all three domains had almost a similar contribution to making Iranian EFL teachers empathic. In effect, in their view the three components are all needed for an EFL teacher to be empathic.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of the domains of classroom management orientations questionnaire

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Behavioral Management	245	37.92	5.15	27.00	48.00
Instructional Management	245	32.26	5.51	19.00	45.00

Based on the results indicated above, the mean score for behavioral management was higher in Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management orientations. To explore whether this difference was statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was run on the data.

Table 8

Paired-samples t-test for domains of classroom management orientations

	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
Behavioral Management	5.66122	6.15140	.39300	4.88712	6.43533	14.405	244	.000
Instructional Management								

As shown above, the difference was statistically significant (p -value < 0.05). It can be inferred that behavioral management was a crucial classroom management orientation for the Iranian EFL teachers.

Addressing the Second Research Question

To answer the question about the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management and empathy, a Spearman's rank-order correlation test was calculated.

Table 9

Spearman's rank-order results of Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management and empathy

			Classroom Management	Empathy
Spearman's rho	Classroom Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.880**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	245	245
	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	.880**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	245	245

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

A two-tailed test of significance indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between classroom management orientations and empathy $r_s(245) = .880$, $p < .05$.

Interview Analysis

Looking for the probable reasons behind the answers given to the interview questions, we examined the responses following the CDA approach. The analysis of the responses to the first question of the written interview revealed that the context of research is composed of adult students who are plausible to come to the class with problems of different sorts.

When I enter the class, I begin the class with greetings and asking my students if everything goes well with them. Sometimes, everyone is silent or just nods to show everything is OK, sometimes, though, some of them begin to nag talking about what annoys them. For example, once one of the students was mad at one of my colleagues. She said due to her overdue absence in that class, her teacher—my colleagues—had told her that she would not take the final exam. My student said she had had problems but her teacher did not believe her. I told my student it was OK and we could talk after the class. Easily, she got calm and I could begin teaching.

Many of the teachers asserted that they begin their classes asking if all is well with the students. Regardless of the country and context of research, adults are expected to have certain concerns including learning, professional, family, social, among others and some of them like to share them in class. The teachers, as human beings, know that their adult students are likely to come to class with a variety of concerns; therefore, many of them prefer to start their classes with greetings, thereby becoming aware of how their students' lives proceed and helping them in case of need.

As for the consequence of being empathic, most of the Iranian EFL teachers said that they intended to be empathic teachers. Several teachers claimed that the students of an empathic teacher understand that others are also important. Moreover, feelings of relief and trust can be found among students.

I always try to be empathic because many of my students are afraid of English and it is always a problem for them because it's a foreign language and not all of them have the chance to take part in extra classes. When my students see me spending much of my free time to listen to them and solve their problems, they will learn from me and will copy my behavior in the future. In situations the students recognize that I understand their problems, whether learning or familial ones, even if I am not able to find a solution they will feel relieved and trusted. Once, one of my students said, "Meeting you and talking to you is enough! I feel relaxed after talking to you. Even if you don't tell me a word, listening to me means a lot to me. Since I'm sure that your guidelines are always practical, you are the first one to come to whenever I run into a problem." Another student said, "My friend and I love you so much because I could help one of my friends based on the guidelines you had told me the other day. I suggested my friend to use help another person who encounters a problem of the same nature." She happily added, "I'm sure that this guideline will go forward and save many more people." I myself experienced receiving empathy from my teachers when I was a student.

We found that a fairly large number of teachers declared that they show empathy to their students. It can be attributed to the fact that the teachers realized the benefits of showing empathy to students could be. In addition, the teachers were able to observe the positive effect of students' being relaxed and relieved in the class after talking about their problems either in public or individually after the class or in some free time the teacher had. In a nutshell, the teachers' own satisfaction with reflecting empathy to their students encourages them to be more and more empathic.

The third question dealt with classroom management orientations. The teachers who were interviewed remarked that although both types of classroom management are worth paying attention to, the BM should be the first concern of the EFL teachers.

To me, behavioral management comes first because if this classroom management orientation is problematic, instructional management will not be useful. Once, a student suddenly and without any reason shouted, it interrupted the classroom procedure. In such a situation, I couldn't teach at all. Therefore, I decided to deal with this student and manage her disruptive behavior first so as to make the classroom atmosphere normal. Then, I could just begin teaching.

To some teachers behavioral management comes before instructional management. The plausible interpretation is that when there exist some inhibitory behaviors in a classroom, neither teaching nor learning will effectively take place because everyone should be focused for learning to happen. If a teacher is good at teaching the subject matter, but incapable of controlling disruptive behavior, their teaching will be inefficient. Such management is so important that even if the teacher ignores it, the rest of the students will ask the teacher to manage the troublesome student(s). Moreover, many teachers and students think that collaboration between and among students can be a crucial element in learning. In case some students overlook mandatory good behavior rules, the social atmosphere in the classroom will be affected and thus collaboration will be somehow hindered.

Discussion

The results of the first research question showed that the Iranian EFL teachers had quite a high level of empathy and their classroom management orientation was mostly behavioral. Several studies revealed findings which were in line with those of our current study (Hassanpour Souderjani et al., 2021; Herrera & Murry, 2005; Jiang & Wang, 2018; Marx & Pray, 2011; Zembylas, 2012; Washburn, 2008, to name a few). Since English is a foreign language, many EFL learners are afraid of attending English lessons. Most of them have learning difficulties and some of them have other problems, including family issues, which are even more crucial and call for the teachers' attention because of the disruption they cause. If an English teacher has such students, s/he has to talk to them and try to find a solution to remove the learning barriers. Moreover, teachers are role models for many students, so their behaviour will become exemplary to them. This positive effect can be transferred to next generations. In addition, when teachers find a solution to students' problems, they will feel relaxed and this relaxation may lead to an increased motivation. Moreover, when students see their teachers' empathic behavior, they trust them and they are more likely to reveal whatever problems they have in the hope of reaching a solution and getting rid any obstacle hindering their learning. On the other hand, lack of empathy gives rise to disappointment and to an overwhelming feeling, which, in turn, may make student quit the course.

Concerning classroom management, there are quite a few studies whose results were consistent with those of this study (Çakmak, 2019; Cerit & Yüksel, 2015; Martin & Baldwin, 1992). In addition, no matter which orientation —instructional and behavioral— they exhibited, the participants showed an interventionist approach, which means they prefer exerting more control. This is in line with Duman, Gelişli and Çetin (2004), Rahimi and Asadollahi (2012), Caner & Tertemiz (2015), and Çakmak (2019). The plausible justification is that language learning will not happen in an atmosphere where there is no management in the class. When everything is in order in the classroom, students feel more at ease and this results in more motivation. When teachers exert classroom management, students know what the teacher expects them to do, which prepares them to complete classroom activities

precisely and on time. Moreover, in the long run, they will turn into people who are responsible in their personal life as well as in society.

Contrary to the findings of this study, Savran and Cakiroglu's (2004) Rahimi and Asadollahi (2012) revealed a preference for IM over BM. On the other hand, Egeberg, McConney and Price (2021) could not find any difference between the two. It can be inferred that BM can be a pre-requisite to maintain classroom discipline. BM is not limited to punishment. Desired behavior should also be rewarded. Rewards can encourage students to behave well in the classroom.

IM orientation towards classroom management prepares students to be organized and structured both in the classroom and their lives. This classroom management approach addresses interactive participatory approaches to instruction. Collaboration in the form of pair- and group-work is encouraged, so all students are engaged in class activities and share a common objective. Groups debates and discussions create a friendly social atmosphere in which mutual negotiation occurs (Heidari Darani & Hosseinpour, 2019). In the long run, collaboration can lead to students' enhanced motivation to learn.

As to the second research question, Barr (2011), Cooper (2004), Ikiz (2009) and Makoelle (2019) reached the results which coincided with the results of the present study. The possible justification is that empathetic teachers tend to choose positive strategies, such as creating a good relationship with problematic students and listen to them, or providing opportunities for students to substitute inadequate behaviors and reinforce favored ones. In fact, instead of punishment, these teachers help these students abandon unwanted behaviors and replace them with positive ones. Additionally, it is implied that Iranian EFL teachers who empathize with students more, have a greater ability for classroom management, probably because they can perceive their difficulties and help them deal with them. This results in a better control of the classroom.

Conclusions

This study was an attempt to shed more light on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' empathy and their classroom management. Based on the results of the study, the first conclusion which can be drawn is that empathizing with others in general, and with students in particular, can make both teachers and students feel more at ease and more relaxed. The analysis of the written structured interviews revealed that when students realize that their teacher is aware of their situation, especially their economic difficulties, they will be eager to study more and to make their teacher happy. Furthermore, this relaxed feeling will create a positive attitude and a higher motivation towards language. We agree that these two variables are not sufficient to make a teacher become an effective teacher, but by being empathic and good classroom managers, teachers will have paved at least half the way to becoming effective. The next conclusion concerns classroom management: BM should precede IM, as long as students' behavior is the desired one, IM can be accelerated.

Our findings suggest that in teacher training courses, teacher empathy should be highlighted as a factor conducive to classroom management. In these courses, communication among students and between the teacher and students should be focused on. That is to say, the more teachers empathize with students, the more and the better they can manage the classroom.

The results of this study are important to teachers, learners and educational authorities. When teachers acknowledge the factors influencing their classroom management, they can find ways to control student disruptive behaviour. Moreover, teachers who are aware of problems and of the root of those problems, can cope with them better: if teachers know that empathy has effects on classroom management, they may try to improve their empathy

to attain better results. Besides, the students of such teachers will have a better chance of learning. There is a further advantage to the effects of teacher empathy of BM and IM which may be of interest to educational authorities. An enormous amount of time, energy, and budget will be saved if authorities can arrange for some time for students to talk about their difficulties in a more relaxed atmosphere.

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Appendix A

Classroom Management Orientations Questionnaire (Modified Version of Martin & Sass, 2010)

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I nearly always intervene when students talk at inappropriate times during class.				
2. I use whole class instruction to ensure a structured classroom.				
3. I strongly limit student chatter in the classroom.				
4. I nearly always use collaborative learning to explore questions in the classroom.				
5. I reward students for good behavior in the classroom.				
6. I engage students in active discussion about issues related to real world applications.				
7. If a student talks to a neighbor, I will move the student away from other students.				
8. I establish a teaching daily routine in my classroom and stick to it.				
9. I use input from students to create classroom rules.				
10. I nearly always use group work in my classroom.				
11. I allow students to get out of their seat without permission.				
12. I use student input when creating student projects.				
13. I am strict when it comes to student compliance in my classroom.				
14. I nearly always use inquiry-based learning in the classroom.				
15. I firmly redirect students back to the topic when they get off task.				
16. I direct the students' transition from one learning activity to another.				
17. I insist that students in my classroom follow the rules at all times.				
18. I nearly always adjust instruction in response to individual student needs.				
19. I closely monitor off task behavior during class.				
20. I nearly always use direct instruction when I teach.				
21. I strictly enforce classroom rules to control student behavior.				

22. I do not deviate from my pre-planned learning activities.				
23. If a student's behavior is defiant, I will demand that they comply with my classroom rules.				
24. I nearly always use a teaching approach that encourages interaction among students.				

Appendix B
Empathy Questionnaire (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004))

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I can easily tell if someone else wants to enter a conversation				
2. I prefer animals to humans.				
3. I try to keep up with the current trends and fashions.				
4. I find it difficult to explain to others things that I understand easily, when they don't understand it first time.				
5. I dream most nights.				
6. I really enjoy caring for other people.				
7. I try to solve my own problems rather than discussing them with others.				
8. I find it hard to know what to do in a social situation.				
9. I am at my best first thing in the morning.				
10. People often tell me that I went too far in driving my point home in a discussion.				
11. It doesn't bother me too much if I am late meeting a friend.				
12. Friendships and relationships are just too difficult, so I tend not to bother with them.				
13. I would never break a law, no matter how minor.				
14. I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite.				
15. In a conversation, I tend to focus on my own thoughts rather than on what my listener might be thinking.				
16. I prefer practical jokes to verbal humor.				
17. I live life for today rather than the future.				
18. When I was a child, I enjoyed cutting up worms to see what would happen.				
19. I can pick up quickly if someone says one thing but means another.				
20. I tend to have very strong opinions about morality.				
21. It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much.				

22. I find it easy to put myself in somebody else's shoes.				
23. I think that good manners are the most important thing a parent can teach their child.				
24. I like to do things on the spur of the moment.				
25. I am good at predicting how someone will feel.				
26. I am quick to spot when someone in a group is feeling awkward or uncomfortable.				
27. If I say something that someone else is offended by, I think that that's their problem, not mine.				
28. If anyone asked me if I liked their haircut, I would reply truthfully, even if I didn't like it.				
29. I can't always see why someone should have felt offended by a remark.				
30. People often tell me that I am very unpredictable.				
31. I enjoy being the center of attention at any social gathering.				
32. Seeing people cry doesn't really upset me.				
33. I enjoy having discussions about politics.				
34. I am very blunt, which some people take to be rudeness, even though this is unintentional.				
35. I don't tend to find social situations confusing.				
36. Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking.				
37. When I talk to people, I tend to talk about their experiences rather than my own.				
38. It upsets me to see an animal in pain.				
39. I am able to make decisions without being influenced by people's feelings.				
40. I can't relax until I have done everything I had planned to do that day.				
41. I can easily tell if someone else is interested or bored with what I am saying.				
42. I get upset if I see people suffering on news programs.				
43. Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.				
44. I can sense if I am intruding, even if the other person doesn't tell me.				
45. I often start new hobbies but quickly become bored with them and move on to something else.				
46. People sometimes tell me that I have gone too far with teasing.				
47. I would be too nervous to go on a big rollercoaster.				
48. Other people, often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why.				

49. If I see a stranger in a group, I think that it is up to them to make an effort to join in.				
50. I usually stay emotionally detached when watching a film.				
51. I like to be very organized in day-to-day life and often make lists of the chores I have to do.				
52. I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.				
53. I don't like to take risks.				
54. I can easily work out what another person might want to talk about.				
55. I can tell if someone is masking their true emotion.				
56. Before making a decision I always weigh up the pros and cons.				
57. I don't consciously work out the rules of social situations.				
58. I am good at predicting what someone will do.				
59. I tend to get emotionally involved with a friend's problems.				
60. I can usually appreciate the other person's viewpoint, even if I don't agree with it.				