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INVESTIGATING THE PATTERNS OF EMPATHY AND CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT APPLIED BY EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract: *The teachers' fundamental role in the success of the students is inevitable. Thus, knowing the various traits and personality characteristics of effective teachers can be used as guidelines to foster inexperienced teachers' teaching quality. Among the required teaching qualities, empathy and classroom environment set up are two vital concepts emphasized by researchers. Accordingly, through relying on mega planning, the present study was conducted to find the patterns of empathy and classroom environment utilized by effective teachers. The participants were 50 teachers and 300 language learners. Three instruments were employed, namely teacher effectiveness questionnaire, classroom environment questionnaire, and teacher empathy questionnaire. The results showed that the contributions of each sub-construct in teacher effectiveness in order of their priority are as follows: empathic concern, perspective taking, fantasy, and personal distress. Results from calculating frequency and percentage for classroom environment construct showed that the contributions of each respective sub-construct in teacher effectiveness in order of priority are as follows: participation, personalization, investigation, independence, and differentiation. The findings of the present study can enlighten policy makers and administrators to plan efficient courses of action and take useful steps in training novice teachers.*
Keywords: *Teacher Empathy, Teacher Effectiveness, Classroom Environment*

1. Introduction

Teachers have always played a significant role in education in general and in developing an effective learning environment in particular (Joulide, et al. 2020). To reach this essential goal, they need to communicate well with their students. Thus, being aware of the factors that improve teacher's interactions with their students seems to be a necessity for teachers who desire to be effective in their classrooms. Teachers' empathy with the students and the way they manage their classroom environment are indisputably two of these fundamental factors that need to be addressed in detail.

When teachers communicate with students, empathy is considered essential. The behavioural component to consider the meaning of the word empathy consists of verbal, as well as non-verbal communication, which indicates an understanding of having an emotional resonance with the other person (Lam, Kolomitro and Alamparambil 2011). So, a teacher's behaviour is important in desirable classroom management for creating an effective learning environment. The environment of the classroom can also help to inhibit behavioural issues as well as to promote and develop learning. The importance of empathy in this matter is still resonated today with empirical

research which demonstrates that "empathy has been closely correlated with effective outcomes in social work practice" (Freedberg 2007:251).

Although classroom environment and empathy can be determining factors for the effectiveness of teaching and consequently of effective learning (Nazari et al. 2021), there seems to be a dearth of research in this area. Accordingly, the present study sought to identify the patterns of empathy and classroom environment among effective EFL teachers.

Effective teachers have a motivating role and they use engaging strategies to involve all their students in learning. They are aware of the students' talents and abilities. Thus, they employ various techniques according to different needs of the students in their classes. Accordingly, effective teachers use strategies that best serve the learning needs of their students. They teach in a way that encourages students to take greater responsibility. Effective teachers also provide a safe and orderly classroom environment, both in terms of physical and emotional needs of their students in order to help them achieve their potential. Effective teachers develop productive relationships with their students and treat them with respect and also expect respect from them (Faravani 2021).

Concentrating on the importance of education and teachers, this implies not only training but also producing effective citizens for society. To have effective individuals, it is mandatory to also have an effective educational system with such components as the curriculum, students, teachers, educational materials, space and others. These elements interact with one another in the direction of achieving the expected objectives (Zohoorian and Zeraatpishe 2020).

School can be defined as a dynamic group in which individuals are equipped to become active members of society in a considerably broader level. In the same vein, a classroom, as a small social group, is the smallest social sub-system, which has exceptional qualities and characteristics. These will make it distinguishable from other organizations, as well as oher social institutions. According to Snook et al. (2009), effective teachers take high prospects of students in terms of both their standard of learning and their behaviour, and they wish to contribute toward meeting those expectations in the context of a classroom.

Over the past decade, the fundamental effects of teachers on the success of their students, in terms of academic, as well as life-long goals, cannot be neglected (Chetty, Friedman and Rockoff 2014; Nye et. al. 2004). Despite intensive efforts put towards the identification of characteristics such as experience, education, and certification, which are associated with effectiveness (Blazar 2015), a comprehensive list may still be missing.

However, the effect of teachers in educational contexts as well as on the students' learning processes is undeniable. Kuskovski (2008) argued that praiseworthy teachers are the individuals who promote learning in their students, while creating positive memories of learning for them. Also, effective teachers are characterized as those who accomplish the intended educational objectives. To accomplish the proposed objectives, they require knowledge and abilities to be implied in the learning environment.

There are some explicit characteristics which are necessary for teachers who desire to teach effectively. One quality of good teachers is having excellent communication skills. Thus, the most important quality for a teacher is not knowledge, but it is sharing the knowledge. In order to create successful learning environments, great teachers need to be able to build sympathetic relationships with their students. Consequently, the best teachers are the ones who understand the importance of building supportive and collaborative environments (Lindsay et. al 2018; Rieckhoff 2020).

Teachers' profession relates to several roles such as the narrow sense which entails a teacher as a motivator, as an evaluator, as a cognitive-diagnostic role, as a social relations manager and as a partner in the emotional interaction. Over the past few decades, educational psychologists

have been concerned with factors related to effective teaching. Emotional characteristics of the teachers are often cited as significant in creating the overall positive atmosphere in the classroom among which the most important are named as emotional stability and empathic sensitivity (Stojijkovic et al. 2012).

One of the most recent topics for research concentrates on classroom management as pedagogical leadership is a determining factor for the outcome of schooling. Accordingly, classroom management can be discussed as a factor that influences the creation of a safe and motivating environment. In other words, teachers can make the classrooms inspiring for fostering encouragement and developing students' learning capacity (Stojiljković 2012).

In the same vein, the quality of the learning environment influences students' experiences and subsequent classroom learning (Joulide et al. 2020). A key influence on a student's engagement to learn is also believed to be the quality of the learning environment. A teacher's behaviour directs the students' capacities to the required educational standards and enables high academic achievement (Stojijkovic et al. 2012). Hence, teachers' empathy as an emotional personality trait of effective teachers may lead to a good classroom environment .

Bratton (2016) defines empathy as a person's ability of understanding and sharing how he/she is feeling, what thoughts they hold, and an understanding of the others' situations and having sensitivity toward that situation. According to Blašková and Blaško (2017), empathy also entails the feelings and insights of the empathetic person, here the teacher, to meet the feelings and insights of the person who is empathized, here the student, in an empathetic understanding. It signifies an intricate combination of diverse emotions and personal philosophies.

Classroom environment and empathy, which have a fundamental role in developing teaching effectiveness, have paramount effects on the learning of the students (Wambsganss 2021). Few studies have concentrated on the determining effects of these variables as an instrument for evaluating EFL teachers' effectiveness. Hence, the general purpose of this study was to investigate the patterns of effective teachers' empathy and classroom environment in an EFL context.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the present study, the research questions are as follows:

Q1: What are the patterns of empathy among effective Iranian EFL teachers?

Q2: What are the patterns of classroom environment set up among effective Iranian EFL teachers?

Q3: What are the teachers' perceptions of empathy in relation to their teaching effectiveness?

Q4: What are the teachers' perceptions of classroom environment in relation to their teaching effectiveness?

2. Methodology

The methodology section entails explanations of the setting and participants, instrumentation including both quantitative data collection instruments and the qualitative technique for data collection. It ends with an explanation of study design and data analysis.

2.1 Participants and Setting

For the present study the target population included the Iranian English teachers and their students from different English Language institutions. Convenience sampling was employed by the researchers to choose the participants due to availability and manageability reasons.

The sampling procedure included two stages. For the first stage, the researchers selected 100 EFL teachers at institutional level from the accessible population of Iranian English teachers of both genders, in Mashhad. The effective teacher questionnaire was administered to the students of the teachers at this stage to determine the level of teaching effectiveness. Based on the data analysis, a number of 50 teachers were selected as effective and the rest were excluded from the study.

During the second stage, the participants included the selected teachers (a number of 50 teachers) who had to complete the questionnaire related to empathy and also the same teachers' students who had to complete the individualized classroom environment questionnaire. Also, for the qualitative data collection which included an interview ,the researchers selected 8 (3 male and 5 female) teachers randomly. The following table (Table 1) presents the teachers' specifications including age, gender, teaching experience, and educational background. The age range of the teachers who were selected for the interview was between 36 and 48 and they had MA and PhD degrees.

Table 3.1 Teacher participants

Teacher	Age	Gender	Teaching experience Years	Educational Background
1	41	Female	17	MA
2	48	Male	28	MA
3	43	Male	18	MA
4	38	Female	12	MA
5	36	Female	10	MA
6	42	Female	16	MA
7	42	Female	14	MA
8	45	Male	17	MA

2.2 Instrumentation

In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used. The quantitative measure included the three questionnaires which were teacher effectiveness, classroom environment, and empathy. The qualitative technique was the face-to-face interview.

2.2.1 Quantitative Measures

The following questionnaires were employed by the researcher to collect data.

2.2.1.1 Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire

The first instrument was a questionnaire which was employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers. This questionnaire contained 67 items. The questionnaire was designed by Calaguas (2012) and included 4 dimensions of Teaching-Related Behaviour (TRB) with 45 items, Subject Matter Expertise (SME) with 10 items, Relational Expertise (RE) with 7 items, and Personality (P) with 5 items. Based on the reliability index reported by Calaguas the whole scale

had a reliability of 0.97. Moreover, the subscales' reported Cronbach alpha were 0.96 for TRB, 0.892 for SME, 0.83 for RE, and 0.70 for P. Thus, the internal consistency estimate related to the sub-scales ranged from 0.70 to 0.96. The minimum score on the scale is 67 and the maximum score is 268 on Likert scale of 5 point from 0 to 4.

2.2.1.2 Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire

The second instrument was a scale of classroom environment, which contained 5 constructs of personalization, participation, independence, investigation, and differentiation. In turn, each construct contained 5 subscales. The classroom environment instrument was an adaptation of DeYoung's (1977) questionnaire known as the Individualized Classroom Environment questionnaire. The questionnaire had a 5-point Likert scale of 1 to 5. The minimum score on the scale is 25 and the maximum score is 125 on a Likert scale of 5 point from 1 to 5. The reliability of the sub-constructs of the scale were reported as 0.83 for personalization, 0.73 for participation, 0.70 for independence, 0.69 for investigation, and 0.85 for differentiation.

2.2.1.3 Teacher Empathy Questionnaire (Persian Version)

The third instrument was a measure of Empathy which contained 22 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'does not describe me well' to 'describe me very well'. It involved the four subscales including Fantasy, Perspective Taking, Empathic Concern, and Personal Distress. It was adapted from Davis's Interpersonal Reactivity Index (1983). The reliability of the translated Persian version is reported by Khorrami (2016) as 0.78. The minimum score for the questionnaire is 22 and the maximum score is 110.

2.2.2 Qualitative measure

The researchers conducted a semi-structured face-to face interview to investigate the teachers' perceptions of classroom environment and empathy in terms of their effectiveness. In this regard, 8 effective teachers were selected randomly to attend the interview. The interviewed teachers had academic degrees. Each interview lasted between 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the information provided by the interviewees. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed carefully for content analysis. The following questions were the main interview questions.

1. What is your perception of empathy as it relates to your effectiveness?
2. What strategies do you employ to be emphatic?
3. What is your perception of your class environment as it relates to your effectiveness?
4. What factors in your classroom environment have helped you to be successful?

2.3 Procedure

Data collection extended over a period of 4 weeks and it was collected from various English institutions through the following procedure: the researcher received recommendations for choosing effective teachers from the administrators of the institutions. This was done to increase the probability of picking out effective teachers. After making a choie on the basis of recommendations, the researcher distributed the effectiveness questionnaire to the students of the selected teachers to determine their effectiveness level.

After having analysed the first stage data (when the effective teachers were already distinguished), the researcher distributed the classroom environment questionnaire among the students of the same teachers. Also, the empathy questionnaire was distributed among the effective teachers themselves.

Finally, to find more in-depth information and to gather teachers' perceptions a semi-structure and face-to-face interview was conducted with 8 teachers who were randomly selected from the whole sample.

2.4 Study Design and Analysis

The present study, as a cross-sectional survey, employed a sequential exploratory mixed method design. Such a design relates to educational research that consists of two phases, in which the quantitative and qualitative methods are implemented in a sequence (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson 2003). Cross-sectional surveys are studies that determine the frequency or level of a particular issue with a defined population in a specific time. The quantitative phase included the administration of the three questionnaires and the qualitative phase included the implementation of the face-to-face interview.

To analyse the quantitative data, to answer the first two research questions, the Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was employed to run a descriptive analysis and to identify frequencies and percentages.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the transcribed interviews were analysed for coding and to find the most recurrent emergent themes. Coding allows the researcher to transfer and connect to the data in order to to simplify the comprehension of the apparent events (Basit 2003). Also, themes are abstract meaningful patterns and can be discovered and extracted from data through the process of coding (Riazi 2016).

3. Results

The result section includes preliminary analysis of the data, including the test of normality and reliability of the questionnaires, descriptive statistics, quantitative analyses and qualitative thematic findings. The themes derived from the interviews are also reported.

3.1 Preliminary Analysis

In this section, the results of tests of normality and reliability are reported.

3.1.1 Test of Normality

To check the normality of the data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run for all of the variables studied in this research. Table 2 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for effective teachers.

Table 2
Test of Normality for Teacher Effectiveness

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]	
	df	Sig.
Teacher Effectiveness	300	.11

As Table 2 presents, the obtained sig value for this variable is .11, which is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data is normally distributed across this variable.Table 3 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for empathy.

Table 3
Test of Normality for Empathy

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]	
	df	Sig.
Empathy	50	.15

As Table 3 presents, the obtained sig value for this variable is .15, which is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data is normally distributed across this variable.
Table 4 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for classroom environment.

Table 4
Test of Normality for Classroom Environment

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]	
	df	Sig.
Classroom Environment	300	.09

As Table 4 presents, the obtained sig value for this variable is .09, which is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data is normally distributed across this variable.

3.1.2 Reliability of the Questionnaires

In the present study, SPSS has been used to calculate Cronbach's alpha coefficient to show the reliability of all the questionnaires and their subscales.

Table 5 summarizes the information obtained from Cronbach alpha analysis.

Table 5
Reliabilities for Teacher Effectiveness and the Subscales of Empathy and Classroom Environment

Scale	Subscales	Item Numbers	Cronbach's Alpha
Teacher Effectiveness		1-67	.91
Empathy	Fantasy	1,5,7*, 11*, 13, 19, 21	.78
	Empathic Concern	2, 4*, 8, 12*, 15*, 17, 18	.74
	Personal Distress	6, 9, 14, 16*, 20, 22	.73
	Perspective Taking	3*, 10	.55
Classroom Environment	Personalization	1, 6, 11*, 16, 21	.71
	Participation	2, 7*, 12, 17, 22	.72
	Independence	3*, 8, 13*, 18*, 23*	.80
	Investigation	4*, 9, 14, 19, 24	.76
	Differentiation	5, 10*, 15, 20, 25*	.84

* The asterisked items have been reversed.

As shown in Table 5, the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the three scales and their relevant subscales are greater than .70, indicating that they have an optimum reliability level except for the subscale of perspective taking (r = .55), which is fairly acceptable.

3.2 Descriptive Analyses

Prior to finding the answers to the research questions, the results from the descriptive statistics are reported. Table 6 below provides the descriptive statistics of the four sub-constructs of teachers' empathy, including fantasy, empathic concern, personal distress, and perspective taking.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Empathy and its Four Subscales

	N	Male	Female	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Empathy	50	11	39	62	104	77.02	9.02
Fantasy	50	11	39	10	34	22.76	5.83
Empathic Concern	50	11	39	14	35	27.68	4.04
Perspective Taking	50	11	39	2	10	7.06	1.67
Personal Distress	50	11	39	13	29	19.52	3.90

As Table 6 shows, the number of effective teacher participants is 50. Besides, the figures here demonstrate the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores related to the whole scale and the subscales of *empathy*. The possible range of scores for the whole scale is between 22 and 110. The possible range of score for fantasy and empathic concern is between 7 and 35, for perspective taking is between 2 and 10, and for personal distress is between 6 and 30. The highest mean score in the four subscales of teachers' empathy is related to Empathic concern (27.68). Perspective taking with the mean score of 7.06 has the lowest mean score.

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics for the five sub-constructs of classroom environment, including personalization, participation, independence, investigation, and differentiation.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Classroom Environment and its Five Subscales

	N	Male	Female	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Classroom Environment	300	144	156	61	123	97.80	16.65
Personalization	300	144	156	9	25	21.85	3.29
Participation	300	144	156	12	25	21.95	3.11
Independence	300	144	156	8	25	18.04	5.19
Investigation	300	144	156	7	25	19.20	3.86
Differentiation	300	144	156	5	25	16.74	5.59

As illustrated in Table 7, the total number of student participants is 300. The possible range of scores for the whole scale is between 25 and 125. The possible range of scores for all the subscales of classroom environment is between 5 and 25. Among the five subscales of classroom environment, participation has the highest mean score (21.95) and differentiation has the lowest mean score (16.74). Table 8 below shows the relevant descriptive statistics of teacher effectivenes.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Effectiveness

	N	Male	Female	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher Effective	300	144	156	236	401	353.02	34.02

As shown in Table 8, the number of student participants who evaluated their teachers as effective teachers is 300. The possible range of scores for teacher effectiveness scale with 67 items is between 67 and 402. In the present study, only the teachers who gained more than average (234) were selected for analysis.

3.3 Main Data Analysis

To meet the objectives of the present study and to find answers to the four research questions, the following analyses were conducted.

3.3.1 Analysis for Research Question 1

Q1: What are the patterns of empathy among effective Iranian EFL teachers?

To find the answer to the first research question, concerning the patterns of empathy among effective EFL teachers, frequency and percentage of teachers who answered the questionnaire were calculated for the items related to each of the four sub-constructs of empathy separately. Table 9 shows frequencies and percentages of the teachers' scores related to the items on the subscale of fantasy within the empathy scale.

Table 9
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Fantasy

Item Number	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No Idea		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q1	9	18	9	18	0	0	21	42	11	22	50	100
Q5	5	10	11	22	11	22	14	28	9	18	50	100
Q7	11	22	13	26	5	10	15	30	6	12	50	100
Q11	2	4	10	20	6	12	24	48	8	16	50	100
Q13	4	8	17	34	4	8	20	40	5	10	50	100
Q19	2	4	12	24	13	26	15	30	8	16	50	100
Q21	3	6	12	24	6	12	17	34	12	24	50	100
Mean		10.28		24		12.85		36		16.85		

As shown in Table 9, on average % 36 of the teacher participants marked *agree* and %16.85 of them marked *strongly agree* for the relevant items of fantasy. Adding these percentages, it can be concluded that %52.85 of the effective teachers are those who fantasize and daydream about things that might happen to them, while %34.28 (%24 *disagree* + %10.28 *strongly disagree*) of them do not have that much of a tendency to fantasize. It should be noted that Q7 and Q11 have been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted in respect of the column titles. Table 10 indicates frequencies and percentages of the teachers' scores related to the items on empathetic concern.

Table 10
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Empathetic Concern

Item Number	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No Idea		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%

Q2	2	4	5	10	2	4	30	60	11	22	50	100
Q4	0	0	5	10	7	14	29	58	9	18	50	100
Q8	2	4	1	2	4	8	32	64	11	22	50	100
Q12	1	2	4	8	3	6	30	60	12	24	50	100
Q15	1	2	6	12	6	12	25	50	12	24	50	100
Q17	0	0	9	18	5	10	17	34	19	38	50	100
Q18	0	0	0	0	7	14	21	42	22	44	50	100
Mean		1.71		8.57		9.71		52.57		27.42		

Adding up the mean percentages related to *agree* (%52.57) and *strongly agree* (%27.42) reported in Table 4.9 we may conclude that %79.99 of the effective teachers are those who have other-oriented feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others. Besides, the table shows that only %10.28 of the effective teachers (%8.57 *disagree* + %1.71 *strongly disagree*) do not have such feelings and concerns. It should be borne in mind that Q4, Q12, and Q15 have been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted with respect to the column titles.

Frequencies and percentages of the teachers' scores related to the items on personal distress are reported in Table 11.

Table 11
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Personal Distress

Item Number	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No Idea		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q6	0	0	3	6	3	6	30	60	14	28	50	10
Q9	4	8	12	24	11	22	17	34	6	12	50	0
Q14	1	2	6	12	18	36	21	42	4	8	50	10
Q16	6	12	27	54	8	16	5	10	4	8	50	0
Q20	4	8	19	38	13	26	12	24	2	4	50	10
Q22	1	2	6	12	14	28	22	44	7	14	50	0
Mean		5.33		24.33		22.33		35.67		12.33		10 0 10 0 10 0

Adding up the mean percentages related to *agree* (%35.67) and *strongly agree* (%12.33) reported in Table 8 reveals that %48 of the effective teachers are those who have self-oriented feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings. Besides, the table shows that only %29.66 of the effective teachers (%5.33 *disagree* + %24.33 *strongly disagree*) do not have such feelings of anxiety and concerns. It should be taken into account that Q16 has been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted in respect of the column titles. Table 12 indicates frequencies and percentages of the teachers' scores related to the items on perspective taking.

Table 12
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Perspective Taking

Item Number	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No Idea		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q3	3	6	13	26	8	16	21	42	5	10	50	100
Q10	1	2	5	10	11	22	18	36	15	30	50	100
Mean		4		18		19		39		20		

Based on the results of Table 12, the mean percentage for the teacher participants who have selected the *agree* option in the items of perspective taking subscale is %39, and for those who have selected the *strongly agree* option is %20. Adding these percentages, it can be concluded that %59 of the effective teachers are those who have the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others, while only %22 (%18 *disagree* + %4 *strongly disagree*) of them do not have the tendency to look at issues from another perspective. It is worth noting that Q3 in the table has been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted in respect with the column titles.

4.3.2 Analysis for Research Question 2

Q2: What are the patterns of classroon environment among effective Iranian EFL teachers?

To find the patterns of classroom environment among effective EFL teachers, frequency and percentage of students who answered the questionnaire were calculated for the items related to each of the four sub-constructs of classroom environment seperatly. Table 13 below shows frequencies and percentages of the scores related to the items on the subscale of personalization in the classroom environment scale as judged by the students.

Table 13
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Personalization

Item Number	Almost Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q1	0	0	7	2.3	9	3	67	22.3	217	72.4	300	100
Q6	27	9	6	2	45	15	78	26	144	48	300	100
Q11	8	2.7	4	1.3	15	5	43	14.3	230	76.7	300	100
Q16	12	4	10	3.3	35	11.7	99	33	144	48	300	100
Q21	9	3	4	1.3	33	11	66	22	188	62.7	300	100
Mean		3.74		2.04		9.14		23.52		61.56		

As Table 13 shows, the mean percentage of the student participants who selected *often* option in the relevant items of the questionnaire is %23.52 and that of those who marked *very often* is %61.56. Adding these percentages, it can be safely stated that the majority (%85.o5) of the students who have effective teachers believe that their classroom environment is student-friendly and is managed by teachers who do their best to take a personal interest in each student. On the other hand, only %5.76 (%2.04 selected *seldom* + %3.74 selected *almost never*) of the student participants stated that their teachers do nothing to personalize their classroom environment. It is necessary to emphasize that the Q11 in the table has been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted in respect of the column titles.

Table 14 shows frequencies and percentages of the scores related to the items on the subscale of participation in the classroom environment scale from the students' perspective.

Table 14
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Participation

Item Number	Almost Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q2	0	0	8	2.7	24	8	97	32.3	171	57	300	100
Q7	13	4.3	15	5	24	8	83	27.7	165	55	300	100
Q12	3	1	23	7.7	30	10	90	30	154	51.3	300	100
Q17	8	2.7	8	2.7	12	4	56	18.6	216	72	300	100
Q22	0	0	8	2.7	32	10.7	62	20.6	198	66	300	100
Mean		1.60		4.16		8.14		25.84		60.26		

Adding up the mean percentages related to *often* (%25.84) and *very often* (%60.26) reported in Table 14 suggests that %86.1 of the students whose teachers are effective declared that their learning environments are managed by teachers who are always trying to provide opportunities for learners to participate in classroom discussions. On the other hand, only %5.76 (%4.16 selected *seldom* + %1.60 selected *almost never*) of the students declared that their classrooms were run through teachers lectures without students asking or answering questions. Attention should be paid to the point that Q7 in the table has been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted with respect to the column titles. Table 15 shows frequencies and percentages of the scores related to the items on the subscale of independence in the classroom environment scale.

Table 15
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Independence

Item Number	Almost Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q3	26	8.7	20	6.7	43	14.3	50	16.6	161	53.7	300	100
Q8	15	5	27	9	29	9.7	103	34.3	126	42	300	100
Q13	29	9.7	69	23	46	15.3	41	13.7	115	38.3	300	100
Q18	43	14.3	77	25.7	33	11	35	11.7	112	37.3	300	100
Q23	35	11.7	90	30	38	12.7	38	12.6	99	33	300	100
Mean		9.88		18.88		12.60		17.80		40.86		

As shown in Table 15, the mean percentages of the student participants who selected *often* and *very often* are 17.80 and 40.86, respectively. Adding these two percentages, it can be suggested that %58.66 of the students whose teachers are effective experience a favourable teaching environment which is based on respecting the students' independence and freedom. Only %28.76 (%18.88 selected *seldom* + %9.88 selected *almost never*) of the students whose teachers are effective stated that their classrooms were run through strict teacher supervision. It should be taken into account that Q3, Q13, Q18, and Q23 have been reversed. Thus, the numbers given in every

cell should be reversely interpreted in respect of the column titles. Table 16 shows frequencies and percentages of the scores related to the items on the subscale of investigation from the classroom environment scale.

Table 16
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Investigation

Item Number	Almost Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q4	25	8.3	64	21.3	59	19.7	41	13.7	111	37	300	100
Q9	21	7	18	6	59	19.7	99	33	103	34.3	300	100
Q14	0	0	21	7	64	21.3	120	40	95	31.7	300	100
Q19	6	2	24	8	42	14	152	50.7	76	25.3	300	100
Q24	6	2	14	4.7	51	17	123	41	106	35.3	300	100
Mean		3.86		9.40		18.34		35.68		32.72		

Adding up the mean percentages related to *often* (%35.68) and *very often* (%32.72) reported in Table 16 suggests that %68.4 of the students whose teachers are effective declared that their classrooms are managed by teachers who utilise most of the teaching strategies to provide opportunities for learners to carry out investigations rather than to find the answers from textbooks. On the other hand, only %13.26 (%9.40 selected *seldom* + %3.86 selected *almost never*) of the students declared that they are not supposed to do any investigation. Attention should be paid to the point that Q4 in the table has been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted with respect to the column titles. Frequencies and percentages of the teachers' scores related to the items on differentiation are reported in Table 17.

Table 17
Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on Differentiation

Item Number	Almost Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q5	45	15	18	6	62	20.7	118	39.3	57	19	300	100
Q10	59	19.7	60	20	51	17	42	14	88	29.3	300	100
Q15	33	11	51	17	41	13.7	88	29.3	87	29	300	100
Q20	24	8	31	10.3	71	23.7	68	22.7	106	35.3	300	100
Q25	97	32.3	36	12	28	9.3	34	11.4	105	35	300	100
Mean		17.20		13.06		16.88		23.34		29.52		

As shown in Table 17, the mean percentages of the student participants who selected *often* and *very often* are 23.34 and 29.52, respectively. Adding these two percentages, it can be concluded that %52.96 of the students, whose teachers are effective, experience a favourable teaching

environment in which different students do different work based on their own potentials. However, %30.26 (%13.06 selected *seldom*+ %17.20 selected *almost never*) of the students who have effective teachers reported that in their classrooms all students do the same activity at the same time. It should be borne in mind that Q10 and Q25 in the table have been reversed, so the numbers given in every cell should be reversely interpreted with respect to the column titles.

3.2.3 Analysis for Research Question 3

Q3: What are the teacher's perception of empathy in relation to their effectiveness?

To understand what effective teachers' views are towards empathy and what strategies and techniques they use to be empathic, the researcher interviewed eight effective and experienced teachers.

Each interview, which lasted about five minutes, was recorded by a digital recorder. To analyse the interviews, first the recordings were transcribed word for word. Then, to extract the main themes and sub-themes from the transcription, a three-step coding process (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) was used. As a first step - open coding - a code was generated for each experience that the interviewees conveyed. In fact, open coding involves applying codes that are derived from the text (emergent codes). As the second step, axial coding, the similar emergent codes were merged into categories. As the last step, selective coding, some categories were chosen as the main categories (themes) and all other categories were placed as their sub-categories (sub-themes). Besides, the emergent codes that did not belong to any meaningful categories were deleted (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The following is an example of employing a three-step coding procedure done on specific cases of transcripts within the present study:

Table 18
Step 1: Open Coding (Finding emergent themes)

Part of Cases' Statements		Emergent Themes
I play some games in my classrooms to provide students with classroom environment in which they have no stress or anxiety.	1	Playing educational games
	2	Creating a stress-free learning environment
I put stress on words to indicate their importance.	3	Putting stress on important words
An important strategy that I use to lessen the students' stress is that I sometimes tell some jokes related to the subject of that day's lesson	4	Lowering the students' stress
	5	Telling topic-related jokes

Table 19
Step 2: Axial Coding (Merging similar emergent codes into categories)

Category One (2+4)	**Category Two** (1+5)
Creating a stress-free learning environment	playing educational games
Lowering the students' stress	Telling topic-related jokes

Table 20
Step 3: Selective Coding (Deciding on categories as main themes or sub-themes, and deletion of the irrelevant emergent codes derived from the first step)

Main Theme	**Sub-themes**
Creating a stress-free learning environment	Playing educational games
	Telling topic-related jokes

As shown in step 3, in this example emergent themes are classified under category one,while in the second step these merged into one main theme due to the similarity of their contents. Besides, emergent theme no. 3, extracted at the first step, was deleted because it was irrelevent.

The following are the two questions asked within the interviews:
Q1: What are your perceptions of empathy as it relates to your effectiveness?
Q2: What strategies do you employ to be empathetic?

Case 1
Gender: Female Age: 41 Teaching experience years: 17 Educational background: MA
She stated that, in order to be empathic, she uses some effective strategies, including:

- Showing compasion
- Understanding the students' feelings and problems
- Giving positive feedback
- Teaching students how to put themselves in the other person's shoes (e.g. in a famous film star's shoes) by doing some classroom activities and practice.
- Drawing students' attention to their shared goals and interests and highlighting the objective that they have in common

Case 2
Gender: Male Age: 48 Teaching experience years: 28 Educational background: MA
As an experienced effective teacher, he pointed out some of his frequently used strategies that have been helpful to show empathy towards his students during the 28 years of teaching experience. The main themes and sub-themes derived from his explanations are as follows:

- Considering the feelings of students
- Paying attention to students' individual differences
- Treating the students differently based on their different personalities
- Trying to put himself in the students' shoes in case of observing any abnormal behaviour
- Taking into consideration the students' problems
- Looking at the issues from both "agreed" and "disagreed" sides
- Trying to imagine things from the students' perspective
- Not criticizing students' ideas and discussions
- Counseling the upset students before teaching

Case 3

Gender: Male Age: 43 Teaching experience years: 18 Educational background: MA
The main themes and sub-themes driven from the interview with this effective teacher based on the 18 years teaching experience are the following:

- Understanding students' feelings in every situation
- Being a good listener instead of criticizing students
- Communicating properly with the students
- Involving all students
- Responding to all students' questions
- Maintaining eye contact with all of the students
- Calling them on their first names
- Having flexibility

Case 4
Gender: Female Age: 38 Teaching experience years: 12 Educational background: MA
The following themes and sub-themes are derived from the interview with this effective teacher with 12 years of teaching experience:

- Showing a pity-based response to a distressing situation
- Trying to be flexible
- Behaving in a friendly manner towards the students
- Paying attention to the students' emotional needs
- Paying attention to the students' individual differences, including personality and intelligence

Case 5
Gender: Female Age: 36 Teaching experience years: 10 Educational background: MA
The interviewee's explanation about her perception of empathy and her used strategies to be an empathetic teacher can be summarised and categorised in the following main and sub-themes:

- Counseling the students
- Being an active listener
- Using body language to express feelings non-verbally
- Telling topic-related jokes

Case 6
Gender: Female Age: 42 Teaching experience years: 16 Educational background: MA
The interviewee's point of view about teachers' empathy towards students and her own techniques and strategies in this field can be briefly mentioned as:

- Getting familiar with the students' family background
- Communicating properly with the students
- Not being judgmental
- Calling students on their first names
- Remembering students' names
- Respecting the students

Case 7
Gender: Female Age: 42 Teaching experience years: 14 Educational background: MA

To express the interviewee's position concerning empathy in a nutshell, the following themes are reported:

- Calling students on their first name
- Telling topic-related jokes
- Sharing personal experiences with the students
- Telling anecdotes
- Allowing all students to ask questions

Case 8

Gender: male Age: 45 Teaching experience years: 17 Educational background: MA

The interviewee's statement consists of the following main and sub-themes:

- Creating a friendly atmosphere in classroom
- Playing educational games
- Being kind
- Creating a stress-free learning environment
- Communicating properly with the students

The themes and the sub-themes extracted from the interviews with the eight effective teachers have been classified in the folllowing table (Table 21). The frequency of each theme has been given along with the items in the questionnaire the themes may be similar with. The themes with no numbers in the *Item No.* column do not have any equivalents in the respective questionnaire.

Table 21
Themes and Subthemes Extracted on Empathy, their Frequencies and Questionnaire Equivalents

Theme	F	Sub-Theme	F	subscale	Item No.
Portraying an attitude of empathy	6	Showing compasion	2	Empathic Concern	18
		Counseling the upset students before teaching	2		8
		Showing a pity-based response to a distressing situation	2		4
Teaching how to see things from the others' perspevtive	2	Encouraging the students to put themselves in the shoes of a famous film character by doing some class activities	2		
Paying attention to individual differences	3	Treating students differently based on their personalities	2		
		Considering differences in students' IQs	1		
Considering students' different points of view	2	Looking at the issues from the both "agreed" and "disagreed" sides	1	Perspective Taking	10
		Trying to put himself in students' shoes	1		
Undestanding the students	5	Taking into consideration the students' problems	2		
		Considering the students' needs	2		
		Getting familiar with the students' family background	1		
Not being judgmental	3	Being a good listener	2		
		Not criticizing students' ideas in discussions	1		
Communicating properly with the students	1	Involving all students in classroom activities	1		
	1	Responding all students	2		
		Having eye-contact with all students	1		

		Allowing all students to ask questions	3
		Using body language to convey feelings non-verbally	1
		Remembering students' names	1
		respecting all students	2
Creating a stress-free learning environment	8	Playing educational games	1
		Telling topic-related jokes	2
		Calling students with their first names	2
		Having flexibility	1
		Behaving friendly with the students	2

As shown in Table 21, the highest frequency is related to the main theme of "communicating properly with the students". The second highest frequency is related to the main theme of "creating a stress-free learning environment".

3.2.4 Analysis for Research Question 4

Q3: What are the teacher's perception of classroom environment in relation to their effectiveness?

To study effective teachers' attitude towards classroom environment and to find out more about the strategies that they use, the researcher conducted interviews with the same previously-mentioned teacher participants.To assess their ideas, their responses were transcribed and reviewed. Doing thematic analysis led to synthesizing the main themes and sub-themes reported for every case of the study, respectively. The two questions of the interview are as follows:

Q1: What is your perception of classroom environment as it relates to your effectiveness?

Q2: What factors in your classroom environment have helped you to be effective?

Case 1

Gender: Female Age: 41 Teaching experience years: 17 Educational background: MA

As an experienced effective teacher, she explained some of her used strategies that have been helpful to create effective environment in her classes during 17 years of teaching. The main themes and sub-themes derived from her explanations are as follows:

- Letting students have discussions for and against something
- Respecting the others' opinions and perspectives
- Sharing personal experiences with the students
- Telling anecdotes
- Creating opportunities for collaboration
- Designing team-projects
- Playing games

Case 2

Gender: Male Age: 48 Teaching experience years: 28 Educational background: MA

The following themes and sub-themes are extracted from the interview with this effective teacher with 28 years of teaching experience:

- Taking a personal interest in each student
- Talking to each student separately
- Respecting students
- Letting students have discussions
- Letting students choose their partners for doing pairwork

- Using students' ideas and suggestions
- Giving different homework based on the students' levels
- Considering the students' differences
- Helping weak students
- Paying attention to students' opinions and feelings
- Paying attention to students' different intelligences
- Encouraging students to do pair and group work
- Explaining the lesson
- Answering the students' questions effectively
- Linking lessons to real life situations

Case 3

Gender: Male Age: 43 Teaching experience years: 18 Educational background: MA

He stated that in order to have an effective classroom environment, he uses some effective strategies, including:

- Being kind to the students
- Encouraging students to be kind with each other
- Encouraging students to play games
- Paying attention to the students' feedback
- Having a good manner with the students
- Using audio-visual instructional materials in classrooms

Case 4

Gender: Female Age: 38 Teaching experience years: 12 Educational background: MA

The interviewee's statements consist of the following main and sub-themes:

- Creating a positive learning environment
- Having enthusiasm for teaching
- Feeling responsible for teaching and learning
- Doing classoom activities that encourage learning
- Providing students with activities which lead to experiential learning
- Taking advantage of the students' feedback

Case 5

Gender: Female Age: 36 Teaching experience years: 10 Educational background: MA

To express the interviewee's declaration about the influential classroom environment factors which helped her to be effective in a nut shell, the following themes are reported:

- Making a friendly atmosphere
- Being kind to students
- Playing games
- Having good manners with students

Case 6

Gender: Female Age: 42 Teaching experience years: 16 Educational background: MA

The interviewee's explanation about her perception of classroom environment and her used strategies to make it effective can be summarized and categorized in the following main and sub-themes:

- Using teaching aids
- Creating happy atmosphere in classrooms
- Implementing law enforcement
- Displaying love for teaching
- Being generous
- Using lesson plan
- Implementing justice
- Feeling resposible for teaching

Case 7

Gender: Female Age: 42 Teaching experience years: 14 Educational background: MA

The interviewee's point of view about classroom environment and the essential factors in changing it into an effective environment can be briefly mentioned as:

- Making students work together
- Encouraging students to share information
- Using available instructional equipment in classrooms
- Manifesting humanistic behaviour in classrooms
- Having sense of humor
- Displaying authority when teaching

Case 8

Gender: male Age: 45 Teaching experience years: 17 Educational background: MA

The following themes and sub-themes are derived from the interview with this effective teacher about the most influential factors in having effective classroom environment based on his 17 years of teaching experience:

- Having students enjoy feeling secure in the classroom
- Not humiliating students for their mistakes
- Making students have cooperation with other students
- Letting students ask questions

The themes and the subthemes extracted from the interviews with the eight effective teachers have been classified in the folllowing table (Table 22). The frequency of each theme has been given along with the items in the questionnaire the themes may be similar with. The themes with no numbers in the *Item No.* column do not have any equivalents in the respective questionnaire.

Table 22

Themes and Subthemes Extracted on Classroom Environment, their Frequencies and Questionnaire Equivalents

Theme	F	Sub-Theme	F	Subscale	Item No.
Encouraging students to do pair and group work	8	Having group conversation	1	participation	2
		Sharing information through discussions	2		22
		Discussing for and against something	1		12
		Creating opportunities for collaboration	2		
		Designing team projects	2		
Using teaching aids	3	Using audio-visual instructional material	1		

		Using instructional equipment	2		
Making a friendly atmosphere	10	Respecting students' perspective	2		
		Having good manners towards the students	1		
		Being kind to students	2		
		Making students to be kind with each other	1		
		Being generous	1		
		Making students feel secure	1		
		Creating a positive learning environment	1		
		Not humiliating students for their mistakes	1		
Creating a happy atmosphere in the classroom	4	Having sense of humour	1		
		playing games	3		
Taking a personal interest in each student	4	Talking to each student separately	1	personalization	1
		Helping weak students	1		16
		Attending to each students' opinions and feelings	2		21
Giving freedom and independence	2	Letting students ask questions while teaching	1	Independence	23
		Letting students choose their partners for pair works	1		8
Manifesting humanistic and ethical behaviour	5	Implementing justice	1		
		Feeling responsibility for teaching	2		
		Paying attention to the students' feedback	2		
Implementing law enforcement	2	Displaying authority when teaching	2		
Paying attention to individual differences	2	Giving different homework based on students' level	1	Differentiation	5
		Considering students' different intelligence	1		
Sharing personal experiences with students	2	Telling anecdotes	2		
Displaying love for teaching	2				
Designing classroom activities that encourage learning	2	Providing students with activities which lead to experiential learning	2		

As shown in Table 22, the highest frequency is related to the main theme of "creating a friendly atmosphere". The second highest frequency is related to the main theme of "encouraging students to do pair and group work".

4. Discussion of the Findings

This study was an attempt to investigate patterns of teacher empathy and positive classroom environment among effective Iranian English language teachers. Research questions were

analysed in two phases. In the first phase, quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS software to specify the patterns of empathy and classroom environment among effective teachers.

To identify empathy patterns, frequency of manifestation and the percentage of the teachers who completes the respective questionnaire were calculated separately for the items related to each of the four sub-constructs of empathy. The first finding concerning the sub-construct of empathetic concern was that %79.99 of the effective teachers are those teachers who manifest this type of attitude and foster other-oriented feelings of sympathy for unfortunate others, while only %10.28 of the effective teachers without having such feelings and concerns have the potential to run their classes effectively.

The next finding concerning the sub-construct of perspective taking was that %59 of the effective teachers are those teachers whose minds are flexible and they are ready to look at issues from another perspective. It is worth mentioning that only %22 of the effective teachers are those who resist to adopt the others' points of view.

The next finding concerning the sub-construct of fantasy was that %52 of the effective teachers are those who have the imaginary power to daydream about things that might happen to them or to fantasize and put themselves in the place of a character after watching a film. Besides, it was found that %34.28 of the effective teachers do not have such a tendency or imagination power.

The last finding concerning the sub-construct of personal distress was that %48 of the effective teachers are those who have self-oriented personal anxiety and tend to lose control or feel unease in tense interpersonal settings or during emergencies. It should be noted that only %29 of the effective teachers are those who remain calm and are quite effective in dealing with emergencies.

To find classroom environment patterns, frequency and percentage of the students who answered the relevant questionnaire were calculated for the items related to each of the five sub-constructs of classroom environment separately. The findings are reported from the highest percentage to the lowest one.

The first finding related to the sub-construct of participation was that %86.1 of the students of effective teachers stated that they have experienced classrooms handled through involving students in learning via participating in discussions, giving opinions, and asking questions. Only %5.76 of the students, whose teachers wereperceived as effective, reported to have teacher-centered and lecture-centered classroom environment without opportunities for students to participate in classroom discussions.

Another finding related to the sub-construct of personalization was that %85 of the students of effective teachers declared that they experienced student-friendly classrooms in which personal interest was taken in each student and his/her feelings. On the other hand, only %5.76 of student participants reported having teachers who did not show any personal interest in the students.

Another finding related to the sub-construct of investigation was that %68.4 of the students with effective teachers suggested that they were provided with opportunities to investigate in order to test ideas or to answer questions coming from class discussions. However, %13.26 of the students announced that they were not expected to do any investigation.

One other finding related to the sub-constructs of independence was that %58.66 of the students whose teachers were perceived as effective enjoyed classroom environments in which they felt fairly free and independent. Only %28.76 of the students reported to have classrooms managed under the strict supervision of their teachers.

The last finding related to the sub-construct of differentiation was that %52.96 of the students who were taught by effective teachers enjoyed learning situations in which students were supposed to do different class activities or homework based on their different personalities or potentials. However, %30.26 of the students whose teachers were effective reported to have classrooms with no differentiation.

In the second phase, qualitative analyses through pre-specified and emergent thematic coding were done on the transcriptions of interviews with effective teachers. Several main themes and sub-themes were extracted from the interviews.

The following main themes, ranked from the highest frequency to the lowest, were extracted from the interviews with effective teachers about teacher empathy:

1. Communicating properly with the students
2. Creating a stress-free learning environment
3. Portraying an attitude of empathy
4. Understanding the students
5. Not being judgmental
6. Paying attention to individual differences
7. Teaching how to see things from the others' perspective
8. Considering students' different points of view

The following main themes, ranked from the highest frequency to the lowest, were extracted from the interviews with effective teachers about classroom environment:

1. Creating a friendly atmosphere
2. Encouraging students to do pair and group work
3. Manifesting humanistic and ethical behaviour
4. Taking a personal interest in each students
5. Creating a happy atmosphere in classroom
6. Using teaching aids
7. Giving freedom and independence
8. Implementing strong classroom management techniques
9. Sharing personal experiences with students
10. Displaying love for teaching
11. Designing classroom activities that encourage learning
12. Paying attention to individual differences

In sum, one important result was that the majority (%79) of the effective teachers have high empathetic concern and only a small percent (%10) do not have such feelings and concerns. This finding is in line with the results obtained in Bozkurt and Ozden's (2010) study, in which they came to the conclusion that it was empathetic beviours rather than competencies of teachers that had impact on students' success in learning.

Despite the common pre-supposition that effective teachers should be self-confident enough to control their personal distress in every situation, the results of this study surprisingly showed that around half of the effective teachers, at least in the present study sample, reported to have high level of anxiety in tense interpersonal settings. Thus, it may pave the ground for a challenging discussion that one can be an effective teacher, even if he/she is not a perfectly self-confident manager in emergency situations.

Scrutinizing the classroom environment of the effective teachers, the present study revealed that a high percentage of their students have experienced student-centered classrooms in which student participation and involvement in learning have been emphasized and central. This

finding is to some extent supported by a study conducted by Malik and Rizvi (2018) in which involvement (negotiation) was found to have the highest correlation with students' academic achievement and to be the best predictor for academic achivement.

Another finding which is worth contemplating on is that more than half of the students whose teachers were seen as effective have experienced teaching environments in which students' independence, freedom, and investigation have been acknowledged. The probable contribution of giving independence and freedom to the students and focusing on investigation in effective teaching may be aspects that traditional teachers may take less seriously. However, the point is that this finding is to some extent in contrast with the results obtained by Malik and Rizvi (2018) in which they found "autonomy" and "investigation" to have negative impact on students' achievement

In the second phase of the study, some interviews were conducted with the teachers to find the complementary information about teacher empathy and classroom environment. Doing thematic analysis, extracting main themes and sub-themes, and comparing them with the subscales and items of the respective questionnaire to find similarities and excluding them, six new themes were extracted from the interviews on the topic of empathy. The high frequency of two of these new themes, "communicating properly with the students" and "creating a stress-free learning environment" indicate the importance of these features from the interviewees' points of view. In the case of extracting the same themes through replication of this study in the future, these new themes could be added to the sub-constructs of empathy questionnaire.

Besides, excluding the themes similar with the classroom environment questionnaire, eight new themes were extracted from thematic analysis of the interviews on classroom environment. The high frequency of two themes, "creating a friendly atmosphere" and "manifesting humanistic and ethical behaviour" may justify the need to consider these themes as the subconstructs of classroom environment in the respective questionnaire.

5. Conclusions

The current study aimed to shed more light on the patterns of empathy and the features of favourable classroom environments among effective Iranian EFL teachers. Quantitative analyses were performed to determine the frequency and the percentage of teachers who answered the empathy questionnaire,calculating the items related to each of the four sub-constructs of empathy separately. The results showed that the contributions of each sub-construct in teacher effectiveness in order of their priority are as follows: empathetic concern, perspective taking, fantasy, and personal distress.

The surprising side-result obtained from this part of analysis, which is worth noting, is that around half of the effective teacher participants in this study claimed to have a high level of anxiety and a tendency to lose control or feel unease in tense interpersonal settings or during emergencies.

Results from calculating frequency and percentage for classroom environment construct showed that the contributions of each respective sub-construct in teacher effectiveness in order of priority are as follows: participation, personalization, investigation, independence, and differentiation. The great contribution of participation and personalization highlight the importance of getting students involved in classroom activities and paying personal attention to all of them. Additionally, results showed that more than half of the students of effective teachers have experienced teaching environments in which students' independence, freedom, and investigation

have been emphasized. This proves the considerable contribution of giving independence and freedom to the students and focusing on investigation in effective teaching that cannot be ignored.

Besides, qualitative thematic analyses were done on the interviews with effective teachers to shed more light on both empathy and classroom environment constructs. Among the eight main themes extracted from thematic analysis of the interviews on the topic of empathy, two themes were similar with the two sub-constructs of empathetic concern and perspective taking in the respective questionnaire. Another six themes are new themes found in this study.They include communicating properly with the students, creating a stress-free learning environment, understanding the students, not being judgmental, paying attention to individual differences, and teaching how to see things from the others' perspective. The high frequency of the first two new themes, "communicating properly with the students" and "creating a stress-free learning environment" indicate the importance of these features from the interviewee's point of view .

Finally, based on the results of thematic analysis of the interviews on the topic of classroom environment, twelve main themes were extracted, among them four themes were similar with the four sub-constructs of participation, personalization, independence and differentiation. Eight new themes emerged from the interviews with the effective teachers. They include creating a friendly atmosphere, manifesting humanistic and ethical behaviour, creating a happy atmosphere in classroom, using teaching aids, implementing strong classroom management techniques, sharing personal experiences with students, displaying love for teaching, designing classroom activities that encourage learning. The high frequency of the first two new themes, "creating a friendly atmosphere" and "manifesting humanistic and ethical behaviour" shows the significance of these features in effective teaching from the effective teacher's perspective.

Recognizing the pattern of empathy and classroom environment among effective teachers and finding the proportion of contributions of their respective sub-constructs would help those language teachers whose challenge is to be effective to know some of the most influential factors in making a teacher effective.

Moreover, being aware of the great influence of being empathic in teaching effectively paves the way for supervisors to use empathy in questionnaires to evaluate teaching candidates and choose the empathetic ones.

Besides, since both empathy and classroom environment are teacher-centered features, it seems that the results of this study have nothing to do with language learners at first glance. However, language learners can benefit indirectly from the results of this study. Selecting empathetic teachers as supervisors from the beginning on the one hand, and training teachers to manage their classroom environment effectively on the other hand, will increase the chance of encountering a learner with an effective teacher in a positiveeffective learning environment.

Finally, finding the pattern of effective teachers' classroom environment will lead to recommendations for curriculum designers to stick to designing tasks in a way that makes the classroom a more effective environment for learning

We suggest that future researchers conduct further studies on finding the patterns of other significant learning or teaching factors such as motivation or anxiety among effective teachers. Further research is needed to replicate this study in different sample populations or even in different cultures to determine whether the results will be the same. Furthermore, in case future researchers replicate this study they may also considerincluding some other variables such as gender, age, and educational status to find if the results can be generalized to a wider scope. The present study was carried out in language institutes. Replication of this study in other contexts such as universities may also result in different findings.

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