Research Paper

Exploring the Interplay Among Stroke, Strictness, and Teacher Success from EFL Teachers' Perspective: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study aimed to explore the interplay among stroke, strictness, and teacher success from Iranian male and female EFL teachers' points of view. This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. In the present study, 420 EFL teachers, 200 males and 220 females, participated based on convenience sampling. For collecting the quantitative data, three questionnaires were employed. From the sample of the study, 50 EFL teachers (25 male and 25 female) were interviewed on teacher stroke and teacher strictness. The intended variables' relationships were examined using the Pearson product-moment correlation formula, and thematic analysis (TA) was applied to analyze the qualitative data. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between female and male teachers' success and stroke, and there is also a significant relationship between female and male teachers' success and strictness. The qualitative findings indicated that the male and female teachers adopted a positive view toward strictness and stroke as the teachers' behaviors in the class in which complement the quantitative findings. At the end of the paper, the implications of the study were presented.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are regarded as the most essential component of any educational system. That is to say, the efficiency of any educational system depends on the performance of its teachers (Pishghadam, Baghaei, & Shahriari, 2011). In a similar line, effective teachers play a significant role in learners' achievements (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Teacher traits stand out, especially when learners problems during the learning process are taken into account. Notwithstanding, presenting a suitable definition

for good teachers can be a demanding task as the term good has many various connotations (Kalay, 2017). It is believed that the meaning changes based on the context. Furthermore, the question "good in terms of what?" pops up in the mind, where a proper definition is concerned (Kalay, 2017). As for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, the profile of an effective EFL teacher has been emphasized since 1920s, and it has been explored through learners' or teachers' perceptions. From the learners' point of view, successful teachers are typically the ones who are distinguished with regard to the essence of a subject, teaching

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content, knowledge of syllabus, implementation of especial methods, and teacher-student relationships (Kalay, 2017). To depict the favorable characteristics of a teacher is a complicated task. For every individual, a successful instructor can mean different things. Students may have different perceptions, ideas, and/or experiences of a successful teacher (Moreno Rubio, 2009). Several studies have focused on the characteristics of a successful teacher (e.g., Amini, 2019; Amini et al., 2019; Elizabeth et al., 2008; Hiebert et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2021; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009); however, the teacher success could have significant relationships with the other variables, such as teacher stroke and teacher strictness.

Broadly speaking, among different variables, which provide affective support for EFL students, teacher-student interaction is of great importance. Over the past two decades, EFL/ESL researchers have explored the variables influencing teacher-learner relations (e.g., McBee, 2007; O'Connor, 2008; Barclay, 2012; Hashemi, 2008; Cheung et al., 2008), and stroke is regarded as a significant element of teacher care among these variables (Pishghadam, Naji Meidani, & Khajavy, 2015), which is depicted as any act a person does to acknowledge another person (Berne, 1988). The teacher's recognition of the student is referred to as a "teacher stroke" which is an essential element of teacher behavior (Pishghadam et al., 2015). In fact, this kind of instructor behavior aims to keep an effective relationship between teachers and students (Rogers & Webb, 1991). That is to say, stroke, as a behavioral device, is implemented with the aim of meeting personal's need for recognition or their recognition hunger (Amini et al., 2019). In this respect, both instructors and students are on a constant line of stroke hunger (Berne, 1988). According to Freedman (1993), individuals act more effectively in contexts where there are more strokes, and learning occurs best in contexts where students receive emotional support and experience enjoyable learning (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007); as a result, stroking might help both students and teachers succeed academically. However, in teacher success studies, stroke is a missing topic that has not been thoroughly discussed in relation to other variables, such as teacher strictness.

Teacher behaviors can be broadly classified as interpersonal and teaching behaviors (Jiang et al. 2021). Interpersonal behaviors are usually conceptualized and investigated using the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), which encompasses eight sectors of behaviors, namely, leadership, helpful/friendly, understanding, student freedom, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and strictness. Some teachers felt that their strictness was essential for respect, safety, efficient education, and their success. Students also view their teacher's strictness as achieving bigger goals (Poplin et al., 2011). In a study done by Molica and Nuessel (1997) on the characteristics of successful English teachers, maintenance of classroom discipline and strictness was viewed as an aspect of classroom environment which is considered critical in their outline of the traits of successful language teachers. Yet, little attention has been specifically paid to teacher strictness in second language (L2) education in general and in EFL education in particular. Therefore, the present mixed-methods study aimed to explore the interplay among stroke, strictness, and teacher success from Iranian male and female EFL teachers' points of view.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical Framework
Students go through a wide spectrum of emotions in the classroom, both positive and negative (Irajzad et al., 2017). Learning is most effective when students have emotional support and like their lessons (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). Student emotions in the classroom are closely tied to the kind of interaction teachers have with their learners (Frenzel et al., 2009). A positive rapport between teachers and students is one of the elements influencing students' learning in a classroom setting (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). Such a relationship not only aids learners to improve the essential interpersonal abilities, reduce their stress, and develop their motivation, but causes them to feel engaged in the learning process (Da Luz, 2015; Khajavy, 2012). As a result, teachers have a major impact on students' motivation and development of crucial interpersonal skills through fostering positive relationships with them (Pierson, 2003, as cited in Irajzad et al., 2017). These interpersonal relationships can be depicted by a theory suggested by Eric Berne known as Transactional Analysis (TA) theory (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). "TA is a theory of personality and systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change" (Stewart & Joines, 1987, p. 3). The six basic elements of TA theory consist of ego states, life positions, life scenario, transactions, time structures, and strokes (Berne, 1988, as cited in Irajzad et al., 2017). The implementation

of TA in the educational setting presents a solid foundation for a better conception of the relationships between human manners, education, and learning (Barrow & Newton, 2015). Furthermore, its great potentials lead to positive changes in the education process and bring about a learning method, which is more fantastic and natural (Stuart & Agar, 2011). TA is utilized in educational contexts to aid teachers and students gain a clear interaction and refuse facing unproductive situations (Stewart & Joines, 1987). In fact, teachers who apply the TA method have better opportunities of accomplishing the needs of their students. Since interaction is an inextricable part of language learning, TA may ease this process via building conversations more open and straightforward. In this regard, some scholars have investigated the application of TA in educational contexts (e.g., Barrow, Bradshaw & Newton, 2001; Hellaby, 2004). Stroke is one of the elements of TA theory and a significant element of teacher care (Pishghadam et al., 2015).

Empirical Studies

Pishghadam and Karami (2017) examined the role of two factors, namely teacher stroking and teacher credibility in relation to teacher success. To do so, a total of 301 EFL students completed three survey instruments: the Student Stroke Scale, the Source Credibility Scale, and the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), first, the construct validity of the Source Credibility Scale was substantiated, and then the associations among all three scales were examined. The results revealed that teacher effectiveness correlated significantly and positively with both the components of stroke and that of teacher credibility. Similarly, Noorbakhsh et al. (2018) explored the roles of teacher gender identity and stroke in teacher success from the learners' viewpoints. Three scales were used to measure stroke, teacher gender identity, and teacher success. The participants consisted of 287 English learners in private language institutes. The findings indicated that femininity and masculinity predicted stroke, and stroke and androgyny were positive predictors of teacher success. In a similar line of studies, Amini et al. (2019) examined the relationships between teacher success, psychological reactance, and stroke. To do this, 300 Iranian English EFL students from various English language institutes completed a psychological reactance scale together with stroke and teacher success scales. According to the findings, a stroke was a positive indicator of a teacher success. Additionally, a negative correlation between psychological reactance and teacher success was discovered. Furthermore, Pishghadam et al. (2019) studied the roles of teacher success, credibility, and stroke in learners' WTAC. In this respect, 276 B.A. students majoring in English Language filled the scales out, and the findings showed that there is a significant positive relationship, first, between teacher success and learners' WTAC, second, between teacher credibility and learners' WTAC, and third, between teacher stroke and learners' WTAC. Moreover, the results also showed that teachers' WTAC and success, credibility, and stroke were significantly correlated. In a same vein, Amini (2019) undertook a research to determine whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of their teachers were influenced by the quantity and type of strokes they experienced in class. Two sets of questionnaires were administered to 400 male and female EFL students who were selected from formal and informal educational settings. The results indicated a positive relationship between teacher effectiveness and stroke. Additionally, it was discovered that valuing and verbal stroke—two of the four subscales of stroke—were the important determinants of teacher effectiveness. In a similar line of studies, Gao (2021) carried out a review study to describe two prime instances of teacher interpersonal behaviors, namely teacher confirmation and stroke, their underlying frameworks, and contributions to desirable student-related outcomes. Providing empirical evidence, the argument regarding the pivotal role of language teacher confirmation and stroke in EFL/ESL contexts was proved. Moreover, Jiang et al. (2021) compared the associations between teacher strictness, teacher feedback, and students' motivational beliefs using data from six Western countries and six East Asian regions in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). A total of 89,869 15-year-old students were included in data analysis. The findings indicate that teacher strictness was negatively associated with Western students' motivation, but positively related to that of East Asian students. In addition, teacher feedback had significant positive associations with the motivational beliefs of both Western and East Asian students, and there was a positive relationship between teacher strictness and teacher feedback in East Asian context.

As far as the researchers of the study reviewed the related literature, no study was conducted to explore the interplay between EFL teacher's

strictness and teacher success, and it is a big gap in the related literature, so this study aimed at filling this gap in the related literature. Since strictness and stroke variables could have the potential of empowering EFL teacher education and resulting in profound educational implications, this study aimed to explore the interplay among stroke, strictness, and teacher success from Iranian male and female EFL teachers' points of view. Expecting efficient educational processes is impossible unless the teacher is qualified and successful enough (Sahan, 2009). As insufficiency of successful teachers could impair learning to a great extent, having knowledge of the elements which could cause teacher success, such as teacher stroke and teacher strictness seems to be essential for the Iranian teacher trainers (Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). Therefore, the significance of the present study lies in investigating EFL teacher success in relation to teachers' strictness and stroke and how these variables could be effective in teacher success across gender. Investigation of these variables could be of particular significance in the Iranian EFL context due to the fact that the previous studies in the field (e.g., Amini et al., 2019; Amini, 2019; Noorbakhsh et al., 2018; Pishghadam *et al.*, 2011; Richardson, 2001) did not study the interplay among stroke, strictness, and teacher success from Iranian EFL teachers' perspective. Therefore, the present study aimed to answer the following research questions,

RQ1: Is there any statistically significant relationship between female teachers' success and stroke?

RQ2: Is there any statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and stroke?

RQ3: Is there any statistically significant relationship between female teachers' success and strictness?

RQ4: Is there any statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and strictness?

RQ5: What are the male and female EFL teachers' attitudes toward stroke with regard to teacher success?

RQ6: What are the EFL male and female teachers' attitudes toward strictness with regard to teacher success?

METHODS
Design of the Study
This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. In two successive phases within one study, the sequential explanatory design used quantitative and qualitative

methodologies. First, a quantitative strategy (a questionnaire survey) was used, then a qualitative method utilizing thematic analysis was employed.

Participants
In the present study, 420 EFL teachers, 200 males and 220 females, participated in the study. The teachers were delivering English classes at various language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces in Iran. The method for sample selection was convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling that consists of the sample being taken from the closest portion of the population (Ary et al., 2013). They had more than two years teaching experience, and 282 teachers were English B.A. holders, 111 teachers were English M.A. holder, 20 teachers were Ph.D. candidates, and seven teachers were Ph.D. holders. All of the teachers passed the teacher training course (TTC) of the institutes. Furthermore, the data was collected from three educational districts that correspond to the poor, middle, and high social strata in Tehran and the Alborz provinces in order to be as representative as possible.

Instruments
Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale
This scale was developed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) and utilized to assess the performance and success of language teachers. This scale, which was written in Persian, has 47 items with a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." It examines eleven components. Its reliability was measured, and it was in an acceptable range.

Stroke Scale
This scale, which Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) developed in Persian, was applied to evaluate the provided stroke by the teachers for their learners. It has 18 items on a 5-point Likert scale with a range of 1 (never) to 5 (always), each representing a different type of stroke. The two fundamental features of the stroke are being recognized by others and giving others feedback. Feedback can be given verbally, non-verbally, or both, and it can be positive or negative. Its reliability was measured, and it was in an acceptable range.

Teacher Strictness Scale
This scale was developed and designed by the researchers. The items of the scale were developed based on the criteria of the teacher

strictness adopted from the related literature. It included 15 items. It was a 5-point Likert scale (1. Never 2. Occasionally 3. Sometimes 4. Often 5. Always). The content validity of the scale was confirmed by three Ph.D. holders in the field. Its reliability was measured, and it was in an acceptable range.

Semi-structured Interview

In order to triangulate the data, the semi-structured interview was held. From the sample of the study, 50 EFL teachers (25 male and 25 female) were interviewed by the researchers on teacher stroke and teacher strictness. The questions of the interview were extracted from the results of the scales, and it consisted of 16 open-ended questions (8 stroke questions and 8 strictness questions). Its content validity was approved by three experts in the field. To enhance the interview questions, a pilot interview with five participants was conducted. Consequently, the interviews were undertaken with the main participants.

Reliability of Research Instruments

To examine the questionnaires' reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed. In the following table, the results of the questionnaires' reliability are presented.

Table 1
Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Questionnaire	Cronbach's alpha
Stroke	0.933
Strictness	0.922
Success	0.919

According to Table 1, it can be seen that all Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.7, and they are in the acceptable range.

Data Collection Procedure
Quantitative Phase

The method for sample selection was convenience sampling. So the accessibility and availability of the participants was the main criterion of sample selection. The purpose of the study was explained to the managers of the English language institutes and after getting their permission to gather the data from their teachers, they explained the aim of the study to the teachers completely. Upon their agreement to take part in the study, they were considered as the participants.

For collecting the quantitative data, three questionnaires were employed in the current study which were mentioned in instrumentation section. It took around 15-20 minutes for the participants to complete each questionnaire. The data was collected during four months. The data was gathered at the teachers' rooms of the institutes where teachers could rest and study there. Before administrating the questionnaires, the first researcher explained the aim of the study and the procedure of answering questionnaires. He ensured the participants that the results of the questionnaires were confidential and did not have any effects on their careers in the institutes to minimize the participants' bias in their responses.

Qualitative Phase

After collecting the quantitative data, the qualitative phase was undertaken. From the sample of the study, 50 EFL teachers (25 male and 25 female) were interviewed, by the first author as the main researcher of the present study, on teacher stroke and teacher strictness. The questions of the interview were extracted from the results of the scales by the researchers, and it included 16 open-ended questions (8 stroke questions and 8 strictness questions). The interview sessions were held during one month. Every session took about 20 minutes. Depending on the availability and willingness of the participants, they were performed face-to-face, over the phone, or via Skype. While 18 of the interviews were conducted in-person, 32 were conducted remotely. The participants were told of the interview's goal and timing prior to the interview sessions. The precise time and location of the interview session were planned in the case of their agreement. Once the data had reached saturation, the researchers stopped conducting interviews because there were no new codes or themes emerging from the data. After that, member checking was done to make sure that the data was reliable (Ary et al., 2013).

Data Analysis Procedure

After data collection, the correlations between the variables were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation formula. In order to

analyze the qualitative data, thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to identify the related codes and categories. This required the transcription of interview recordings and followed coding stages.

RESULTS
Descriptive Statistics
The characteristics of descriptive statistics of research variables and its dimensions are given in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive indicators of research variables

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Standard error	Statistic	Standard error
Stroke	420	3.93	0.75	-1.208	0.119	1.655	0.238
Strictness	420	3.79	0.75	-0.954	0.119	1.185	0.238
Success	420	3.83	0.55	-0.975	0.119	1.164	0.238

Based on the information in Table 2, which investigates the descriptive statistics of the variables derived from the indicators within the sample, the mean of the variables in the sample is greater than the value or cut-off point of 3, i.e., in the sample of respondents, their amount of stroke, stiffness, and success is higher than the mean value, and there is relative agreement in the sample. On the other hand, according to Steven (2002), the dispersion in the responses of individuals in the sample must be greater than the cut-off point of 0.5 for a variable. That is, it is clear that in the preprocessing section, indifferent people in each row have been identified and removed. All values of the standard deviation of each variable in the sample for the present study is greater than the cut-off point of 0.5.

Testing the Normality of Data
Since the data of this research have been obtained through a questionnaire and spectrum, the only method for investigation is the skewness and kurtosis indicators and place the observations in certain intervals. As shown in Table 2, two necessary and sufficient conditions were examined, and it was found that the data distribution of the research variables has a bell-shaped and normal pattern.

Answering the First Research Question
Is there a statistically significant relationship between female teachers' success and stroke?

To specify the significance of the relationship between female teachers' success and stroke, first, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.

Table 3
Correlation coefficient between female teachers' success and stroke

Pearson correlation		Stroke
Female teachers' success	Number (n)	220
	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.373
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to the information in Table 3, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This means that at the 99% probability level, the H_0 hypothesis is rejected, therefore, there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and stroke. According to Kesel (2010) (0.20-0.35, weak intensity), (0.35-0.65, moderate intensity), (0.65-0.85, good intensity) and (0.85 and above, strong intensity) based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between female teachers' success and stroke is moderate. Graph 1 shows the scatter graph for the correlation between female teachers' success and stroke.
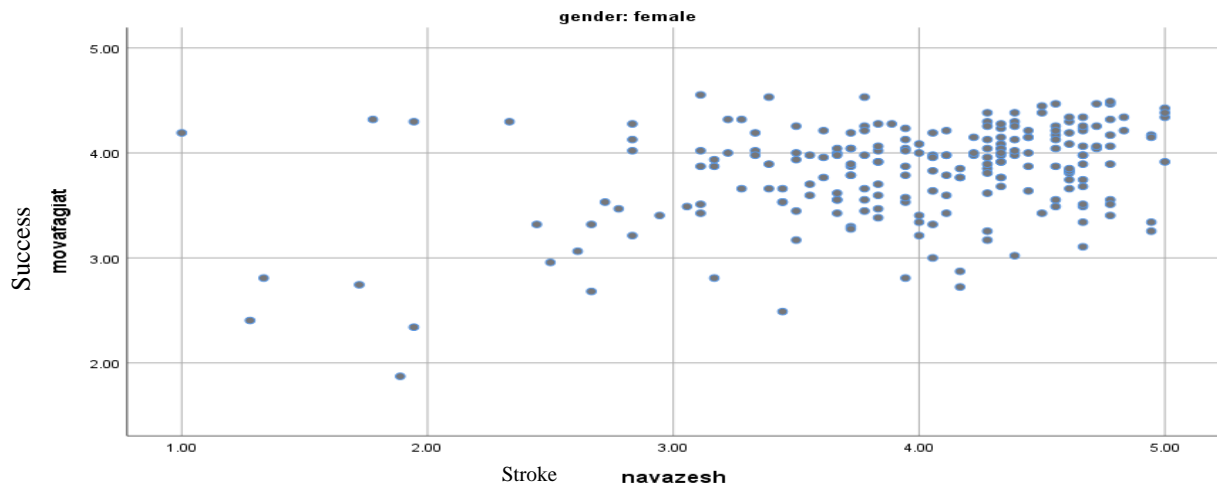
Figure 1
Scatter graph for correlation between female teachers' success and stroke

Answering the Second Research Question

Is there a statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and stroke?
To specify the significance of the relationship between male teachers' success and stroke, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.

Table 4
Correlation coefficient between male teachers' success and stroke

Pearson correlation		**Stroke**
Male teachers' success	Number (n)	200
	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.353
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to the information in Table 4, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This means that at the 99% probability le Stroke hypothesis is rejected, and therefore, tnere ıs a significant relationship between female teachers' success and stroke. According to Kesel (2010) (0.20-0.35, weak intensity), (0.35-0.65, moderate intensity), (0.65-0.85, good intensity) and (0.85 and above, strong intensity) based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between male teachers' success and stroke is moderate. Graph 2 shows the scatter graph for the correlation between male teachers' success and stroke.
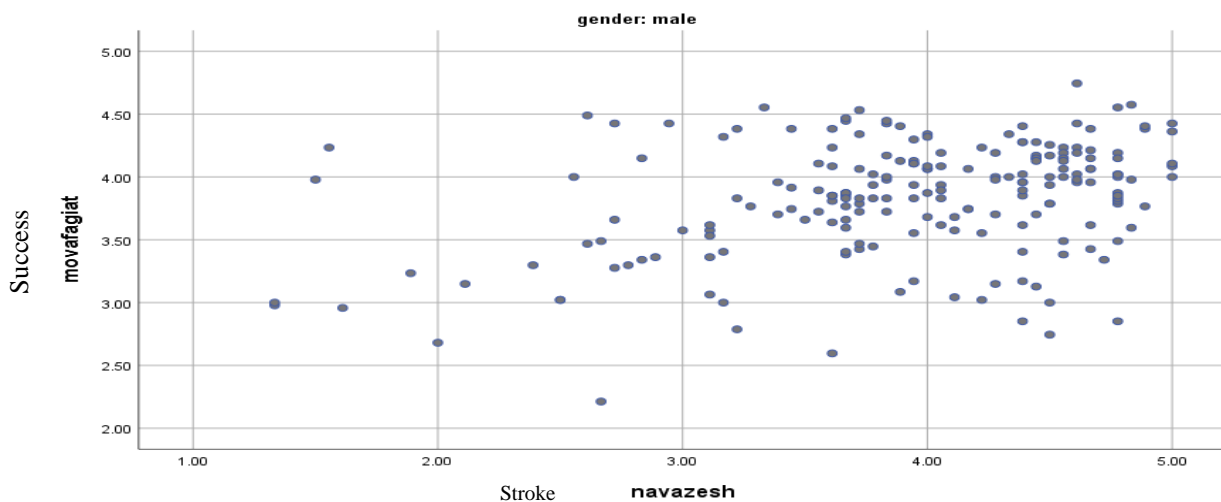

Figure 2
Scatter graph for correlation between male teachers' success and stroke

Answering the Second Research Question

Is there a statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and stroke?

To specify the significance of the relationship between male teachers' success and stroke, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.
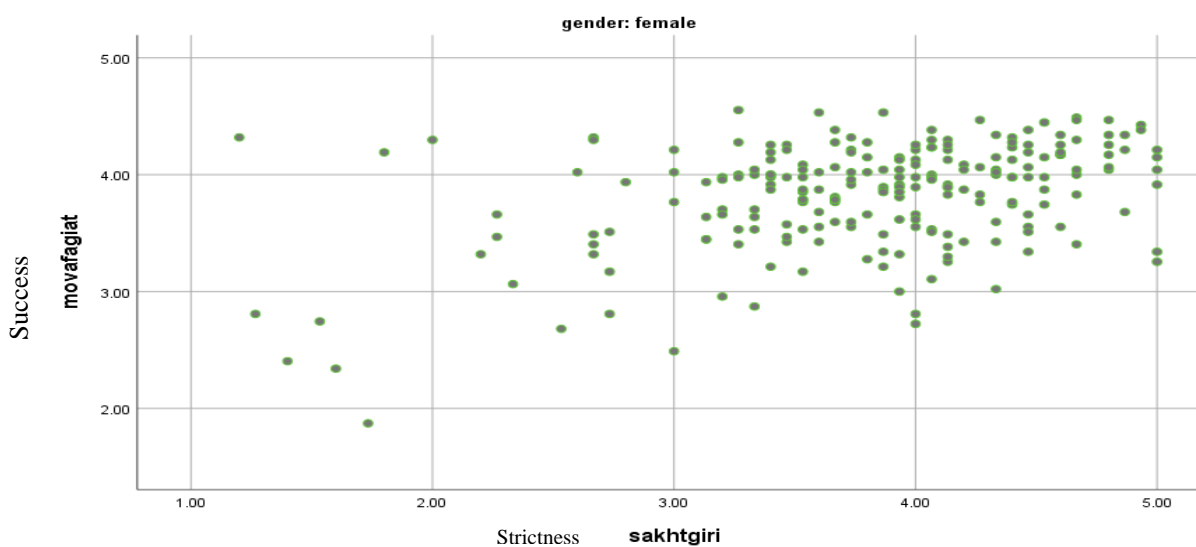
Table 5
Correlation coefficient between female teachers' success and strictness

Pearson correlation		Female teachers' success
	Number (n)	220
Strictness	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.412
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to the information in Table 5, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This means that at the 99% probability level, the H_0 hypothesis is rejected, and therefore, there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and strictness. According to Kesel (2010) (0.20-0.35, weak intensity), (0.35-0.65, moderate intensity), (0.65-0.85, good intensity) and (0.85 and above, strong intensity) based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between female teachers' success and strictness is moderate. Graph shows the scatter graph for the correlation between female teachers' success and strictness.

Figure 3
Scatter graph for correlation between female teachers' success and strictness

Answering the Fourth Research Question

Is there a statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and strictness?

To specify the significance of the relationship between male teachers' success and strictness, first, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.

Table 6
Correlation coefficient between male teachers' success and strictness

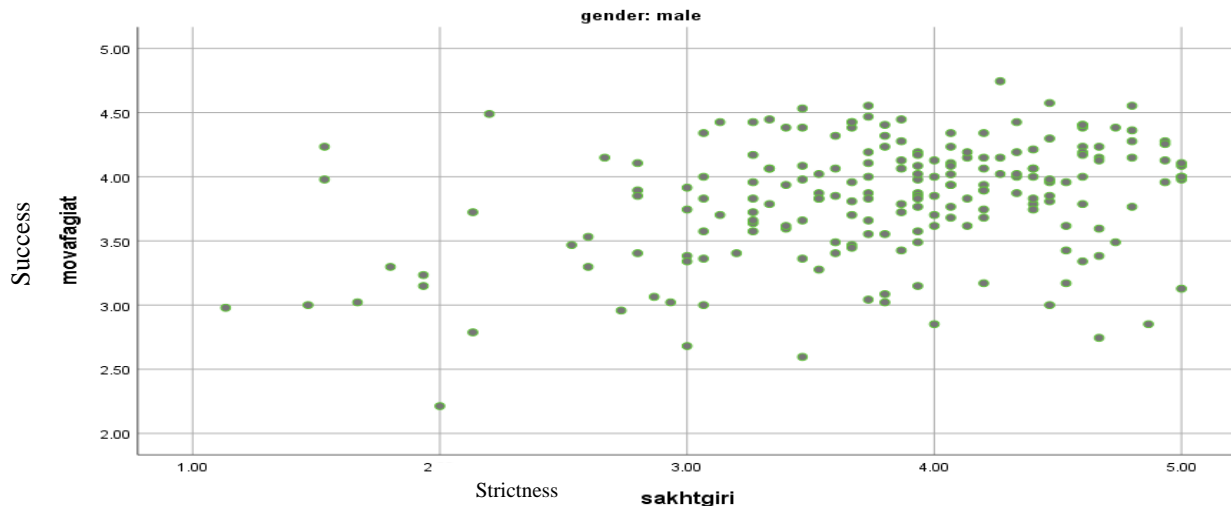| Pearson correlation		Male teachers' success
	Number (n)	200
Strictness	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.335
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to the information in Table 6, it can be seen that based on the level of signifi-

cance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This

means that at the 99% probability level, the H_0 hypothesis is rejected, and thus, there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and strictness. According to Kesel (2010) (0.20-0.35, weak intensity), (0.35-0.65, moderate intensity), (0.65-0.85, good intensity) and (0.85 and above, strong intensity) based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between male teachers' success and strictness is moderate. Graph 4 shows the scatter graph for the correlation between male teachers' success and strictness.

Figure 4
Scatter graph for correlation between male teachers' success and strictness

Answering the Fifth Research Question
What are the male and female EFL teachers' attitudes toward stroke with regard to teacher success?

To answer this research question thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to identify the related codes and categories within the qualitative data (Table 7). This required the transcription of interview recordings and followed coding stages. All of the answers to each interview question served as the study's unit of analysis for coding purposes. The researchers examined the transcripts several times and coded them. Due to the frequent use of several observers in qualitative research, Ary et al. (2019) proposed interrater agreement approaches for evaluating dependability (reliability). As a result, the researchers chose a transcript at random and asked an expert in the field to code it using TA techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The expert was free to include whatever additional codes he thought of. Following the expert's coding process, the outcomes were compared to the original transcript to see if the labels assigned by the two coders matched. The findings indicated that there was not any significant difference between two coders and the coding process enjoyed the acceptable dependability (reliability). The following table tabulates the related categories, themes, codes, and code percentage.

Table 7
The Categories, Themes, Codes, and Code Percentage of Stroke

No.	Category		Theme		Code	Percentage
1	Stroke as a motivating tool in a classroom	1.	Increasing learners' motivation	1.	Motivation	65%
		2.	A better performance	2.	Performance	54%
		3.	Enhancing language production	3.	Production	45%
		4.	Increasing the rate of acquisition	4.	Acquisition	71%
				5.	Success	57%
2	Reinforcing students' behaviors	1.	Using positive words	1.	Behavior	76%
		2.	Calling students' name	2.	Attention	48%
		3.	Helping students to learn	3.	Learning	61%
		4.	Enhance students' attention	4.	Name	47%
		5.	A remedy for bad behaviors	5.	Remedy	38%
3	Increasing rapport between	1.	Improving the rapport	1.	Rapport	82%
		2.	Creating a good relationship	2.	Relationship	74%

	students and teachers	3. Psychological readiness to learn 4. Enhancing language education	3. Learning 4. Teaching 5. Positive	39% 52% 28%
4	Developing learners' self-image and self-confidence	1. Improve self-image 2. Developing self-confidence 3. Enhancing self-belief 4. Believing in ability	1. Self-image 2. Self-confidence 3. Self-belief 4. L2 5. Capable	53% 69% 35% 74% 44%

Stroke as a motivating tool in a classroom

Most of the participants believed that stroking the students could increase the motivation of learners in the language learning process. They noted that giving strokes could help learners in stimulating and maintaining their motivation and also stroking learners in positive way could encourage them to have a better performance in the class. Maryam in this regard pointed out,

> Stroke is one of the main motivators in education, especially in language classes, which could enhance the motivation of English language learners remarkably, and consequently, it could result in having a better performance. When I stroke my students, they try to produce more and more language items that leads to learning.

She maintained that giving strokes to learners could beneficial for their learning in which they encourage to enhance their language production in the class and increase the rate of language acquisition, and as a result, it could lead to teacher success. Saman in this regard stated, "I try to give my students positive strokes in my classes, like, very good, well-done, and good for you. I think using such positive words and expression could increase the motivation of my learners and also my success". He believed that implementing strokes could be a motivating factor in English language classes.

Reinforcing students' behaviors

Some of the participants held that stroking students could reinforce their manners. They believed that strokes could be verbal, such as using positive words and calling the students first name or non-verbal, such as nodding. They expressed that using both of these two types of stroke could have significant effects on the students' behaviors in classes. Narges pointed out,

> I frequently use the first names of my learners when I want to ask them questions or require them to do a task. I think that using the students' first name could increase their attention towards their be-

haviors and performance during the task completion or responding the questions. They feel that I am their friend who wants to help them to learn a new language not just their language teacher.

She believed that using her students' first names as a stroke can enhance her students' attention towards their manners, and as a result, they could focus better on the class activities. In addition, using this type of stroke could be valuable for the class atmosphere in which her students regard her as their friend. Ali in this respect noted, "Stroking students can be a remedy for their bad behaviors in a class. I usually give strokes to my students to improve their manners towards me and other classmates". He held that stroking can be a solution for improving the bad behaviors of his learners.

Increasing rapport between students and teachers

Most of the participants maintained that applying strokes in classes could improve the rapport between them and their students. They also held that using positive strokes could have effects on the students' relationship with them. Reza in this regard noted,

> I always use strokes in my classes since I think that the first factor in teaching is creating a good relationship with my learners in order to make the appropriate context for language education in the classroom. Because, at first, students should be psychologically ready to learn the language items, and it could be attained implementing strokes by the language teacher.

He held that using stroke can enhance the rapport, and it could prepare the context of the class for teaching as the learners could be psychologically ready to acquire the new language items. Saba, one of the experienced English teachers, in this regard stated, "Stroke could change the way of language education since it reinforces the teacher's relationship with his/her students, which is the integral factor in language learning and teaching". She believe that giving stroke to learners could empower the rapport, and as a consequence, it

could help learners and teachers in the process of language learning and teaching.

Developing learners' self-image and self-confidence

Some of the teachers believed that stroking can improve self-image of learners as it may seriously affect the way they approach language learning. The participants perceived that self-image is one of the important factors in learners' performance and the students with weak self-image could not perform as good as the students with stronger self-image. They held that improving self-image could lead to developing learners' self-confidence, too. Ahmad pointed out, "Implementing stroke during language instruction by teachers can improve the learners' self-image, which is one of the significant factors in language learning in which learners feel confidence regarding their ability to learn the new language". He maintained that stroking could result in improving both self-belief and self-image in which students believe in their competence to acquire L2. Sosan in this respect noted,

> One of the advantages of using strokes is enhancing the self-belief of the students, that is to say, they could accept themselves as the capable language learners in which this self-belief could help them learn new language items better. It also develops the self-confidence of EFL learners who could not use L2 out side of the language class.

She held that stroking could result in developing self-belief or self-image that is one of the main important factors in learning a new language in which learners, especially the EFL ones, believe in their ability to learn L2 successfully, and as a consequence, it could lead to improving their self-confidence as well.

Answering the Sixth Research Question

What are the male and female EFL teachers' attitudes toward strictness with regard to teacher success?

Like the previous research question, to answer this research question thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to identify the related codes and categories within the qualitative data (Table 8). This required the transcription of interview recordings and followed coding stages. All of the answers to each interview question served as the study's unit of analysis for coding purposes. The researchers examined the transcripts several times and coded them. Due to the frequent use of several observers in qualitative research, Ary et al. (2019) proposed interrater agreement approaches for evaluating dependability (reliability). As a result, the researchers chose a transcript at random and asked an expert in the field to code it using TA techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The expert was free to include whatever additional codes he thought of. Following the expert's coding process, the outcomes were compared to the original transcript to see if the labels assigned by the two coders matched. The findings indicated that there was not any significant difference between two coders and the coding process enjoyed the acceptable dependability (reliability). The following table tabulates the related categories, themes, codes, and code percentage.

Table 8
The Categories, Themes, Codes, and Code Percentage of Strictness

No.	Category	Theme	Code	Percentage
1	Creating the sense of commitment and responsibility	1. Creating a sense of commitment 2. Fulfilling tasks 3. A better performance 4. Enhancing students' responsibility 5. Making best efforts	1. Commitment 2. Fulfill 3. Responsibility 4. Performance 5. Effort	71% 84% 33% 53% 62%
2	Enhancing the students' motivation	1. Increasing motivation 2. Performing tasks 3. A reasonable motive 4. A source of motivation	1. Motivation 2. Task 3. Learning 4. Acquisition 5. Rule	85% 32% 70% 28% 64%
3	Developing the students' respect	1. Creating respect 2. A specific framework 3. A source of admiration 4. A significant teacher behavior 5. Class attendance	1. Respect 2. framework 3. Admiration 4. Behavior 5. Attendance	57% 38% 49% 72% 43%

Creating the sense of commitment and responsibility

Some of the participants stated that teacher strictness could create a sense of commitment among students. In other words, when student have the strict teacher, they try to fulfill their tasks on time and with more care and attention. The participants believed that students try to do the tasks and practices as correct as they can. Taghi in this respect noted, "I am a strict teacher, and I found that the more strictness a teacher has, the better performance his/her students will have. This could result in having more commitment to the class and the teacher". He held that strict teachers could have better results as strictness can increase the sense of students' commitment toward their language education. Bita in this regard pointed out,

> If you are a strict teacher, your students know that they must do their best in the class; otherwise, they could not pass the course. Therefore, they make their best efforts to perform their activities in both inside and outside of the class. Consequently, it could result in making students' responsibility to their language learning.

She maintained that teacher strictness could be a beneficial behaviour, which could lead to the better performance of students. Besides, it could create the sense of students' responsibility towards their learning.

Enhancing the students' motivation

Most of the participants believed that strictness could increase the motivation of students in the class to follow the class rules and to perform the tasks and activities since they perceive that it is a completely serious course and class, which demands efforts to acquire the new language. Mohammad in this regard pointed out,

> Being strict in the class is very important as students observe their teachers' activities every moment, and teacher strictness is essential for their motivation since they find a reasonable motive to pursue the class activities, and it can lead to performing their best in language learning.

He maintained that teacher strictness could be a source of motivation for the learners and they see strictness as a motive to fulfill their tasks to learn the L2 in a better way. An interesting point that he mentioned was observing the teacher by his/her students every moment in the classroom, which echoes the fact that teacher behaviors are very influential in class management. Maryam in this respect noted,

"Teacher strictness could be a positive point in the Iranian EFL context because the learners should have some strict rules and regulations in the class to follow them to learn L2, and it could increase learners' motivation". She believed that strictness may result in increasing learners' motivation as learners have some strict rules for language learning in which regarding the Iranian EFL context, it could be beneficial for language acquisition.

Developing the students' respect

Some of the participants stated that teacher strictness could create a sense of respect among students toward the teacher and the class as they view their class in a specific framework that every thing has its own significance. The teachers believed that a sense of strictness can be a source of students' admiration with regard to the class efficiency. Nahal in this respect pointed out,

> I think a teacher should be a source of inspiration for their students through his/her behaviors, and one of the significant teachers' behaviors is strictness, which could lead to increasing the students' admiration and respect to the teacher and the class.

She strongly held that strictness is a significant teacher behavior, which enhances the students' respect, and the students are inspired by teacher strictness. Her words implied that teachers' behaviors could have significant effects on the students' performance, especially teacher strictness. In a same vein, Morteza mentioned,

> Strictness is one of the essential factors in a language class as the teacher could be dominant to apply his/her methods and strategies to manage the class; therefore, the learners conceive that it is an organized class, which requires their respect and attention to every aspect from class attendance to class examination.

He maintained that strictness is essential for a teacher to apply his/her methods and strategies in the classroom since the students find the class an organized context in which they should consider all its dimensions even their attendance.

All in all, the qualitative results showed that the participants adopted positive views toward stroking and strictness.

The quantitative findings of the present study showed that there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and stroke, and also there is a significant relationship between male teachers' success and

stroke. In addition, there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and strictness, and there is also a significant relationship between male teachers' success and strictness. The qualitative findings also indicated that the male and female teachers adopted a positive view toward strictness and stroke as the teachers behaviours in the class with regard to teacher success in which complement the quantitative findings. Furthermore, the findings revealed that gender was not a significant factor regarding the relationship between teachers' success and stroke and also the relationship between teachers' success and strictness.

The findings of the first and second research questions showed that there is a significant relationship between stroke and male and female teacher success which are in line with those of Pishghadam and Karami (2017) who examined the role of two factors, namely teacher stroking and teacher credibility in relation to teacher success, and their results revealed that teacher effectiveness correlated significantly and positively with both the components of stroke and that of teacher credibility. Additionally, the results are in harmony with those of Noorbakhsh et al. (2018) who explored the roles of teacher gender identity and stroke in teacher success, and their findings indicated that femininity and masculinity predicted stroke, and stroke and androgyny were positive predictors of teacher success. Moreover, the findings lend support to the results of Amini et al. (2019) who investigated the relationship among stroke, psychological reactance, and teacher success in which their findings showed that stroke was a positive indicator of teacher success. Furthermore, the findings of this study lend credence to the findings of Pishghadam et al. (2019) who explored the roles of teacher success, credibility, and stroke in students' WTAC, and the research results showed a strong positive correlation between teacher stroke and students' WTAC. Additionally, the findings are in agreement with those of Amini (2019) who conducted a study to find whether students' perceptions of their instructors' effectiveness may be influenced by the quantity and type of stroke they experience in class, and the results indicated a relationship between teacher effectiveness and stroke. Furthermore, it was discovered that valuing and verbal stroke—two of the four subscales of stroke—were the important predictors of teacher effectiveness. Moreover, the findings of the present study confirmed those of Gao (2021) who proved the pivotal role of language teacher confirmation and stroke in EFL/ESL contexts. Furthermore, the relationship between stroke and teacher effectiveness may be explained by the need to appease each individual student's hunger for recognition. To learners, a good teacher who is a stroker meets that need. Such a teacher pays attention to learners, values their characters, respects their opinions, devotes time to help learners with their problems, and is willing to build rapport, all of which are the characteristics of a successful teacher (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). The significant relationship between stroke and teacher success shows the significance of stroke-rich contexts in instructional settings (Freedman, 1993; Kusluvan, 2003). This significant relationship can be elaborated by the requirement to satisfy each individual learner's desire for recognition. It is very crucial that teachers stroke their students. Stroking demonstrates that teachers pay close attention to their students, take into account their individual traits, respect their opinions, and have a propensity to build rapport. These traits are characteristics of efficient teachers (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). Additionally, stroke, an integral aspect of teacher behaviour (Pishghadam et al., 2015), has a significant impact on teachers' effectiveness. A range of beneficial effects, such as greater academic performance, increased study time, lower anxiety, a lower dropout rate, and higher students attendance have been related to effective teachers (Bieg et al., 2013; Foster, 2008). When learning environments are free from emotional and physical stress, teachers could be successful in their job. As a result of the anxiety that students experience when learning a foreign language, teaching is by nature a stressful career (Ozmen, 2011). Therefore, stroke could be a means for attaining teacher success. Based on Yazdanpour (2015), instructors may experience less burnout if they provide their students more opportunities to succeed. Moreover, she maintains that having a stroke is one of the very things that influences teachers' eagerness, efficacy, and willingness to stay in the teaching profession. Therefore, stroke is a simple way to increase instructors' chances of success and, in doing so, lessen the circumstances that could lead to burnout.

Regarding the findings of third and fourth research questions, the results revealed that there is a significant relationship between female and male teachers' success and strictness which are in line with those of Rahimi and Hosseini Karkami (2015) who studied the role of discipline in teaching success and learners'

motivation and language learning. According to their findings, more effective instructors are those who regularly implement classroom discipline. Moreover, the findings are in harmony with the results of Jiang et al. (2021) who compared the relationships between teacher strictness and feedback, and learners' motivational conceptions, and their findings revealed that teacher strictness was positively associated with that of East Asian learners, and moreover, in the East Asian context, teacher strictness and teacher feedback were significantly correlated. Additionally, this result is in line with the findings of Maulana et al. (2011) research in Indonesia who found that the more instructors show strictness and collaboration, the more learners are encouraged to involve in language education.

The findings of fifth research question showed that teacher stroking can increase the students' motivation. Students that experience a lot of positive feedback are more eager to learn the English language (Pishghadam & Khajavi, 2014). It may be inferred that if a teacher pays more attention to all of the learners, engaging them in classroom activities, and praises their accomplishments in front of the class, the strokees will become more encouraged and devote more energy into their education, which will enhance their level of achievement (Pishghadam & Karami, 2017). Cultivating a classroom environment where students feel appreciated and welcomed by teachers promotes success for both teachers and students since the only location where ESL students could obtain opportunities to utilize language is the classroom (Ware, 2006). Teachers must provide students enough time to participate in class activities and encourage them to open up their feelings and personal experiences. Effective teacher-student relationships could indeed actually be seen as a valuable source of knowledge, motivational resources, and favorable communication abilities (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Khajavy et al., 2014). One possible explanation could be based on the idea that students' level of success is a sign of effective teaching (Good, 1979). It is obvious that greater motivation would result in greater achievement. Lewis (2001) argues the explanation is that when instructors engage learners in decision-making in the class or recognize their positive behavior, they will behave more responsibly in class, supporting the notion that stroking can lead to an improvement in students' behaviors. In other words, according to Clark (1993), an effective teacher is one who acknowledges his

or her role as a significant contributor to students' accomplishments. In addition, based on Rahimi and Hossini Karkami (2015), teachers who frequently employ recognition and involvement tactics are more successful. Rapport between teachers and students that are characterized by respect, love, and reciprocity can therefore have an effect on both (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). A teacher's rapport, relationship, and care for their students are seen as crucial for EFL classes since communicative abilities and language functional dimensions of are most prominent in L2 acquisition (Saboori & Pishghadam, 2016), which supports the findings of the present study that showed stroking could improve rapport. Consequently, stroke makes it easier for EFL teachers to meet job requirements and, as a result, increases the likelihood that they will feel successful in their careers. This leads to the conclusion that in a two-way teacher-student relationship, when teachers become effective strokers, they can make a giant leap towards success. Furthermore, stroking reinforces the specific student behavior that is shown for stroking (Wachtel, 1980 as cited in Noorbakhsh et al., 2018), which supports the findings of the current study that demonstrated stroking could improve the students' behaviors.

The findings of sixth research question showed that teacher strictness can increase the students' motivation. Based on the Jiang et al.'s (2021) findings, teacher strictness was significantly related to that of East Asian learners' motivation, which confirmed the findings of the present study. Additionally, this result is in line with the findings of Maulana et al. (2011) research in Indonesia who found that the more instructors show strictness and collaboration, the more learners are encouraged to involve in language education. Language learners in EFL settings can only aspire to use their L2 in the classroom. As a consequence, EFL teachers must give students enough time to participate in class activities in order to achieve their potential goals (Rajabnejad et al., 2017). To accomplish this, the teacher strictness may be a beneficial aspect in managing the class time to involve all of the students in class activities. Additionally, the participants of the present study believed that teacher strictness could increase the students' sense of commitment and responsibility. The significant effects of teacher strictness on Asian learners' motivation could be more elaborated by the profoundly rooted conceptions that teacher strictness is a sign of high

expectations from Asian cultures (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Consequently, this expectation could develop the learners sense of commitment and responsibility towards their learning. Furthermore, the findings showed that teacher strictness could increase the students' respect towards the class and teacher. Teachers maintained that being strict was essential for respect, safety, and efficient education. Moreover, learners believed that their teacher's strictness could serve bigger aims (Poplin et al., 2011).

CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to explore the interplay among stroke, strictness, and teacher success from Iranian male and female EFL teachers' points of view. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between female and male teachers' success and stroke, and there is also a significant relationship between female and male teachers' success and strictness. The qualitative findings indicated that the male and female teachers adopted a positive view toward strictness and stroke as the teachers behaviors in the class in which complement the quantitative findings. Furthermore, the findings revealed that gender was not a significant factor regarding the relationship between teachers' success and stroke and also the relationship between teachers' success and strictness. Thus, it could be concluded that gender does not play a significant role in stroking and strictness in teacher success. Similarly, Mashhadlou and Izadpanah (2021) found that based on the teachers' gender and experience, there was no noticeable difference in the performance of the teachers. Men and women do not share the same conceptions, preferences, manners, and personalities, and these differences also manifest in their fundamental communication differences (Hosseini, 2016). Recognizing individual distinctions, abilities, motivational components, the way of motivating and punishing, the individuals personality, and similar factors between male and female, could aid those engaged in language education to better perceive persons and their needs (Irajzad et al., 2017). Since without understanding the psychological and behavioral dimensions of persons, one could not anticipate to be successful. Based on the qualitative findings, both male and female participants adopted positive views toward stroking and strictness, and regarding the quantitative findings, gender does not play a significant role in stroking and strictness in teacher success. From the psychological view, scholars have not addressed gender

in much detail (Yazdanpour, 2015). It is found that there is a significant difference in the emotions of male and female teachers, which is caused by receiving positive non-verbal strokes, refraining from receiving strokes, and receiving negative conditional verbal strokes (Almutairi & Shraid, 2021). Notwithstanding, in spite of this difference, at older ages gender differences decrease and the L2 acquisition rate become the same for men and women (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021).

Regarding the implications of the present study, pre- and in-service teacher training programs could apply these findings to meet the practical needs of EFL instructors with respect to the pre-service training significance in developing or altering belief systems (Koc, 2013). Identifying the factors that may lead to teacher success might be crucial for teacher trainers because a severe lack of effective teachers may harm L2 acquisition. It is impossible to anticipate effective educational processes unless the instructor is qualified (Sahan, 2009). Teachers could successfully influence the students' proficiency, wisdom, self-image, creativity as the teachers are trained effectively. Lastly, the results could be applied by policy makers and administrators. Based on Darling-Hammond (2010), policymakers and practitioners believed that the enhancement of teacher quality is a crucial method for developing educational achievements. These findings could be used by educational systems to enhance the quality of education in general and language education in particular.

The present study suffered from some limitations. Firstly, the results are contextualized by an Iranian sample of EFL teachers. Moreover, because study was conducted in a less formal setting—language institutes in the provinces of Tehran and Alborz—the findings might not generalize to more official institutions like public schools or universities. In addition, future studies could be much more comprehensive if the teachers' perceptions of other subjects, like Arabic and Persian are investigated. Furthermore, future research could be undertaken to determine whether similar findings could be achieved in different contexts and subject areas. Moreover, since the convenience sampling was employed, it is recommended to interpret the findings with great caution. Ultimately, the instruments applied for the data collection were questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. To undertake a more complete investigation of teacher success, stroke, and strictness, further research could gather data through other instruments, like observation.

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