

An Investigation into Humanistic Methodological Characteristics Among Iranian EFL Teachers

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Abstract. The present study delved into an essential construct in the domain of English as a foreign language (EFL), i.e. humanistic approach. Notwithstanding humanistic approach has made significant changes in all aspects of language education and redefined the traditional roles of teachers and learners, it has rarely been studied in Iran. The first purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which English teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in English language classes in Iran. The second aim of this study was to explore the most prominent humanistic methodological characteristics followed by teachers in English language classes. To this end, 40 Iranian EFL teachers (25 males and 15 females) of Shiraz institutes were selected through purposive sampling. A questionnaire designed by Bashir (2013) was utilized as the instrument of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The results demonstrated that in general, English teachers followed humanistic approach in their classes; however they lagged in certain areas, such as arranging make-up tests, allowing peer-feedback, supporting students outside of the class hours, and giving students the freedom to choose their activities. The results also showed that among the six humanistic methodological characteristics,

teachers were most humanistic in managing classroom tasks and activities and least humanistic in assessing their students' performances in the classroom. Finally, pedagogical implications of the study for language teachers, teacher educators, and educational authorities were presented.

Keywords: Iranian EFL teachers, humanistic methodological characteristics, English language classes

1. Introduction

Humanism is a belief system based on human needs. Human beings have specific needs in common and these needs must be met in a certain order (Maslow, 1943). In the academic context, humanism or the humanistic approach refers to a psychological approach that emphasizes the study of the whole person and the uniqueness of each individual (Rogers, 1969).

According to Lei (2007), humanistic education is defined by learner-centeredness, in which the goal is not only to improve the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the learners but also to pay attention to the learners' emotions. A humanistic approach to education, in contrast to traditional education, emphasizes the importance of students' inner worlds; their attitudes, thoughts, and emotions are placed at the forefront of growth (Arifi, 2017). Humanistic education provides an opportunity for personal growth so that learning as a self-directed process will continue throughout life (DeCarvalho, 1991).

Humanistic pedagogy emphasizes both the cognitive and affective dimensions. Humanistic language teachers and theorists emphasize adding the affective both to facilitate the cognitive in language learning and to encourage the development of the whole person (Arnold, 1998, p. 237). Humanistic education also supports cognitive development and affective or emotional growth, which are significant aspects of education (Patterson, 1977). Teachers must exercise caution and maintain balance between these two factors when employing a humanistic approach to teaching in the classroom.

Learners develop their ability to learn autonomy and feel driven to learn new language behaviors in the non-threatening and pleasant atmosphere of humanistic education (Akter & Al Mamun, 2019). In fact, by

properly following the humanistic methodological characteristics, teachers can create a learning environment that fosters students' academic progress, self-esteem, social skills, and emotional well-being (Soviyah, 2007). Therefore, as Maslow (1987) pointed out, teachers can enhance the students' learning by following humanistic methodological characteristics.

There is widespread interest in humanizing language teaching, and great emphasis has been placed on its contribution to learners' academic engagement (Soviyah, 2007). While previous studies of humanistic education predominantly explored the main principles and features of humanistic approach (Khatib, Najafi Sarem, & Hamidi, 2013; Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020), little is known about humanistic methodological characteristics in English language classes in the context of Iran.

Additionally, in Iran, teaching is mainly viewed as "a teacher-controlled, and directed process" (Choudhury, 2006), and students are heavily dependent on teachers. Hence, it seems essential to explore humanistic methodological characteristics of English teachers in English language classes in Iran. Therefore, the present study will contribute to the current literature by investigating if English teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in English language classes in Iran.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical considerations

The humanistic approach not only enhances students' learning but also positively affects their personalities (Vasuhi, 2011). According to Gage and Berliner (1991), humanistic psychology can be divided into three major principles: individual self-worth, feelings as important as facts, and personal, social, and moral development as important as academic development. Regarding the first principle, Gage and Berliner (1991) state that the emphasis on learners' value is based on their knowledge of their dignity and rights as individual human beings, with each individual on a path of self-actualization. Second, a learners' feelings and ambitions are honored, emphasizing the emotional aspect of learning, resulting in the development of a positive self-concept and self-esteem, which leads to the development of self-efficacy.

In humanistic-psychological approach to teaching, learners are not considered “full-time linguistic objects at whom language teaching is aimed”. However, they are “human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs, and sentiments, should be respected” (Medgyes, 1986, p. 109).

In response to some criticisms of humanistic pedagogy regarding the cognitive dimension of learning, Arnold (1998) indicated that “humanistic language teachers and theorists never talk about substituting the cognitive for the affective, but rather about adding the affective both to facilitate the cognitive in language learning and to encourage the development of the whole person” (p. 237). A humanistic class is learner-centered and prioritizes two aspects: whatever happens in the classroom in the form of activities, resources, evaluation, and feedback should include both intellectual and affective components. Accordingly, Bashir (2013) defined six characteristics of humanistic teaching: materials, classroom tasks, and activities, assessment, feedback, learner autonomy, and teacher-student relations.

A. Materials

Humanistic instructors adapt and update materials based on the requirements, skill levels, and psychological characteristics of their students. Although it is a teacher’s professional responsibility to feel qualified to augment or progressively replace content whenever it is deemed deficient (Bennett, as stated in Stevick, 1982), the humanistic teacher permits students to select their learning materials.

B. Classroom Tasks and Activities

Learners in humanistic classrooms engage in various activities such as role play, simulation, and discussions. Instructors should encourage students to share their experiences with their peers in order for them to learn from one another.

C. Assessment

Assessment is a continual process in humanistic education that focuses on students’ steady growth. Humanistic assessment is considered the flexibility of learners to assess their own learning, since when students evaluate their learning they are engaging in responsible learning (Pat-

terson, 1977). Final evaluation in a formal education system is done by instructors through formal examinations. However, learners might be encouraged to monitor and analyze their performance.

D. Feedback

Feedback does not simply flow from professors in a humanistic education approach; it will also flow from learner to teacher and between learners (Underhill, 1989). It implies that teachers apply peer feedback, which helps students improve their critical thinking skills. Humanistic teachers constantly provide positive feedback on their learners' performance. They constantly commend students for their initiative and never blame them for making errors because mistakes are no longer merely mistakes but also consequences of learners' endeavors, which are therefore highly appreciated (Underhill, 1989).

E. Learner Autonomy

In humanistic classrooms, learners are allowed to pick their materials and activities, as well as to evaluate their performance. Thus, humanistic education aims to grow learners into responsible and self-directed learners.

F. Teacher-Student Relation

In a humanistic approach, the teacher plays an essential role in building positive relationships between the teacher and the students both within and outside of the classroom. The teacher is friendly and cooperative with learners, has a favorable attitude toward them, and expresses sympathy and understanding (Bashir, 2013).

2.2 Empirical studies

Bashir (2013), who investigated the humanistic characteristics followed by teachers of the undergraduate English language classes at the University of Dhaka, reported that generally, language teachers used a humanistic approach in their classrooms. However, they fell short in several areas, such as adopting modern teaching aids, humanizing teaching materials, offering varied learning support, and displaying tolerance for mistakes. Bashir (2013) also found that teachers used the humanistic approach most in managing tasks and activities in the classroom while

they were least humanistic in selecting and using materials in the classroom. The researcher also concluded that while teachers were free to give their students tasks and monitor their activities in the classroom sometimes they were required by the institution to follow fixed texts and use certain materials.

Rahmanpanah and Mohseni (2017) investigated the effects of two intervention programs on generating engagement and motivation among EFL learners: humanizing the course book and self-determination theory-based instruction. To that purpose, 60 participants were randomly chosen from a pool of foreign language learners and randomly allocated to one of two experimental groups. The findings demonstrated that humanizing the course book had a significant influence on enhancing behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic engagement subscales among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

Ghanizadeh, Jahedi, and Amirizadeh (2020) explored whether EFL teachers' humanized error treatment has any effect on their students' cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement, intrinsic motivation, and language achievement using a mixed-methods design incorporating both quantitative (experimental design) and qualitative (interview & observation) methods. The participants were placed into two groups: control and experimental. The experimental group's speaking errors were rectified using three types of corrective feedback, including peer-correction, elicitation, and repetition, whereas the control group's speaking faults were fixed directly by the teacher.

Based on the results, the researchers concluded that all three categories of engagement were influenced by the treatment, with emotional engagement showing the most remarkable change and behavioral engagement showing the smallest. In terms of language accomplishment, the findings indicated that the experimental group's use of corrective feedback resulted in higher language achievement.

Literature Review supports the claim that humanistic education is of paramount importance. Notwithstanding, it seems the humanistic approach in English classes in Iran is entirely unexplored. In this respect, the current study was designed to investigate to what extent Iranian EFL teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in their

classes. Therefore, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do Iranian EFL teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in their classes?
- 2) What humanistic methodological characteristics are most prominently followed by Iranian EFL teachers?

3. Method

3.1 Design

This study followed a descriptive, quantitative design for examining whether the characteristics of the humanistic approach to teaching are used in English language classes in Iran. This study can be considered as a survey. Survey methodology is the study of the selection of individual units from a population and the accompanying survey data collection procedures, such as questionnaire construction and strategies for increasing the quantity and accuracy of survey responses.

3.2 Participants

The participants in the present study were 41 EFL teachers (25 males and 16 females) from Shiraz institutes whose teaching experience was between 5-15 years. Convenience sampling was used to select participants in the study. The participants came from Fars province in Iran, and their ages ranged from 20 to 50 years.

Seventeen participants had bachelor's degrees, and 24 teachers had master's degrees. Additionally, all the participants were studying subjects connected to English. In addition, 11 EFL teachers taught elementary, 18 intermediate, and 12 advanced levels.

3.3 Instruments

To address the research questions, a modified version of the humanistic approach questionnaire designed by Bashir (2013) was used. The original humanistic approach questionnaire designed by Bashir (2013) included 50 items. In the modified version of the questionnaire employed in the present study, the last eight items related to learners' attitudes towards teachers' overall role were omitted. The modified questionnaire consists

of 42 items. The items are designed to elicit responses following a four-point Likert-Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire includes six critical areas based on the characteristics of humanistic teaching: materials, classroom tasks, and activities, assessment: feedback, learner autonomy, and teacher-student relations. Each key area was assessed by seven items of the questionnaire. As the questionnaire included Likert items, the reliability of the questionnaire was computed via Chronbach's alpha. Table 1 shows the results of the reliability.

Table 1: Reliability of the Questionnaire

	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
Humanistic Approach Questionnaire	.79	42

The reliability estimate obtained in the current study was .79 highlighting the instrument to be reliable. The questionnaires were assessed for the face validity by two experts.

3.4 Data collection procedure

As mentioned earlier, 41 Iranian EFL teachers from Shiraz institutes participated in the study. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and dwindling opportunities for face-to-face data collection, the data collection method of the present study was in the form of a questionnaire administered on social media network WhatsApp. Using WhatsApp to complete the questionnaire could save considerable time. A questionnaire invitation, along with a link to the survey, was sent to EFL teachers at Shiraz Institutes. By clicking the link to the survey questions, EFL teachers indicated their willingness to participate in the study. The questionnaire took them roughly 20 minutes to complete. All participants completed the research questionnaire anonymously, and these were coded numerically. The data collection took place over 3 months.

3.5 Data analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire was examined using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). First,

to ensure the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha coefficients were estimated. Afterward, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). For each item, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean) were generated to determine the amount to which humanistic methodological characteristics were applied. Additionally, Based on the descriptive statistics, the most commonly used humanistic aspects in the classroom were specified. The researcher picked the top 10 items based on the means of the participants' replies to answer the second research question.

4. Results

To answer the first research question (i.e., Do Iranian EFL teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in their classes?), descriptive statistics were run. In terms of the scoring system, it is worth noting that as the questionnaire items were in a Likert scale, including four-point ranging from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (4 points), the mean score of each item could range from 1 to 4.

4.1 Materials

The descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the items of the material construct are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Material

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
1. I use a fixed text in the class.	1 2.4%	7 17.4%	33 80.5%	0	2.78
2. I develop new materials and try them in class.	0	3 7.3%	33 80.5%	5 12.2%	3.04
3. I modify and change materials according to my students' needs and level of competence.	0	2 4.9%	34 82.9%	5 12.2%	3.07
4. I use teaching materials which are related to students' life and culture	0	4 9.8%	4 9.8%	33 80.5%	3.70
5. I allow students to develop and use their own materials.	2 4.9%	3 7.3%	34 82.9%	2 4.9%	2.87
6. I use audio tapes.	0	4 9.8%	29 70.7%	8 19.5%	3.09
7. I use video and multimedia.	0	1 2.4%	4 9.8%	36 87.8%	3.85

From the results depicted in Table 2, it can be inferred that majority of the participants used static text in their classes (80.5%) and developed and used new materials in the classroom (92.7%). In addition, based on the responses to the material section of the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of teachers (95.1%) confirmed that they modify and change materials based on their students' needs and level of competence. A high percentage of the teachers (90.3%) also indicated that they use teaching materials which are culturally sensitive and related to their students' lives. Furthermore, the results revealed that most of the participants used audio tapes (90.2%) and video and multimedia (97.6%) in their classes.

4.2 Classroom tasks and activities

The descriptive statistics of the second humanistic feature, teachers' use of classroom tasks and activities, including the frequency of the teachers' responses and the mean score, are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Classroom Tasks and Activities

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
8. I encourage students to take part in small group and pair work activities.	0	0	4 9.8%	37 90.2%	3.90
9. I give students tasks to do alone.	2 4.9%	4 9.8%	32 78%	3 7.3%	2.87
10. I move around and monitor students' class activities.	0	0	5 12.2%	36 78.8%	3.87
11. I encourage students to share their personal experiences with others.	0	0	34 82.9%	7 17.1%	3.17
12. I give students role play and fun activities.	0	0	32 78%	9 22 %	3.21
13. I encourage students to help each other during class activities.	0	1 2.4%	7 17.1%	33 80.5%	3.78
14. I give students real life tasks according to their abilities.	0	3 7.3%	6 14.6%	32 78%	3.70

As evident in Table 3, concerning the classroom tasks and activities, a large percentage of teachers selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in most items suggesting that all teachers (100%) encourage their students to share their personal experiences with others.

All the participants also admitted that they give their students role play and fun activities indicating that teachers are friendly and the classroom environment is non-threatening.

Furthermore, all teachers opined that they move around and monitor their students' class activities. The responses to Item 13 showed that most of teachers (97.6%) inspired their students to help each other meaning that teachers promoted cooperation in the class environment. 92.6% of the participants also admitted that they give their students real-life tasks according to their abilities.

Regarding the modes of classroom activities, in Item 8, all teachers indicated that they encourage their students to participate in small group and pair work activities. However, in Item 9, 87.3% of the teachers admitted that they also give students some tasks alone. It can be inferred that compared with individual activities, the teachers consider group works as activities of more importance.

4.3 Assessment

Assessment as the next characteristic of the humanistic approach was addressed in seven questionnaire items. The descriptive statistics of the participants' responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Assessment

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
15. I make assessment criteria clear while conducting tests.	0	2 4.9%	35 85.4%	4 9.8%	3.04
16. I conduct various types of tests according to students' level of competence.	0	2 4.9%	33 80.5%	6 14.6%	3.09
17. I use continuous assessment and focus on students' gradual improvement.	0	2 4.9%	36 87.8%	3 7.3%	3.02
18. I give students enough time during a test.	0	1 2.4%	40 97.5%	0	2.97
19. I am fair in giving students marks.	0	1 2.4%	33 80.5%	7 17.1%	3.14
20. I encourage students to evaluate their own performances.	0	5 12.2%	31 75.6%	5 12.2%	3.00
21. I arrange make-up tests for students.	1 2.4%	32 78.0%	5 12.2%	3 7.3%	2.24

In the assessment section, the pattern of the responses revealed that high percentage of the teachers make assessment criteria clear while conducting tests. The teachers give clear instructions during different tests (95.2%) and they select the tests according to their students' level of competence (95.1%). In addition, a vast majority of the respondents (97.5%) admitted that they gave their students enough time during a test and believed that they are fair in grading their students' performances. 87.8% of the teachers also encouraged their students to self-evaluate their performances. The teachers' responses to Item 21 revealed that a significant percentage of the participants do not arrange make-up tests for students (80.4%).

4.4 Feedback

The descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the items of feedback construct are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Feedback

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
22. I check all students' tasks they do in class and at home.	0	3 7.3%	33 80.5%	5 12.2%	3.04
23. I encourage students to give feedback on each other's performances.	1 2.4%	31 75.6%	6 14.6%	3 7.3%	2.24
24. I give detailed feedback on students' performances.	0	3 7.3%	33 80.5%	5 12.2%	3.04
25. I praise students when they perform well.	1 2.4%	1 2.4%	5 12.2%	34 82.9%	3.75
26. I do not criticize students in front of the class when they make any mistake.	1 2.4%	3 7.3%	4 9.8%	33 80.5%	3.68
27. I always look for positive things in students' performances.	0	1 2.4%	5 12.2%	35 85.4%	3.82
28. I correct students' errors gently.	0	1 2.4%	4 9.8%	36 87.8%	3.85

As seen in Table 5, in the feedback section, a considerable percentage of the teachers (92.7%) asserted that they check all students' tasks and give detailed feedback on their performances.

In addition, in Item 23, most teachers indicated that they do not encourage peer-feedback. However, it is worth noting that 21.9% of the teachers disagreed with Item 23, suggesting that some teachers encouraged their students to give feedback on each other's performances. Additionally, most of the teachers admitted that they praise their students' good performances (95.1%) and do not criticize them in the class (90.3%). A substantial percentage of the teachers (97.6%) also reported that they correct their students' errors gently and always look for positive things in students' performances meaning that they help the development of students' positive self-image.

4.5 Learner Autonomy

The findings of learner autonomy are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Learner Autonomy

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
29. I allow students to choose their own activities in class.	4 2.8	32 78%	2 4.9%	3 7.3%	2.09
30. I appreciate students' talents and helps them develop a positive self-image.	0	1 2.4%	4 9.8%	36 87.8%	3.85
31. I allow students to express their opinions, feelings and emotions.	0	1 2.4%	3 7.3%	37 90.2%	3.87
32. I encourage students to be confident and self-dependent.	0	0	4 9.8%	37 90.2%	3.90
33. I encourage students to reflect (think deeply) on what they learn.	0	0	7 17.1%	34 82.9%	3.82
34. I do not force students to take part in activities when they are not ready.	1 2.4%	4 9.8%	33 80.5%	3 7.3%	2.92
35. I make students understand that they are responsible for their learning.	0	0	34 82.9%	7 17.1%	3.17

From the results depicted in Table 6, it can be inferred that all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they encourage their students to be confident and self-dependent (Item 32) and to think deeply about what they learn (Item 33).

All teachers also admitted that they make their students understand that they are responsible for their learning (Item 35). In Items 30 and 31, 97.6% of the teachers indicated that they help their students develop a positive self-image and express their opinions, feelings and emotions. Furthermore, the majority of the teachers (87.8%) opined that they do not force students to take part in activities when they are not ready, while most of them disagreed or strongly disagreed (80.8%), indicating that they do not allow their students to choose their activities in the class.

4.6 Teacher-student relation

The descriptive statistics regarding the last humanistic feature assessed in the present study are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher-Student Relation

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
36. I am friendly and cooperative with students.	0	1 2.4%	33 80.5%	7 17.1%	3.14
37. I show sympathy and empathy for students when they are in a difficult situation.	0	1 2.4%	6 14.6%	34 82.9%	3.80
38. I teach students moral values.	0	1 2.4%	6 14.6%	34 82.9%	3.80
39. I tell students to avoid negative thinking and attitudes.	0	3 7.3%	5 12.2%	33 80.5%	3.73
40. I meet students individually outside class hours to solve their problems.	2 4.9%	33 80.5%	1 2.4%	5 12.2%	2.21
41. I speak less and encourage students to speak in English more in the class.	0	3 7.3%	6 14.6%	32 78%	3.70
42. I helps students overcome their fear of English language.	0	1 2.4%	3 7.3%	37 90.2%	3.87

As evident in Table 7, concerning the teacher-student relation, a large percentage of teachers (97.6%) selected ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ in Items 36 and 37, suggesting that they considered themselves as friendly and cooperative teachers who show sympathy and empathy for students in difficult situations.

In the same vein, in Items 38 and 40, 97.6% of the teachers indicated that they teach their students moral values and help them overcome their fear of English language which shows that the teachers care about the affective dimensions of the learners.

The majority of teachers (92.6%) also admitted that they speak less and encourage their students to speak in English more in the class. Furthermore, they tell their students to avoid negative attitudes. However, the teachers' responses to Item 40 revealed that most of them (85.4%) are not willing to solve their students' problems outside class hours.

The second research question sought to identify the most prominent humanistic methodological characteristics followed by teachers in English language classes. To answer the second research question, the researcher identified top ten items based on the means of the participants' responses.

The questionnaire items were on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree =4" to "strongly disagree =1". Therefore, the average score for each item fell between 1 to 4. It is worth noting that some items had the identical mean scores. Table 8 demonstrates the ten most prominent humanistic methodological characteristics noted by the teachers.

Table 8: Ten Most Prominent Humanistic Methodological

Items	Mean	SD
8. I encourage students to take part in small group and pair work activities.	3.90	0.30
32. I encourage students to be confident and self-dependent.	3.90	0.30
10. I move around and monitor students' class activities.	3.87	0.33
31. I allow students to express their opinions, feelings and emotions.	3.87	0.39
42. I helps students overcome their fear of English language.	3.87	0.39
7. I use video and multimedia.	3.85	0.42
28. I correct students' errors gently.	3.85	0.42
30. I appreciate students' talents and helps them develop a positive self-image.	3.85	0.42
27. I always look for positive things in students' performances.	3.82	0.44
33. I encourage students to reflect (think deeply) on what they learn.	3.82	0.38

As Table 8 displays, the most prominent humanistic features were encouraging students to participate in pair and group activities and be confident and self-dependent (M= 3.90).

The next most prominent humanistic aspects were moving around and monitoring students' activities, allowing students to express their opinions and feelings, and helping students overcome their fear of English language.

Additionally, based on the teachers' responses, other significant humanistic characteristics were using video and multimedia, gently correcting students' errors, recognizing students' abilities, and assisting them in developing a good self-image. The findings also revealed that teachers seek good aspects in their students' work and encourage them to reflect on what they have learned.

Afterward, concerning the most humanistic areas followed by the teachers, the researchers calculated the means of underlying components. Although instructors utilized humanistic methodological features in all six domains studied in this study, the researcher determined the areas in which they used the humanistic approach the most. The pertaining results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Means of the Constructs (in descending order)

	N	Mean	SD
Classroom tasks and activities	41	3.50	0.20
Teacher-student relation	41	3.47	0.24
Learner autonomy	41	3.37	0.14
Feedback	41	3.35	0.28
Material	41	3.20	0.36
Assessment	41	2.93	0.24

According to Table 9, classroom tasks and activities had the highest mean ($M=3.50$) while 'assessment' had the lowest mean ($M=2.93$), implying that in the English language classes, teachers use the humanistic approach most in managing tasks and activities in the classroom. In contrast, they are least humanistic in assessing their students' performances in the classroom.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion on the first research question

As mentioned earlier, the first objective of the present study was to in-

investigate if Iranian EFL teachers follow humanistic methodological characteristics in their classes. Based on the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, it can be concluded that regarding the material, the teachers not only utilize modern technological teaching aids which the students like but also they try to develop new materials depending on their students' needs, level of competence, life, and culture.

Concerning the classroom tasks and activities, the findings revealed that teachers mainly emphasize group activities. They also monitor students' class activities and encourage them to communicate and cooperate. Therefore, English teachers try to promote cooperation which is an integral and significant part of humanistic teaching in their classes. Bashir (2013) also admitted that in humanistic teaching, cooperative learning is emphasized so that learners can work together to enhance their own and each other's learning.

The teachers' responses to the assessment items revealed that they considered assessment a continuous process in which learners' gradual development is focused. They also indicated that they have students' self-evaluation in their classes. However, they did not arrange make-up tests for their students.

Regarding the feedback, the results indicated that the teachers provide feedback on their students' performances and praise their good performance. However, they did not allow peer feedback in their classes. In humanistic teaching, peer-feedback is considered essential type of feedback as it develops the students' sense of critical judgment. In a humanistic teaching model, feedback does not flow from teachers only; it "will also flow from the student to teacher and between students" (Underhill, 1989, p. 257). As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that English teachers do not entirely implement feedback aspect of the humanistic approach of teaching in their classrooms.

The responses to the learner autonomy items showed that the teachers support learner autonomy and attempt to develop students as responsible and independent learners. However, they do not give their students the freedom to choose their activities.

The findings also revealed that the teachers are friendly and cooperative with their students. They hold a favorable attitude toward their

students and express sympathy and understanding. There is mutual respect and trust between the teachers and their students. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicated, the friendly and cooperative teachers can nurture the affective dimensions of the learners. Therefore, it can be inferred that English teachers pay special attention to the role of students' emotions. Moskowitz (1978) also considered developing good relationships between teachers and students as one of the characteristics of humanistic education.

The results also revealed that teachers stated that they are unwilling to help their students with difficulties outside of the class hours. One probable explanation is that the teachers are extremely busy. The results of the current study are in line with those of the research conducted by Bashir (2013). Bashir (2013) also found that teachers are unwilling to solve the students' problems outside class hours.

All in all, the results revealed that humanistic methodological characteristics are present in all six areas (materials, classroom tasks and activities, assessment, feedback, learner autonomy, and teacher-student relations) in English language classes in Iran and EFL teachers mostly follow them.

5.2 Discussion on the second research question

The second research question in this study asked: What humanistic methodological characteristics are most prominently followed by teachers in English language classes?

Based on the mean scores, the social development recognized by encouraging students to participate in pair and group activities and promoting individual self-worth by encouraging students to be confident and self-dependent were the most prominent humanistic features followed by the teachers in the English language classes.

The results also showed that among the six areas of the humanistic approach, classroom tasks and activities were the most prominent approach, followed by teacher-student relation, learner autonomy, feedback, and material. This finding aligned well with those results reported by Bashir (2013). Bashir (2013), who investigated humanistic methodological characteristics in teaching English to students in Bangladesh,

found that the undergraduate university teachers are most humanistic in classroom tasks and activities.

Based on the mean scores, the teachers were least humanistic in assessing their learners' performances. Although self-assessment is a pivotal feature of humanistic approach (Rogers, 1969, 1983), in formal education systems such as academic education, teachers are not willing to apply the humanistic values of assessment. This finding can be explained in light of crucial characteristics of formal education settings (Patterson, 1977). In a formal education system, teachers provide final assessments through formal examinations. In a classroom setting, however, students might be encouraged to monitor and evaluate their performance.

This finding can be also explained in light of problems teachers may face when trying to put some humanistic values such as assessment into practice in their classrooms. In this regard, Underhill (1989) mentioned that one source of difficulty in applying humanistic values is the many external pressures that operate against teachers' desire to try new things. According to Underhill (1989), when pushed to take greater responsibility for their learning, students may be disturbed, and teachers may lack the experience, confidence, and competence to facilitate this shift. Additionally, colleagues, directors, and the cultural and political environment may all lack support and understanding for teachers. This shift can also be mitigated through materials, syllabuses, and training systems.

6. Conclusion

The results gathered were interpreted to mean that Iranian EFL teachers follow most of the humanistic methodological characteristics. These characteristics are present in all six areas (materials, classroom tasks and activities, assessment, feedback, learner autonomy, and teacher-student relations) in their classes.

Furthermore, it was concluded that the classroom tasks and activities and assessment were the most and the least followed approaches in English language classes in Iran suggesting that though the Iranian EFL teachers are aware of humanistic teaching and attempt to follow

the humanistic methodology characteristics, they lag in certain areas, such as applying the humanistic values of assessment.

In other words, Iranian EFL teachers use the humanistic approach most in managing tasks and activities in the classroom while they are least humanistic in assessing their learners' performances, especially in arranging make-up tests for students.

The findings of this study can be helpful for both teachers, educational authorities, and teacher trainers. Current findings ascertain that teachers follow the humanistic methodological characteristics in all six areas (materials, classroom tasks and activities, assessment, feedback, learner autonomy, and teacher-student relations) in English language classes in Iran.

In addition, the present study suggests that teachers should be given more awareness of the need to follow the humanistic methodological characteristics, especially in humanizing assessment. It is essential to mention that instructors must foster a sense of care and relatedness in their classes by highlighting the goal of humanistic education, which is to foster a sense of community.

Furthermore, to help teachers follow humanistic approach, educational authorities should plan not only prospective teachers' roles based on humanistic methodological characteristics but also provide substantial training support and best practices for implementing those roles.

Teacher trainers can use empirical information of humanistic methodological characteristics bestowed here to prepare teachers who can contribute to the learners' affective and cognitive development.

Given the study's limitations, several areas require much more research. Only Iranian EFL teachers in English classrooms were chosen for this study using online networks, which limited the number of participants and may not be generalizable to other non-Iranian teachers. Furthermore, the researcher only used a questionnaire to collect the data; to be more inclusive, data collection instruments like observation or interview can be added, as well.

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