



Examining The Relationship Among Stroke, Strictness, Gender Identity, and Teacher Success from EFL Teachers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the role of EFL teacher's strictness, stroke, and gender identity in teacher success. To do so, 420 EFL teachers, 200 males and 220 females, participated in the study. The teachers were teaching English courses in different language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces in Iran. The method for sample selection was convenience sampling. The present study was in the form of a survey design. To collect the required information, four instruments were administered to the sample of the study: Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale, Masculinity/Femininity Scale, Student Stroke Scale, and Teacher Strictness Scale. For collecting the data, these questionnaires were filled out by the participants during one month. After collecting the data, Pearson product-moment correlation formula and Path Analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that there are no significant differences between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke, strictness, and gender identity. The findings indicated that strictness does not play a significant role in female and male teachers' success. Additionally, gender identity and stroke play a significant role in predicting female and male teachers' success. As insufficiency of effective teachers can harm learning to a great extent, knowledge of the factors which might cause teacher success seems to be necessary for teacher trainers.

KEYWORDS: EFL Teachers; Gender Identity; Strictness; Stroke; Teacher Success



INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, among different variables, which provide affective support for EFL students, teacher-student interaction is of great importance. Since the interaction of instructors with students is essential to meet students' emotional needs, EFL investigators have paid a growing attention to its status and essence (e.g., Amini, Pishghadam, & Saboori, 2019; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Pierson, 2003; Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). As far as teacher interaction with learners is critical to the fulfillment of students' emotional needs, scholars in the field have paid progressive attention to the nature and quality of this interaction (Irajzad, Pishghadam, & Shahriari, 2017). Over the past two decades, EFL/ESL researchers have explored the variables influencing teacher-learner relations (e.g., Barclay, 2012; Cheung, Cheng, & Pang., 2008; Hashemi, 2008; McBee, 2007; O'Connor, 2008). Among these variables, stroke is an important component of teacher care (Pishghadam, Naji Meidani, & Khajavy, 2015) and is defined as every action a human being does to recognize another human being (Berne, 1988). Pishghadam et al. (2015), developing the concept of *stroke* to mean "gentle," "supportive," and "encouraging behavior" considered it as one of the significant elements of instructor care. 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). The concept of stroke has, unfortunately, been ignored among the motivation concepts and theories (Amini et al., 2019). The concept of stroke mainly refers to teacher feedback and teacher praise in the educational psychology (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Interestingly, different research studies were conducted on the this concept (e.g., Pishghadam et al., 2015; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004). A teacher (stroker) can stroke students (strokees) in many ways such as providing them with feedback, recalling their names, having eye contact with them, encouraging them to think about their academic abilities positively, etc. As stated by Freedman (1993), individuals perform better in stroke-rich settings. Therefore, stroking may contribute to student achievement and success. Teacher stroke, as a crucial element of teacher care, refers to the teacher's recognition of the student (Pishghadam et al., 2015).

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 instructors (Pishghadam, Baghaei, & Shahriari Ahmadi, 2011). In a similar line, effective teachers play a necessary role in learners' achievements (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Teacher traits stand out, especially when learners encountering learning problems during the 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). Some researchers maintain 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 EFL teachers, the profile of a successful EFL teacher has been emphasized since 1920s. Most of research in the related literature have explored either the learners' or teachers' perception in EFL field. From the learners' point of view, successful teachers are typically the ones who are distinguished with regard to the essence of the subject, teaching content, knowledge of syllabus, implementation of especial methods, and teacher-student relationships (Kalay, 2017). To depict the favourable characteristics of a teacher is a complicated task. The idea of successful teacher for each individual is variable. Students' perception, opinions and/or experiences about a successful teacher are different (Moreno Rubio, 2009).

The notion of femininity and masculinity might affect the quality of teaching and thus, contribute to a more effective teacher education (Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). It is also referred to as gender identity. This notion is one of the significant and fundamental elements of personality (Bem, 1974) and is described as the self-conception of maleness and femaleness regarding what it means to be a male or a female in a given context (Stets & Burke, 2000). Various cultures and ethnic groups may possess different gender roles (Harris, 1994). Generally, males are supposed to be more assertive, strict, and competitive, while females are more modest, caring, and cooperative (Hofstede, 1980, as cited in Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). As for academic contexts, it is believed that teachers who are more corrective and concerned with the quality of the learners and develop competition among them are considered as male instructors, while those who are more lenient, boost collaboration and social abilities, and pay especial attention to rapport with learners are considered as female ones. Assessing such characteristics of teachers



concerning the subject matter they teach could result in perspicacious instructional implications (Pishghadam et al., 2016).

The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), which includes eight behavioral sectors including leadership, helpful/friendly, understanding, student freedom, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and strictness, is typically used to conceptualize and research interpersonal behaviors. Some teachers believed that their strictness was necessary for students' progress, respect, safety, and an effective education. Students see their teacher's strictness as a means of accomplishing greater objectives (Poplin et al., 2011). More elaborate analysis of students' and teachers' perceptions of preferred teacher-student interpersonal behaviour in studies showed two distinct types of 'ideal' teachers: preferred dominant teachers and preferred student-oriented teachers (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). The former displays a lot of cooperative behaviour, but also fair amounts of Leadership and Strictness, while the latter provides a fair amount of student freedom compared to the dominant teachers (Telli et al., 2008). Therefore, teacher strictness could be one of the important factors in teacher-learner interaction. The preservation of classroom discipline and strictness was recognized as a feature of the classroom environment that was crucial in their outline of the traits of successful language teachers in a study done by Molica and Nuessel (1997) on the characteristics of good English teachers. Nevertheless, little focus has been placed on the strictness of teachers in second language (L2) instruction in general and EFL education in particular.

Teachers' conceptions attracted much attention in the related literature in the past, and, recently, they have reintroduced as the essential factor to comprehending what develops teachers' effectiveness (Borg, 2006). Among other terms, Borg (2006 as cited in Shahvand & Rezvani, 2016) introduces attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as mental elements that depict the formation and content of mental states thought to manage teaching efficiency. A large volume of research (e.g., Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Thompson, 1992) recommends that teachers' conceptions about teaching and learning influence their teaching efficiency. The results of some research studies (e.g., Kagathala, 2002; Mansour, 2009) showed that relationships between teacher conceptions and teaching effectiveness were complicated. The findings indicate that scholars should question their typical presuppositions since several variables are believed to affect the complicated nature of these relationships (Shahvand & Rezvani, 2016). Some studies (e.g., Pishghadam *et al.*, 2011; Richardson, 2001) have been undertaken till now to investigate the underlying traits of successful teachers, but little attention have been paid to the roles of stroke, strictness, and gender identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners experience a wide range of positive and negative feelings in the classroom (Irajzad et al., 2017). Learning occurs best in contexts where students receive emotional support and experience enjoyable learning (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). The type of relationship teachers have with their students is tightly related to student emotions in the educational setting (Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Sutton, 2009). One of the factors contributing to students' learning in an educational context is a positive relationship between teachers and their students (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). Such a relationship not only aids learners build the necessary interpersonal skills, reduce their anxiety, and develop their motivation, but also causes them to feel involved in the learning process (Da Luz, 2015; Khajavy, 2012). Consequently, teachers play a main role in forming a positive relationship with students, thereby improving their motivation and helping them in building the essential interpersonal skills (Pierson, 2003, as cited in Irajzad et al., 2017). These interpersonal relationships can be evaluated 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). Barrow et al. (2001) provide the advantages of utilizing the TA method in the classroom in particular and the school as a whole. In another research, Hellaby (2004) investigated that the implementation of TA in the classroom results in a more helpful learning context which raises the self-esteem and academic performance of the learners. Stroke is one of the elements of TA theory and a significant element of teacher care (Pishghadam et al., 2015).

Stewart and Joines (1987, p. 72) defined stroke as “a unit of recognition,” meaning that strokes indicate that human being existence has been recognized by others. Human beings are all strokable and need strokes; therefore, due to under-stroking or lack of stroking, they feel deprived (Pishghadam & Karami, 2017). This notion is elaborated by Berne (1988) in which he implemented the term “recognition-hunger”, which in order to satisfy this hunger, it has been mentioned that “any kind of stroke is better than no stroke at all” (Stewart & Joines, 1987, p. 73). Based on Berne (1988), all human beings need to be confirmed by others and this can be accomplished via receiving strokes. Thus, every action taken by a human being to realize another human being is regarded a stroke (Berne, 1988, as cited in Irajzad et al., 2017). In educational psychology, stroke entails teacher feedback and teacher praise (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Freedman (1993) notes that a stroke-rich teaching setting motivates EFL/ESL learners to perform better. Teachers (strokers) can stroke students (strokees) in different methods, like calling students’ first names, allowing them to express themselves, presenting adequate feedbacks, and motivating learners in different probable ways (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014).

Strokes can be verbal/non-verbal, positive/negative, conditional/unconditional (Stewart & Joines, 1987). Verbal strokes include an exchange of spoken words, whereas non-verbal strokes consist of nodding, smiling, and so forth; positive strokes (e.g., *I love you*) make the receiver feel good and pleased, while negative strokes (e.g., *I hate you*) make the receiver feel displeased; conditional strokes associated with what we do, and unconditional strokes (e.g., *I love you; I hate you*) are given for what we are (Stewart & Joines, 1987). As the unconditional negative stroke is all about attacking a person for who s/he is, it can be very devastating. Hence, teachers should avoid giving this kind of stroke in the classroom (Irajzad et al., 2017). However, it is claimed that “... negative strokes are better than no strokes at all” (Solomon, 2003, p.19). In each interaction, instructors and students might also influence each other positively or negatively. Showing a firm positive interaction between teacher stroke and learner motivation, Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) conclude that “when teachers pay attention to their learners and ask them to take part in classroom activities, learners can gain higher level of motivation and better performances” (p. 6). A positive teacher-learner interaction beneficially turns into a valuable source of help, prompts L2 learners’ motivation, and bring about a chance to improve some needed interpersonal abilities (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Pierson, 2003).

The term “identity” has been depicted in various ways over the years undergoing the change from the emphasis on the individual towards the focus on the role of both individual and social settings where the people live (Farrell, 2017). Nowadays, the ubiquitous notion of identity is the one which is changing and malleable with the creation of new classifications, which come out in different social settings (Barkhuizen et al., 2013). Notwithstanding, the commonality of all definitions is considering identity as a unstable characteristic but as a dynamic procedure (Beijaard et al., 2004). Indeed, it is the response to the questions of “Who am I at the moment?” and “Who do I want to become?” (Gholamshahi et al., 2021). The notion of identity is viewed as relational, negotiated, and transitional conception. It is not regarded as a unitary notion anymore, but as a multidimensional concept dealing with different aspects, such as social identity and gender identity (Miller, 2009). Therefore, it is conceived as a dynamic, multidimensional, and evolving notion over time. As a matter of fact, it is regarded as a construct that is formed both individually and socially. Thus, it is reformed via one’s exposure to different social settings (Richards, 2017). Individual identity is changing and subject to evolve via various experiences, and people are continuously shaping and reshaping their identities (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Gender identity is one of the most fundamental elements of personality, which is depicted as an individual’s view of the extent of his/her maleness and femaleness disregarding of biological sex (Bem, 1974). Culturally specified roles of male and female in a community are called masculine and feminine roles that are only to some extent specified by biological restriction (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). Whereas men are, generally speaking, regarded as more confident, competitive, and fully concentrated on material success and results in different communities,



women are considered to be more humble, caring, and fully focused on the life quality (Hofstede, 1980). These features are the consequences of a mixture of biological, cultural, and social effects (Stets & Burke, 2000). They noted that the origins of femininity and masculinity can be social (one's gender) than biological (one's sex). What being female or male means (e.g., brave or emotional, dominant or passive) is determined by the social and cultural conditions (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). Gender role socialisation, which takes place in the family, religious establishments, educational contexts, media, and peer networks might give rise to one's femininity or masculinity (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Katz, 1986; Sifuna *et al.*, 2006; Stromquist, 2007). Despite the conventional perspective, gender identity is not restricted to a dichotomy (Noorbakhsh *et al.*, 2018). Constantinople (1973) questioned the gender's exclusive dichotomy. She maintained that maleness and femaleness should not be manifested as two opposing sides of a single scale, rather they can be regarded two discrete aspects on which individuals can be gauged. Therefore, an individual can be high or low in both maleness and femaleness, simultaneously (Noorbakhsh *et al.*, 2018). Bem (1974 as cited in Noorbakhsh *et al.*, 2018) coined the term androgyny ("andro" meaning male and "gyn" referring to female) as the consequence of such a two-dimensional notion of gender to depict the gender identity of persons who possess both masculine and feminine features on the basis of their behaviours. Furthermore, whereas those who do not include in the masculine-feminine split are typically called as ostracised (Chege & Sifuna, 2006), Bem (1974) confidently introduced androgyny as a merit, which could lead to major behavioral malleability.

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, Pishghadam *et al.* (2019) explored the roles of teacher success, credibility, and stroke in students' Willingness to Attend Classes (WTAC). To this aim, a total number of 276 undergraduate students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and English Language and Literature completed four scales: Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2008), Teacher Credibility Scale (McCroskey & Teven, 1999), Student Stroke Scale (Pishghadam & Khajavi, 2014), and WTAC Scale (Rajabnejad, Pishghadam, & Saboori, 2017). For data analysis, Pearson multiple correlation coefficients and path analysis were employed. The results of correlational analyses revealed a significantly positive correlation, first, between teacher success and students' WTAC, secondly, between teacher credibility and students' WTAC, and thirdly, between teacher stroke and students' WTAC. Furthermore, the results of path analysis indicated that students' WTAC was significantly predicted by teacher success, credibility, and stroke. Similarly, Amini (2019) conducted a study to find whether the amount and the kind of stroke learners receive in their class might have any role in how they perceive their teachers to be effective. Through convenience sampling, 400 male and female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from both formal and informal educational settings of the Khorasan Razavi province were selected to whom two sets of questionnaires, Characteristics of Effective English Language Teachers Scale and Student Stroke Scale were administered. In this survey study, structural equation modeling and multiple regression analysis were then used to examine the possible relationships among the study variables. The regression analyses of the results revealed a positive relationship between stroke and teacher effectiveness. In addition, among the four subscales of stroke, valuing and verbal stroke were found to be the significant predictors of teacher effectiveness. Along similar lines of studies, Amini *et al.* (2019) investigated the relationship among stroke, psychological reactance, and teacher success. To this end, a total number of 300 Iranian English learners from different English language institutes filled out a newly developed scale on psychological reactance along with stroke and teacher success scales. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was exerted to both develop and validate the new scale. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was, then, employed to examine the possible relationships. Results revealed that stroke was a positive predictor of teacher success. Moreover, a negative relationship was found between psychological reactance and teacher success. 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.

To the researcher's best knowledge, there was no study to investigate the role of EFL teacher's strictness, stroke, and gender identity in 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 these strictness, gender identity, and stroke have the potential of empowering EFL teacher education and resulting in profound educational implications, this study aimed at exploring the roles of stroke, gender identity, and strictness in teacher success from EFL teachers' points of view.

RQ1: Is there any statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions regarding stroke?

RQ2: Is there any statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions regarding strictness?

RQ3: Is there any statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions regarding success?

RQ4: Can female teachers' success be predicted by stroke, strictness, and gender identity?

RQ5: Can male teachers' success be predicted by stroke, strictness, and gender identity?

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

In the present study, 420 EFL teachers, 200 males and 220 females, participated in the study. The teachers were teaching English courses in different language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces in Iran. The method for sample selection was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand (Ary et al., 2019). 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, in order for the data to be as representative as possible, it was collected from three educational districts representing low, middle, and high social classes according to geographical districts of Tehran and Alborz provinces.

INSTRUMENTATION

Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale: To evaluate language teachers' performance and success in language teaching, Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale (TSS) designed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) was applied. This scale was in Persian and included 47 items, each followed by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. It measures the twelve following factors: Teaching accountability, Interpersonal relationships, Attention to all, Examination, Commitment, Learning boosters, Creating a sense of competence, Teaching boosters, Physical and emotional acceptance, Empathy, Class attendance and Dynamism. Its reliability was measured through Cronbach alpha, and it was in an acceptable range ($r=.919$).

Masculinity/Femininity Scale: To obtain measures of the teachers' gender identity, Masculinity/Femininity Scale (MFS) designed by Pishghadam *et al.* (2016) was employed. It was in Persian and included 30 adjectives. Masculinity is represented by adjectives, such as kind, intelligent, friendly, etc.; Androgyny by open-minded, high-class, well-dressed, etc.; and Femininity by knowledgeable, well-educated, consultable, etc. Its reliability was measured through Cronbach alpha, and it was in an acceptable range ($r=.92$).



Stroke Scale: To assess the stroke given to EFL learners by their teachers, Stroke Scale (SSS) developed in Persian by Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) was utilized. It was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) and included 18 items, which were indicators of different types of stroke. The main characteristics of the stroke are recognition by other people and also providing feedback for the other people. Recognition and providing feedback can be verbal or non-verbal, positive or negative. Moreover, factors of this scale were Verbal stroke, Non-verbal stroke, valuing and Classroom activities. Its reliability was measured through Cronbach alpha, and it was in an acceptable range ($r=.933$).

Teacher Strictness Scale: This scale was developed and designed by the researcher. The items of the scale were developed based on the criteria of the teacher strictness adopted from the related literature. It consisted of 15 items. It was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always (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 through Cronbach alpha, and it was in an acceptable range ($r=.922$).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The present study was in the form of a survey design. The participants were selected from different language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces, Iran. The teachers have been teaching different English courses. The method for sample selection was convenience sampling. So the accessibility and availability of the participants was the main criterion of sample selection in the present study. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the managers of the English language institutes and after getting their permission to gather the data from their teachers, he 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 of the study.

The data collection was conducted at different language institutes with the participation of 420 English language teachers who willingly helped the researcher. The researchers' intention of selecting these numbers of the participants was having a true representative sample for the purpose of the present study. For collecting the data, four questionnaires were employed in the current study that were mentioned in instrumentation section (phase 1). 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 researcher explained the purpose of the study and the procedure of taking questionnaires. He explained that the results of the questionnaires were confidential and do not have any effects on their careers in the institutes in order to minimize the participants' bias in their responses.

After collecting the data, Pearson product-moment correlation formula was used to examine the relationships between the intended variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (or Pearson correlation coefficient, for short) is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r . Next, the predictive power of gender identity, stroke, and teacher strictness in teacher success was assessed through Path Analysis. Path Analysis was used to describe the directed dependencies among a set of variables. In order to analyze the data, SPSS (version 24) was utilized. In addition, to estimate the reliability of the employed scales, Cronbach alpha was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The characteristics of descriptive statistics of research variables and its dimensions are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Indicators of Research Variables*

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Standard	Statistic	Standard



					error	error	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
Gender identity	420	3.79	0.71	-0.818	0.119	1.167	0.238
Success	420	3.83	0.55	-0.975	0.119	1.164	0.238

Based on the information in Table 1, 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, gender identity 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. Fortunately, 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.

DATA NORMALITY TEST

The normality of the distribution of data obtained from spectra should be checked in the description of observations through two indicators of skewness and kurtosis. The necessary condition is that the indicators (items) must have a skewness value between -3 and 3 and their kurtosis value must be between -5 and 5. In the normality of data distribution of variables, the researcher must act according to Klein's opinion with two necessary and sufficient conditions to examine the indicators and variables. Since the data of this research has 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 1, 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.

ADDRESSING THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

"Is there a statistically significant relationship between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke?"

In order to determine the significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke, t-test of independent groups was used.

Table 2. T-test of Independent Groups for Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions of Stroke

		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test of independent groups				
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig	Mean difference	Standard error
Stroke	Equality of variances	0.485	0.486	0.569	418	0.569	0.042	0.074
	Inequality of variances			0.586	410.442	0.570	0.042	0.074



According to the information in Table 2, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is greater than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke.

ADDRESSING THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

"Is there a statistically significant relationship between female and male teachers' perception of strictness?"

In order to determine the significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of strictness, t-test of independent groups was used.

Table 3. T-test of Independent Groups for Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions of Strictness

		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test of independent groups				
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig	Mean difference	Standard error
Strictness	Equality of variances	0.333	0.564	0.137	418	0.891	0.010	0.074
	Inequality of variances			0.137	410.470	0.891	0.010	0.074

According to the information in Table 3, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is greater than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of strictness.

ADDRESSING THE THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION

"Is there a statistically significant relationship between female and male teachers' perceptions of success?"

In order to determine the significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of success, t-test of independent groups was used.

Table 4. T-test of Independent Groups for Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions of Success

		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test of independent groups				
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig	Mean difference	Standard error
Success	Equality of variances	0.012	0.912	0.124	418	0.902	0.005	0.044



Inequality of variances	0.124	410.456	0.902	0.005	0.044
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According to the information in Table 4, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is greater than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of success.

ADDRESSING THE FOURTH RESEARCH QUESTION

“Can female teachers' success be predicted by stroke, strictness, and gender identity?”

In order to answer this question, the path analysis method is employed using PLS (Third version) software. The results are reported in the form of graphs (1 and 2) and Table 5.

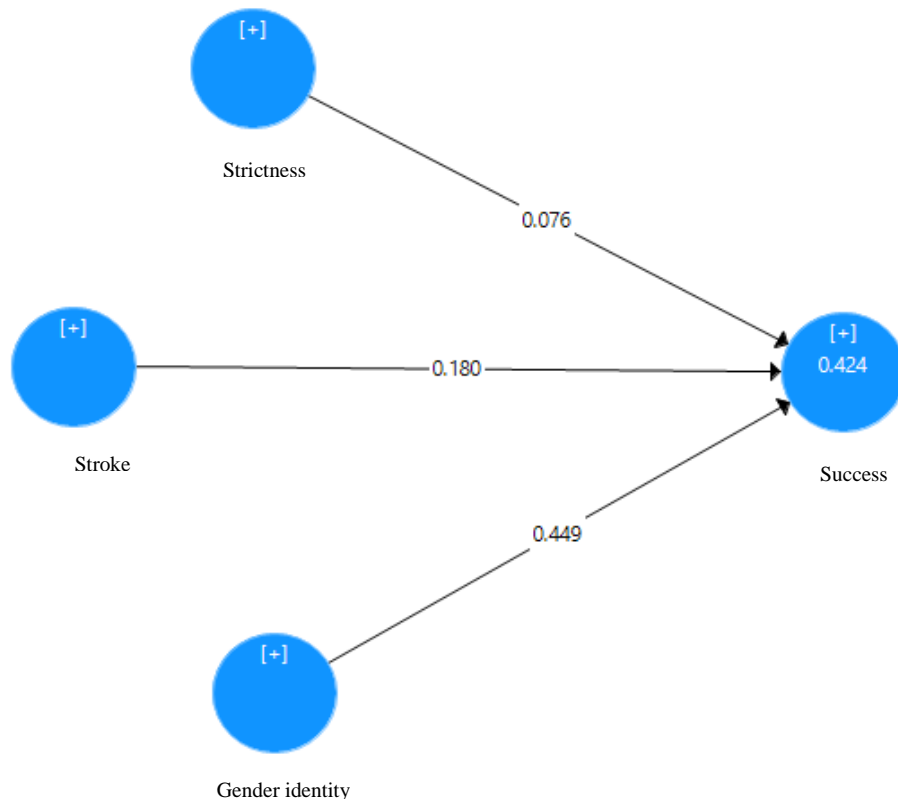


Figure 1. Path coefficients, values of factor loads and R^2

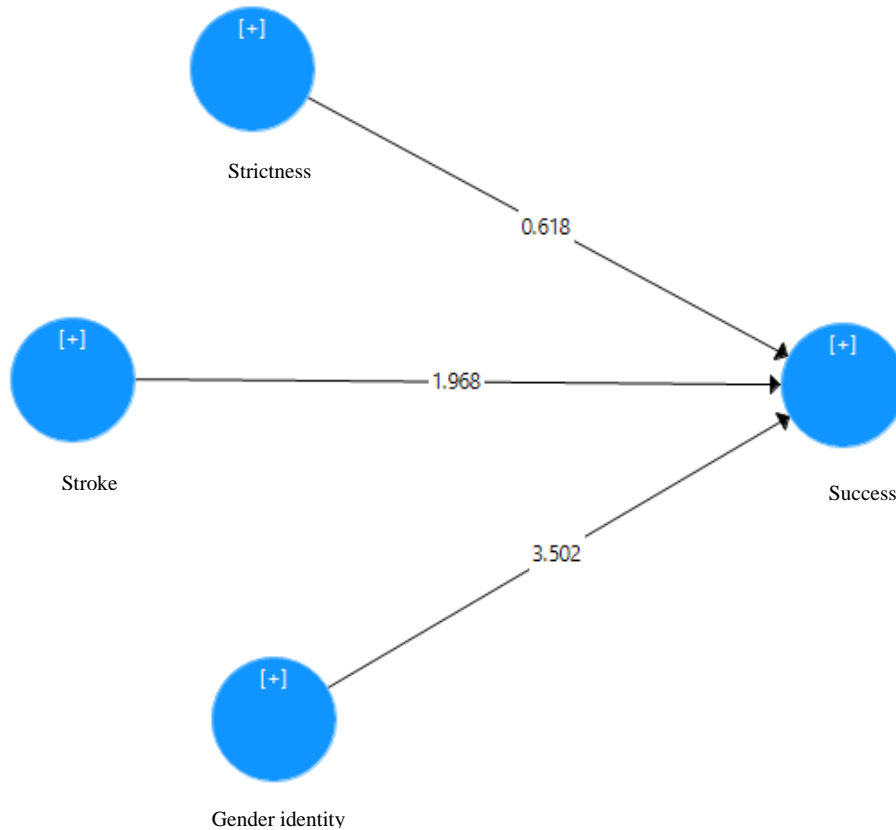


Figure 2. t-values test results

Table 5. Results of the Model

Paths	Path coefficient	t statistic	R ²	Sig. level
Success → Stroke	0.180	1.968	0.139	0.000
Success → Strictness	0.076	0.618	0.102	0.356
Success → gender Identity	0.449	3.502	0.159	0.000

According to the results in Table 5, it can be seen that the investigation of the effect coefficient of stroke on success shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.80. Given the value of the partial index (p-value) which is less than 0.05 and also the significance value, which is 1.968 and is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., stroke has a significant positive effect on success. The effect coefficient of gender identity on success also shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.449. Given the partial index (p-value) which is less than 0.05 and also the significance value, which is 3.502 and is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., gender identity has a significant positive effect on success. However, the investigation of the effect coefficient of strictness on success shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.076. Given the partial index (p-value) which is greater than 0.05 and also the significance value, which is 0.618 and is less than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is not significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., strictness does not have a significant positive effect on success.



ADDRESSING THE FIFTH RESEARCH QUESTION

“Can male teachers' success be predicted by stroke, strictness, and gender identity?”

In order to answer this question, the path analysis method is employed using PLS software. The results are reported in the form of graphs (3 and 4) and Table 6.

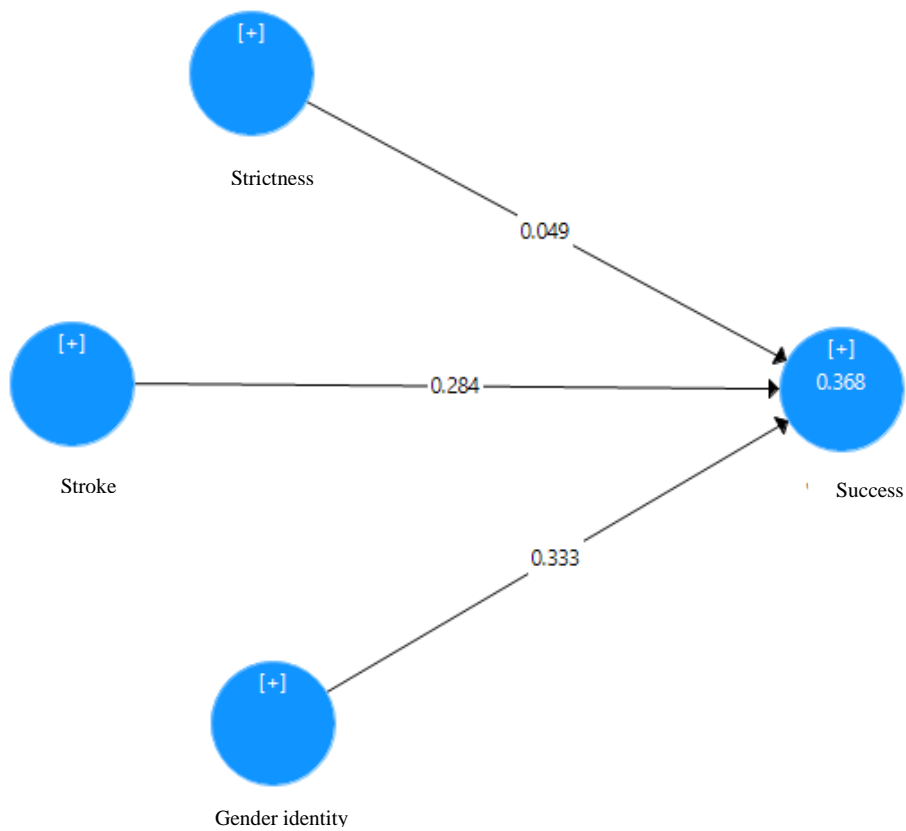


Figure 3. Path coefficients, values of factor loads and R²

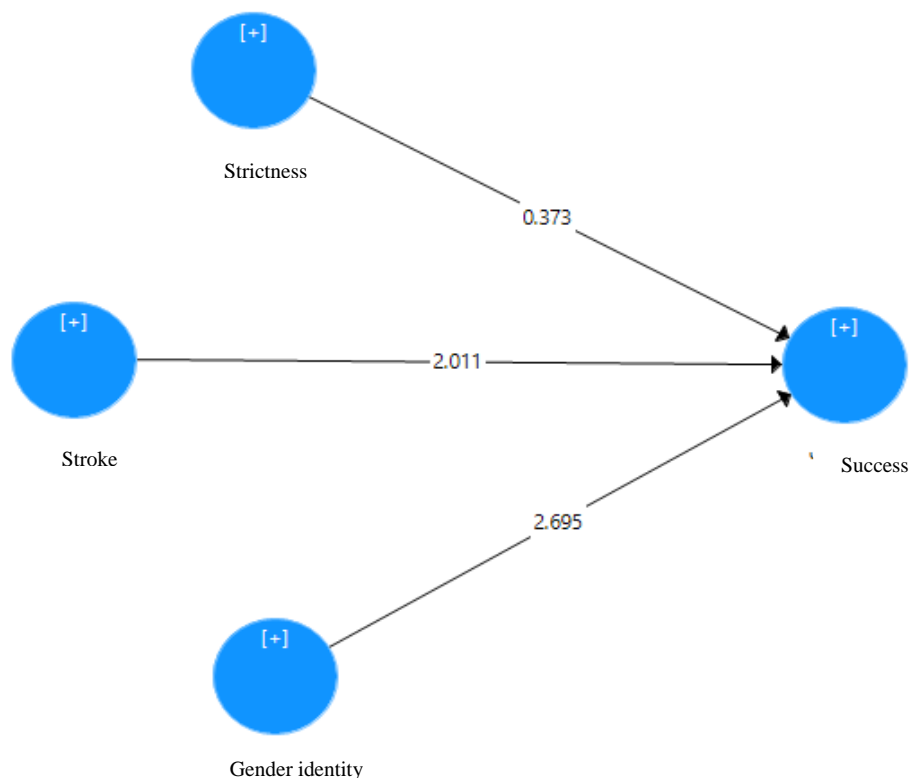


Figure 4. t-values test results

Table 6. Results of the Model

Paths	Path coefficient	t statistic	R ²	Sig. level
Stroke → Success	0.284	2.011	0.124	0.000
Strictness → Success	0.049	0.373	0.112	0.198
Gender identity → Success	0.333	2.965	0.123	0.000

According to the results in Table 6, it can be seen that the investigation of the effect coefficient of stroke on success shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.284. Given the partial index (p-value) which is less than 0.05 and also the significance value which is 2.011 and greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., stroke has a significant positive effect on success. The effect coefficient of gender identity on success also shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.333. Given the partial index (p-value) which is less than 0.05 and also the significance value which is 2.695 and is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., gender identity has a significant positive effect on success. However, the investigation of the effect coefficient of strictness on success shows that this path coefficient is estimated to be 0.049. Given the partial index (p-value) which is greater than 0.05 and also the significance value which is 0.373 and is less than 1.96, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is not significant at the error level of 0.05; i.e., strictness does not have a significant positive effect on success.



The findings showed that there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke, and also there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of strictness. In addition, the results indicated that there is no significant difference between female and male teachers' perceptions of success. The results of fourth research question showed that stroke and gender identity play a significant role in success of female EFL teachers; however, strictness does not play a significant role in female EFL teachers' success. The results of fifth research question revealed that stroke and gender identity play significant roles in success of male EFL teachers, but strictness does not play a significant role in male EFL teachers' success.

The findings are in line with those of Rajabnejad et al. (2017) who explored the role of stroke in learners' willingness to class attendance (WTAC) and foreign language anxiety (FLA) in an EFL context in which their results revealed that the WTAC of teacher characteristics subscale was the only factor that could predict FLA, and the non-verbal and valuing subscales of stroke were the highest predictors for WTAC. Furthermore, the results are in harmony with Irajzad et al. (2016) who studied the differences among English, Persian, and Arabic school teachers considering their stroking behavior, and their results demonstrated that English teachers outstroke students. 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 those 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. Further, the results are in harmony with those of Pishghadam and Karami (2017) who examined the role of two characteristics—teacher stroking and teacher credibility—in relation to teachers' success, and the findings demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between teachers' efficacy and each of these factors.

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.

In addition, the results revealed that stroke and gender identity play significant roles in success of male EFL teachers. Playing a significant role of stroke in teacher success shows the significance of stroke rich contexts in instructional settings (Freedman, 1993; Kuslivan, 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). 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. In addition, the results are in agreement with the findings of Norbakhshi et al. (2018) who explored the roles of teacher gender identity and stroke in teacher success, and their findings showed that femininity and masculinity predicted stroke and that stroke and androgyny were positive predictors of teacher success. Therefore, the concept of femininity and masculinity could have impacts the quality of teaching and hence contribute to a more efficient teacher education. As for the role of masculinity, it can be argued that since the culture of Iran is dominantly collective, hierarchical and masculine-based (Hofstede, 1983), EFL teachers who possess more masculine qualities provide their students with more strokes and are more comfortable in distributing their eye contact equally and caring more about their students.

Moreover, the findings indicated that strictness does not paly a significant role in female and male teachers' success, which are not in harmony with those 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 East Asian learners' motivation, and moreover, in the East Asian context, teacher strictness and teacher feedback were significantly correlated. Additionally, this result is not in line with the findings of Maulana et al.'s (2011) research in Indonesia who found that the more instructors show strictness and collaboration, the more learners are encouraged to involve in language education.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This survey study was an attempt to explore the conceptions of male and female EFL teachers with regard to the roles of stroke, gender identity, and strictness in teachers' success. The findings showed that there are no significant differences between female and male teachers' perceptions of stroke, strictness, and gender identity. The findings indicated that strictness does not paly a significant role in female and male teachers' success. Additionally, gender identity and stroke play a significant role in predicting female and male teachers' 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 performance become the same for men and women (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021).

According to the findings, it can be also concluded that effective caring teachers, who use stroking most of the times, also know the students individually and give them individual attention and develop productive relationships with their students. They treat their student with respect and expect the same in return, enhancing the students learning progress. It is not enough to know the students in their formal setting (in the classroom: their learning strategies or learning style), but also, to know them in their informal setting (outside the classroom: likes and dislikes, background, their motivation, aptitude and attitude to learn). These have great effect on behaviour and performance in the classroom, and in their learning process (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001).

The findings of the present study may contribute to the current literature on EFL teacher success in several ways. A better understanding of the factors that are associated with and predict success in EFL teachers can inform efforts to increase skills in teachers. As Gourneau (2005, p.1) stated that "effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers can ultimately make positive differences on the lives of their students", the first and the most important outcome of the present study is to make changes in teachers' performances and provide them with effective attitudes that can cause better learning outcomes in their students. Since teacher-student interactions result in a productive classroom climate and individual student success, teachers should be aware of the fact that stroking should be an inseparable part of their job and it can be a helpful strategy for classroom management. Furthermore, teachers should be cautious and selective when adopting teaching strategies in accordance with local cultural environments. Third, taking a culturally responsive classroom management perspective (Weinstein et al., 2004), it is important for teachers, especially those from Western countries who work in schools with populations of students from



multicultural backgrounds, to be conscious of the potential for different interpretations of interpersonal behaviors in different cultures.

Furthermore, given the significance of pre-service training in reinforcing or changing belief systems (Koc, 2013), these findings should be utilised in teacher pre- and in-service training programmes to satisfy the practical needs of EFL teachers. As insufficiency of effective teachers can harm learning to a great extent, knowledge of the factors which might cause teacher success seems to be necessary for teacher trainers. Expecting efficient educational processes is impossible unless the teacher is qualified enough (Sahan, 2009). When the teachers are trained well, they can successfully impart knowledge, wisdom, self-efficacy, creativity and all that is required for the students. In this regard, teacher educators need to develop better relationships with pre-service teachers mainly due to the fact that pre-service teachers' understanding of the concept of teacher stroke is greatly influenced by their relationship with teacher educators. Moreover, teacher trainers should alter teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward their educational responsibilities. To put it simply, they should make teachers aware that their responsibilities in instructional learning environments are beyond the transmission of content and pedagogical knowledge. That is, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge that the interpersonal behaviors they employ in interaction with their students (e.g., stroke) are as important as their knowledge and instructional skills.

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.

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