The Role of Iranian EFL Teachers' Personal Characteristics and Their Teaching Contexts in the Amount of Affective Support They Provide their Students with

Neda Taherkhani

M.A. in Applied Linguistics, Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of Humanities, Kharazmi (Tarbiat Moallem) University, Tehran, Iran
taherkhani.neda@gmail.com

Abstract: Affective aspects have been generally identified to influence Second Language Acquisition (SLA) processes; nevertheless, the topic is yet to attract systematic attention from scholars and teachers in language learning contexts, especially in Iran. The present study aims at determining the relationship between (a) the Iranian EFL teachers' personal characteristics as well as their contexts of teaching and (b) the amount of affective support they provide for language learners. To this end, an Affective Support Scale was constructed to assess the general perceptions of 60 Iranian EFL teachers and 810 language learners regarding the affective scaffolding provided by teachers for learners. The teachers' characteristics (age, gender, EFL related experience, and academic degree) as well as their contexts of language teaching (schools, language institutes, and universities) were also taken care of in the developed scale. The data were then analyzed using SPSS IBM. Significant differences were detected between the perceptions of the EFL teachers' and those of the learners' regarding teachers' affective support (P ⩾ 0.01). Besides, according to the learners' ratings, the EFL teachers at language institutes were believed to provide more affective support while the ones at schools had the lowest rank in providing affective support for the learners (P ⩾ 0.05). The more educated, the younger, and the less experienced the EFL teachers were, the higher they were rated by language learners on the scale of affective support; furthermore, female teachers were believed to provide a bit more affective support than the male ones in language institutes. On the other hand, according to the EFL teachers' own ratings, no significant differences were found in terms of the affective support provided by teachers in the three contexts and with regard to their age, gender, experience, and educational level (P ⩾ 0.05). The result of the present study has implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and even curriculum developers in improving the affective state of EFL learners. These implications are supplemented with suggestions for further research in order to bridge the gap between the present and the desired emotional state in EFL educational contexts.

1. Introduction

Affective factors are generally believed to have a much more important role in EFL learners' learning than many other factors such as cognitive, metacognitive, social, cultural, individual, and strategic factors (Arnold, 1999; Arnold & Brown, 1999; Dörnyei, 2001; Ehrman, 1996; Gardner, 1985; Hurd, 2008; MacIntyre, 2002; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Rossiter, 2003). Krashen (1982) characterized affect as comprising "learner's motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states" (p. 46). Moreover, regarding "affect in language learning", which "is a complex phenomenon" (White, 2003, p. 117) Hilgard (1963, p. 267) emphasized that "purely cognitive theories of language will be rejected unless a role is assigned to affect". Besides, affect and emotional responses are believed to increase the attention, motivation and effort needed for language learning (Schumann, 1997). To incorporate affect in language learning

programs (See Arnold, 1999) movements such as student-centeredness (Machemer & Crawford, 2007; Arnold, 1999), self-regulated student learning (Van Eekelen, Boshuizen, & Vermunt, 2005, p. 447), humanistic psychology (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1973), communicative language teaching (Asher, 1997; Gattegno, 1972; Curran, 1976; Lozanov, 1979) and the Natural Approaches (Krashen and Terrel, 1983) emerged which gave a central role to affect and emotion in language learning. Different models have been proposed for clarifying affective factors.

One of the most influential models in this regard is the "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives" by Bloom, Masia, Krathwohl (1964). They believed that "Affective Domain" is comprised of five main hierarchical processes of receiving, responding, valuing, organizing and characterization. Besides, learners' emotional states are generally believed to be capable of affecting their thinking and learning. Learners learn better when they are in positive

emotional states such as happiness and security (Boekaerts, 1993; Isen, 1990; Oatlay & Nundy, 1996).

Kort, Reilly & Picard (2001, p. 2) introduced a continuum of possible emotional sets through which the positive (+) emotions were believed to affect the learning process in a positive way; and the negative (-) states were claimed to affect learning in a negative fashion. Traditional learning contexts have not sufficiently paid attention to the affective aspects of learning and the emotional needs of students; they tended to reduce learning to other factors such as cognitive and psychomotor ones. However, from the 1970s on, the role of emotions in educational settings has proven to be more obvious (Arnold, 1999). Since then, many studies have addressed the issue of affective factors and their crucial role in the field of language teaching and learning (e.g., Arnold, 1999; Arnold & Brown, 1999; Burleson, 2006; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Hurd, 2007; Hurd, 2008; MacIntyre, 2002; Schumann, 1997; Scovel, 1978; Young, 1999). Moreover, the affective support provided by teachers to their students in all its forms has been the subject of study by several researchers (Bailenson & Yee, 2005; Baylor, Shen, and Huang, 2003; Bickmore & Picard, 2004). Many studies have been also carried out with regard to the emotional factors in learning contexts other than language learning, like mathematics (e.g. Sakiz et al., 2007), distant learning and computer (e.g. Anderson & Simpson, 2004) and Physics (e.g. Hazari, Sadler, & Tai, 2008).

With all these studies, however, it seems that very little, if any, has been done to see how affective support is perceived in language learning classes by language teachers and learners, especially with regard to factors such as learning environment (schools, language institutes, universities) and EFL teachers' characteristics (age, gender, academic degree, and experience) which could possibly influence the extent of affective support provided for ELT learners in Iranian EFL contexts. The purpose of the present study was to determine the differences between Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of the affective support provided by teachers with different characteristics and in different EFL instructional contexts. The teacher characteristics taken into account included age, length of experience, gender, and academic degrees while schools, language institutes, and universities were considered as the three different EFL teaching contexts.

2. Material and Methods

This study was a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey in which two groups of participants took part. The first group was composed of sixty Iranian EFL teachers chosen based on a stratified random sampling procedure from among the teachers in Tehran, Iran. In order to include teachers and students of diverse socio-economic statuses, three main regions were identified including city center, the northern part of the city, and the southern part of the city. Then almost the same numbers of teachers in each area were randomly chosen to take part in the study; however, whenever a school manager or its teachers were not willing to cooperate, they were randomly replaced with some other schools. The teachers were both males and females from different age groups (under 30, 30-40, above 40) and came from different EFL teaching/learning contexts (schools, language institutes, and universities). They also had different periods of EFL working experience (less than 10 years, 10-20 years, more than 20 years) and various educational backgrounds (academic degrees). The second group of participants comprised 810 Iranian EFL learners (434 female and 376 male) who were randomly selected to participate in the study. They were chosen from three instructional contexts (300 learners from schools, 140 from language institutes and 370 from universities). Furthermore, in order to control the effect of learners' gender on the results of the study, the researchers tried to include male and female learners in almost equal numbers. The demographic information of the samples is illustrated in table 1.

An Affective Support Scale consisting of 24 Likert-type items was developed and used in this study. Due to lack of any comprehensive theory on EFL teachers' affective support for learners, the researchers sought help from three ELT experts and two educational psychologists throughout the construction procedure of the questionnaire. Several items were constructed based on the current literature; four others were based on Sakiz et al.'s (2007) Affective Support Sub-scale , two items were adapted from Sakiz's (2012) Affective Support Scales; and 8 items partly corresponded to the CLASS framework proposed by Pianta, Karen, & Birdget (2009). Some unstructured interviews were also carried out with some EFL teachers and learners, who were selected based on convenience sampling, in order to come up with more relevant ideas regarding the identified concepts. The experts were then asked to establish the face and content validity of the chosen items. Finally, 25 items were included in the first draft of the scale and four main concepts related to EFL teachers' affective support were identified to be addressed by the scale; the teachers' own affective characteristics, their affective reactions to language learners' behavior and performance, the objectivity (impartiality) of teachers' behavior with

language learners, and the authority given by teachers to their students. Eight items were written in a negative sense, which were also coded reversely in data quantification. The scale had two forms with exactly the same items; one addressing EFL teachers and asking them about the amount of emotional support they thought they were providing for their learners, and the other form was to be filled out by a number of those teachers' students asking about the amount of affective support their EFL teachers were providing. The questionnaire items then were translated into Farsi for the sake of attributing the results to the variables under investigation than to the participants' understanding of the questionnaire language.

Afterwards, the scale underwent a pilot study in which 387 EFL learners of 30 classes and their 30 teachers (10 classes in each context) participated. To calculate the reliability of the first version of the questionnaire, the application IBM SPSS STATISTICS 20 was used. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for the learners' form, the teachers' form and the combined form were 0.82, 0.77, and 0.835 respectively. Then, the dimensionality of the scale was analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis. To this end two criteria were used to identify the number of factors to be retained in the Principle Axis Analysis; Kaiser's criterion and the interpretability of rotating factors. Due to the significance of Bartlett's test of sphericity (Sig=0.00), the desirable KMO index (.948), and the

rotated matrix values, the four already identified factors were recognized. Nevertheless, in the present study EFL teachers' and learners' GENERAL perceptions of the affective support provided by teachers for learners were taken into account and the specific analysis of the affective support with regard to the detected factors of the scale are proposed to be considered in further researches.

Afterwards, the questionnaire underwent the main stage of the study. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was checked at the end of the study for the learners' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire separately and then also for the two questionnaires combined together. The three reliability coefficients proved 0.922, 0.850, and 0.923 respectively. Then the data were entered into IBM SPSS STATISTICS 20 to be analyzed. In order to convert the qualitative data into quantitative, a code ranging from 5 (the greatest amount of affective support) to 1 (the least amount) was given to each item. The negative items were coded in a reverse manner in order to get consistent results. The statistical measures, whose results are summarized in table 2, were Independent-Samples T-Test, One-Way ANOVA, Univariate Analysis of Variance (UNIANOVA), and Tukey Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons test. Each questionnaire sheet was given a score between 24 (if all items were scored 1) to 120 (if all items were scored 5); and this score was used as the basis for any further analyses and comparisons.

Table 1. Demographic information of EFL teachers and learners taking part in the study

EFL Teachers	Context		Schools	Institutes	Universities	Total
	gender	Male	9	9	11	29
		Female	11	11	9	31
		Total	20	20	20	60
	age	30 and below	0	16	6	22
		30-40	11	2	5	18
		40 and over	9	2	9	20
		Total	20	20	20	60
	Experience	10 and below	0	17	6	23
		10-20	11	2	9	22
		20 and over	9	1	5	15
		Total	20	20	20	60
	Education	Associate	8	1	0	9
		Bachelor	11	14	0	25
		Master	1	4	13	18
		PhD	0	1	7	8
		Total	20	20	20	60
EFL learners	Gender	Male	143	61	172	376
		Female	157	79	198	434
		Total	300	140	370	810

3. Results

The results of analyzing the data are as follows:

3.1. Language institute EFL teachers were rated the highest by learners on providing affective support in the classroom; while school teachers were rated the lowest by them on this characteristic. However, teachers' ratings indicated no significant differences. After using a test of One-Way ANOVA, learners' ratings indicated significant differences in terms of the affective support provided by teachers in different contexts (F= 47.962; Sig.= 0.00). Therefore, the null hypothesis predicting lack of such association was rejected.

Then the Tukey post-hoc test of multiple comparisons based on learners' ratings showed that language institute EFL teachers provided learners with the most amount of affective support; institute teachers offered learners a moderate degree of such support; and school EFL teachers gave them the least amount of support (P ≥ 0.01). On the other hand, another test of One-Way ANOVA which was carried out based on EFL teachers' ratings, showed no significant differences in terms of the emotional support offered by teachers in different EFL instructional contexts (F=.357; Sig= .701); hence, the other null hypothesis predicting absence of such differences could not be rejected.

3.2. The EFL learners rated the male and female teachers equally on providing affective support in the classroom; while only learners in language institutes rated female teachers higher than male teachers on being affectively supportive; besides, teachers' ratings indicated no significant results. A UNIANOVA test was conducted based on the learners' ratings to investigate the relationship between the teachers' gender and their affective support for language learners and also the relationship between the teachers' gender-context interaction and their affective support for the learners. Learners' ratings showed that male and female EFL teachers provided their students with almost the same (insignificantly different) amount of affective support (F= 1.236; Sig= 0.267); hence, the null hypothesis asserting no significant difference in the amount of affective support provided by male and female teachers could not be rejected. Besides, an association was detected between the teachers' gender-context interaction and their emotional support for the learners (F=3.104; Sig= 0.045). Therefore, the null hypothesis predicting the absence of such meaningful association was rejected.

A glance at the descriptive statistics indicated that female language institute teachers were rated by learners to be more affectively supportive in the classroom than males. Besides, the two factors of teachers' gender and their context of teaching together could predict almost 11% of the variance in teachers' affective scaffolding. Another UNIANOVA test was also run based on the teachers' ratings. The results indicated no meaningful association between the teachers' gender and their affective support (F= 1.068; Sig= 0.306). Furthermore, no relationship was observed between the teachers' gender-context interaction and the amount of emotional support provided by them (F=2.762; Sig= 0.072). Therefore, the null hypotheses predicting lack of meaningful relationships between teachers' gender and their affective support on one hand, and between their gender-context interaction and their affective support on the other hand, could not be rejected.

3.3. The younger the EFL teachers, the higher they were rated as affectively supportive by language learners; while teachers' ratings did not show any significant results. Regarding language learners' ratings, the UNIANOVA test results indicated that teachers at different ages provided learners with various (significantly different) amounts of affective support (F= 4.277; Sig= 0.014); therefore, the null hypothesis emphasizing no statistically significant differences among teachers' affective support based on their age levels was rejected. Tukey test of learners' ratings indicated further that the young EFL teachers provided more affective support for learners in comparison with the middle-aged and old ones.

It seemed that teachers' affective support decreased as their age increased; furthermore, the decrease was even more evident (significant) when it came to middle-aged teachers (P ≥ 0.05). The absence of a meaningful relationship between the teachers' age-context interaction and the amount of their affective support (F=0.354; Sig= 0.786) resulted in failure in rejecting another null hypothesis regarding the absence of such a meaningful relationship and it showed that probably the age-affective support pattern found in each of the EFL learning contexts was almost the same as the general pattern found in all of the contexts. Afterwards, teachers' age and their contexts of teaching together turned out to predict almost 12.5% of the variance in teachers' affective support. Another UNIANOVA test was done based on the EFL teachers' own ratings of their affective support and the results indicated lack of any significant differences among the teachers' of different ages regarding their emotional support (F=0.467; Sig=0.629); therefore, the null hypothesis predicting absence of such differences could not be rejected. Besides, no meaningful association was found between the teachers' age-context interaction and the amount of their affective support (F=0.431; Sig= 0.732); thus, the null hypothesis asserting absence of such an association

was not rejected. This shows that the teachers at different age levels have rated their affective support in all the three contexts almost equally.

3.4. The more experienced the EFL teachers were in their teaching profession, the lower they were rated as affectively supportive by language learners; while no significant results were found in the teachers' ratings.

Table 2. Summarized results of statistical tests used in the study

Test Type	Purpose Of Test	Rators Considered	Considered Variable(s)	Sig	Null Hypothesis	Adjusted Square
One-way ANOVA	AS in different contexts	Ls	Contexts	.000	Rejected	
Tukey Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons	AS in different contexts	Ls	Contexts	P≤ 0.01		
One-way ANOVA	AS in different contexts	Ts	Contexts	.701	Not Rejected	
UNIANOVA	male and female Ts' AS	Ls	Gender Gender-Context	.267 .045	Not Rejected Rejected	.108
UNIANOVA	male and female Ts' AS	Ts	Gender Gender-Context	.306 .072	Not Rejected Not Rejected	
UNIANOVA	AS by Ts' at different age levels	Ls	Age Age-Context	.014 .786	Rejected Not Rejected	.123
Tukey Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons	AS by Ts' at different age levels	Ls	Age	P≤ 0.05		
UNIANOVA	AS according to Ts' age levels	Ts	Age Age-Context	.629 .732	Not Rejected Not Rejected	
UNIANOVA	AS by Ts with different experience levels	Ls	Experience Experience-Context	.021 .518	Rejected Not Rejected	.123
Tukey Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons	AS by Ts with different experience levels	Ls	Experience	P≤ 0.05		
UNIANOVA	AS by Ts with different experience levels	Ts	Experience Experience-Context	.912 .747	Not Rejected Not Rejected	
UNIANOVA	AS by Ts with different educational levels	Ls	Education Education-Context	.000 .010	Rejected Rejected	.155
Tukey Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons	AS by Ts with different educational levels	Ls	Education	P≤ 0.05		
UNIANOVA	AS by Ts with different educational levels	Ts	Education Education-Context	.747 .656	Not Rejected Not Rejected	
Independet-Sample T-Test	Ts' and Ls' Perceptions of AS	Ts & Ls		.000	Rejected	

Ts: Teachers. Ls: Learners. AS: Affective Support. df: degree of freedom. sig: significance

The results of UNIANOVA test indicated that teachers with various lengths of EFL teaching experience were considered by learners to offer significantly different extents of emotional support (F= 3.867; Sig= 0.021); therefore, the null hypothesis predicting the absence of such a relationship was rejected. As such, the less experienced the EFL teachers were, the more affective support they were likely to provide for language learners, and the probability appeared to get less when the teachers' experience increased to 40 years and over, as the results of Tukey test indicated (P≥ 0.05). Moreover, the absence of a meaningful association between teachers' experience-context interaction and their affective support (F=0.757; Sig= 0.518) leads to failure in rejecting another null hypothesis regarding the lack of such a meaningful relationship and indicates that the experience-affective support relationships found in each of the EFL learning contexts were almost the same as the general relationship existing in all the contexts. Besides, teachers' experience and their contexts of teaching together predicted almost 12.5% of the variance in the teachers' affective support. Another UNIANOVA test was run based on the EFL teachers' ratings and the results proved the absence of significant differences among the amount of the teachers' affective support and their different experience levels (F=0.093; Sig=0.912). Therefore, the null hypothesis asserting lack of such differences could not to be rejected. Moreover, the results indicated the lack of any meaningful relationships between the teachers' experience-context interaction and their affective support (F=0.409; Sig= 0.747). So, the null hypotheses predicting lack of such associations could not be rejected.

3.5. The higher the educational level of the EFL teachers, the higher they were rated as affectively supportive by the learners, and the teachers' ratings did not display any significant differences.

The results of UNIANOVA test showed that teachers with different academic degrees were rated differently by learners on offering affective support (F= 24.372; Sig= 0.000); therefore, the null hypothesis asserting lack of such a correlation was rejected. Due to the meaningful relationship found between the teachers' academic degree-context interaction and the extent of affective support they gave the students (F=7.107; Sig= 0.010); the same situation also existed in each of the contexts. Therefore, another null hypothesis predicting the absence of such a relationship was rejected. A short glimpse at the descriptive statistics reveals that probably in each of the language instruction contexts too, the more educated the EFL teachers were, the more affective support they were likely to offer to the language learners. As the results of the Tukey post-hoc test showed, the amount of affective support provided by the teachers who had a Doctorate or Master's degree or were studying at these levels was considered to be higher than the support given by those who held or were students of Bachelor's or Associate's degrees.

Although the relationship is not linear, it can be stated with less than 99% confidence interval that the more educated the EFL teachers were, the higher they were rated by the learners on being affectively supportive. Furthermore, the two variables of teacher education and their contexts of teaching together turned out to predict almost 16 percent of the variance in teachers' affective support. Another test of ANOVA was also run based on the teachers' own ratings and the results indicated lack of any significant differences in the amount of affective support provided by teachers with different academic degrees (F=0.409; Sig= 0.747); hence, the null hypothesis predicting the absence of such differences was not rejected. The teachers' ratings also indicates no meaningful association between their experience-context interaction and their affective support (F=0.541; Sig= 0.656). In other words, teachers with different academic degrees rated their affective support almost the same in all EFL instructional contexts; hence, the other null hypothesis predicting the absence of such an association could also not be rejected.

3.6. The EFL teachers rated themselves higher than what their learners did regarding their affective support. An independent-sample t-test was used to make a comparison between the EFL teachers' and the learners' perceptions of the teachers' affective support. According to the significance of Leven's test (Sig= 0.003) as well as the significance of the t-test result (t=7.064; sig=0.00), a significant difference was detected between the means of the two groups' ratings. Hence, the null hypothesis predicting the absence of such a difference was rejected. It is generally evident that the amount of the teachers' affective support in their own ratings is higher than that in the learners' ratings. About 95% of the teachers rated their affective support as high (Mean= 1-40), 5% as moderate (Mean= 41-80), and 0% as low (Mean= 81-120). On the other hand, 71.1% of the learners rated their teachers' emotional support as high, 26.3% as moderate, and 2.6% as low.

4. Discussions

Although the researches carried out on the affective aspects of EFL instruction are very limited, especially in the Iranian contexts of language instruction, the most important results are discussed

here in relation to some related studies available to the researcher.

4.1. The learners rated the language institute EFL teachers the highest on providing affective support in the classroom and the school teachers the lowest. Probably one of the reasons why Iranian schools lag behind the other two contexts with regard to their EFL teachers' affective support is that the schools are suffering from methodological attrition. Language curriculum, with strong resistance, has still remained traditional; something like Grammar Translation Method (ghorbani, 2009; Hosseini, 2007). Teachers and learners are deeply involved in the mechanics of language in a teacher-centered environment (zohrabi, Torabi, & Baybourdiani, 2012) in which there is hardly a place for teachers' affective support, learners' critical thinking, and their expression of thoughts, ideas, and emotions. The course books have not changed considerably in years (Jahangard, 2007); moreover, teachers themselves are also restricted by the nature of the system (Namaghi, 2006); they have to adjust their practices with the curriculum expectations set for the learners.

In Iranian universities, the situation is somehow different from that in schools. University EFL teachers are not as constrained as school teachers; however, they have to deal with the students who have come from the school context and have being involved for years in memorizing the words and rules of English. Therefore, a limited number of EFL professors at universities tend to make considerable changes to what the learners have got used to. In comparison, the number of students who attend English language classes in language institutes to learn something and communicate in English seems to be much more than those at universities and even schools (Dolati & Mikaili, 2011). This can probably increase their teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and their being more attentive to individual needs and differences.

The class size in language institutes usually allows for such individualized attention and instruction thorough which learners have the possibility to ask their questions, participate in class discussions, and express their emotions using their language skills cooperatively in a whole language approach and in less formal and stressful environments than school and university environments (pishghadam & Navari, 2010). The course books such as New Interchange series which are used in many Iranian language institutes, have shown to be more communicative and to stimulate more learner-centered classroom activities (Soleimani and Dabbaghi, 2012). So, they are more likely to provoke learners' emotions and independent thinking than the conventional books available to school and university students.

4.2. The EFL learners rated male and female teachers equally on providing affective support in the classroom, while only the learners in language institutes rated female teachers higher than male teachers on being affectively supportive. This may be related to the studies conducted by Rubin (1981), Basow & Distenfeld (1985), Connell (2002), and Feldman (1992). They found no association between teachers' gender and their students' general perception of teachers' performance. This seems to be the dominant viewpoint that female teachers provide more affective support than male teachers. Yet, the reality might not be so simple. It seems that male teachers have been remarkably successful at redefining the stereotypic gender roles which generally represent females as feeling and displaying more emotions and males as inhibiting their emotions (Uitto et al., 2009).

Besides, having found female EFL teachers in language institutes be rated higher than males by language learners associated with the research done by Cornelius-White (2007) in which it was found that female teachers had more influence on teachers' behaviors and learners' outcomes; it also correlates with the findings of Demetriou, Wilson, and Winterbottom (2009); they remarked that female teachers used more affective technics in facing with challenges in communication or disinterested learners than male teachers; further, this finding is in line with the study done by Basow & Distenfeld (1985); they mentioned that learners ranked female teachers as being more emotionally appealing, enthusiastic about teaching, warm, and approachable than male teachers. This is also consistent with Basow and Howe's study (1987). They found female teachers more friendly and expressive than male teachers. Apparently, female teachers deal with boys more easily than male teachers. This is probably one of the reasons why female teachers were rated by language institute learners higher than male teachers. This is probably logical while school boys do not seem to be quite content with the way their teachers treat them. Moreover, female teachers generally appear to be more competitive in their working environments; therefore, they behave in a more affective way in the classroom in order to satisfy language learners', supervisors', managers', and parents' expectations.

4.3. The younger the EFL teachers were, the higher they were rated by the learners regarding their affective support. This finding corresponds with the study done by Cornwell (1974) in which it was found that young teachers were more motivating and capable of attracting learners' interest in the subject matter. It is also consistent with the research carried

out by Riley et al. (1950) in which it was stated that younger teachers were more helpful to learners and tolerant of their disagreements. It is also in line with the study done by Adams (1973) in which he asserted that there was a reverse relationship between teachers' age and their stimulation of learners' autonomous thinking; besides, it corresponds with the study carried out by Feldman (1983). He asserted that there was a negative association between teachers' age and their students' ratings of the teachers' affective behavior such as their willingness to help the students, their stimulation of students' interest in learning, and their encouragement of students' autonomous thinking. Young teachers and those who have less working experience intend to advance their careers, that is, they would like to be seen by others. Therefore, in order to be more appreciated by their students or higher-order authorities, they put more effort in running their classes by taking a wide range of measures such as providing more affective support for their students.

4.4. The more experienced the EFL teachers were in their teaching profession, the lower they were rated by the learners regarding their affective supportive. This finding is associated with the studies carried out by Potter (1978); he proposed that novice teachers attracted learners' interest and attention better than experienced teachers. It is also in line with the study carried out by Linsky & Straus (1975) which indicated that novice teachers were more responsive to learners' individual opinions. Besides, the finding is inconsistent with the findings of the study carried out by Elmore & Pohlmann (1978) which asserted that experienced and novice teachers equally stimulated learners to think independently and openly express their ideas. In literature, against expectations, hardly a relationship has been found between teachers' age or level of education and their students' ratings of teachers' general performance in the classroom. However, when there is any significant association found, it is almost always negative rather than positive. That is, the older and the more experience the teachers are, the lower they are usually rated by their learners in most cases. This reverse association is probably because the older the teachers get, the less they succeed in understanding and emphasizing younger students. However, the younger teachers may not be better than the older ones in their performance. They may only be more similar to what learners are and to what they want their teachers to be like. In other words, learners' evaluation of their young teachers' performance may be better than that of their older teachers just because the younger teachers are nearer to their students in age and soul than the older teachers.

4.5. The higher the educational level of the EFL teachers, the higher they were rated by the learners as affectively supportive. This finding corresponds to the results of some other studies such as the researches done by Blau (2000) and Pianta et al. (2005). They found that the educated teachers' classes had better quality than those of the less-educated ones. It is also in line with the research carried out by Stuit & Ebel (1952). They proposed that teachers with higher academic ranks worked more enthusiastically. This finding is in contrast with that of Early et al (2006) in which it was proposed that variation in teacher education had no considerable effect on the quality of their classes. Moreover, it is in sharper contrast with some other studies (Freedman et al., 1978; Frey, 1978; Linsky & Straus, 1975; Marsh, 1980; Riley et al., 1950; Stuit & Ebel, 1952) in which teachers with lower education were reported to be more active, humorous, enthusiastic, fair, helpful, and were encouraging their learners more to think independently.

Teacher education has been treated differently by different researchers. Some have considered it as the sum of their education years, some as their academic rank, some as their latest academic degrees, and some thought of it as the level at which the teacher has been or is being trained. This plurality in assumptions has made it rather hard to compare the results of different studies. Besides, the more educated the language teachers are, the more probable they are to be up-to-date and close to language learners' world. So, they can understand the differences among the learners better and treat them better. Educated people are also more aware of the principal reasons behind their actions in the classroom. On the other hand, according to the EFL teachers' ratings,

4.6. The EFL teachers were rated a lot higher by themselves than by their learners in being affectively supportive disregarding their characteristics and their instructional context. This finding is in line with the study carried out by Bordelon et al. (2012) which indicated that teachers and learners have different perceptions of teachers' efficacy in classrooms. This finding may be grounded in the higher levels of learners' expectations that never seem to be met by language teachers as Boicer (1992) claimed. There is only one teacher in the classroom, while the students have different worlds as well as social and emotional backgrounds which make them grow different expectations of their language teacher. It may also be a matter of face which might have led the teachers to answer the questionnaire in a more socially acceptable way, or an effect of Halo error based on which the learners may have answered the questionnaire items according to the perceptions they

have of their teachers. Besides, what seems to be an attempt to push the learners toward their goals might be perceived as strictness by the learners.

The insensitivity of teachers' ratings to their own characteristics like age, gender, and experience can be explained partly by teachers' natural tendency to perceive themselves as what they like to be than what they actually are, regardless of their own characteristics (although learners' perceptions also seem to be generally influenced by what they expect their teachers to be). Teachers' perceptions of their emotional support might also be influenced by their students' characteristics of their teaching milieu. For instance, teachers may rate their affective support higher if they find their students more interested and hardworking, or they may rate their affective support lower if they themselves are not supported properly by upper levels in milieu.

5. Conclusion

Briefly, according to language learners' ratings, some meaningful relationships existed between EFL teachers' characteristics as well as their teaching context and the amount of affective support they provided for the learners. On the other hand, the teachers' own ratings did not display such relationships. The findings are empirically significant in stimulating EFL teachers, teacher trainers, and even curriculum designers to pay more attention to the affective aspects of language learners, especially in Iranian schools. Teachers are invited to regularly update their knowledge of learners' specific affective needs. They should modify their instructional behavior in order to compensate for their increasing age difference with their students. They are even invited to continue their educations through upper academic levels in order to broaden their existing knowledge of language teaching and its pertinent factors such as affect.

Curriculum developers, by employing young and educated teachers and by educating the older and the less educated teachers can also be more effectively responding to EFL learners' affective needs. Further studies can replicate the current study in order to give a better insight into the affective aspects of language instruction in Iranian contexts; however, using longitudinal observations supplemented by other data gathering methods such as self-reports, interviews, and observations can lead us to better results. Besides, using larger samples of language learners and especially EFL teachers and considering each of the factors distinguished in factor analysis procedure can add to the precision of the study.

Corresponding Author:
Neda Taherkhani
Faculty of Humanities,
Kharazmi (Tarbiat Moallem) University,
Tehran, Iran
Tel: + 98.2188304896
Fax: + 982188306651
Email: taherkhani.neda@gmail.com

References
1. Adams, H. L. (1973). Favorable student evaluation as a function of instructor's age. Improving College and University Teaching, 21, 72.
2. Anderson, B., & Simpson, M. (2004). Group and class contexts for learning and support online: Learning and affective support online in small group and class context. International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 5(3).
3. Arnold, J., & Brown, H. D. (1999). A map of the terrain. In J. Arnold (Ed.), Affect in language learning (pp. 1-24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Arnold, J. (1999). Affect in Language Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. Asher, J. (1997). What is TPR? Cambridge, England: Cambridge University.
6. Bailenson, J. N., & Yee, N. (2005). Digital chameleons: Automatic assimilation of nonverbal gestures in immersive virtual environments. Psychological Science, 16, 814-819.
7. Basow, S. A., & Distenfeld, M. S. (1985). Teacher expressiveness: More important for males than females. Journal of Educational Psychology, 77(1), 308-314.
8. Basow, S. A., & Howe, K. G. (1987). Evaluations of college professors: Effects of professors' sex-type, and sex, and students' sex. Psychological Reports, 60(2), 671-678.
9. Baylor, A. L., Shen, E., & Huang, X. (2003). Which pedagogical agent do learners choose? The effects of gender and ethnicity. E-Learn World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education. Phoenix, Arizona.
10. Bickmore, T., & Picard, R. W. (2004). Establishing and Maintaining Long-Term

Human-Computer Relationships. Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, 12(2), 293¬-327.

11. Blau, D. M. (2000). The production of quality in child-care centers: Another look. Applied Developmental Science, 4, 136-148.

12. Block, D. (2003). The social turn in second language acquisition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

13. Boekaerts, M. (1993). Being concerned with well-being and with learning. Educational Psychologist, 28(2), 149-167.

14. Boice, R. (1992). Countering Common Misbeliefs about Student Evaluation of Teaching. ADE Bulletin, 101, 2-8.

15. Bordelon, T., Phillips, I. Parkison, P., Thomas, J., & Howell, C. (2012). Teacher Efficacy: How teachers rate themselves and how students rate their teachers. Action in Teacher Education, 34(1), 14-25.

16. Burleson, W. (2006). Affective Learning Companions: Strategies for empathetic agents with real-time multimodal affective sensing to foster meta-cognitive and meta-affective approaches to learning, motivation, and perseverance. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

17. Connell, R.W. (2002). Gender. Cambridge, Polity Press; Malden, Blackwell Publishers.

18. Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-centered teacher–student relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 77, 113-143.

19. Cornwell, C. D. (1974). Statistical treatment of data from student teaching evaluation questionnaires. Journal of Chemical Education, 51, 155-160.

20. Curran, C. A. (1976). Counseling-learning in second languages. Apple River, IL: Apple River Press.

21. Demetriou, H., Wilson, E. & Winterbottom, M. (2009). The role of emotion in teaching: Are there differences between male and female newly qualified teachers' approaches to teaching? Educational Studies, 35(4) 449-473.

22. Dolati, I., Mikail, I. P. (2011). Opinions related to the main reasons on Iranian Students' difficulties in Spoken English proficiency. Aust J Basic Applied Sci, 5(11), 1142-1148. Rerieved from http://www.insipub.com/ajbas/2011/November-2011/1142-1148.pdf

23. Dörnyei, Z. (2001). Teaching and Researching Motivation. Harlow: Longman.

24. Early, D.M., Bryant, D. M., Pianta, R. C., Clifford, R. M., Burchinal, M. R., Ritchie, S., et al. (2006). Are teachers' education, major, and credentials related to classroom quality and children's academic gains in pre-kindergarten? Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21, 174-195.

25. Ehrman, M. E. (1996). Understanding Second Language Learning Difficulties: Looking Beneath the Surface. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

26. Elmore, P. B., & Pohlmann, J. T. (1978). Effect of teacher, student, and class characteristics on the evaluation of college instructors. Journal of Educational Psychology, 70, 187-192.

27. Feldman, K. A. (1983). Seniority and experience of college teachers as related to evaluations they receive from their students. Research in Higher Education, 18(1), 3-124.

28. Feldman, K. A. (1992). College students' views of male and female college teachers: Part I-evidence from the social laboratory and experiments. Research in Higher Education, 33(3), 317-375.

29. Freedman, R. D. & Stumpf, S. A. (1978). Student evaluations of courses and faculty based on a perceived learning criterion: Scale construction, validation, and comparison. Applied Psychological Measurement, 2, 189-202.

30. Frey, P. W. (1978). A two-dimensional analysis of student ratings of instruction. Research in Higher Education, 9, 69-91.

31. Gardner, R. C. (1985). Social Psychology and Language Learning: The Role of Attitude and Motivation. London: Edward Arnold.

32. Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). A student's contributions to second language. Learning Part II: Affective variables. Language Teaching, 26, 1-11.

33. Gattegno, C. (1972). Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way. New York: Educational Solutions.

34. Ghorbani, M. R. (2009). ELT in Iranian high schools in Iran, Malaysia and Japan: Reflections on how tests influence use of prescribed textbooks. Reflections on English Language Teaching, 8(2), 131-139.

35. Hazari, Z., Sadler, P. M., & Tai, R. H. (2008).Gender Differences in the High School and Affective Experiences of Introductory College Physics Students. The Physics Teacher, 46, 423-427.

36. Hilgard, E. (1963). Motivations in Language Theory. In S. Koch (Ed.), Psychology: A study of science (Vol. 5, p. 267).

37. Hosseini, S. M. H. (2007). ELT in higher education in Iran and India: A critical view. Language in India, 7, 1-11.

38. Hurd, S. (2007). Distant voices; learners' stories about the affective side of learning a language at a distance. Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, Learners' Voices Special issue 1(2), 142-159.

39. Hurd, S. (2008) Affect and strategy use in independent language learning. In S. Hurd, & T. Lewis (Eds.) In Language learning strategies in independent settings (pp. 218–236). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

40. Isen, A. M. (1990). The influence of positive and negative affect on cognitive organization: Some implications for development. In N. Stein, B. Leventhal, & J. Trabasso (Eds.), Psychological and biological approaches to emotion (pp. 75-94). Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

41. Jahangard, A. (2007). Evaluation of EFL materials taught at Iranian public high schools. The Asian EFL Journal, 9(2), 130-150.

42. Kort, B., Reilly, R., & Picard, R.W. (2001). An Affective Model of Interplay between Emotions and Learning: Reengineering Educational Pedagogy-Building a Learning Companion. In T. Okamoto, R. H. Kinshuk, & J. Klus, (Eds.), Proceedings of International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (pp. 43–48), Madison, WI, 6–8 August, 2001. IEEE Computer Society Press (2001).

43. Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. Oxford: Pergamon.

44. Krashen, S. D. (1987). Principles and practices in second language acquisition. New York: Prentice-Hall.

45. Krashen, S. D., &Terrell, T. D. (1983). The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom. Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.

46. Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., & Masia, B. B. (Eds.). (1964).Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook II: The affective domain. New York: McKay.

47. Linsky, A. S., & Straus, M. (1975). Student Evaluation, Research Productivity, and Eminence of College Faculty, Journal of higher Education, 46, 89-102.

48. Lozanov, G. (1979). Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy. New York: Gordon and Breach.

49. Ma, A. (2012). A study of the shaping of the 'emotion and attitude' domain in the new English language curriculum of China through an EFL textbook. Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 20(2), 231-250.

50. Machemer, P. L., & Crawford, P. (2007). Student Perceptions of Active Learning in a Large Cross-Disciplinary Classroom. Active Learning in Higher Education, 8(1), 9-30.

51. Marsh, H. W. (1980). The influence of student course, and instructor characteristics in evaluations of university teaching. American Educational Research Journal, 17, 219-237.

52. Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). The Self-directed Teacher: Managing the Learning Process. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

53. Oatley, K., & Nundy, S. (1996). Rethinking the role of emotions in education. In D. R. Olson, & N. Torrance (Eds.), The handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching and schooling (pp. 257-274). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

54. Oxford, R. L. (1996). Language Learning Strategies around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives. Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, Hawaii at Manoa.

55. Oxford, R. L., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language Learning Motivation: Expanding the Theoretical Framework. The Modern Language Journal, 78(1), 12-28.

56. Pianta, R. C., Karen, M. L., & Bridget, K. H. (2009). Classroom Assessment Scoring System Scoring Manual. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

57. Pianta, R., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Bryant, D., Clifford, R. M., Early, D. M., & Barbarin, O. (2005). Features of pre-kindergarten programs, classrooms, and teachers: Prediction of observed classroom quality and teacher-child interactions. Applied Developmental Science, 9(3), 144-159.

58. Pishghadam, R., & Navari, S. (2010). Examining Iranian language learner's perceptions of language education in formal and informal contexts. The Modern Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2(1), 171-185.

59. Potter, E. L. (1978). The relationship of teacher training and teaching experience to assessment of teaching performance of community/junior college faculty. Journal of Educational Research, 72, 81-85. Retrieved from http://writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej26/a2.html

60. Riley, J. W., Ryan, B. F., & Lifshitz, M. (1950). The Student Looks at His Teacher: An Inquiry into the Implications of Student Ratings at the College Level. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press.

61. Rossiter, M. J. (2003). The effects of affective strategy training in the ESL classroom. TESL-EJ, 7(2). Retrieved from http://writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej26/a2.html

62. Rubin, R. B. (1981). Ideal traits and terms of address for male and female college professors. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 41(5), 966-974.

63. Sakiz, G. (2012). Perceived instructor affective support in relation to academic emotions and motivation in college, Educational Psychology: 32(1), 63-79.

64. Sakiz, G., Pape, S. J., Hoy, A. W. (2007). Does perceived teacher affective support matter for middle school students in mathematics classrooms? Journal of School Psychology, 50, 235-255.

65. Schumann, J. (1997). The neurobiology of affect in language. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

66. Scovel, T. (1978). The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. Language Learning, 28, 129-42.

67. Soleimani, H. & Dabbaghi, A. (2012). Textbook evaluation: A reflection on the new interchange series. International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 1(2): 19-32.

68. Stuit, D. B., & Ebel, R. L. (1952). Instructor rating at a large state university. College and University, 27, 247-254.

69. Uitto, M. & Estola, E. (2009). Gender and emotions in relationships: teachers recalling their own teachers. Gender and Education 21(5), 517-530.

70. Van Eekelen, I. M., Boshuizen, H. P. A., & Vermunt, J. D. (2005). Self-Regulation in Higher Education Teacher Learning. In Higher Education, 50, 447-471.

71. White, C. (2003). Language Learning in Distance Education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

72. Willower, D., Eidell, T. L., & Hoy, W. K. (1973). The school and pupil control ideology (2nd ed.), University Park: Pennsylvania State University.

73. Young, D. J. (Ed.). (1999). Affect in Foreign Language and Second Language Learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere. Boston: McGraw-Hill College.

74. Zohrabi, M., Torabi, M. A., & Baybourdiani, P. (2012). Teacher-centered and/or student-centered learning: English language in Iran. English Language and Literature Studies, 2(3), 18-30.

10/10/2013