Development and Validation of Teacher Emotional Support Scale: a structural equation modeling approach*

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Abstract

Reviewing the literature indicated that no validated model was found that examine the extent to which teachers support their students emotionally in EFL classrooms. Therefore the present study elaborated on this issue through developing and validating a teacher emotional support scale in an Iranian English foreign language context. Main components of the scale have been specified based on Hamre and Pianta's (2007) theoretical framework. A large number of items were created primarily based on operational definitions of each component. After reviewing the items by a group of experts, the questionnaire was piloted and tested on a sample of 324 EFL teachers. Finally, the researchers evaluated the validity of the questionnaire through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.The results of the reliability of the questionnaire estimated through Cronbach's alpha were 0.833. 17 items have been removed from analysis resulting in identifying 4 factors in exploratory factor analysis. The model was evaluated using AMOS 22 also indicated that the model was fit the data.the current study contributes to the field of English language education through designing and validating new instrument to assess teacher emotional support in EFL classrooms. Researchers and other practitioners who are involved in teaching English language can assess the extent to which teachers support students emotionally in similar pedagogical EFL context using this instrument. They also need to encourage teachers to improve their emotional skills by participating in teacher training courses.

Keywords: Emotional support scale; EFL teachers; structural equation modeling approach; reliability; validity

Literature Review

Over a decade, policymakers and school administrators have emphasized that there is a relation between what students experience and what they achieve in class (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). In the field of education, the performance of students in school is affected by classrooms' atmosphere and teachers' performance. Classroom environment, the instructors 'experience and their competencies in assessing classroom and students performance are three factors that impact students' learning and their growth (Ladd, 2008; Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges, 2004; Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Examining teachers' qualifications and student achievement, Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor (2007) demonstrated that teachers' qualifications can systematically affect student achievement.

Considering school as a small social setting and learning as a social process, different members of this small organization such as teachers, peers and their families play a significant role in students' learning. They may facilitate or prevent students' learning and their success in school through showing their emotions. Because social and emotional factors have a great impact on students' achievements, schools must attach great importance to these aspects so that they can help students to learn more effectively (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007). The degree of social and emotional performance of students in the classroom indicates that how much they are ready to attend school (Blair 2002; Raver, 2004). Blair (2002) implied that children who are not emotionally supported are not ready to attend school. The structure of home and preschool education play a crucial role in reducing stress and developing the emotional competence of students in the classroom. In his model of relating the emotional concept to school readiness, the author indicated that environment that cannot support the child's regulatory capability is likely to develop emotionally reactive, poorly regulated, the development of executive-function skills and school readiness. In contrast, those who are in a supportive environment are more likely to develop regulatory skills and being less reactive. Consequently, schools and particularly classrooms represent a different context for children regarding specific regulatory demands. In these

environments, children are supposed to adapt to a specific social role. In this regard, it can be seen that parents, peer, classroom, school, and community have an impact on school readiness and school achievement. Moreover, various factors such as different incomes, risk, and sociocultural contexts have an impact on children's development of emotional self-regulation (Raver, 2004).

As it is evident, the purpose of schools is to teach students to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring, and contributing individuals in society. Their purpose is more supported by school-based prevention and youth development programs. These programs are considered fundamental to preschool through high school education. By providing continuous instruction, encouragement, and reinforcement to assist students' development and avoid students'' misbehaviors, school-based prevention and youth development programming can positively affect social, health, and academic outcomes. There are key techniques that characterize effective school-based prevention programming. These techniques place an emphasis on interactive classroom teaching and enhance students' autonomy so that they can use their social and emotional learning skills and ethical values in everyday life; respectful and supportive relationships are encouraged among students, parents, and school members; positive behaviors are systematically supported through various school, family, and community procedure. (Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, & Resnik, et al., 2003, p 470).

It is likely that students take appropriate social and health practices when classroom instruction and parents, school personnel and other community members' effort integrate in order to create a supportive environment for students (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). The context of caring, safe, well-managed, and participatory classroom, school, and other learning environments provide an opportunity for students to develop their social and emotional learning skills (SEL). These environments help students to fortify their social and emotional abilities. SEL programs represent a clear picture of organizing, coordinating, and integrating school- prevention and promotion programs. Promoting social and emotional competence of students,

assisting them to develop healthy behaviors and preventing behavior problems are emphasized in this program. Considering different needs of students, family and school provide different levels of supports including academic support and social-emotional support for all students and promote their development (Zin & Elias, 2006). Therefore the development of students' social and emotional behaviors is connected to their success in school and life.

Among the various communications, students have with their parents, teachers, and pears, teachers, and students affect their academic and behavioral outcomes in school (Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Silver, Measelle, Essex, & Armstrong, 2005; Wentzel, 1998). Examining the relationship between teachers and students, Hamre and Pianta (2001) predicted a wide range of school outcomes. The researchers found that there is a relation between teacher and children's conflict and their academic and behavioral outcomes, In particular for children with High levels of misbehaviors and for boys generally.

Students' ability in interpreting their classmate' behavior appropriately depend upon teachers' ability in developing a supportive relationship with the students in the class. It is viable for teachers to manipulate their level of supportive interactions than to manipulate their level of conflict with a student. That is, teachers can correct students' misbehaviors, providing positive comments and affective gestures for the students. The more teachers support their students' particularly aggressive students, the more they can help them to be engaged in class (Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001). Teachers tend to feel and act more positively toward well-adjusted and competent students. Thus they support students' efforts and facilitate their improvement. In turn, the students' improvement promotes teachers' positive feelings and actions (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). Teachers who promote students' achievements by developing supportive relationship lead students to view them in a more positive way (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch 1994)

It is essential for teachers to understand students' motives for doing particular actions in the classroom. That is, students for a number of

reasons may not be engaged in learning or in the classroom. These reasons are whether they are able to be challenged by the teacher, whether they see the purpose in doing classroom activities, and whether they feel safe and cared for by teacher in the class. Therefore teachers need to enhance students' motivation and help them to be engaged in meaningful activities so that they can follow their academic purposes. By providing effective feedback, explaining the purpose of doing a particular task, providing emotional support during the learning process and increasing social motivation through group work, teachers can increase students' achievement in the class (Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 2000).

The degree of social and emotional support that teachers provide for students is crucial for developing effective classroom practice (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). A number of researchers (Albrecht and Adelman, 1987; Burleson, 1984; Burleson, 2003; Cutrona & Russell, 1990) have defined the concept of emotional support differently. For example, Albrecht and Adelman (1987) defined emotional support as a communication that meets an individual's emotional and affective needs. Individuals who provide emotional support display their care and concerns. They do not directly solve the problem but to elevate an individual's mood. Emotional support is the ability to help distress people, to listen to them, to empathize with and explore their feelings (Burleson, 1984). Burleson (2003) viewed emotional support as an essential element of creating a close relationship with others. Cutrona and Russell (1990) defined emotional support as the ability to secure others during the time of stress, to take care of them. Therefor teacher emotional support involves their concerns and cares for the students, their respect for the students, their desire to understand the feeling of students, and opinion and dependability (Patrick, Anderman, & Ryan, 2002; Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

Most of the studies on emotional support in classrooms are based on the two theories including attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Based on Attachment theorists children can become more independent and take risks if their parents

provide an appropriate level of emotional support and secure environment. They help children to count on them whenever they need help (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Several researchers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Howes, Hamilton, & Matheson, 1994; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992) have applied this theory to the school environment. Self-determination (or self-systems) theory examines individual's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are necessary for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the circumstances that promote these needs. Competence, relatedness, and autonomy are three important needs that facilitate individuals' growth, integration, and their social development. It places emphasis on the essential role of social environments in fostering or hindering these needs. Therefore environments that support autonomy, competence and relatedness facilitate individuals' development while environments that control the individuals' behavior and ignore responding to these fundamental needs hinder individuals 'development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Considering schools as a social context, teachers can support different needs of children and create a sense of competency, relatedness, and autonomy in students so that they can be motivated and learn more effectively (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998). Wentzel (1999) found that when teachers reinforce students' effort to complete a task, provide warmth and support, explain their expectation from students' behavior clearly and develop students' autonomy in class, they help them to be motivated, engaged in class and peruse their goals. The degree to which teachers support students is not limited to children they can also support adolescents and enhance their social and academic adjustment in school.

Theoretical framework

Hamre and Pianta (2007) proposed a model for investigating the relation between teacher and students which lead to students' development. They presented clear, testable hypotheses concerning the structure of teachers' behavioral patterns and its association with developmental processes. Their Classroom *Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* conceptual framework consists of three major domains which include Emotional Supports, Classroom Organization, and Instructional

Support are dimensions of the CLASS framework that has a great impact on students' academic and/or social development (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

For the purpose of the present study, the researchers just focused on the domain of Emotional Supports that consist of four dimensions: positive classroom climate, Negative classroom climate, teacher sensitivity, and regards for student perspectives. Each dimension reflects different behavioral indicators. For example, the positive classroom climate dimension includes observable behavioral indicators such as teacher affective communications with students, the degree to which students enjoy spending time with one another and are enthusiastic about learning and there is mutual respect between teacher and students. The negative classroom climate dimension includes an observable behavioral indicator such as the degree to which teacher and students get irritated and angry with each other. In this class teacher and students constantly display sarcasm, disrespect, and negativity toward each other. The third dimension is teacher sensitivity which refers to teacher's concern in responding to students 'question and need, providing an appropriate level of support and creating a safe environment in which students can learn more effectively. The fourth dimension is regarded as students' perspective which teacher focuses on students' interests, motivations, and points of view foster students' autonomy and encourage students to talk and share their ideas in class.

The problem
Several researchers (Allen, Gregory, Mikami, Lun, Hamre, & Pianta, 2013; Downer, López, Grimm, Hamagami, Pianta, & Howes 2012; Hamre & Pianta , 2005; Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, et al., 2005; Pianta, Belsky, Houts Morrison, & the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2007; Merritt, Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Cameron, & Peugh 2012; Ruzek, Hafen, Allen, Gregory, Mikami, & Pianta, 2016) have applied observational methods such as CLASS framework to examine the extent to which teachers support their students emotionally in the classroom. Although teachers' behaviors and their effect on students success in the class have been analyzed using various

measurements (Hamre & Pianta, 2005), all techniques are to some extent restricted with regard to different aspects of the classrooms (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Although, the ClASS framework can be applied in classroom contexts with different grades and content areas, from preschool to high school (Pianta and Hamre, 2009), no study was found examining teachers emotional support in EFL classrooms. The present study elaborated on this problem by designing a quantitative measure of emotional support dimension using the CLASS framework in the EFL classrooms.

The following question guided the present study:

1-What are the components of teacher emotional support scale for Iranian EFL teachers?

Method

Participants

324 individuals (female = 247, male = 77) took part in the present study. The data were collected from EFL teachers who taught English in middle schools, high schools, and English language learning institutes in Ilam province, Iran. Most participants were females (75.5%). Participants ranged in age from 23 to 55, with an average age of 30.91 years (SD =10.009). The majority of the teachers taught either in English language learning institution (40.1.%) or in high school (38.2%). Only 21.6% of them taught in middle schools. Most teachers have had either Bachelors (49.3%) or Masters (47.8%) degrees, with a few who have had a Doctorate degree (2.7%). Teachers' experience of teaching ranged from one to 25 years, with a mean of 4.41 years (SD = 2.94).

Instrument

The Development of EFL teacher Emotional support

Several steps were taken in the development of the scale. Drawing on one dimension of Hamre and Pianta's (2007) CLASS conceptual framework, the researchers provided operational definitions for a different aspect of emotional support dimension. After generating a great number of items, a group of professors holding Ph.D. in the department of English language and literature reviewed the items to

make sure that each item shows clearly a different construct of the scale. Based on their comments, the researchers eliminated any item that was ambiguous or was not related to the construct. After the revision of each item based on professors' feedback, the questionnaire was piloted using a small sample (n = 55) of EFL teachers who taught English in either schools or institutions. Finally, to validate the instrument, the researchers used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

Classroom climate	
Positive climate	
Positive Affect	I meet my students with smile.
Respect	I talk with warm and calm voice with students.
Positive Communication	I use nonverbal communication such as facial expressions and gestures in class.
Negative climate	
Punitive control	I use harsh punishments to control students in the class.
Sarcasm	I tease my students in the class.
Disrespect	In my class, students humiliate each other.
Teacher Sensitivity	
Awareness	I know which of my students needs more support, or help.
Responsiveness	I respond to students' questions, concerns, and needs.
Addresses problems	I can address students' problems and concerns.
Student comfort	I create a secure environment for student in order to feel safe in class.
Regard for student perspective	
Flexibility	I am flexible in my teaching plan and I can change it according to students' ideas.
Autonomy	I emphasize students' autonomy in the class.
Student expression	I consider my students' interests, motivations, and points of view.

Table 1: The model, its components and sample items

Data collection

Data were collected from 324 EFL teachers teaching at middle school, high schools, and English language learning institutes in Ilam province, Iran. The questionnaire was administered to 324 EFL teachers. 310 copies of questionnaires have been returned. Participants were given enough time to answer the questions anonymously.

Data analysis

Data Screening

The data were screened for detecting any missing data. Karanja, Zaveri, and Ahmed, (2013) defined missing value as a fail or rejection of participants in answering certain items in the questionnaire. Missing values can affect statistical power and standard errors of statistical procedures (Rigdon, 1998).There are three forms of missing values in a data: (a) missing completely at random (MCAR), (b) missing at random (MAR), (c) or not missing at random (NMAR) (Little, 1988). Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) pointed out that the researcher needs to identify the missing data so that they can decide whether to maintain or remove the items.

Applying Karanja et al.'s (2013) 20% missing-value criterion in dealing with missing values in data, the researchers found variables with missing values in the data analysis. Less than five percent of missing data were replaced with the median for ordinal scale.

Model fit

Evaluating model fit for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, the researchers used several statistics including chi-square statistic, test of absolute fit including Goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of fit index (AGFI) and the Root Mean square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), as well as test of incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index(TLI),and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Generally, Hu and Bentler, (1999) suggested that the Chi-squared statistic of less than3, with GFI and AGFI greater than.90 and.85 respectively and RMSEA of Less than.6 are considered as an adequate model fit. SPSS version 23 for windows was carried out in evaluating exploratory factor

analysis of EFL teachers, whereas AMOS version 22 for Windows was used in evaluating confirmatory factor analysis.

Results
Results of statistical analysis with EFA:

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using SPSS version 23. EFA was run on 44 items, each containing five-point -Likert scale (strongly disagree=1, strongly agree=5) using Maximum likelihood technique with a Promax rotation. KMO statistics and Bartlett's tests of sphericity were also used to examine the appropriateness of factor solution. Pallant (2010) pointed out that KMO values close to 1 indicate relatively good patterns of correlation. Kaiser (1974) suggested KMO values of .50 or more are acceptable, whereas Field (2013) considered values between .70 and .80 as good. Bartlett's test, on the other hand, examines whether a variable's correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which means all correlation coefficients are zero (Field, 2013). Bartlett's test has to be significant ($p < .05$) in order to be acceptable (Allen and Bennett, 2010).

The results of the first round of EFA indicated that the data were adequately factorable with KMO = .875, and significant Bartlett's test of sphericity, $p < .001$(Allen and Bennett, 2010; Field, 2013; Kaiser, 1974). Nine factors were identified as underlying latent constructs from 43 items based on Eigenvalues greater than 1, accounted for 64.13% of the total variance in the data. Generally, 16 items were removed due to cross loading on more than one factor. Items with the highest ratio of loadings on the most variables and those with the lowest highest loading were also removed. Additionally, items with highest factor components much less than 0.4 were also removed. The result of the final round of EFA yielded to 4 factors with KMO =0.876. A final 4-factor model was identified as an underlying latent construct from 28 items based on eigenvalues greater than 1, accounted for 55.01% of variances. These factors included the 4 dimensions used to measure EFL teacher emotional support which are positive classroom climate (9 items), negative classroom climate (4 items), teacher sensitivity (7items), and regards for students' perspective (8 items).

Factors	Items	Factor Loadings			
Positive classroom climate	Pc1	.624			
	Pc5	.693			
	Pc8	.763			
	Pc9	.768			
	Pc10	.634			
	Pc12	.707			
	Pc13	.822			
	Pc14	.662			
	Pc15	.702			
Negative classroom climate	NC18				.853
	NC19				.839
	NC21				.819
	NC23				.759
Teacher sensitivity	TS25			.639	
	TS26			.814	
	TS27			.741	
	TS28			.774	
	TS29			.867	
	TS30			.894	
	TS31			.643	
Regard for students perspective	RFSP36		.595		
	RFSP37		.823		
	RFSP38		.896		
	RFSP39		.827		
	RFSP40		.795		
	RFSP41		.670		
	RFSP42		.692		
	RFSP43		.528		

Table 2: Results of exploratory factor analysis

Results of statistical analyses with CFA

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Amos version 22. The maximum likelihood method was used to estimate the parameter. The measurement model was assessed based on the criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). These criteria require statistically acceptable levels of the Chi-squared statistic of less than3, with GFI and

AGFI more than .90 and .85, and RMSEA of less than.60. Additionally, IFI, TLI, and GFI with cut-off values >.90 are also examined in order to assess the model fit.

The results of the first CFA analyses indicated a relatively adequate good model fit, chi-squared=2.483, p < .001, CFI = .908, TLI =.900, IFI=.909, GFI=.850, AGFI.826 and RMSEA=.062. Considering the criteria for assessing the model fit, the estimation for GFI and AGFA was somewhat lower than desired. The modification indices were evaluated and indicated that correlating the residuals for PC14 and PC15 would improve the model fit. This procedure was used several times in order to improve the model fit. In addition, item 1 was removed because it showed low factor loadings. After these revision, the result indicated an overall good model fit, chi-squared=1/459, p < .001, CFI = .976, TLI =.973, IFI=.976, GFI=.921, AGFI=.904 and RMSEA=.035. After the removal of 1item, 27 items were identified including positive classroom climate (8 items), negative classroom climate (4 items), teacher sensitivity (7items), and regards for students' perspective (8 items).
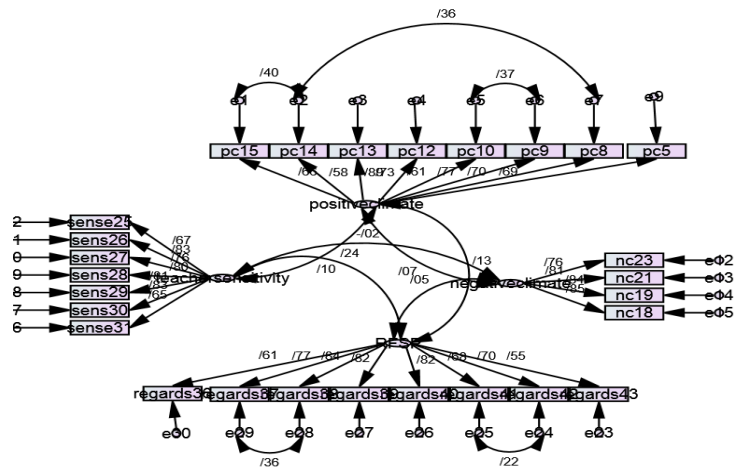
Figure 1: Fitted CFA model

Results of reliability analyses

The reliability of items can be evaluated primarily based on their loading on parent factor (Hair et al., 2010). Consequently, items with loading equal to or more than .50 are reliable. to assess the reliability of latent construct, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability with a threshold set to .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) were used. An instrument which indicates a value above the minimum .70 cut-off provides a consistent measurement (Rizzuto, Schwarz, & Schwarz 2014; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) and is therefore considered reliable. In the present study, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were estimated. In addition, the convergent and discriminate validity of the items were also assessed using. Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared Variance (MSV). Based on Hair et al., (2010) suggestion, a cut-

off point for both convergent validity (AVE > 0.5) and discriminate validity (MSV < AVE) Square root of AVE greater than inter-construct correlations were used.

The results, as it can be seen in table 3, indicated adequate item reliability with Cronbach' alpha for positive classroom climate (a=.895), negative classroom climate (a=.889), teacher sensitivity (a=.913), and regards for students perspective (a=.899). The internal consistency of the whole instrument was found to be relatively high (Cronbach's alpha =.833). Convergent validity of the latent variables in the model was confirmed by significant item loadings (p < .05) (shown in the composite reliability of more than .70, and average variance extracted (AVE) in excess of the minimum threshold of .50. Discriminant validity was supported by the square-root of AVE for each subscale, which was more than their respective inter-construct correlation.

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	TS	PC	NC	RFSP
Teacher sensitivity	0/909	0/589	0/058	0/917	0/768			
Positive climate	0/889	0/504	0/018	0/955	0/104	0/710		
Negative climate	0/889	0/668	0/005	0/967	-0/017	0/074	0/817	
Regards for students perspective	0/901	0/537	0/058	0/976	0/240	0/134	0/053	0/733

Table 3: Convergent and discriminate validity of the items

Discussions

To answer the research question: "What are the components of Emotional support scale?" an instrument that measures EFL teachers' emotional support in their classrooms was developed and validated. Based on Hamre and Pianta's (2007) CLASS framework, the 27-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree=1, strongly agree=5) was developed and its reliability and validity were estimated through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Results suggested that TESS scale had a reasonable factor structure. The internal reliability of items was found to be relatively high and the convergent and discriminant validity was also satisfactory.

Accordingly, the results of EFA and CFA confirmed the four-factor model of the TES scale in the Iranian EFL context. These four factors include positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity and regards for students' perspective that particularly measure how much EFL teachers provide emotional support for the students in EFL classrooms.

Therefore, the 27-item teacher emotional support scale questionnaire can effectively assess the behaviors of EFL teachers in their classrooms. Positive classroom climate is the first factor of the scale which includes 8 items. Item 5 and 8 examine the degree to which teachers show positive affects in the class. Item 9, 10, and12 shows the importance of being respectful of each other in the class. Item 13, 14, and 15 indicate the degree to which teachers are able to build positive communications such as using nonverbal communication, checking students understanding and making eye contact with them. To have a productive classroom environment, teachers need to attempt in creating a positive classroom. In this classroom, teachers place an emphasis on having respect in the class. They model respectful behavior in the class and encourage students to have respectful behavior. Based on the results of several studies, positive classroom climate lead to the improvement of students' academic outcomes, reduce students' misbehaviors, increase the social and emotional competence of students, engage and motivate students to learn, decrease the victimization of instructor, and improved teacher and students' attendance (Fraser, 1982, 1989; Goh, Young, & Fraser1995; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Payne, 2005; Huang 2003; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt 2001; Lau & Lee, 2008;Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan 2007;Tapola & Niemivirta, 2008).With regard to EFL classrooms, teachers assist students to feel safe while they are learning the language. The conductive atmosphere assists students to practice their language without being worried about students that may make fun of them when they speak English.

The second factor is related to negative classroom climate. It includes four items. Item 18 measures the degree to which teacher punish their students and use the punitive control in the class. Item 19and 21ask bout teachers' perception of whether they use sarcastic

language in the class or not. Item 23 shows the degree of disrespect of both teacher and students toward each other. The results of studies on classroom climate indicate that negative classroom climate has been related to aggression and social-emotional problems (Gazelle, 2006; Somersalo, Solantaus, & Almqvist, 2002). If teachers create a negative climate in class, students may feel that they are insecure in class. This feeling may avoid them to take a risk and practice their language. By avoiding taking a risk in class, students make an effort to protect themselves from being ridiculed by their classmate or teacher. Teachers need to build a positive relationship with their students rather than being hostile towards them. Being hostile toward them and reacting quickly will enhance their misbehaviors and create a negative climate in class.

Factor three is teacher sensitivity which includes item 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.These items examine teachers' recognition of different needs of students and the importance of responding to their questions within the class, addressing their problems and considering their comfort in the class.

The last factor is regards for students' perspective. It includes 8 items that measure the extent to which teachers are flexible in the class and foster students autonomy. These items also measure the degree to which teachers give importance to students' involvement in the class and encourage them to express their ideas in the class. They need to consider different needs of students and care about them. In these classrooms, teachers are aware of different needs of students and constantly respond to their needs.

The importance of providing emotional support in the classroom is made apparent in several studies (Allen, Gregory, Mikami, Lun, Hamre, & Pianta, 2013; Hamre & Pianta , 2005; Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, et al., 2005; Pianta, Belsky, HoutsMorrison, & the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2007; Merritt, Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Cameron, & Peugh 2012; Downer, López, Grimm, Hamagami, Pianta, & Howes 2012; Ruzek, Hafen, Allen, Gregory, Mikami, & Pianta, 2016). Teachers play a major role in creating a

productive environment and providing emotional support for their students. They assist students with poor performance to learn language effectively. Teachers need to show their ability in supporting their students emotionally.

Conclusion and implications

The lack of instrument to measure teacher emotional support in EFL context has led the researchers to conduct the present study. To this end, the present study based on Hamre and Pianta's (2007) *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* conceptual framework developed and validated a new instrument – a Teacher emotional support scale (TESS) – which measures the extent to which EFL teachers provide emotional support for their students. It would help teachers to be aware of their emotional skills. These capabilities are in fact important qualities of teachers. Teachers are expected to consider their emotional skills in their teaching and learning practices in the classroom settings and observe the effect of their emotion on students' achievement. The results of the present study would help teachers to be aware of their emotional skills. These capabilities are in fact important qualities of teachers. Teachers are expected to consider their emotional skills in their teaching and learning practices in the classroom settings and observe the effect of their emotion on students' achievement.

Moreover, the current study contributes to the field of English language education through designing and validating a new instrument to assess teacher emotional support in EFL classrooms. Researchers and other practitioners who are involved in teaching the English language can assess the extent to which teachers support students emotionally in similar pedagogical EFL context using this instrument. They need to assist teachers to improve their emotional skills as it relates to language learning and students by holding teacher training courses. Teachers can participate in these courses and improve their qualities such as providing emotional support for their students. Although it was attempted to collect data from a large sample of EFL teachers, more research is needed to collect data from EFL teachers from different cities in Iran as well as other EFL contexts.

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