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## Teacher Interaction and Empathy: An Investigation among Effective English Language Teachers

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### Abstract

Teachers play a fundamental role in educational settings as well as in every academic context. Thus, educational systems have to rely on evaluating the teachers for various traits, features, and personality characteristics. Among the different qualities, teacher interaction and empathy are two of the vital concepts well-accepted by language teaching scholars. However, novice teachers may need guidance. It is advisable to rely on the experiences and traits of effective teachers when administrators and policy makers aim to hold teacher training courses or in-service training sessions. Accordingly, through relying on mega planning theory and employing a mixed method, the researcher concluded the patterns of empathy and interaction among effective English language teachers to provide feedback to English program administrators and teachers mainly. The findings of the qualitative phase of the study also shed light on what skills effective teachers had and what beliefs they held concerning empathy and interaction in classroom.

**Keywords:** Teacher Interaction; Teacher Empathy; Effective Teachers; Teacher Education

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### **Introduction**

Teacher development is the heart of every educational system. With regard to the necessity of having professional teachers and teacher development, it is emphasized to describe a conceptual framework for teacher professional development. A significant departure from the traditional approach to professional development may focus on teachers' acquisition of knowledge and skills, and may emphasize promoting all aspects of a teacher's development such as interaction, empathy, and effectiveness. Staff progress efforts involve people in interaction with one another in particular contexts to achieve professional growth and advancement goals (Griffin, 1983). In the current educational system and systemic reforms and changes which take place in this environment, the need for professional teachers to improve and promote students to achieve their goals is tangible. It goes without saying that, without the continuous improvement of teaching and without training professional teachers, the educational reforms will reach nowhere. In the process of teacher development, especially in an educational system, teachers should learn continuously new knowledge about teaching and learning. Professional development is an essential part of efforts to build up and renew education (Dilworth & Imig, 1995).

With regard to the importance of teacher and teacher development, the theoretical framework of this study is based on mega planning. Mega planning was developed as a model for strategic thinking and planning. Kaufman (1999) states that "mega planning involves significant stakeholders in defining success and then identifies what each person and part of an organization must do to succeed". He also mentions that, "To be successful – to do and apply Mega Thinking and planning- you have to realize that yesterday's concepts, biases, understanding, stereotypes, and methods and their associated results are often not always appropriate for tomorrow". Mega planning and thinking framework consist of three phases: scoping, planning, and implementation. Thus, "adding value to our shared society using your organization as the primary vehicle is the purpose and defining characteristic of Mega Thinking and Planning" (Kaufman, 2011).

In foreign language learning context, among various factors that influence the learning process, this study focused on teacher effectiveness, teacher empathy, and teacher interaction. As far as teacher effectiveness is concerned, there have been several definitions, conceptions, and theories which define an effective teacher. To some researchers a teacher's effectiveness can be judged based on the students' higher achievement and motivation as well as the innovation of the teacher (Aspy & Roebuk, 1970) or special attention to students' interests, problems, and achievements (Emmer, 1981). However, Lewis (1999) states that "teacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it". Yet, according to Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011), teacher effectiveness can be judged from three dimensions which are based on teacher inputs (e.g., qualifications), the teaching process (e.g., instructional practices), the product of teaching (e.g., effects on student learning), or mixture of all these elements. Another scholar, Carkhuff (2017), emphasizes the significance of teaching steps. Among the many conceptions of teacher effectiveness, the present study focuses on Mishra's (2016) definition where it is stated that a teacher's effectiveness is related to the students' growth and that is a part of what is called performance measurement. It seeks to define an effective teacher as one who cares about students' understanding, her/his own discipline, authenticity of teaching, knowledge of educational psychology, emotional stability, remedial measures, proper rapport, and the like.

Moreover, interaction is an important word for language teachers. Teacher interaction is long well-accepted as the key to a language classroom specially if an interactive learning environment and teaching is meant to be provided (Rivers, 1987; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Van Lier, 2014). Accordingly, scholars such as Hall and Walsh (2002) have been interested in finding the specific patterns that might exist within classrooms concerning interactions of teachers and students. "In the era of communicative language teaching, interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about" (Brown, 1994). To find the

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patterns of interaction, the researchers of the present study employed Wubbels, Creton and Holvast's (1988) definition who stated that the behavior of the teacher is influenced by the behavior of the students and in turn influences student behavior. The eight underlying constructs of teacher interaction include the following: Leadership which is the extent to which the teacher leads, organizes, gives orders, determines procedure and structures the classroom situation. Helping/Friendly which is the extent to which the teacher shows interest, behaves in a friendly or considerate manner and inspires confidence and trust. Understanding which includes the extent to which a teacher listens with interest, empathizes, shows confidence and understanding. Student responsibility and freedom entails the extent to which the teacher gives opportunity for independent work as well as freedom and responsibility to students. Uncertain comprises the extent to which the teacher behaves in an uncertain manner and keeps a low profile. Dissatisfied is the extent to which the teacher expresses dissatisfaction, looks unhappy, criticizes and waits for silence. Admonishing entails the teacher's anger, expression of irritation and anger, and forbidding and punishing. Strict entails the extent to which the teacher checks, maintains silence and strictly enforces the rules.

With regard to empathy, Karush (1979) maintains that "empathy is a means of communication and of understanding another's mental processes and mental contents that is very different from our usual relational means of observation and inference" (p. 63). Empathy has many definitions which are complicated and arguable (Cooper, 2002). Empathy requires the ability to take another's view and having compassion towards another (Davis, 1983). Empathy is "an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition" (Eisenberg & Liew, 2009, p.316). The focus of educators in empathy has centered on teacher empathy. From a pedagogical point of view, the teacher is similar to the counselor or therapist and the student is similar to the client. Educators emphasize teacher empathy and state that empathic communication by the teacher will result in students' experiencing greater understanding and acceptance, and they will thus develop more positive attitudes toward themselves and toward education. To identify, control, manage, and then respond to the students' needs and concerns, teachers must show empathy (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009). Teacher empathy has been defined as "the ability to express concern and take the perspective of a student, and it involves cognitive and affective domains of empathy" (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007, p. 50). According to Tettegah and Anderson (2007), teacher empathy is often neglected in higher levels of education. Kyriacou (1986) stresses that in order to develop classroom environments and personal relationships it is very important for teachers to see the classroom through their students' eyes. Thus, students' positive perception of their teachers' empathy has been found to influence academic motivation (Branwhite, 1988). Few investigators have studied the role of empathy in the everyday school experiences of educators and teachers as an important character for educators to possess in order to facilitate positive interactions among students. However, the role and importance of teacher empathy in educational environments is something new and needs to be explored more than expected, because teacher's empathy can facilitate learning activities (Barr, 2011). However, in general, it is believed that empathy can be taught and improved as a skill (Hoffman, 2000) through critical thinking activities, imagination and visualization and role playing by the help of professional training (Teich, 1992).

A large number of studies on the concept of the word empathy with various dimensions such as personality and social psychology have been done over the years across the world. This study relies on the definition given by Davis (1983). He defines empathy as the "reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another. The underlying constructs include perspective Taking (the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others), fantasy (tapping respondents' tendencies to transpose themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters), empathic concern that assesses "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others, and personal distress which measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings.

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While the two concepts of interaction and empathy are said to have vital roles in the teaching environment and especially in language teaching, there seems to be lack of research in this area which can be of interest to a number of researchers focusing on teacher development such as educational evaluators, teacher trainers, institutional leaders, and in-service training course providers.

In view of that, the present study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns of interaction among effective English language teachers?
2. What are the patterns of empathy among effective English language teachers?
3. What other interaction skills do effective English language teachers employ?
4. What empathic skills do effective English language teachers employ?

### **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed method descriptive design.

### **Participants**

For the quantitative phase of the study the participants were 45 teachers (20 male, 25 female) and 192 students. The teacher's teaching experience ranged from 2 to 25 years. The students participated willingly in this survey. As for the qualitative phase purposive sampling technique which is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information was employed. Accordingly, 9 effective English language teachers were selected to attend a one to one interview to express their views.

### **Instrumentation**

To conduct this study, both qualitative and quantitative measures were employed. The questionnaire on teacher effectiveness which was constructed and standardized by Mishra was employed and was given to the students. The reliability of the questionnaire calculated in the present study was 0.78. Also the questionnaire on teacher interaction designed by Fisher, Fraser, and Cresswell (1995) was administered to the students. The measure includes the following 8 subscales of Leadership, Helping/Friendly, Understanding, Student responsibility and freedom, Uncertain, Dissatisfied, Admonishing, and strict. The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was calculated as a Cronbach alpha of 0.91 for the leadership, 0.90 for the understanding, 0.89 for the uncertain, 0.87 for the admonishing, 0.85 for the helpful/ friendly subscale, 0.83 for the responsibility subscale, 0.91 for the dissatisfied subscale, and 0.86 for the strict subscale. Moreover, The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983) consisting of four subscales each taping some concept of empathy was administered to the teachers. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported by Khorrami (2016) as 0.78. The present study reliability indices for this questionnaire constructs were 0.75 (fantasy), 0.89 (emphatic concern), 0.86 (personal distress), 0.91 (leadership), 0.90 (understanding). 0.89 (uncertain), and 0.87 (admonishing). Finally, In order to get more information, in this study, a one to one semi-structured interview was held with 9 effective English language teachers.

### **Data Analyses**

The study included two phases. In phase one the questionnaire on teacher effectiveness was distributed among 84 teachers. Analysis was run to distinguish the effective teachers based on the responses to the questionnaire. Accordingly any teacher who scored above 120 on that questionnaire was considered as effective. Out of the 84 teachers 45 were effective among whose students the interaction questionnaire was distributed. Also, the interpersonal reactivity measure was given to the effective teachers.

To answer the first research question Table 1 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the leadership behavior construct.

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**Table 1.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Leadership Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q1	73	38	67	34.9	34	17.7	14	7.3	4	2.1
Q5	59	30.7	81	42.2	33	17.2	16	8.3	3	1.6
Q9	76	39.6	76	39.6	25	13	14	7.3	1	.5
Q13	64	33.3	77	40.1	43	22.4	7	3.6	1	.5
Q17	64	33.3	102	53.1	22	11.5	3	1.6	1	.5
Q21	63	32.8	96	50	26	13.5	3	1.6	4	2.1

Among the six items, item 9 (My teacher always appreciates student’s opinions and demands) had the highest percent of strongly agree (39.6%) and item 17 (My teacher behaves respectfully with all guardians without discriminating caste, social status and economics status) had the highest percent of agree (53.1%).

Table 2 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the understanding behavior factor.

**Table 2.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Understanding Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q2	98	51	70	36.5	19	9.9	5	2.6	0	0
Q6	81	42.2	59	30.7	33	17.2	16	8.3	3	1.6
Q10	82	42.7	76	39.6	28	14.6	4	2.1	2	1
Q14	76	39.6	61	31.8	37	19.3	18	5.7	7	3.6
Q18	80	41.7	66	34.4	33	17.2	8	4.2	5	2.6
Q22	91	47.4	67	34.9	29	15.1	3	1.6	2	1

Among six items, item 2 (My teacher has the ability to teach other needed subjects like current events, general knowledge etc.) had the highest percent of strongly agree (51%) and item 10 (My teacher admits his/her mistakes, pointed out by students willingly) had the highest percent of agree (39.6%). Table 3 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the uncertain factor.

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**Table 3.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Uncertain Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q3</b>	4	2.1	20	10.4	31	16.1	74	38.5	63	32.8
<b>Q7</b>	7	3.6	13	6.8	21	10.9	92	47.9	59	30.7
<b>Q11</b>	12	6.3	18	9.4	46	24	71	37	45	23.4
<b>Q15</b>	15	7.8	10	5.2	28	14.6	79	41.1	60	31.3
<b>Q19</b>	6	3.1	16	8.3	30	15.6	92	47.9	48	25
<b>Q23</b>	9	4.7	14	7.3	18	19.4	73	38	78	40.6

Among six items, item 15 (My teacher has enough self-confidence) had the highest percent of strongly agree (7.8%) and item 3 (My teacher advises the students to solve their problems according to their needs) had the highest percent of agree (10.4%). Table 4 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the Admonishing factor.

**Table 4.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Admonishing Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q4</b>	6	3.1	9	4.7	20	10.4	67	34.9	90	46.9
<b>Q8</b>	11	5.7	9	4.7	21	10.9	78	40.6	73	38
<b>Q12</b>	3	1.6	18	9.4	41	21.4	54	28.1	76	39.6
<b>Q16</b>	10	5.2	16	8.3	42	21.9	47	24.5	77	40
<b>Q20</b>	11	5.7	12	6.3	17	8.9	62	32.3	90	46.9
<b>Q24</b>	10	5.2	18	9.4	27	14.1	59	30.6	78	40.6

Among six items, item 8 (My teacher is well prepared when he/she comes for teaching) and 20 (My teacher co-operates with the guardian to solve the problem of student for their proper development according the right opportunity) had the highest percent of strongly agree (5.7%) and item 12 (My teacher listens patiently, even the irrelevant, question of the student and try to solve them) had the highest percent of agree (9.4%). Table 5 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the helpful/friendly behavior factor.

**Table 5.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Helpful/ Friendly Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q25</b>	68	35.4	66	34.4	41	21.4	14	7.3	3	1.6
<b>Q29</b>	79	41.1	79	41.1	26	13.5	8	4.2	0	0

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<b>Q33</b>	83	43.2	58	30.2	41	21.4	7	3.6	3	1.6
<b>Q37</b>	66	34.4	50	26	41	21.4	28	14.6	7	3.6
<b>Q41</b>	65	33.9	62	32.3	31	16.1	25	13	9	4.7
<b>Q45</b>	77	40.1	69	35.9	43	22.4	1	.5	2	1

Among six items, item 33 (My teacher has proper rapport with his/her students) had the highest percent of strongly agree (43.2%) and item 29 (My teacher communicates the subject matter clearly before the students) had the highest percent of agree (41.1%). Table 6 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the Responsibility behavior factor.

**Table 6.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Responsibility Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q26</b>	72	37.5	60	31.3	33	17.2	16	8.3	11	5.7
<b>Q30</b>	62	32.3	78	40.6	19	9.9	18	9.4	15	7.8
<b>Q34</b>	68	35.4	81	42.2	20	10.4	14	7.3	9	4.7
<b>Q38</b>	68	35.4	75	39.1	28	14.6	17	8.9	4	2.1
<b>Q42</b>	56	29.2	72	37.5	49	25.5	10	5.2	5	2.6
<b>Q46</b>	52	27.1	84	43.8	45	23.4	6	3.1	5	2.6

Among six items, item 26 (My teacher is creative) had the highest percent of strongly agree (37.5%) and item 46 (My teacher is missionary zeal) had the highest percent of agree (43.8%). Table 7 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the dissatisfied behavior factor.

**Table 7.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Dissatisfied Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q27</b>	12	6.3	18	9.4	26	13.5	54	28.1	82	42.7
<b>Q31</b>	10	5.2	23	12	25	13	52	27.1	82	42.7
<b>Q35</b>	14	17.3	25	13	28	14.6	42	21.9	83	43.2
<b>Q39</b>	8	4.2	26	13.5	31	16.1	52	27.1	75	39.1
<b>Q43</b>	15	7.8	19	19.9	29	35.9	60	31.3	69	35.9
<b>Q47</b>	6	3.1	15	7.8	16	8.3	67	34.9	88	45.8

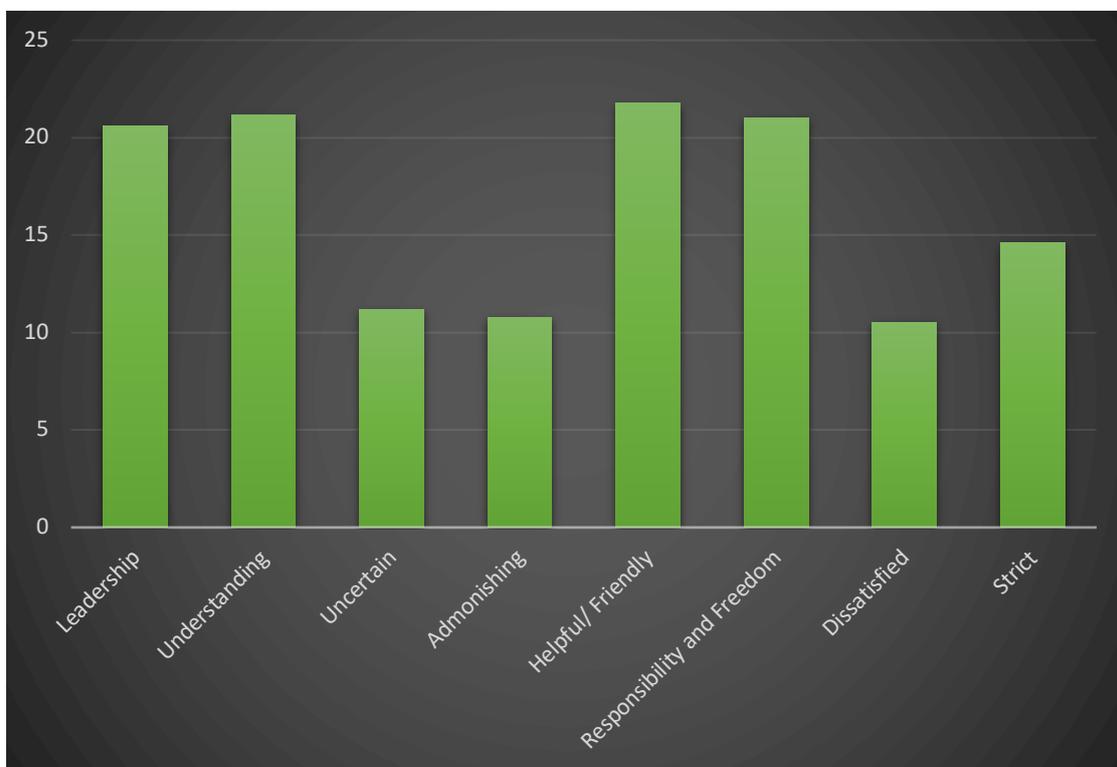
Among six items, item 35 (My teacher uses needed remedial measure in teaching) had the highest percent of strongly agree (17.3%) and item 43 had the highest percent of agree (19.9%). Table 8 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the strict behavior factor.

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**Table 8.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Strict Behavior Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q28</b>	21	10.9	61	31.8	50	26	40	20.8	20	10.4
<b>Q32</b>	4	2.1	34	17.7	77	40.1	63	32.8	14	7.3
<b>Q36</b>	3	1.6	49	25.5	85	44.3	48	25	7	3.6
<b>Q40</b>	4	2.1	32	16.7	97	50.5	49	25.5	10	5.2
<b>Q44</b>	4	2.1	45	23.4	76	39.6	49	25.5	18	9.4
<b>Q48</b>	10	5.2	12	6.3	109	56.8	52	27.1	9	4.7

Among six items, item 28 (My teacher has adjustment capacity) had the highest percent of strongly agree (10.9%) and the highest percent of agree (31.8%). As figure 1 demonstrates, among the eight sub-constructs of interaction scale, helpful and friendly behavior has the highest mean score and dissatisfied, and admonishing have the lowest mean score among effective teachers. In addition, students reported a medium level of strict behavior for effective teachers. Furthermore, leadership, understanding and responsibility behaviors are important characters of effective teachers.



**Figure 1.** The mean score of different sub-constructs of interaction

To answer the second research question Table 9 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the perspective construct.

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**Table 9.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Perspective Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q3</b>	30	66.66	15	33.33	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q8</b>	25	55.55	17	37.77	3	6.66	0	0	0	0
<b>Q11</b>	35	77.77	10	22.22	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q15</b>	31	68.88	4	8.88	10	22.22	0	0	0	0
<b>Q21</b>	24	53.33	15	33.33	5	11.11	1	2.22	0	00
<b>Q25</b>	25	55.55	15	33.33	5	11.11	0	0	0	0
<b>Q28</b>	17	37.77	25	55.55	3	6.66	0	0	0	0

Among seven items, item 11 (I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective) had the highest percent of strongly agree (77.77%) and item 28 (Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place) had the highest percent of agree (55.55%). Table 10 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the fantasy factor.

**Table 10.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Fantasy Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q1</b>	20	44.44	17	37.77	7	15.55	1	2.22	0	0
<b>Q5</b>	17	37.77	22	48.88	5	11.11	0	0	1	2.22
<b>Q7</b>	20	44.44	24	53.33	1	2.22	0	0	0	0
<b>Q12</b>	18	40	20	44.44	4	8.88	2	4.44	1	2.22
<b>Q16</b>	20	44.44	25	55.55	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q23</b>	22	48.88	23	51.11	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q26</b>	15	33.33	30	66.66	0	0	0	0	0	0

Among seven items, item 23 (When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character) had the highest percent of strongly agree (48.88%) and item 26 (When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me) had the highest percent of agree (66.66%). Table 11 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the Empathy concern factor.

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**Table 11.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Empathy Concern Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q2</b>	35	77.77	10	22.22	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q4</b>	41	91.11	3	6.66	0	2.22	0	0	0	0
<b>Q9</b>	36	80.00	6	13.33	2	4.44	1	2.22	0	0
<b>Q14</b>	43	95.55	2	4.44	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Q18</b>	30	66.66	10	22.22	3	6.66	2	4.44	0	0
<b>Q20</b>	31	68.88	11	24.44	3	6.66	0	0	0	0
<b>Q22</b>	36	80.00	5	11.11	2	4.44	1	2.22	1	2.22

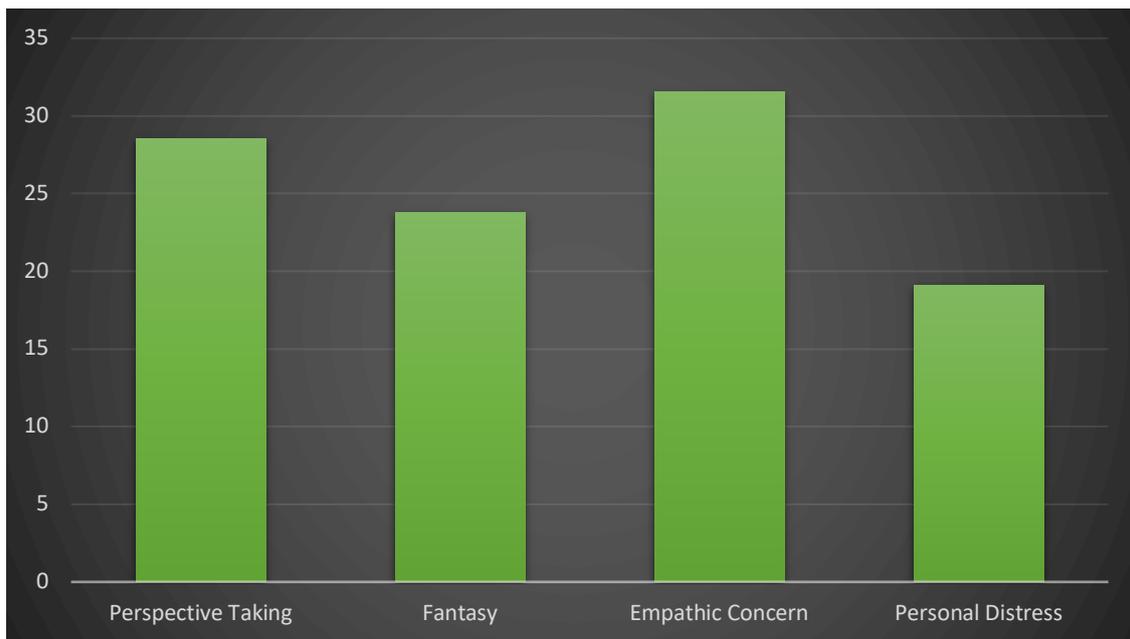
Among seven items, item 14 (Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal) had the highest percent of strongly agree (95.55%) and item 20 (I am often quite touched by things that I see happen) had the highest percent of agree (24.44%). Table 12 shows frequencies and percentages of the items on the personal distress factor.

**Table 12.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the Personal Distress Factor

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Q6</b>	1	2.22	2	4.44	5	11.11	10	22.22	17	37.77
<b>Q10</b>	2	4.44	4	8.88	10	22.22	11	24.44	18	40
<b>Q13</b>	0	0	5	11.11	5	11.11	15	33.33	20	44.44
<b>Q17</b>	2	4.44	3	6.66	7	15.55	18	40	15	33.33
<b>Q19</b>	0	0	2	4.44	20	44.44	5	11.11	18	40
<b>Q24</b>	1	2.22	1	2.22	22	48.88	4	8.88	17	37.77
<b>Q27</b>	2	4.44	4	8.88	11	24.44	10	22.22	18	40

Among seven items, item 13 (When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm) had the highest percent of strongly disagree (44.44%) and item 17 (Being in a tense emotional situation scares me) had the highest percent of disagree (40%). As the figure 2 demonstrates, among four sub-constructs of teachers' Empathy, Empathic Concern and perspective taking have the highest mean score and fantasy and personal distress have the lowest mean score among effective teachers.

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**Figure 2.** The mean score of different sub-constructs of teachers' empathy

To analyze the interview data the researcher employed the constant comparative method and to identify the common themes, organize them in categories, compare and contrast the similarities and the differences between the cases. The researcher employed open coding, axial coding, and selective coding in this analysis.

The participants' explanations of the role of empathy differed to some extent. All cases agreed that empathy helps in understanding other's views, emotions, and situations. They also emphasized on imagining themselves in other peoples' situations to understand them better.

Five interviewees shared the same view and mentioned that it is important to have a close and friendly relationship with students and understand them. All interviewees emphasized that it is necessary to be honest with the students and consistent with your expectations that requires the teacher to be patient. If your students know you are honest and truthful and what your expectations are and you are clearly communicating and doing the same way all the time, then they are going to understand when you say something and what it means. Thus, clarifying expectations seems to be a vital feature.

Three interviewees pointed out that it is important to know the social background of the students, because knowing students' background and where they are coming from give you information about how to adjust your class and your teaching because what might work in one classroom situation might not work in other classrooms. Four interviewees mentioned that knowing your students' individual differences is significant for their learning. The teacher should care not only about the students' cognitive development but also their behavior in the classroom.

Four interviewees expressed that for a teacher to be empathic it is necessary to listen carefully to student's utterances and understanding the sources of students' problems and difficulties and providing appropriate feedback accordingly. Two interviewees stated that teachers have to avoid discriminating among students because it reduces the students' motivation in the process of learning. Two interviewees suggested that, you as a teachers have to consider a boundary between you and your students. You need to use your judgment where to limit your conversation and see all aspects before acting just based on your emotions. You always have to be careful to not cross lines. Two other interviewees pointed out that, teachers have to create a happy and lovely learning environment and focus on the students and put the students at the

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center. It can help with empathy. Two interviewees emphasized that teachers should avoid expressing empathy in front of the whole class. The ideal situation to express empathy is one on one that you can address the issues. They also mentioned that, acknowledging success or achievements are something that can be done in front of the whole class.

The participants described their strategies to connect with students. Although participants shared a common opinion of how teacher interaction and empathy can be effectively employed in the process of teaching to increase student learning, they differed in their teaching styles and use of empathy. Participants also conveyed their belief in connecting with students, understanding them better, and creating a supportive classroom environment to promote learning.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Based on the findings in interaction helpful and friendly behavior as well as understanding together with responsibility and freedom and also leadership behaviors were more important than the other features. Thus, teachers need to consider these points in managing their classrooms. Administrators and trainers also need to outline these important behavioral patterns and introduce them to novice teachers. Other empirical studies also confirm the positive effects of friendly behavior (Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2006; Nadeem, 2014; Ozturk & Ok, 2014; etc.). Also, the understanding factor is well-accepted by several scholars (Bozkurta & Ozdena, 2010; Bouton, 2016; etc.) to have positive effects in establishing an emphatic relationship and interaction. In the same vein the teachers' responsibility is known as a fundamental factor in the effectiveness of teachers and towards professional development (Guan & Huang, 2013; Lopez, 2010; etc.)

Furthermore, according to the results it was found out that among the four constructs of empathy, emphatic concern and perspective taking were more important. Perspective taking is concerned with the improvement of social skills and interactions (Hall, 2006). "Inherent in perspective taking are many significant interpersonal values, including respect for different realities, appreciation for individual differences, objectivity, flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and nonjudgmental attitudes" (Laurence, 2005,p.2). Furthermore, emphatic concern deals with emotional empathy which is an inevitable and fundamental issue in creating empathy (Murphy, Tubritt, & Norman, 2018). These constructs should also be introduced while there is need to care for an emphatic behavior within classrooms. On the contrary, fantasy followed by personal distress were the least important.

Based on the results of the interviews some key points were gathered by the researcher. In every field of study related to human characteristics, teacher interaction and empathy play an important role in promoting learners' achievement. According to teachers' responses to this aspect it can be concluded that most of the teachers agreed that teacher interaction and empathy allow us to understand the intentions of others, predict their behavior, and experience an emotion. Teachers mentioned that teacher interaction and empathy are essential to learning.

Thus, teacher interaction and empathy as important factors that guide behavior and contribute to the special patterns of thought, behavior, and feeling, should be taken into consideration by both teachers and language teaching services who are involved on teacher education. Moreover, teacher training course providers, administrators, and in-service training holders can use the patterns found in the present study to present them as important factors in successful and effective teaching.

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