



## The Relationship among EFL Teachers' Critical Thinking, Self-Esteem, and Classroom Management

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship among Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking, self-esteem, and classroom management. To carry out the study, 60 EFL teachers who teach in different public and private schools in Gorgan, Iran, participated in the study. Honey's (2005) Critical Thinking Questionnaire containing 30 items was used to measure teachers' critical thinking. Regarding self-esteem, the Coopersmith's Questionnaire was employed. Two sessions of each teacher's classes were observed by two raters who used Murdoch's (2000) checklist to assess each teacher's classroom management. To find out the relationship among three variables of this study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied in order to identify the relationship among EFL teachers' critical thinking, self-esteem, and classroom management. The results revealed that the three variables were significantly correlated with one another. The regression analysis demonstrated that teachers' critical thinking and self-esteem was a significant predictor of their classroom management.*

### Introduction

Classroom management (CM) is one of the most essential skills for a teacher to become an effective classroom teacher. Teachers who possess the ability to manage their classrooms are able to create an environment where learning is the focus (Burden, 2003). There are several factors that influence the classroom management abilities of teachers. One of them can be teachers' personality trait and one of such personality traits is self-esteem. Teacher confidence is an important mediator in determining how teachers interact with difficult students and how they manage misbehavior (Pajares, 1992; Martin, et al., 1998;). Managing student behavior has always been a primary concern of teachers for student misbehaviors have interfered with a positive learning environment (Shin & Koh, 2007). Classroom management involves many aspects: the management of space, time, activities, materials, labor, social relations, behavior of students (Watkins & Wagner, 2000).

Another concept of teacher success in foreign and second language teaching programs is critical thinking (CT) ability. McDade (1995) defines critical thinking as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a rubric to belief and action" (p. 10). According to the definitions of critical thinking, critical thinkers should have variety of characteristics, which make them as an ideal critical thinker. They need to move their thinking to a higher level of quality and this process is ongoing and, they need to acquire several dispositions and skills to expand their process of thinking. "One doesn't become a skillful critic of thinking overnight, to become better at thinking; you must be willing to put the work into thinking that skilled improvement always requires" (Paul & Elder, 2008, p.10).

Self-esteem has also attracted the attention of scholars in the area of foreign language instruction. Stevick (1979) for instance, proposed that foreign language teachers and students can profit from their understanding of self-esteem in that they can recognize the problems and will be in a better position to deal with them and alleviate the physical and intellectual side-effects which interfere with learning. Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as:

The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. (pp.4-5)

### Statement of the Problem

Classroom management, in spite of its importance and complexity suffers from a bad reputation among scholars and is not given enough focused attention in teacher training (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Everstone & Weinstein, 2006).

In order to manage the EFL classroom effectively, teachers need to be able to handle a range of variables. Examples of those variables include; how the classroom space is organized, whether students are involved in pair/group work or they are working on their own and, organization of the class time, and choosing and employing appropriate styles. Manipulation of all these variables may be

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a function of the personality type of the teachers, influencing it or being influenced by it. Although some studies have been done on classroom management in Iran (Sabahgian, 2001; Siyami, 2001; Zamani, 2000; Marashi, 2000 as cited in Esmaeeli, 2002), in the field of EFL teaching, there is still a lack of supporting documentation on EFL teachers' critical thinking, self-esteem, and CM and challenges they face. So, this study sought to find relationship among EFL teachers' CT, SE, and CM.

## Research Hypotheses

Based on the above mentioned purpose, the following null hypotheses were posed:

H0.1. There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking and their self-esteem.

H0.2. There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking and their CM.

H0.3. There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' self-esteem and their CM.

H0.4. There is no difference between predictability of critical thinking and self-esteem of EFL teachers about their CM.

## Method

### Participants

Sixty female Iranian EFL teachers from public schools and private language institutes in Gorgan, Iran, took part in this study. Some of the teachers held a Master's degree and the rest had Bachelor's degree in English Literature, English Teaching, and English Translation.

## Instrumentation

### Critical Thinking Questionnaire

Developed by Honey (2000), the questionnaire aims at evaluating the three main skills of comprehension, analysis, and evaluation of the participants. It is a Likert-type questionnaire with 30 items which allows researchers to investigate the teachers' ability in note-taking, summarizing, questioning, paraphrasing, researching, inferencing, discussing, classifying, outlining, comparing and contrasting, distinguishing, synthesizing, inductive and deductive reasoning. The total score ranges from 30 to 150.

### Self-esteem Questionnaire

The Coopersmith self-esteem inventory containing 50 items was used in this study. The desirable score on this test ranges from 25 to 50. The students choose one of the choices of "like me" and "unlike me" that each is in the place of "yes" and "no" answer. Each of the items is scored on 2 points, ranging from 0 to 1 point, which shows the most positive attitudes and the most negative attitudes. The maximum score for this questionnaire is 50 and the minimum is 0.

### Murdoch's Classroom Management Checklist

The instrument used for evaluating classroom management, was Murdoch's (2000) checklist. It is prepared for observing language teachers. The 30 questions which are related to classroom management in this test were taken into consideration. The total score was calculated based on the mean of values given to the teachers by two raters (the researcher, and an official supervisor).

## Procedure

In this study, observation of classes was important for collecting data. To increase the internal validity of the observation results, the researcher asked the supervisor who had enough experience of observing classes to participate in this process. The researcher and the supervisor used Murdoch's checklist for classroom observation as described above.

Next, the participants were given the Honey's Critical Thinking Questionnaire to fill out which included 30 items and the recommended time is 20 minutes. Then, Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Questionnaire (1967) was administered to the same teachers to fill.

## Results

To test the first three hypotheses the parametric Pearson correlation was used. The following table shows the correlation between the three sets of scores.



Table 1.  
*Correlation between CT, SE and CM*

		Critical thinking	Self-esteem	Classroom management
Critical thinking	Pearson Correlation	1	.482**	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	60	60	60
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	.482**	1	.559**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	60	60	60
Classroom management	Pearson Correlation	.481**	.559**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	60	60	60

As displayed in the above table, the correlation between CT and SE is shown to be significant ( $p=.000<.05$ ). Therefore, the first hypothesis is rejected. Also, the correlation between critical thinking and classroom management turned out to be positive and significant ( $r=.481$ ,  $p=.000<.05$ ) which leads to the rejection of the second hypothesis. The correlation between self-esteem and classroom management also was significant and positive ( $r=.559$ ,  $p=.000<.05$ ). Hence the third hypothesis is rejected.

To test the fourth hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted:

Table 2.

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4668.232	2	2334.116	16.806	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	7916.501	57	138.886		
	Total	12584.733	59			

The above table shows that the model is significant ( $F=16.80$ ,  $p=.000<.05$ ). The following table shows the predictability power of each independent variable:



Table 3.

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	26.301	11.846		2.220	.030	2.579	50.023						
Critical thinking	.293	.127	.276	2.303	.025	.038	.548	.481	.292	.242	.768	1.302	
Self-esteem	.887	.250	.426	3.553	.001	.387	1.387	.559	.426	.373	.768	1.302	

As exhibited in the above table, both independent variables can significantly predict the dependent variable as the Beta sig values were less than .05 (.025 and .001). By comparing the Standardized Beta values corresponding to the two independent variables, it can be concluded that self-esteem makes a stronger contribution to explaining the dependent variable (.426 vs. .276). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

### Conclusions and Discussion

The outcome of this research provided evidence that there was a significant relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking, self-esteem and classroom management. Also, the regression analysis indicated that teachers' critical thinking and self-esteem was a significant predictor of the teachers' classroom management, but self-esteem was a stronger predictor of the teachers' classroom management.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers' critical thinking correlated positively and significantly with their classroom management. This is hardly surprising since teachers' critical thinking ability, as its diverse definitions denote, can be said to affect almost all their educational decisions relating to how to group learners, how to prepare appropriate learning atmosphere, how to enhance learner motivation, what supplementary materials and tasks to draw upon, and various other 'hows', 'whats' and 'whys'.

Besides, the results indicated a positive correlation between EFL teachers' self-esteem and their classroom management. This significant correlation is not unexpected since the notion of self-esteem influences different aspects of people's life and teaching is not an exception.

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