

Validating a Qualitatively-Developed Model of Classroom Management Strategies in Iranian Context

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Abstract

The present research was an attempt to posit a model of classroom management strategies for Iranian EFL learners to provide a better interpretation of qualitative findings. Hence, in line with the components of the previous model of classroom management strategies (Bagheri & Khatib), a 42-item questionnaire was considered in the design of the classroom management questionnaire. The 42 item researcher-made questionnaire was piloted with 180 EFL learners and its reliability and the related validities were checked. As a result, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) findings corroborated a 3- component classroom management questionnaire. Finally, the 33-item questionnaire of classroom management was distributed to 360 EFL learners. Then, the initial structure of the model was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to come up with the final model of classroom management strategy. The results substantiated the initial structure of Exploratory Factor Analysis with 3 factors, i.e. management, quality of teaching, classroom practices, and 33 items. The findings suggest EFL teachers not only pay attention to classroom practices, but also work on building up rapport and encouragement with their students.

Keywords: Classroom Management Strategy, Encouragement, Focus- Group Interview, Rapport

1. Introduction

Several scholars have defined classroom management strategy and it has recently received an excessive attention in the field of ELT in general, and professional development training courses in particular. Not only does the term include practices of teachers, but also, it embodies behaviors of students in language learning classrooms and, in turn, reactions of teachers. Although the notion does not seem complicated and does not involve many intricacies, classroom management strategies have reserved a pivotal position globally (Burden, 2005). Classroom management entails a wide range of teachers' efforts to supervise students' learning activities, social interactions, and behaviors (Good & Brophy, 2003; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1985).

Furthermore, classroom management is especially crucial since it is a central aspect to a teacher's practice, and can have implications on student learning, engagement, and academic success, in addition to reduced teacher stress and burnout (Emmer & Gerwels, 2006; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Tartwijk, 2009). Effective teachers also use rules, procedures, and routines to ensure that students are actively involved in learning (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). They use management not to control behaviors of students, but to influence and direct it in a constructive manner to set the stage for instruction (McLeod, Fisher, & Hoover, 2003).

In the post-method era, where teachers are advised to move away from general rules and conduct research in local contexts, with local learners, the language learner has a role and his/her needs and wants should be counted by teachers. Local educational, institutional and social contexts have to be duly considered. The main duty of an EFL teacher is to manage time and materials, establish communicative needs, and involve students in attractive classroom activities (Brown, 2001). Teachers must inhibit problem behaviors before students exhibit them rather than solving them after they happen in the class. In addition, they should attempt to act as a manager or facilitator to provide students with opportunities to speak, act, and learn effectively (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). For the sake of moving from teacher autonomy to learner engagement and in order to include students' voices in the management of classroom activities, the proposed model of classroom management events may inform teachers of the students' management strategies, routines and qualities to be practiced cooperatively alongside the teachers' viewpoints.

A number of studies have, thus far, dealt with classroom management, focusing on the perspective of the teachers as to classroom management (Berliner, 1986; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Oliver, Wehby & Reschly, 2011; Yazdanmehr & Akbari, 2015). Furthermore, Wolff, van den Bogert, Jarodzka, and Boshuizen (2015) differentiate expert and novice teachers in that the former focus on learning in the classroom and the ability

of the teachers to influence learning, whereas the latter are more concerned with maintaining discipline and behavioral norms. But to the best of researchers' knowledge, few endeavors have been made to draw upon a qualitatively-derived model of classroom management to design an instrument for the notion of classroom management to be piloted, tested and proposed as a valid instrument within the Iranian context.

Among the studies carried out in the domain of English language teaching, Khatib and Bagheri (2018) did a qualitative inquiry in the form of grounded theory model of classroom management for Iranian EFL learners. Yet, the existing model grounded in the EFL learners' viewpoints has to be quantitatively supported with a large body of learners in the context of Iranian ELT learners.

2. Literature Review

Emmer and Stough (2001) argued that the ability of teachers to organize classrooms and manage the behavior of their students is crucial to achieving positive educational outcomes. Although behavior management does not seem to guarantee effective instruction, it provides the environmental context that paves the ground for proper instruction. Highly successful teachers manage their classrooms effectively (Sridhar & Javan, 2011); negotiating control with their students (Hami, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996), and often giving them autonomy (Ross & Gray, 2006). They rely on positive strategies such as interacting with their students, demonstrating patience, and sharing responsibility with them, rather than insisting on appropriate behavior and resorting to punitive strategies to maintain classroom control (Henson, 2003).

Learning about classroom management is a noticeable concern of the majority of EFL teacher education programs and a common learning expectation among teachers (LePage, Darling-Hammond, Akar, Gutierrez, Jenkins-Gunn, & Rosebrock, 2005). In a foreign language-learning classroom, the significance of the issue of effective management becomes more uncertain (Fowler & Sarapli, 2010). The uncertainty of effective management of classes might be different cross-culturally and nationally. In an ideal EFL classroom, the priority is given to establishing an effective environment for communication rather than discipline, order, or control. Besides, establishing a well-controlled classroom, EFL teachers should increase the learners' willingness to communicate (Richards & Rodgers, 2003), because communication can occur in a situation where everything is fine-tuned. Therefore, EFL teachers should master adequate classroom management strategies that will assist them in controlling the class and make their students enjoy it rather than hate it or consider it as a heavy problem (Brown, 2001).

Since the present study taps into the attitudes of EFL students as to what classroom management strategies are favorable to them, EFL teachers like any other teachers have to play many roles in the classroom simultaneously. They should be an authority figure, leader, knower, director, manager, counselor and friend. In order to do this, they should know themselves; their strengths and weaknesses, their limitations, their likes and dislikes, and more importantly they should be aware of their students' attitudes and finally they should accept that they are in the class to be many things to many different people (Brown, 2001). Understanding the factors of classroom management would help one to improve the teacher's skills as a language teacher (Brown, 2001). Examination of previous works about classroom management indicated that several variables influence the teachers' classroom management. Literature is limited to studies done on teachers' efficacy of classroom management in the area of education in general (Cheung, 2008; Daugherty, 2005; Dibapile, 2012; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Martin, 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) and language pedagogy in particular (Taya, 2007; Moafian, & Ghnizadeh, 2009; Goker, 2006; Liaw, 2009; Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2012; Rahimi & Hosseini, 2012).

Khodarahmi and Motallebinia (2014) investigated the relationship between EFL learners' perception of classroom-discipline strategies and their willingness to communicate in English inside the classroom. The findings demonstrated that students' willingness to communicate in the English was significantly related to the perception of the discipline strategies. It was also discovered that teachers' discipline strategies could predict around 38% of the variance in EFL learners' willingness to communicate.

Elbla (2012) tested the effect of physical and verbal punishment to discipline the behavior of Sudanese students. The results showed that teachers use disciplinary strategies because they themselves experienced akin stress and frustration at school. Also, Harmer (2007) described rapport as a connection that students have with their instructor and vice versa when they intermingle every day in the classroom. Creating a good rapport between the learners and the tutor is a movement toward a fruitful class (Barmaki, 2014).

Finally, Khatib and Bagheri (2018) conducted a qualitative research in the form of grounded theory model of classroom management for Iranian EFL learners. To this end, some face to face and focus group interviews as well as real observations were performed. Twenty-six students including various proficiency levels from four different provinces participated in the face to face and focus group interviews. Also, 10 observations of the real classes wherein teachers were teaching conversation courses were made. Transcribing and codifying the data according to Corbin and Strauss's (2014) systematic steps of open, axial, and selective coding, the findings revealed a model of classroom management strategy encompassing three main themes

(management, quality of life and classroom practices), nine categories and 39 subcategories.

Although Khatib and Bagheri's (2018) proposed model emerged from the voices of EFL learners in Iran in terms of a grounded theory model, its generalizability was under question because it was not tested with a large body of ELT students and the model was drawn from the interviews and observation made with a small number of EFL students. Therefore, to compensate for the limitations, and with the aim of developing and validating the model to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of classroom management, this study addresses the following research question:

Through the use of Structural Equation Modeling and building upon the qualitative model of classroom management (Khatib & Bagheri), what model of classroom management can be proposed for EFL students within the Iranian context?

3. Method

The present article draws upon an earlier study by Khatib et al. (2018) to corroborate a qualitative preliminary model of classroom management in the field of ELT. In other words, this study aimed to build a new instrument, that is, an ELT classroom management questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire were taken from the qualitative model of classroom management. Through the 3 components/themes of the model, 9 categories and 39 sub-categories, a 42-item classroom management questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was designed to generalize the findings of the qualitative phase.

Thus, the researchers attached a quantitative phase to the emerged model by Khatib et al.'s (2018) study to answer to the requirements of students, to provide a better understanding of the qualitative findings, and to put forward a model that could be tested and explained in order to stand as a valid local model for EFL learners (Samimi, Sahragard & Razmjoo, 2016).

Ultimately, a 42 item questionnaire of Classroom management strategy was made with the help of the colleagues involving 3 main factors (see Table 1). The factors include: a) management and its categories (items 1-18), b) quality of teaching and its categories (items 13-30), and c) classroom practices and its categories (items, 31-43).

Items and Factors of Classroom Management Questionnaire

Factors	Items
Management	1-18
Time management	1,2,3,4
Resource management	5,6,7
Discipline/ Behavior Management	8,9,10,11,12,13,14
Attention management	15,16,17,18
Quality of Teaching	19-30
Encouragement	19,20,21,22,23
Rapport	24,25,26,27,28,29,30
Classroom Practices	31-42
Opening classroom practices	31,32,33
Developing classroom practices	34,35,36,37,38,39,
Terminating classroom practices	40,41,42

The questionnaire contains some details about what it includes and wants from the respondents. Moreover, it inquires the demographic variables such as, age, gender and proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate & advanced). Subsequent to the instruction and demographic variables, the items of the questionnaire were included. A five-point continuous Likert-scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to measure the questionnaire items.

3.1. Piloting the Questionnaire

Subsequent to the designing of the questionnaire, it was handed out to 180 EFL learners (85 male, 95 female). The questionnaire was then distributed among students via a web-based survey consistent with purposive sampling. The reason 180 participants took part in the piloting phase was because the study has 3 hypothetical constructs or concepts for which 60 participants could be considered appropriate.

Shortly after, the researcher collected the necessary data and ended the survey to avoid additional responses to the questionnaire. The piloting of the questionnaire was realized in order to make sure the current instrument was satisfactory regarding content, face and hypothetical constructs to be used in the main study.

3.1.1. Reliability Analysis of Classroom Management Questionnaire

The idea of reliability assumption is to realize if item responses are stable across concepts/ factors. This can be computed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Thus, the internal consistency of the CMSQ items was estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha=.87$) showing a high index of reliability as demonstrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Reliability Statistics of Classroom Management Strategy Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.870	43

3.1.2. Construct Validity of Classroom Management Questionnaire

Testing the original examination of the factorial structure of the CMSQ questionnaire was carried out via Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The EFA is essentially a system that calculates correlations between variables. EFA results are not dependable if the correlations are below 0.3.

In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy for the correlation matrix turned out to be 0.84, well above the minimum required level of 0.60 (Pallant, 2011). Moreover, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at $p < .001$. Overall, the results of the initial examination of the data corroborate the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Additionally, a number of Principal Axis Factors (PAF) were conducted followed by the Direct Oblimin rotation techniques. The results showed that 3 factors can be extracted which can elucidate 50.75 percent of the variance in the data. Regarding the number of factors to be removed, it was steered by the qualitative model of the study as well as the examination of the screen plot and the meaningfulness of the pattern of factor loadings.

Of the 42 items, 9 items had to be removed. The factor loadings for the remaining 33 items can be seen in Table 3 (See Appendix 1). Notice that each item loads on a single factor. Also, each factor is measured through a number of items that have high loadings of above the requisite level of 0.30 (Pallant, 2011).

Based on the pattern of factor loadings, the factors can be dubbed as follows:

- Factor 1: Classroom management
- Factor 2: Quality of life in the classroom
- Factor 3: Classroom practices.

3.2. The Main Study

The third and the final phase of the research began immediately after the reliability and validities of the Classroom management strategy questionnaire (CMSQ) were established. At that juncture, the questionnaire was ready for its final distribution. Thus, based on the results the preliminary model of classroom management strategies could be examined quantitatively to help elucidate and interpret the qualitative findings in the form of the final

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model of CMSs. The details of the final phase are explained in the following sections.

3.2.1. Participants

Three hundred-sixty EFL students participated in the quantitative phase of the study. It should be mentioned that participants who took part in the pilot study were excluded from the final phase. Hence, the participants of the main study including EFL learners from all over Iran were selected based upon availability sampling. The age of the participants ranged from 11 to 43.

3.2.2 Materials and Instruments

The main instrument was CMSQ consisting of 33 items. The final CMSQ was produced based on the qualitative phase, literature review and the pilot study.

3.2.3. Procedure

The following two steps were taken in order to gather the data for the present phase. Step 1: Internet based survey Google forms of CMS were made. The questionnaire included an opening, a body and a closing. The opening required demographic information and made clear the purpose of the study. The body of the questionnaire contained the 33 items on the continuous five-point Likert-scales from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Lastly, as soon as the participants submitted their responses, a thank you statement was displayed on the screen.

Step 2: The internet link to the survey was shared among EFL learners all over the country (Iran). Furthermore, the link was forwarded to English language teachers and institutes, and they were requested to distribute it among their students.

3.2.4. Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the relationships between the variables in this research were meant to be put forward as a model. In order to reach this objective, Structural Equation Modeling (henceforth SEM) was used as the strongest and most precise instrument for testing the model using CFA. SEM works on the basis of describing the relationship between the measured and the latent variables yielding a measurement mode (Dörnyei, 2007). Its second stage comprises of identifying links and connections between the latent independent and dependent variables. The result is consequently a model that includes all the measurement models (Kline, 2011). MPLUS software was used to run SEM. The results of MPLUS software are shown in the following chapter.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

To answer the research question, that is “Through the use of Structural Equation Modeling and building upon the qualitative model of classroom management (Khatib & Bagheri), what model of classroom management can be proposed for EFL students within the Iranian context? “ Confirmatory Factor Analysis using SEM was run. The conjecture in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as in all other Structural Equation Models (SEM) is that data should be multivariate normal. In spite of the fact that the hypothesis can be examined empirically, it is a complicated task to achieve normality with items that only incorporate five categories. However, there are a number of estimation methods that can be used to counter the breach of this hypothesis.

In the present study, the researchers opted to use the MLR also known as Yuan–Bentler test (Yuan & Bentler, 2000) estimation technique in the Mplus software (Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2010; Samimi & Sahragard, 2018).

In contrast to EFA, where it is impossible to assess the fit of the model, in CFA assessing the fit is possible. The reason for this is that CFA models tend to usually be over-identified. Multiple indices exist for the evaluation of model fit in SEM (for an overview, see Byrne, 2016; Kline 2015). Out of the many indices introduced in the literature, four were identified by Brown (2006) as the best. In fact, these happen to be the only fit indices that are mentioned in the Lisrel Program.

They include the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Comparative Fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). In order to show adequate fit, the following indices must be achieved: $RMSEA \leq 0.06$, $CFI \geq 0.90$, $TLI \geq 0.90$, and $SRMR \leq 0.08$.

Figure 1 shows the path diagram of the model. It can be observed that all loadings are acceptable and high. The fit indices for this model are as follows: $RMSEA=0.023$, $CFI=0.93$, $TLI=92$, and $SRMR=0.044$. The X^2 was 432.16 (df = 138). The 90 percent confidence interval around the RMSEA was 0.038-0.053. The close-fit probability value for the RMSEA was 0.824 indicating a very good fit (Wang & Wang, 2012).

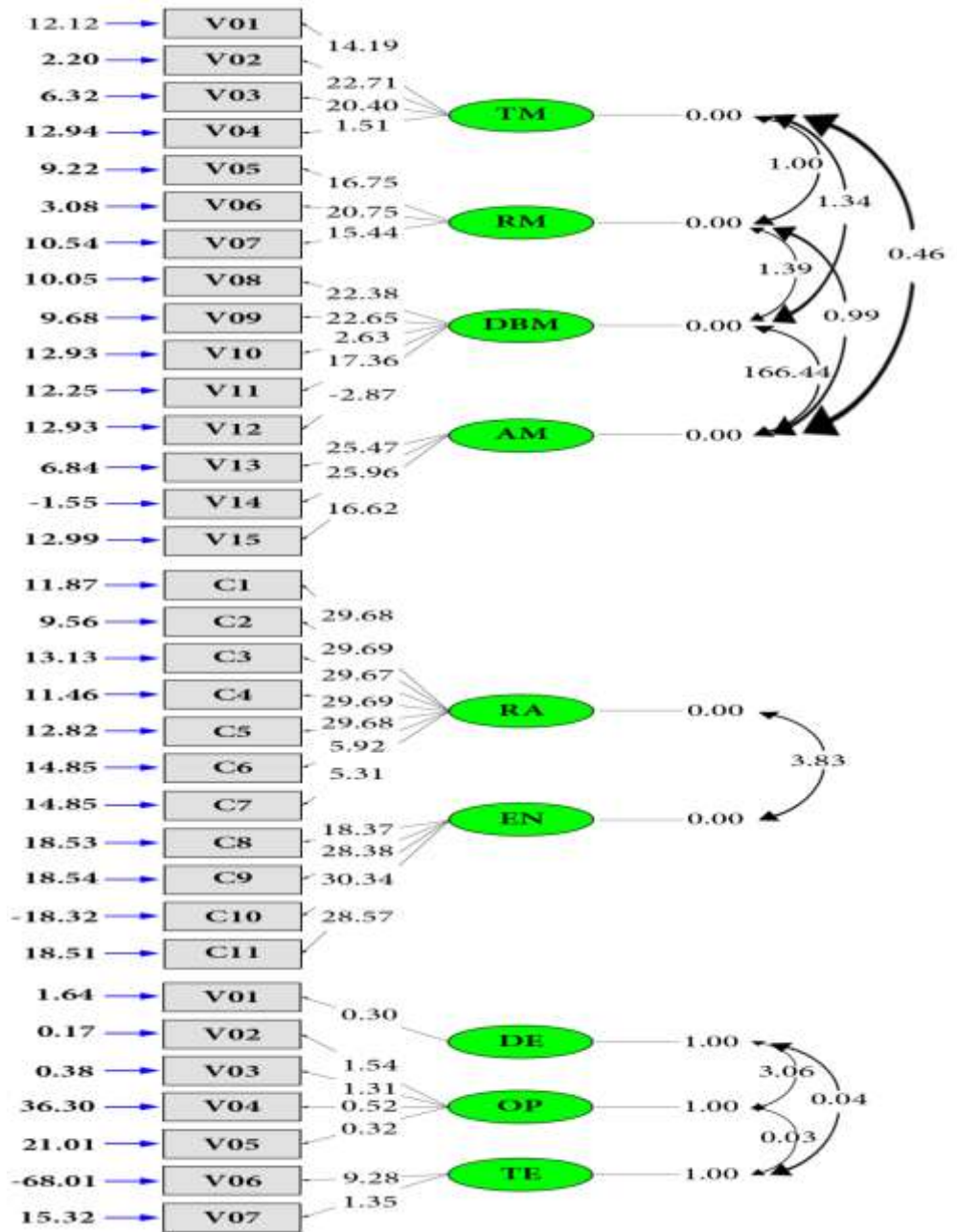


Figure 1. The Path Diagram for the Final Model of Classroom Management

4.2. Discussion

As shown in Table and Figure 1, the final model of classroom management strategies contains the three following main factors: classroom management, quality of life in the classroom, and classroom practices. Thus, the findings of quantitative data lend support to themes extracted in the

preliminary qualitative phase (Khatib & Bagheri, 2018). A number of items however had to be removed in the pilot study. It should be mentioned that the present study aims to establish a model of classroom management strategies employing a quantitative-model building method based on the Khatib and Bagheri's (2018) study where the inclusion of quantitative phase intends to aid the interpretation of qualitative findings.

The findings of this study support a number of findings in the literature (Cheung, 2008; Daugherty, 2005; Dibapile, 2012; Ataya, 2007; Moafian, & Ghnizadeh, 2009; Goker, 2006; Küçükoğlu, 2013; Liaw, 2009; Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2012; Rahimi & Hosseini, 2012); although this study advances the body of present literature in the following categories of a) management (time ,resource, behavior, and attention management), b) quality of teaching (encouragement and rapport) and c) classroom practices (opening, developing and terminating practices) . Regarding management, when a teacher not only pays attention to the mal behavior of students, but also does everything to manage their attention toward the process of learning, it can be claimed that learning and teaching occur in a harmony. In addition, time and resource management must go hand in hand for the process of learning to be effectively executed. Moreover, Khodarahmi and Motallebi Nia's study (2014) has also pointed to discipline/ behavior management.

More importantly, the quality of teaching as a component of the present model should be given equal importance as the management component, as a well-managed classroom that lacks encouragement and rapport, learning can hardly be effective and long lasting for the students, since stress and fear will automatically replace a comfortable learning atmosphere. Bruney (2012) and Barmaki (2014) in their respective studies support encouraging students as an augmenting factor in the process of learning.

Last but not least, the third component of the model which is classroom practices including opening, developing, and terminating practices takes effect if classrooms are managed wisely and students are given positive feedbacks. Therefore in a classroom where all of the aforementioned components are carefully observed, ideal learning is likely to take place. Moreover, previous studies, (Kohn, 1996; Xu & Wu, 2013) include information regarding terminating activities and homework.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Based on the paucity of research as to a local model of classroom management strategy considering the voices of EFL students, this study described the validating process of the classroom management questionnaire

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from its initial design, piloting to model building using structural equation modeling.

Overall, the emerged model was the result of two robust methods of data collection and analysis which are the grounded theory (Khatib & Bagheri, 2018) and SEM. Additionally, the present model wields authority to the students since new classroom management models diverge from teacher authority. The model looks upon language learners as an integral part of the syllabus and the classroom.

In spite of the fact that classroom management was the main objective of the present work, it can also be applied to other disciplines, e.g. engineering, philosophy, medicine, law, and so forth in the form of a teaching model. PhD dissertations and MA theses can also use an exploratory mixed-method design to explore the classroom management strategies of students other than learners of EFL to help them develop new ideas in managing their classes.

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Appendix 1: Table 3

Table 3

The Pattern of Factor Loadings

<i>Items</i>	<i>Component</i>		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Item1	0.518		
Item2	0.509		
Item3	0.507		
Item4	0.405		
Item5	0.893		
Item6	0.688		
Item7	0.557		
Item8	0.252		
Item9	0.476		
Item10	0.439		
Item11	-0.243		
Item12	-0.702		
Item13	-0.679		
Item14	-0.583		
Item15	-0.862		
Item16	-0.225		
Item17	-0.609		
Item18	-0.568		
Item19		-0.84	
Item20		-0.276	
Item21		-0.454	
item22		-0.679	
Item23		-0.583	
Item24		0.476	
Item25		0.439	
Item26		-0.243	
Item27		-0.702	
Item28		-0.679	
Item29		-0.583	
Item30		-0.862	
Item31			0.241
Item32			0.219
Item33			-0.568
Item34			0.405
Item35			0.893
Item36			0.296
Item37			0.557
Item38			0.252
Item39			0.476
Item40			0.405
Item41			0.221
Item42			0.557

Appendix 2: Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire

1. In my opinion the teacher should ignore unrelated comments made by students while teaching.
2. The teacher should allocate a particular time for each task.
3. The teacher should allocate a specific time to teach each of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).
4. The teachers should have a timetable to divide different activities s/he will teach during the period of each class.
5. In my opinion language classrooms should be equipped with audiovisual devices.
6. In my opinion the teacher should rely more on his/her own knowledge to conduct the class rather than depending on the class equipment (audio-visual devices).
7. I think the teacher must use the black/white board to write down the main and important points of each lesson.
8. In my opinion teachers should use grades to entice/punish students to observe classroom rules.
9. I think teachers should show flexibility toward students' misbehaviors.
10. In the case that there is misbehavior, the teacher should have the knowledge and capability to know where it stems from.
11. I believe that good relationship with students on the part of the teacher will minimize students' misbehavior (being talkative, not paying attention, not getting on well with their work, etc.)
12. I believe establishing clear classroom rules about acceptable and non-acceptable behavior is crucial.
13. I believe the teacher should call for a student's attention when s/he is distracted.
14. I believe the teacher should pay extra attention to those students who are unable to do the work to avoid misbehavior.
15. I think the teacher should value novel ideas given by the students.
16. In my opinion the class should be conducted in such a way to promote enthusiasm in students to learn English.
17. The teacher should try to identify each student's talent and to encourage the flourishing of that talent.
18. When a mistake is made, I prefer the teacher to point out the way the exercise should be done rather than target the personality of the person who made the mistake.
19. The teacher should avoid competition in class and rather encourage improving the students' own performance.
20. In my opinion there should not be any intimacy between the teachers and the students (the students should not feel comfortable enough to discuss personal matters with their teacher).
21. I believe the teacher should have a sense of humor.
22. I think the teacher should use the students' nicknames instead of their last names.
23. I think teachers and students should sometimes meet outside class (restaurants, coffee shops, parks, etc.) and just have fun.
24. In my opinion a teacher should give special attention to students who are not feeling all right.
25. I believe mutual respect between the teacher and the students is very important.
26. I prefer a sympathetic and warm tone of voice to convey a sense of teachers' affection rather than a harsh military-like tone.
27. In my opinion it is not necessary to call the role every session.
28. In my opinion all four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) should be covered in every session.

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29. I think students should be assigned subjects to lecture about.
 30. The teacher should actively monitor the pupils' progress through walking around the room and asking questions to make sure the students have understood the lesson.
 31. I believe role playing is a very important exercise in learning a second language.
 32. I think homework assignments are essential for language classes.
 33. The teacher should summarize what has been taught very briefly, at the end of every session

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