

I Am Good at It Because I Like Its Teacher: To what Extent Does Teacher Behaviour Motivate Students to Learn?

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Abstract

The teachers' behaviors sometimes have a more intense and long-lasting influence than the information being transmitted; meanwhile, the concentration of much of the curriculum of teacher education has just been on the course content or teaching methods. In this study, the relationship between students' motivation and teachers' behavior is investigated based on the *Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behavior* (MITB). The questionnaires were distributed to 211 students of eight classes of general English course at the *University of Isfahan*. Results indicated that among the eight scales of the model, students' motivation is significantly positively correlated with the friendly scale, and significantly negatively correlated with dissatisfied, and reprimanding scales. This may have cultural and psychological implications. Furthermore, some modifications on the graphical presentation of the MITB are proposed and a model for an ideal English teacher in Iran is obtained and compared cross-culturally.

Keywords: Ideal Teacher, Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behavior, Motivation, Proximity

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1. Introduction

Interaction has proved to play a significant role in the process of learning, especially second language acquisition. The advent of communicative

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language teaching further highlighted the significance of interaction (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, interaction is now perceived to promote the processing capacity of learners (Walsh, 2002; Matsumoto, 2010). As anybody might have experienced, one's motivation and achievement in a course may be heavily dependent on and influenced by the teacher's behavior and the interactive atmosphere of the class (den Brok, Berkelmans & Wubbles, 2004 & 2005; Maulanaa, Opdenakker, den Brok & Bosker, 2011; Nugent, 2009; Passini, Molinary & Speltini, 2015; Urhahne, 2015; Wei & Onswad, 2007; Wei, Zhou, Barber & den Brok, 2015). In fact, according to Whitaker (2004), teachers should be aware of the importance of connecting with their students; they can hardly influence students' minds if they cannot establish a proper connection with them. He believes that although there have been countless reforms, educational movements, and programs all undertaken to improve education, no factor can be as profound and influential as the human element. Students' perceptions of their teachers' competence, care, support, and the nature of the teacher-student relationship affect their motivation and achievement (Stipek, 2002).

The interactive state of the class influences not only learners' motivation, but also their achievement. According to Stipek (2002) many of students who do not perform well academically, are those who have a poor rapport with their teachers. Often, the more they lag, the more this relationship is enfeebled; conversely, students who perceive this relationship to be more encouraging, tend to develop better attitudes and may desire to maintain this relationship or please the teacher by doing well in class. They often perform better in comparison with other students who lack the same support.

Research on educational and instructional effectiveness has demonstrated that between seven and fifteen percent of the variance in student outcomes is related to differences between schools, teachers, and classes (den Brok,

Berkelmans & Wubbles, 2004). The major cause of this difference is differences between *teachers*. According to Whitaker (2004), in the classroom the main variable is the teacher and not the student. Great teachers expect much from their students, but even more from themselves. Obviously, the concepts of effective teaching and effective teacher vary from era to era. This makes the need to search for effective teaching attributes to be an ongoing process. Thus, it can be claimed that teachers of the present era need to be knowledgeable and competent not only as instructors but also as leaders and counselors (Falls, 1999).

Despite these facts and irrespective of the importance of teacher behavior on learners' motivation and achievement, much of the curriculum of teacher education programs has focused on content or teaching methods and very little attention is being paid to the interpersonal relationships that exist between teachers and their students (Higgins, 2011). Therefore, many teachers start their job when they have just minor or no idea of the definitive role that they play in developing interpersonal relationships.

To sum up, most of us can remember some teachers for their outstanding and motivating behaviors even when just a blurred picture of the content of that course can come to our mind, so the effects of teachers' behaviors may be more intense and long-lasting than the content and information taught. Therefore, to assist learning, having a thorough view of the interactive ground of the classroom, especially with respect to the pivotal role which the teachers play via their interpersonal behavior, is significant. Examples of such behaviors include talking passionately about the lesson, trusting learners, not being uncertain, explaining clearly and clarifying the points, having patience, leading the class, having self-confidence, correcting students on time, realizing when learners do not understand something, giving students some degree of freedom, and so on.

2. Literature Review

The effect of motivation on learning, especially a second language has been well-established since 1959 by dominant researchers such as Dörnyei (1998, 2005, 2009), Dörnyei and Schmidt (2001), Gardner (1959, 2004, 2008) and Oxford (1996). Gardner, in his original socio-educational model (1985) proposed that aptitude and motivation are two primary factors affecting language learners' performance. Among these two, motivation has a more central role. Based on this model, the motivational factors occur in sites where L2 learning takes place. Hence, Gardner points at the significance of the educational context as the formal site where L2 learning takes place.

The role of teacher in motivating learners is also highlighted through the social-constructivist model of motivation since in this model there are four key elements influencing teaching-learning process. These elements include learner(s), teacher, task, and context (Williams & Burden, 1997). The framework in this model emphasized contextual influences and categorized motivational factors as learner-internal or external factors with teachers being learner external factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

As motivation is something dynamic that fluctuates, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) developed a process oriented model which consists of three chronological preactional, actional, and postactional stages. In this model teachers have a role in the second stage (i.e., the actional stage). At this stage, one's level of motivation should be sustained throughout the learning process. It includes generating and performing subtasks, self-regulating and appraising one's achievement. In addition to teachers' influences other major motivational influences at this stage include the quality of the experience of L2 learning, perception of autonomy as an L2 learner, parents' influence, and application of self-regulatory strategies. Dörnyei (2001) suggests that

teachers are responsible for establishing the fundamental motivational conditions. They should also generate and maintain student motivation.

However, regarding teachers' behaviors much of the past research on classroom interaction focused on a teacher's specific behaviors, counting how frequently each one occurred and then building a description for effective teaching by combining discrete behaviors. However, according to Tuckman (1995) there is an alternative approach which is more holistic and personal, wherein the teacher is regarded not as a teaching device, but as a person, a human being with his or her own interpersonal style and identifiable affective behaviors. As teaching is an interpersonal process, interpersonal style cannot be detached from it.

The perceptions of students about their relationships with their teachers can be mapped and studied via the Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (MITB). The basis of this model is Leary's research on the interpersonal diagnosis of personality which was later applied to teaching (Wubbels, Créton & Hooymayers, 1985). It is an orthogonal model consisting of two basic dimensions of proximity which measures cooperation versus opposition and influence that measures dominance versus submission. These can be represented as two axis of a coordinate system. Dominance indicates the extent to which teacher determines students' activities and cooperation is the extent to which teacher shows approval of students and their behavior.

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The two dimensions can be represented as two axes which denote eight types of behaviors, namely leading, helpful/friendly, understanding, student responsibility and freedom, uncertain, dissatisfied, admonishing and strict. Figure 1 presents an overview of generic teacher behaviors that relate to the model by Wubbels, Brekelmans, and Hooymaners (1991) and Table 1 provides a description on scales and some sample items of for each scale by Fisher, Rickards, and Newby (2001).

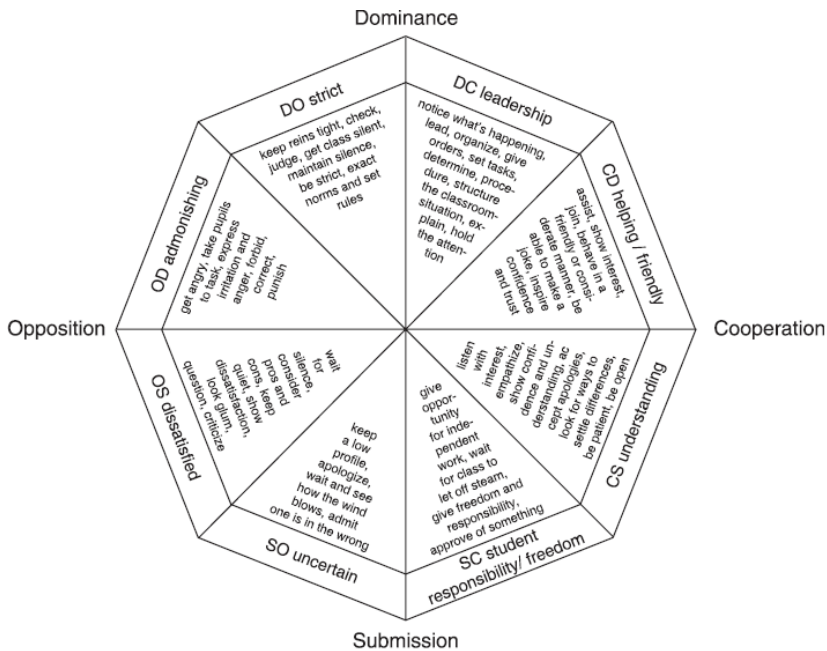


Figure 1. Model for interpersonal teacher behavior

Table 1
Description of Scales and Sample Items of the Model

Scale name	Description of scale (the extent to which the teacher ...)	Sample item
Leadership	...leads, organizes, gives orders, determines procedure & structures the classroom situation.	This teacher talks enthusiastically about his/her subject.
Helping/friendly	...shows interest, behaves in a friendly or considerate manner & inspires confidence and trust.	This teacher helps us with our work.
Understanding	...listens with interest, empathizes, shows confidence and understanding & is open with students.	This teacher trusts us.
Student responsibility/freedom	...gives opportunity for independent work, gives freedom and responsibility to students.	We can decide some things in this teachers' class.
Uncertain	...behaves in an uncertain manner & keeps a low profile	This teacher seems uncertain.
Dissatisfied	...expresses dissatisfaction, looks unhappy, criticizes & waits for silence.	This teacher thinks that we cheat.
Admonishing	...gets angry, express irritation and anger, forbids & punishes.	This teacher gets angry unexpectedly.
strict	...checks, maintains silence & strictly enforces the rules.	This teacher is strict.

Different names have already been proposed for these eight scales; for instance, Wubbels et al. (2012) have used the terms steering, complying, reprimanding, and enforcing instead of leadership, student responsibility/freedom, admonishing and strict, respectively. As these seem to be more proper dictions, these names are used in this study. Therefore, the eight scales are: steering, friendly, understanding, complying, uncertain, dissatisfied, reprimanding, and enforcing as in Wubbels et al. (2012).

Teachers' interactive behavior has cognitive and affective outcomes. Among the studies investigating cognitive outcome are den Brok,

Berkelmans and Wubbles (2004) and Wei and Onsayad (2007). As cited in Wubbles and Berkelmans (2005), Brekelmans' (1989) study indicated that there was a positive correlation between students' perceptions of teacher influence and their cognitive outcomes.

A positive relationship of both influence and proximity have been found between the teacher–student relationships and affective outcomes (Maulanaa et al., 2011; Nugent, 2009; Urhahne, 2015). Generally, proximity is somewhat more influential than influence. The motivation of students is higher if they have a higher perception of proximity.

Other studies such as den Brok, Berkelmans and Wubbles (2005) done on subject-specific motivation found that teacher proximity strongly and positively influenced all diagnosed subject-related attitude variables. In addition, influence had a positive effect on three of the outcome variables, namely pleasure, relevance and effort, too. Overall, however, proximity seemed to have a greater impact than influence.

To conclude, investigating interpersonal teacher behavior may be illuminating as it can both provide a teacher role model and help probe the relationship between these behaviors and learners' motivation more thoroughly. This investigation has relied on the Model on Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (MITB) which is culture-sensitive (Wei et al., 2015). The validity and reliability of the relevant instrument have been investigated in different contexts and countries (den Brok et al., 2003) and the present study can investigate its reliability and validity in Iran. Furthermore, different cultures and contexts require different patterns especially with regard to interactive behaviors. The teacher role model of this study can be compared with those of other studies such as Fisher et al.'s (1995) and Wei et al.'s (2015).

3. Methodology

Students' motivation was measured by using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Survey (MSLQ) and their perceptions on teachers' interactional behavior were measured and analyzed via the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). Students were also asked to rate the QTI for an ideal teacher so that a role model can be obtained. Demographic information on the age, gender, and perceived level of English proficiency was obtained from the learners.

3.1 Participants

The questionnaires were distributed to 211 students of eight classes of general English course at the *University of Isfahan*, Iran. Classes consisted of at least 21 or at most 32 students. The students' age range was 18-24 with an average of 19. About 44% of the students were female and 56% were male. The age range of instructors was 30-45 with at least five years of experience of teaching English at the university level.

3.2 Instruments

The quick version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Survey (MSLQ) and student version of Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) are used to investigate learners' motivation and interpersonal teachers' behaviors, respectively.

3.2.1 MSLQ

The quick version of Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was applied to investigate learners' motivation. It has 12 items and the web version of it is available on the University of Arizona's website. It was originally an 81-item questionnaire made to measure students' perceptions of their motivation and their personal use of learning strategies. This questionnaire was developed by applying a social cognitive view of motivation and self-regulated learning (Artino, 2005). In this model,

according to Arnito (2005), students' motivation is positively related to their ability in self-regulating their learning activities and self-regulated learning is deemed to be metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally functioning in one's learning processes and in achieving goals. Here, motivation and learning strategies are not regarded as static characteristics of the learner, but as dynamic and contextually bound traits. Learning strategies can be learned and brought under the control of the student; in other words, students' motivations change from one course to another, and accordingly the learning strategies they apply may vary, depending on the nature of the course.

MSLQ was developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie (1991) but its formal development started in 1986 by McKeachie and Pintrich. Since then, it has undergone numerous revisions. As is reported in Nuget (2009) various versions of it has undergone statistical and psychometric analyses. The Cronbach's alphas are strong and range from 0.52 to 0.93. Additionally, its factor validity has been established through factor analyses provided in its manual.

3.2.2 QTI

The students' perceptions of their teacher's interpersonal behavior can be measured with the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). The base of the QTI is the two dimensional Leary model which has eight sectors (Wubbels et al., 1985). The original version of it is in Dutch and consists of 77 items that should be rated on a five-point Likert scale. The items are divided into eight scales corresponding with the eight behavior types. The instrument has been translated into the several languages such as English, French, German, Russian, Hebrew, and so on (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005) and applied in different subject classes (den Brok, Taconis & Fisher, 2010; Fisher & Richards, 1998).

Several studies have been done to investigate the reliability and validity of different versions of QTI. These have included American (Wubbels & Levy, 1991), Australian (Fisher, Henderson and Fraser, 1995), and Dutch (den Brok, 2001). Also, a cross-national validity study was conducted in Singapore, Brunei, US, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Australia (den Brok et al., 2003). It has also been applied in the Chinese context by Wei et al. (2015).

3.3 Data Analysis

For the QTI questionnaire a 5-point Likert scale was used to indicate agreement by responses of 'Never' (1), 'Almost never' (2), 'Neutral' (3), 'Almost always' (4), and 'Always' (5). Items relating to each subscale and domain are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Items Relating to Each SubScale and Domain in the QTI

Domain	Subscale	Question numbers
Dominance	Steering	1,5,9,13,17, 21
	Enforcing	28, 32, 36, 40, 44, 48
Cooperation	Uncertain	3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23
	Complying	26, 30, 34, 38, 42, 46
Submission	Friendly	25, 29, 33, 37, 41, 45
	Understanding	2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22
Opposition	Dissatisfied	27, 31, 35, 39, 43, 47
	Reprimanding	4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24

For each subscale the minimum score is six, when a student rates the teacher 1 for all the six items, and the maximum is 30, when the scores of all the six items is 5. Then, the mean of each subscale is obtained from the ratings of all students.

MSLQ was also administered to each student. The responses were on a 7-point Likert scale. 1 represented Not true at all, 4 is Neutral and 7 is Always true. The relevant questions were reverse-coded. The MSLQ had a possible minimum score of 12, if respondent answered all questions with 1 and a maximum score of 84, if respondent answered all of them with 7. The total

MSLQ score for each student represented his/her motivation. The higher the score, the more study skills the student used.

To investigate whether there is a relationship between teachers' interactional behavior and learners' motivation, a Pearson product moment r correlation was conducted. Before running the correlation, box plots were used to test outliers of both the MSLQ and the QTI. Outliers were identified and removed. This was crucial because the Pearson correlation is highly sensitive to these extreme values.

4. Results

Data were analyzed for both the actual teacher and the ideal one, the results of which will be first presented separately and then they will be compared together.

4.1 Actual Teacher

Cronbach's alpha showed that the questionnaire had an acceptable reliability of 0.81. The data on the perceptions of learners about their actual teacher were analyzed for outliers by box plot. After identifying outliers, they were eliminated and Pearson product moment r correlation was used to investigate the relationship between the scales of interpersonal teacher behavior and learners' motivation. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Relationship Between Scales of Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour and Learners' Motivation

		steering	friendly	understand	complying	uncertain	dissatis	reprimand	enforcing	mot
steering	r	1	.744**	.680**	.184**	-.532**	-.401**	-.401**	-.123	.241**
	Sig.		.000	.000	.008	.000	.000	.000	.077	.000
	N	211	207	211	207	211	207	211	207	206
friendly	r	.744**	1	.638**	.396**	-.441**	-.446**	-.414**	-.255**	.164*
	Sig.	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.019
	N	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	204
understand	r	.680**	.638**	1	.284**	-.501**	-.527**	-.657**	-.270**	.129
	Sig.	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.065
	N	211	207	211	207	211	207	211	207	206
complying	r	.184**	.396**	.284**	1	.050	-.080	-.045	-.244**	-.082

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	Sig.	.008	.000	.000		.478	.253	.517	.000	.241
	N	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	204
uncertain	<i>r</i>	-.532**	-.441**	-.501**	.050	1	.707**	.659**	.330**	-.236**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.478		.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	211	207	211	207	211	207	211	207	206
dissatis	<i>r</i>	-.401**	-.446**	-.527**	-.080	.707**	1	.702**	.562**	-.148*
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.253	.000		.000	.000	.035
	N	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	204
reprimand	<i>r</i>	-.401**	-.414**	-.657**	-.045	.659**	.702**	1	.338**	-.158*
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.517	.000	.000		.000	.024
	N	211	207	211	207	211	207	211	207	206
enforcing	<i>r</i>	-.123	-.255**	-.270**	-.244**	.330**	.562**	.338**	1	-.067
	Sig.	.077	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.344
	N	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	204
motivation	<i>r</i>	.241**	.164*	.129	-.082	-.236**	-.148*	-.158*	-.067	1
	Sig.	.000	.019	.065	.241	.001	.035	.024	.344	
	N	206	204	206	204	206	204	206	204	206

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

At the 0.05 level of significance motivation is significantly and positively correlated with the friendly scale. It is also significantly but negatively correlated with the dissatisfied and reprimanding scales. Therefore, learners' motivation is first affected by a teacher being friendly and then, not being dissatisfied and reprimanding. At the next level, being steering and not being uncertain can affect learners' motivation, too as these are significant at the 0.01 level. As can be observed from the Table, learners' motivation is positively affected by the steering, friendly and understanding scales; however, the effect of the rest of the scales on the motivation is negative. Interestingly, complying is a positive scale but it influences the motivation negatively, although not significantly. The first four scales are positively correlated with each other and negatively correlated with the rest and vice versa. That is logical as the first four scales are positive in nature and the rest are negative. However none of these correlations is significant at the 0.05 level.

4.2 Ideal Teacher

The data gathered for the ideal teacher via the same QTI were probed for outliers by boxplot. Interestingly, there are more outliers in data for the ideal teacher than for the actual one. As the students mark for the actual and ideal teacher simultaneously and the entered data are checked by two experts, this increased number of outliers may indicate that learners are more uncertain about their role model. After identifying outliers, they were deleted. Table 4 shows minimum, maximum, and mean scores for the real and the role model teacher.

Table 4

Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Scores for Real and Ideal Teachers

scale		Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
steering	Real	6	30	24	5.11
	Ideal	7	30	26.9	3.66
friendly	Real	7	30	23.79	5.57
	Ideal	6	30	22.82	6.65
understanding	Real	6	30	25.81	4.86
	Ideal	6	30	22.13	9.49
complying	Real	8	30	19.01	4.68
	Ideal	10	30	20.59	4.17
uncertain	Real	6	30	10.14	5.05
	Ideal	6	30	15.12	9.12
dissatisfied	Real	6	30	10.66	5.56
	Ideal	6	30	15.37	9.88
reprimanding	Real	6	30	10.48	5.13
	Ideal	6	30	10.12	5.19
enforcing	Real	6	28	15.57	4.98
	Ideal	6	30	13.22	5.59

The minimum possible score is 6 and the maximum is 30. For the ideal teacher the highest and the lowest means are related to the steering and reprimanding scales, respectively. For the real teacher, these are related to the understanding and uncertain scales, respectively. Among these four scales, that is just the reprimanding score which is significantly correlated with motivation, based on the results obtained for actual teachers.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

According to Wubbles and Berkelmans (2005) generally the effects of proximity are somewhat stronger than those of influence, which means if the proximity is perceived to be higher, the motivation of the students will be higher. That was also true for this study, except for the complying scale that is negatively correlated with motivation. This indicates that in the present context being too much complying affects motivation negatively.

In previous studies, strong and positive associations have been detected between affective outcomes and teacher interpersonal behavior and/or some of its scales such as leading and helpful/friendly while this relationship have been found to be negative for other scales, namely admonishing, dissatisfied, and, in most cases, strict (Fisher & Rickards, 1998; Nuget, 2009; Wubbles & Berkelmans, 2005; Wei et al., 2015).

With respect to the ideal teacher, several more or less similar models have been proposed as in Wubbles and Levy (1991) who presented the best American teacher model (*Figure 2*), Wubbles et al. (1992) who presented a model for ideal teacher in the Netherlands (*Figure 3*) and Wei et al. (2015) who presented the Chinese role model. Noticeably, in the Dutch model, the ideal teacher is more steering and enforcing and less uncertain than the American one. The highest score in the Chinese model pertains to the understanding scale.

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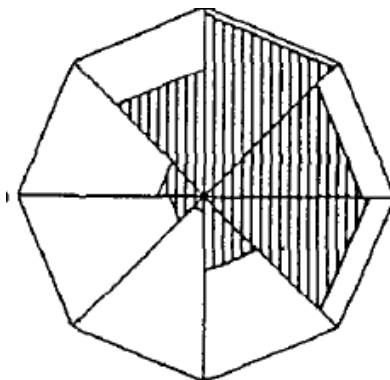
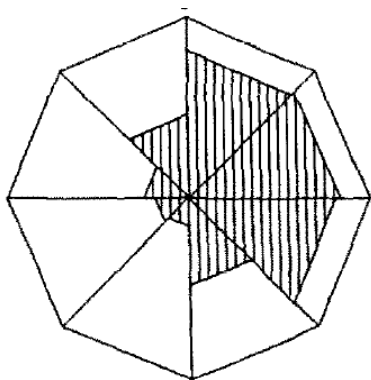


Figure 2. American teacher role model

Figure 3. Dutch teacher role model

The ideal teacher in Iran is not as steering as the Dutch one. The pattern for proximity positive scales is more or less similar in the three contexts; meanwhile, for the proximity negative scales conspicuous differences can be observed among the Iranian and the other two models. In the latter two contexts the least scores of the proximity negative scales are related to the uncertain scales; however, in the Iranian context, surprisingly, a relatively higher level of uncertainty is allowed for the ideal teacher. In the Iranian model the lowest level is related to the reprimanding scale whereas in the Chinese model the least score is related to the dissatisfied scale. These may indeed have cultural, psychological and ideological basis that need to be further investigated.

With reference to the low level of individualism in China, Wei et al. (2015) expected the degree of influence to be relatively high. In the classes with collectivist cultures, the group rather than the individual domineers, students do not respond unless they are called upon and face saving is regarded to be significant. However, the result of their study revealed that the learners prefer less controlling teachers who are yet strict and offer guidance. This reflected the current educational context in China which differs from the

culturally stereotyped learning environments that were teacher-centered and teacher-controlled. This is contrary to the Iranian model in which the steering scale is dominant, and students do not require a high degree of strictness. This may indicate that Iranian students are more collectivist and also reprimanding a student may mean reprimanding the whole class.

The original model is in the form of a hexagon; however, if any radius in each sector is to represent the same score, a circular model is preferable. Additionally, the minimum score is 6, that is if a teacher is scored 6 on a scale like strict, this shows that the teacher is not strict and there is absence of strictness; so, the inner circle with a radius of 6 should be left empty; otherwise the graph shows that that teacher has an amount of strictness. Therefore, model for the ideal teacher in the context of the present study would be something like Figure 4.

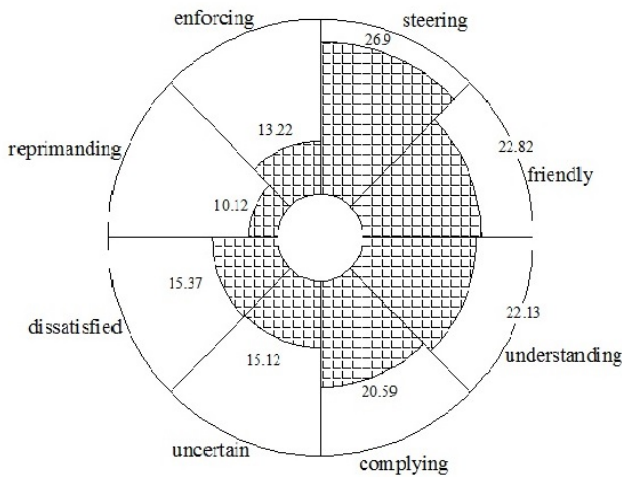


Fig. 4 Iranian teacher role model

To conclude, the results of the study can be used extensively in promoting the communicative ground of the class. This can lead to enhancing the quality of the relationship that exist between teachers and learners and finally motivating learners. As there is a close relationship between teachers and learners, enriching the interactive ground of the classroom will help all learners, especially those students who are shy by promoting their self-esteem and self-determination. Learners will be encouraged to participate more actively in the class and ultimately the educational outcome will be elevated. These results can also be applied in training teachers for their professional development. The QTI which was proved to be a valuable tool in research and teacher education in various contexts, especially because of its strong theoretical framework, is ascertained to be reliable and valid in Iranian EFL context as well. As learners in some courses may be more sensitive to teachers' interpersonal behaviours the interdisciplinary variations can be another issue to be investigated to enhance the overall educational outcome. Furthermore, as behaviours are context and culture-dependent cross cultural differences can also be taken into consideration for further research.

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