Iranian EFL Teachers′ and Policymakers′ Perceptions of Success in High-school Classes: A Critical Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study intended to explore the perceptions of Iranian high-school English teachers and the perspectives of policymakers on success in teaching English. Data were collected through questionnaires and curriculum documents. To this end, one-hundred-twenty Iranian high-school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers contributed to the research. National Lesson Plan and Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) were used to explore policymakers' perspectives on success in teaching English at the high school level. The data were analyzed using both the Constant Comparative Method (Charmaz, 2006) and template coding to realize similarities and differences between the answers. General themes and patterns were recognized and discussed. The results of this study showed that while the teachers tended to improve students' communication skills, policymakers must also be aware of the fact that change is an all-inclusive phenomenon demanding full cooperation and commitment from a host of policy workers. In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of success in teaching English and expectations of educational change should be modified in such a way that the teachers see

the importance and relevance of educational change to their professional success. In this respect, most Iranian high school EFL teachers are needed to modernize, i.e., to provide them with valuable pre-service and in-service courses with communicative frameworks that they can operate in their classrooms. The findings can be helpful for EFL teachers to reflect on their perceptions and accord them with their practices, use communicative activities that are more constructive in their classrooms.

Teachers' perceptions and assumptions about teaching influence the way they comprehend and establish instruction (Chacón, 2005). Successful handling depends heavily on teachers as end-point policy workers so that their roles tend to interfere with the smooth enactment of curricular mandates (Pease-Alvarez & Sam way, 2012). If the discrepancy between the instructive novelty and the perceptions of teachers' roles, students' needs, and the educational system requirements are widening, additional workload, negative attitudes, and resistance to change have occurred (Carless, 2013). To keep pace with the changing requirements in EFL education, teachers must reconstruct their professional knowledge and perceptions, which can mostly be achieved through continued professional development. Therefore, the teachers attempt to familiarize the policy orders along with their understandings, favorites, selections, and present education situations in the classroom contexts (Le, Nguyen & Burns, 2021).

The subjects of applied linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) have gone through several remarkable evolutions over the last two decades in Iran (Aghagolzade & Davari, 2014). Current studies of ELT in Iran have dealt with EFL teachers' perceptions of the effective language teachers (e.g., Zamani & Ahangari, 2016), professional development (e.g., Mohammadi, &

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Moradi, 2017), and features of teacher effectiveness evaluation (e.g., Mazandarani, & Troudi, 2021). However, Iranian high school EFL teachers' perceptions of successful language teaching have been left under-researched. The practitioners in the sociocultural context of Iran need less theoretical and more practical help fitting to their local setting. It is more significant to discover the teachers' perceptions through their lenses as they are the major players in any educational system.

The prominence and relevance of teachers' involvement in curriculum improvement become gradually apparent when curriculum policy is considered. The policymakers would benefit from taking into account teachers' perceptions of success in teaching. Teachers' perceptions require to be considered by Iranian policymakers in the ELT program of secondary education in such a way that the teachers see the relevance and usefulness of educational change to their professional success. One possible advantage of considering teachers' perceptions is that it aids the EFL teachers, teacher educators, and even policymakers put into action the new national curriculum more successfully by bringing the teachers' perceptions into the interaction to make progress in the field. To the best of the researchers' information, to date, a few types of research have studied the enactment of the ELT curriculum in Iran from both policymaker's and EFL teachers' perceptions.

Exploring the characteristics of successful English teaching from EFL high school teachers' perceptions and policymakers is worthy. It is indeed a variety of needs analysis proposed to aid EFL teachers in coming across their students' requirements. In this relation, the present study intends to explore the teachers' perceptions of successful language teaching based on four categories proposed by Whichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012); pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, organization, and communication skills, and

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socio-affective skills. The study can be significant as it proposes guidance for the EFL teachers who unceasingly do self-reflection and adjustment to advance their teaching and deal with different teaching policies. In addition, gaining an insight into the perceptions of the EFL teachers about successful English teaching will have direct implications for those involved in teaching EFL in Iran high school classes as well as for their policymakers who wish to plan national initiatives.

Literature Review

Uncovering teachers' perceptions of successful teaching can be a possibly productive part of the examination. This claim is supported by Cornia and Vaderica (2012), who argue that teachers' decisions in teaching activity have their roots in their values, experiences, and perceptions. Worawuth, Prayuth, Kanokorn, Udomporn, Chadchawarn, and Wilawan (2014) state that teachers are supposed to use practical teaching methodologies, choose a suitable role, collaborate with students, be up to date and attentive to technology, solve the students' problems, discern and use diverse teaching techniques, and focus on the learning process. Even though the general rules of successful teaching can enforce properly in all domains, there appear to be some other factors concerning the kind of language teaching that should be taken into account. Therefore, several scholars have also investigated teacher success in language teaching (e.g., Borg, 2018; Coombe, 2020; Pishghadam, Derakhshan, & Zhaleh, 2019; Soltanian, & Sadeghi, 2021).

Meanwhile, defining successful teaching is not an easy responsibility. Bell (2005), as a case in point, describes successful language teaching as a well-defined and exciting type of teaching that offers pupils phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, interactive practice, and sociocultural

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knowledge they require to communicate successfully in the target language. To encounter the objective of successful language teaching, professional development is required concerning theory, curriculum policy, methods, materials, classroom management, activities, and evaluation (Wichadee, 2011). Besides, the importance of learners has been highlighted by Kourieos and Evripidou (2013). Their conclusion suggests that focusing more students on language learning and teaching, as well as a more supporting and facilitating role for the language teacher, verifies successful language teaching. Their researches also underline that they demand to be competent enough in employing technology and attempt to involve learners in expressive classroom relations via using tasks and group works. Hence, emphasizing classroom interaction is a significant feature of the recent global ELT curriculum (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2016). Along with such global changes in the ELT field, the new curriculum in Iran high schools has emphasized communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and learning all four language skills since 2012 (Riahipour, Tavakoli, & Eslami Rasekh, 2019).

In this respect, Barabadi and Razmjoo (2016) suggest that a host of factors, including English teachers themselves, other components of the same system they operate in, such as teachers' colleagues and in-service teachers, need to join hands to be able to overcome the obstacles on the new policy enactment. In this relation, the findings of Rasti and Sahragard's (2017) study also indicate the highly context-specific nature of English teaching in Iran high schools and the extremely located nature of teacher reaction and action. Despite embracing the changes in the new ELT curriculum in Iran, the high school EFL teachers think that they have been left to their expedients in interpreting the policy into practice (Rasti, 2018). Mirhosseini, Shirazizadeh, & Pakizehdel (2020) also revealed three major categories of English language

teacher recruitment policies; prioritizing Islamic values and perspectives, emphasizing a commitment to the goals of the educational system, and focusing on recruited teachers' knowledge and expertise. Their research showed clear discrepancies in translating the official policies into actual recruitment practices. Furthermore, the new ELT curriculum textbooks did not benefit from different kinds of communicative strategies; thus, they need to be modified so that such strategies are more appropriately included (Jamshidian, Tabatabaei, Salehi, & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2021).

The assumption underlying these findings is that with the introduction of the new ELT program, some changes are expected to occur in high school EFL teachers' perceptions which might have influenced their decisions on practices in their classrooms. Given that the literature abounds with the characteristics of successful teachers in general and language teachers in particular, it seems justified to proceed with research associated with high school EFL teachers' perceptions of success in teaching. This is because the perception of success is not sticking to a general design. Furthermore, the majority of the researchers have reported on some lists of successful EFL teachers' characteristics using quantitative principles of analysis. The paucity of research in both quantitative and qualitative types of exploration in the field of successful English teaching is felt. Hence, the present study has opted for mixed-methods descriptive research. Another distinctive feature of the present study is its attempt to explore policymakers' perspectives of success in teaching English at the high school level in the new ELT curricular changes. These explorations emphasize that a modification within developed education policy makers' viewpoints to the commitment of teachers in educational policy and decision-making progress the classroom productions (Tohidian &

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Nodoshan, 2020). The current research, being of mixed-methods nature, has been guided by the following overarching research questions:

1. What are Iranian high school EFL teachers' perceptions of success in teaching English?
2. From the Iranian policymakers' perspectives, what characteristics identify qualities of successful English teaching in high school?

Method

Participants

The current study was carried out in the ELT context of Iran's educational system. One hundred and twenty high school teachers teaching English in Mazandaran, Guilan, East Azerbaijan, Tehran, Alborz, Semnan, Hamedan, Fars, Qom, Kerman, Lorestan, Khuzestan, North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Yazd, Bushehr, and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad participated in the current research. The participants varied in their gender, age, English proficiency level, educational background, and teaching experience. The sampling procedure employed was convenient sampling. Because of changing time schedules of the participants, a convenient sampling method was selected to employ a total of 250 Iranian high-school EFL teachers from the provinces via emails or mobile applications to respond in their spare time. The respondents who expressed their consent to be part of the research project or were introduced by headteachers were considered participants of this study. This process was done by sending a request message to online mobile groups asking for the participation of the teachers. Table 1 indicates thorough demographic data about the participants of the study.
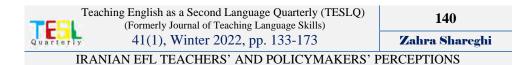
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Table 1

Demographic Data of the Participants

	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	male	58	48.3
	female	62	51.6
Years of EFL teaching experience	1-5 years	17	14.1
	6-10 years	10	8.3
	11-15 years	23	19.1
	16-20 years	24	20
	More than 20 years	46	38.3
Relevant university degree	BA	38	31.6
	MA	71	59.1
	Ph.D.	11	9.1
Presently teaching at:	Junior high school	30	25
	High school	42	35
	Both of them	48	40

Instruments

Two instruments were employed to collect the data to answer the research questions: a survey questionnaire and curriculum documents.

Questionnaire

The teachers were asked to fill out a survey questionnaire including two distinct parts, which will be explained separately below (see Appendix). The questionnaire asked the teachers' perceptions about pedagogical knowledge (17 items), English proficiency (3 items), organization and communication (2 items), and socio-affective skills (4 items). The researchers developed the questionnaire based on four underlying categories of successful English teaching proposed by Whichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012): pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, organization and communication, and socio-affective skills to identify dimensions of successful English teaching. The

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items of the questionnaire were taken from the content analyses of the major works recorded in foreign and Iran literature as well as the national curriculum document of the Iran ELT program. The cause why this questionnaire was made for the present research was the fact that it covered both open-ended and closed-ended questions, which offered chances for the respondents to choose more choices that explain their perceptions and spread the range of the questions. The researcher-made questionnaire was transformed into the digital form in the net to make it more convenient for the volunteer respondents.

Curriculum Documents

National Lesson Plan and Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) were used to address the second question of the current research, i.e., identifying characteristics of successful English teaching in high school from the Iranian policymakers' perspectives. These documents were used to examine the policymakers' perspectives on successful English teaching. English language teaching curriculum was reported mainly in the light of current communicative-based changes introduced into Iran secondary education. Regarding Iran's new ELT curriculum, the emphasis of the document was put on communication and learning all four language skills (Riahipour, Tavakoli, & Eslami Rasekh, 2019).

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was sent to 250 Iranian high school EFL teachers via emails or mobile applications. The researchers translated the questionnaire into Persian, but all the participants were told they would be free to answer the questions either in English or Persian. Regarding the significance of piloting and increasing the reliability and content validity of the questionnaire,

the researchers asked ten colleagues to go through the items and provide feedback about the appropriateness and ease of the survey instrument. Then, some changes were made based on their recommendations, and a near-final version of the questionnaire was selected, and their comments were addressed (see Appendix). One hundred forty-four participants filled out the questionnaires and gave them back to the researchers. Those questionnaires that were not filled out completely were eliminated, and the last 120 questionnaires were analyzed. The researchers also provided the participants with some directions for answering the questions.

The content related to the perspectives of the policymakers was collected exactly according to the available documents, i.e., National Lesson Plan and Fundamental Reform Document of Education. Iran Ministry of Education advanced new English language programs and syllabuses, which promoted the practice of Communicative Language Teaching in high school EFL classes (Ministry of Education, 2006 as cited in Dahmardeh, 2009). Instructional objectives, priorities, and kinds of content were also offered by the National English Language Lesson Secretariat.

Data Analysis Procedure

As the first step in analyzing the data for this study, the researchers read through all the information collected from the completed questionnaires and the mentioned curriculum documents. The questionnaire answers were then put through quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The content analysis allows researchers to change through great amounts of data with comparative ease in a systematic way (Stemler, 2000). The questionnaire analysis included the analysis of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The integration of qualitative and quantitative research findings of the questionnaire, including

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the frequency of the responses, was estimated in this descriptive research. The quantitative results of the questionnaire were analyzed by using frequency. The answers to open-ended questions were analyzed largely qualitatively. It included a process of tabulating for quantitative findings, then template coding and categorizing in the case of the qualitative ones.

Both Constant Comparative Method (Charmaz, 2006) and template coding were used to realize differences and similarities among the data derived from the questionnaire. The Constant Comparative Method is used to listen to the ideas, compare the ideas with others, consider and arrange through these implications, and then investigate and reach these conclusions (Kolb, 2012). An inductive data analysis was carried out from the beginning through continuous contrast and critical examination of transcripts. To this end, common emerging themes were recognized and discussed. In analyzing the collected data, the researchers employed the content analysis technique, which can be defined as drawing up a list of template-coded categories and falling each section of transcribed data into one of these categories. For example, considering the category of pedagogical knowledge, one of the teachers perceived that "we came to this reality that group work helps students improve motivation and self-confidence, reduce stress, exchange information, cooperate, and communicate with each other." Such similar answers fell into the first category. Finally, member check as a technique of respondent validation was used to ensure credibility as well as dependability of the findings of the current research.

Results

The first research question explored the EFL teachers' perceptions of successful English teaching (SET) in Iran high-school EFL classes. The

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teachers' perceptions about four underlying categories, pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills, were selected in the questionnaire.

Concerning the first category, 17 questions in the questionnaire were developed.

Table 2

The Teacher's Perceptions of Pedagogical Knowledge

Question	Teachers' perceptions	Frequency
What the teachers perceive matters most to students in EFL classes	Communicating in English well	118
	Learning the correct grammar	41
	Learning the correct pronunciation	30
	Learning the correct accuracy	18
	Collaborating	26
Helpful Tasks in SET	Roleplay	83
	Free discussion	68
	Games	52
	Problem-solving	43
	Information gap	36
	Listing/ ranking	20
The Most Effective Skills in Successful English Teaching	Listening	82
	Speaking	78
	Reading	57
	Writing	38
Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary	Deductively and inductively	112
	Deductively	8
Appropriate Time to Take Class Exams	Setting time with students	82
	According to student's readiness	24
	By accident	16

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Question	Teachers' perceptions	Frequency
Suggestions for Improving Slow/Underachiever Students	Giving them appropriate homework	114
	Asking questions at the students' levels to improve confidence	101
	Working in pairs with	72
	Encouraging them in the slightest progress	69
	Establishing a good relationship with them	67
	Introducing supplementary materials for them	21
Effects of Field Experience on SET	Managing classroom	93
	Selecting appropriate methods of teaching English	90
	Predicting and solving students' learning problems	76
	Evaluating students' performance	43
	Planning various tasks	32
	Designing standard questions	29
Some Obstacles in The Way of SET	Incompatibility of class time with textbook volume	109
	Unmotivated students or teachers	106
	Too much attention to the University Entrance Exam (UEE)	100
	The ambiguous evaluation system of learning English	91
	Low-quality workshops and in-service courses	83
	Educational injustice all over the country	78
	Lack of class equipment in some areas	72
	Inadequate exercises of textbooks	44
	Not so authentic textbooks	39
	Ignorance of grammar in seventh/ eighth grades, and too much of it in the ninth grade	30
	Low-quality EFL teachers	24

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Question	Teachers' perceptions	Frequency
Features of Successful Language Teacher in high school EFL classes	Teaching functionally	83
	Encouraging students' interest in learning	78
	English	75
	Achieving a higher level of his/her	69
	working knowledge Updating with	58
	teaching methodologies	29
	Teaching according to the purpose of the textbook	
	Being a good template for both language learning and lifestyle	11
	Empowering students to be independent English learners	

As demonstrated in Table 1, most of the teachers (118 out of 120) perceived that "Communicating in English well" was most important for students in EFL classes. A few teachers mentioned "Collaborating" as the most important factor. Their responses to question 2 specified a range of activities. The position of activity types perceived by the participants propose that "role play', "free discussion", and "games" were the most helpful activities in SET. In response to question 3, the majority of participants (more than 50%) perceived that "listening and speaking" were the most effective skills in SET. The teachers contemplated each skill significantly more for communicating than passing the University Entrance Exam (UEE). The fourth question relates to teaching grammar and vocabulary, to which 112 out of 120 teachers paid the same amount of attention to both deductive and inductive methods. Only 8 of them teach deductively. Question 5 asked the teachers about the appropriate time to take class exams. Most participants (92 out of 120) suggested setting time with students.

Regarding suggestions for improving Slow/Underachiever Students, the teachers (between 101 and 114 out of 120) perceived "Giving the students

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appropriate homework or asking questions at the students' levels" would be helpful. Question 7 sought to uncover the effectiveness of field experience on SET. It can be seen that most participants (between 90 to 93 out of 120) pointed to the effects of experience on "Managing classroom", "Selecting appropriate methods of teaching English", and Predicting and solving students' learning problems. Concerning some obstacles in the way of SET, between 100 and 109 out of 120 teachers perceived "Incompatibility of class time with textbook volume, "Unmotivated students or teachers", and Too much attention to the entrance exam" as the major obstacles. Some divergence was found between the teachers' perceptions about the features of a successful language teacher. Their answers to question 9 confirm that almost the majority of the teachers suggested "teaching functionally" as the main feature.

A summary of the teachers' reasons and their perceptions about the other questions related to the first category is given in Table 3.

Table 3

The Teachers' Perceptions and Reasons for Pedagogical Knowledge

Question	Teacher's Perceptions	Teacher's Reasons	Frequency
Frequency of Pair/Group Work in EFL Classes	Usually	To exchange information and cooperate	40
	Often		32
	Always	To find out the right ways of learning	24
	Sometimes	To consolidate knowledge	20
	Seldom	To motivate and reduce stress	4
		To improve self-confidence	
Utilizing Technology, e.g. Audio-Visual Products, In EFL Classes	Yes	Helping students improve their oral skills.	64
	No		56
		Having limited time and media facilities.	

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Question	Teacher's Perceptions	Teacher's Reasons	Frequency
Repeating Words in Group to Learn Pronunciation	Yes	To improve pronunciation, especially in junior high school	77
	No	Not to recognize individual mistakes	43
Successful Ways of Students' Assessment in Each Session	Initial assessment (at the beginning of each session)	To learn more of what had been taught To promote to study more	105 115
	Continuous assessment	To identify their strengths and weaknesses To prepare students for the end-semester exam	
Sitting Arrangement in EFL Classes	The U-shaped arrangement	Easier communication Crowded classes & small sizes of classes	67 42
	In terms of height	No difference	11
Talking About Cultural Issues in EFL Classes	Yes	Teaching language is directly related to learning its culture. Students get more familiar with the cultural values	115
	No	Unnecessary	5
Using Supplementary Materials in EFL Classes	No	Unnecessary	67
	Yes	Inadequate textbook & multilevel students	53
Engaging with EIL or Standard English	EIL	To emphasize intelligibility, acceptable stress pattern, and intonation	66
	Standard English	To avoid confusion of students in EFL classes	54

As seen in Table 3, more than half of the teachers (96 out of 120) perceived that it would be better if the teachers usually, often, or always used group/ pair work in the classrooms. The above-average frequency of perceived
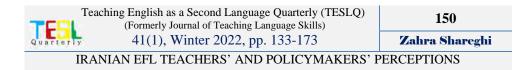
use of pair/group work and their reasons indicate it helps students "To exchange information, cooperate, and find out right ways of learning". They (64 out of 120 teachers) also indicate agreement that utilizing technology, e.g. audio-visual products, helps students improve their oral skills. However, lack of adequate time and media facilities prohibit the other teachers from using them. As evident from the above table, most teachers (between 105 and 115) mentioned initial and continuous assessment would help students improve continuously. Also, 109 out of 120 teachers emphasized on sitting arrangement of students in EFL Classes, while the others (11) gave no weight to this factor. More than half of the teachers perceived the U-shaped arrangement as the most influential one affecting easier and more controlled communication.

Whereas 115 out of 120 teachers perceived language items were culturally loaded and showed positive attitudes towards talking about cultural issues in their teaching practices, only five teachers considered it unnecessary. To provide an answer to question 16 concerning the effect of using supplementary materials on SET, the results show that their perceptions differed. It was deemed unnecessary for more than half of the participants (67 out of 120). The others (53) tended to use them. For instance, Participant 10 points out the use of them as a great challenge in their classes:

Participant 10: *I use them at the urging of the students, parents, and school staff for passing UEE.*

Sixty-six teachers out of 120 who mentioned their use of different accents of English indicated their focus on EIL. With the assumption of English as an international language, they emphasized intelligibility, acceptable stress pattern, and intonation. The others (54 out of 120) perceived the need to focus

on standard pronunciation, American English, to avoid confusion of students in EFL classes.

Table 4

The Teacher's Perceptions of their English Proficiency

Question	Teachers' perceptions	Frequency
Essential Requirements of a Successful Language Teacher in EFL Classes	A communication model	102
	Fluent in pronunciation	64
	Fluent in eloquence	62
	Fluent in grammar	56
	Curriculum provider	49
	A co-communicator	27
Suggestions for EFL Teachers' Self-Assessment	Answering the language questions of UEE	100
	Participating in specialized language tests	97
	Considering student's opinions about the teacher's efficiency	43
		37
	Participating in clinical supervision plan	18
	Talking to a native speaker	5
	Using Douglas Brown's form	3
	Using a matrix diagram	
Suggestion for Taking a Qualification Test by the Ministry Of Education On EFL Teacher's Success	Language knowledge and pedagogy test	35
	TTC after completing the prerequisite course	30
		26
	Teacher evaluation based on his/her practical teaching	29

The teachers' responses to question 1 led to the discovery of six main requirements of a successful language teacher in EFL Classes perceived by the participants, as shown in Table 3. The most important requirement, perceived by 102 out of 120 teachers, is the teachers' ability to be an appropriate communication model for students. To answer the second question, suggestions for EFL Teachers' self-Assessment, "Answering the language questions of UEE, and Participating in specialized language tests,"

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were suggested by the participants (between 97 to 100 out of 120). Concerning suggestions for taking a qualification test by the Ministry of Education on EFL teachers' success, the participants (91 out of 112) favored taking such an exam from EFL teachers between 3 to5 years. However, the others (29) did not utter a single word about it.

Table 5

*Teacher's Perceptions of Organization and Communication Skill*s

Question	Teacher's perceptions	Frequency
Suggestions for Various Communicative Activities	Playing roles	81
	Having free discussion	79
	Playing games such as pantomime	73
	Telling story	65
	Making small talks such as about weather	41
	Making video reports of historical places	39
	Writing emails	33
	Lecturing on various topics	21
	Using charts, worksheets, and brochures	14
Suggestions for Implementing Communicative Activities	Increasing class hours	103
	Decreasing student population, especially in public schools	90
	Developing basic facilities	88
	Not paying excessive attention to UEE in high school	74
	Having the same level of students in a class as much as possible.	11
	Developing tourism industry	4

The teachers' responses to this category yielded nine major activities. The first derived activities, "role play and free discussion," were specified by between 79 to 81 out of 120 teachers. As an example,

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participant 46 suggested: *We can check out the sites of successful schools in Iran or share our perceptions through cyberspace to find various communicative activities.*

Question 2 asked the teachers about the conditions that are necessitated to be replaced to benefit from the communicative activities more successfully. The majority of the teachers (between 90 to 103 out of 120) pointed to "increasing class hours, and decreasing student population, especially in public schools" as the chief stimulating issues which should be modified before the policymakers can expect the EFL teachers to have more successful EFL classes.

Table 6

Teacher's Perceptions of Socio-Affective Skills

Question	Teacher's perceptions	Frequency
Suggestions for Enhancing Students' Motivation to Learn English	Having motivation by the teachers themselves	104
		97
	Establishing a good relationship with students	80
		72
	Explaining the importance of learning English in different fields	61
	Telling others' or our successful experience of learning English	
	Asking questions based on students' levels	
Suggestions for Dealing with Behavior Problems of Students	Requesting the school counselor for students 'psychological problems	72
		69
	Ignoring some small inappropriate behaviors	54
		47
	Behaving based on the cultural differences	31
	Asking frequently students who do not pay attention to the lesson	17
	Talking to the undisciplined students privately during the break	6

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Question	Teacher's perceptions	Frequency
	Studying more psychological books to understand them.	
	being familiar with them through school staff at the beginning of the school year	
Reactions to Students Who Remind Teachers' Language Mistake	We accept after checking them.	88
	We study, then explain it completely next session.	22
The Necessity of Influencing Students' Indiscipline On Their Continuous Scores	Yes, to promote morality	65
	No, not to correlate with language knowledge	55

The first question of Table 5 involved the teachers in providing suggestions for enhancing students' motivation to learn English. "Having motivation by the teachers themselves" as the most important suggestion was perceived by 104 out of 120 teachers. Question 2 refers to the teachers' ability to deal with students' behavior problems effectively. More than half of the teachers (between 69 to 72 out of 120) suggested: "Requesting the school counselor for students 'psychological problems, and ignoring some small inappropriate behaviors". Most teachers (88 out of 120) suggested accepting as a suitable reaction to students who remind teachers' language mistakes. In this regard, one of the participants elaborated on his/her response and commented:

participant 66: *I attempt to be acknowledgeable enough, but sometimes students are ahead of their teachers because of attending language institutes.*

However, there was a remarkable difference in their responses to the last question. Whereas more than half of the teachers (65 out of 120) perceived the necessity of influencing students' indiscipline on their continuous scores, the others (55) gave no weight to it.

The second question of the present study is intended to pinpoint the characteristics of successful English teaching in high schools as a result of new curricular changes from Iranian policymakers' perspectives. The following title is designed to answer the second question.

Iranian Policymaker's Perspectives on Success in Teaching English

National Lesson Plan and Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) were sought to explore policymakers' perspectives on success in teaching English, especially in the light of current communicative-based changes introduced into the country's secondary education English language teaching curriculum.

The following table shows that policymakers appear to offer some criteria for choosing materials and methods to teach English successfully.

Table 7

Characteristics of SET in High School Proposed by IMOE

The Second Research Question	Policy makers' Perspectives
Identifying characteristics of successful English teaching in high school determined by the Iran Ministry of Education (IMOE)	Through the lessons, the learner feels closer to their Creator. The lesson, along with the whole syllabus, leads learners (teacher included) to feel deep empathy towards God's creatures. Individuals had the chance of connecting to the community: class community, school community, the community of one's town and nation, and the global community. The lesson strengthens learners' connection with their identity (through discussing our values introducing role models).

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The Second Research Question	Policy makers' Perspectives
	Learners establish the relationship between their mind and body through movement, arts-based activities, etc.
	Learning has not separated from life; the student finds a meaning for what he learns in his life.
	Activities allow each student to contribute a response by giving expressions to his or her uniqueness.
	Participants construct knowledge about their experience through their thinking and intuition and by their discovery.
	Students mostly create the materials.
	Heart, imagination, and creativity have also been considered in self-expression and learning.

As evident from Table 7, lesson planning according to the new national curriculum reveals that the policymakers emphasize maximum attention to improving students' oral skills and communicative language ability. Such reform in policymaker's perspectives can promote Iranian students' successful communication in real-life situations.

Discussion

Previous studies have focused on English teachers' perceptions of effective language teachers (e.g., Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016; Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Khojastehmehr & Takrimi, 2009; Mohammaditabar, Bagheri, Yamini, Rassaei, & Lu, 2019; Saalahshour & Hajizadeh, 2013; Simpson & Mengi, 2011), or teachers' perceptions of successful teaching in the foreign language university classrooms or adult EFL learners (Brown, 2006; Goldouz & Baleghizadeh (2021). This study aimed to paint a vivid picture of Iranian

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high school EFL teachers' perceptions of Successful English Teaching (SET). Exploring teachers' perceptions is worth persistent consideration as perceptions are self-motivated (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003; Brown, 2009). To address the first research question, exploring the teachers' perceptions of SET, four underlying categories in the questionnaire were selected: pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, organization and communication, and socio-affective skills. On the whole, the researchers found some general care for the characteristics of successful English teaching with some variation across the participants. The participants appeared to be conscious of the restrictions teachers had in their everyday job and were most likely critical to themselves. Their responses voiced their perceptions on successful English teaching, experiences they had in the EFL classes, and the essentials they considered in the high school EFL classes. Moreover, the present study identified Iranian policymakers' perspectives on successful English teaching at the high school levels in the new ELT curricular changes to address the second research question.

In terms of pedagogical knowledge, the EFL teachers in this study valued communicative activities such as roleplays, free discussion, and games through group work resulting in good communication which was highly recommended in SET. This finding is consistent with Anani Sarab, Monfared, and Safarzadeh (2016). Their research confirmed that pair/group work and communicative activities such as roleplays and games were perceived more advantageous to the teachers. In this connection, the participants of this study placed more value on monitoring pair/group work, relating language to students' levels and needs, attending to individual differences, and designing effective tasks, which was also emphasized in Qunying (2009)'s study. Also, by involving the students' group work in task completion and taking pleasure

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in the learning process, the students can expand their language proficiency (Khoshsima & Saed, 2016). What seems to be obvious is that through pair/group work, students learn how to make good decisions, provide leadership, help the group, understand others' perspectives, and communicate effectively (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Gauging students' comprehension of what has been taught, the participants' common perceptions focused on various assessment types, including formative, diagnostic, and summative. The result is in agreement with Kahl, Hofman, and Bryant (2013) and Xu and Brown (2016), in which they recognized classroom and formative summative as two sorts of assessment goals that successful teachers must distinguish.

The findings of the first category also highlighted that language teachers require to be expert enough in employing technology "to provide learners with the desired environments and foster exposure to authentic materials" (Ghanizadeh, Razavi, & Hosseini, 2018, p.92). With the assumption of connecting language to culture, the participants suggested that talking and making students familiar with cultural information causes them to engage the students in meaningful classroom interactions. In the same vein, Rahimi and Sahragard (2017) state that teachers who provide students with linguistic elements are concurrently exposing learners to cultural values and messages. Besides, their agreement with considering English as a global language means that acceptability is going to prove a more critical factor in determining an efficient pronunciation (Jenkins, 2009). Reviewing the teachers' answers, their common perceptions indicate more informed decisions on teaching grammar and vocabulary inductively, as Akbarian (2015) showed, arranging u-shaped sitting for easier communication, and providing alternative homework multilevel students are what form this success.

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Similar to Tajeddin and Adeh's (2016) study, the teachers of the current research highlighted communication matter most to students in EFL classes. In this regard, the results showed that incompatibility of class time with textbook volume, unmotivated students or teachers, and crowded classes, as Razavi, Nakhle, and Naghavi (2012) mentioned, to be the main difficulties warning the worth of communication in high school EFL classes. Considering ambiguous evaluation systems, we would realize that learning English for communication is different from making ready students for the University Entrance Exam (UEE). The aim might be that the teachers are usually under stress from the students, parents, and school officials for passing UEE, even from junior high school. It can be the cause of harmful washback of UEE on SET in high schools. This result points out that there is a conflict between the teachers' main concern in attaching to meaningful classroom interactions and the restrictions of the teaching context, which are detrimental to their best attempts to continue devoted to the communication atmosphere in their language classes. It was also found in Alimorad and Tajgozari's (2016) study. In their study, the high school teachers prefer a traditional approach to teaching English. Therefore, they feel less compelled to plan and perform creative tasks and activities demanding active engagement on the part of students.

Moreover, Richards, Richards, and Renandya (2002) assert that the specialized community of English teachers has expanded ways of combining associations between its members and made chances for them to take advantage of each other's knowledge. The teachers' common perceptions also uncover that high-quality pre-service or in-service courses, as Khanjani, Vahdany, and Jafarigohar (2016) stressed, reflect on field experiences and efficient teaching methods classroom management discussion with colleagues

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provide these opportunities for the teachers. Therefore, as the main contributing factor, teacher training courses should be changed based on the teachers' need analysis. It seems that such courses were decontextualized from practice, and much stress is laid on the theories of teaching (e.g., Hashemian & Azadi, 2010; Mirhassani & Beh-Afarin, 2004). Therefore, these communities enable them to reach their own decisions as to what works and what does not work in the EFL classes. In sum, according to the participants, a successful language teacher teaches functionally, arouses students' interest in learning English, and tries to acquire a higher level of working knowledge to be a good communication model for students, which should be taken into account by the EFL teachers.

The second category, English proficiency, identified in this study is one of the most frequently cited characteristics of SET. As the data reveals, there is a general agreement of the teachers' perceptions that they must be proficient in four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to support students' communication skills. Accordingly, since the present situation of the EFL classes is relatively unfavorable, there are heavy demands on the teachers to focus on the constant development of their linguistic knowledge to improve their qualification level. As Farhady and Tavassoli (2018) indicate, it is crucial to have complete measures of teachers' Language Assessment Knowledge Test to help them improve their professional accomplishments. Teachers who acquire a high level of English proficiency and teach English will have more possibilities of SET in the classes. Accordingly, teachers with a higher degree (e.g. MA) are inclined to organize more advanced thoughts and perceptions in contrast to their colleagues with BA degrees (Ghanizadeh & Heydarnejad, 2015). Teachers who desire policymakers to be sure about the need to be exposed and transparent in two strategic methods:1) in their dedication to

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increasing their own specialized and instructive capabilities; and 2) in their dedication to the interests of students and to preparing them for their job in the future (Kotilainen & Pienimäki, 2017).

The third category is concerned with organization and communication skills which have been proposed by Whichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012) as a salient one to attain the instructional goals. These goals offer more selections of communicative activities for students in the class. As the participants emphasized, EFL teachers have suggested a variety of activities to manage and promote meaningful interactions and create opportunities for the students to support their ability in learning English. Their general perceptions imply that different tasks can be identified, designed, and implemented according to the proficiency level of teachers and their students' needs and levels. To this end, the chosen activities might have been performed alone, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class. Based on their perceptions, success can be understood as making appropriate teaching situations for EFL learners, including authentic resources, everyday language, through pair/group work, and meaningful interaction. Their perceptions make this category noteworthy since ways of learning skills differ in their objectives (Gebhard, 2006). Considering the students' achievements in learning English, the participants suggested that identifying challenges, using their expertise, and adopting the role of facilitators in creating communicative activities bring success in teaching English. In this sense, Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) suggest that a more learner-centered attitude to language teaching and learning and a more helping and facilitating role for the language teacher reinforces successful language teaching.

The items included in the fourth category, socio-affective skill, related to producing a classroom mood encouraging to work together in English in

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expressive ways to improve learners' development in learning English. As Richards (2002, p.14) declares: "in a well-managed class, discipline problems are few, and learners are actively engaged in learning tasks and activities; this contributes to high motivation and expectations for success." Mediation via task and teacher scaffolding was found to contribute to the learners' willingness to communicate (Jamalvandi, Jafarigohar, Jalilifar, & Soleimani, 2020). The current research findings imply that SET demands underscoring the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of language teaching that can be ascertained by the teachers' behavior, the learners' behavior, and classroom interaction. Similar conclusions were perceived in Mohammaditabar, Bagheri, Yamini, and Rassaei's (2019) study in which teaching promoters, maintenance, and eagerness are essential to successful teaching. In this respect, explaining prospects, using body language, and establishing rules and routines were also suggested by Yazdanmehr and Akbari (2015). Similar perceptions were found to be a matter of concern to Brown (2007) who strongly claims that If we were to plan theories of second language acquisition or teaching practices that were constructed only on cognitive factors, we would be neglecting the most vital part of human actions. According to the participants, political and societal expectations from the teachers are high to: think about students' needs, be friendly to students, help them to obtain their status in life, and make them for the future so that it makes teaching difficult for the teachers.

Given the second question of this study, identifying the characteristics of SET in high schools from the policymaker's perspectives, one can see that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) identified in the new ELT curriculum calls for the EFL teachers' motivation and active participation. On the one hand, such participation can give a hint to the language teachers to

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develop their communicative competence to incorporate more oral skills in their classrooms. On the other hand, while the participants characterized the EFL classes as learner-centered, lack of enough cooperation from some unresponsive students, parents, schools, local educational leaders, and policymakers demotivate them to work smoothly. It was the teachers' firm perception that oral skills were welcomed practically by many high school students in private institutes to such an extent that the students were more likely to learn grammatical points and develop vocabulary knowledge at schools required to pass UEE. Therefore, the incompatibility of policymaker's perspectives with those expectations of the students, as the participants perceived, impede the teacher's focus on students' communication skills. The lack of key elements such as taking proper notice of the oral skills, adaptation to the essentials of different users, preparing the teachers to increase their skills in applying techniques well-matched for the reality of local language classrooms has restricted the successful completion of the program's aims (Zare & Anani Sarab, 2020).

The results also uncovered that Iranian high-school EFL teachers face some psychological, professional, and infrastructural challenges in successfully teaching and fulfilling the new English curriculum. The conclusions of this research are compatible with Rasti's (2018) results, who discovered that despite embracing the changes such as the use of technology, the teachers perceived that they had been left to their means in converting policy into practice. Furthermore, some general criteria such as the number of years the teachers have taught and the number of hours they have attended in-service courses are mostly used to evaluate teachers in the Iran ministry of education (IMOE) at the end of each academic year. As the sample teacher circular reveals, the ELT pre and post-reform has not paid adequate attention

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to evaluating teachers' performance, quality of teaching, testing, and classroom management. This result is in line with Riahipour, Tavakoli, and Eslami Rasekh (2019). They pinpointed IMOE has not seriously considered the teachers' performance, financial status, career promotion, and social status. Therefore, this aspect of EFL teachers' problems also deservers particular attention to more success in teaching English.

Conclusion

The current study explored the perceptions Iranian high school EFL teachers gained on successful English teaching and the policymakers' perspectives about success in the new ELT education programs. The results demonstrated that the teachers favored the communication skills to teach English. They also expected policymakers to be aware of the fact that change is an all-inclusive phenomenon demanding policymakers' full cooperation and commitment. The teachers expect educational change to be relevant to their professional success. Most Iranian high school EFL teachers need to know and prepare for creditable pre-service and in-service courses on learning/teaching communicative skills so that they can operate them successfully in their classrooms. To this end, carrying out a bottom-up and flexible educational program as well as improving the teachers' socio-economic status can bring more success in their teaching.

Also, holding some teacher education workshops that intend to provide topics related to classroom management, students' learning styles, and practice teaching can be helpful. In this vein, the above-mentioned perceptions could act as a guideline for an operative program in teacher education and teaching English. Also, we may conclude that language teachers at schools can enhance their success by providing organizational support through

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effective cooperation with respective policy workers. Therefore, policymakers would be liable to benefit from a thorough probe into teachers' values and perceptions as far as the implementation of the new ELT large-scale policy is concerned. At last, considering all the educational contexts in Iran and different requirements of different EFL students with different economic, cultural, educational, and administrative infrastructures in different high schools, a united English teaching seems to be doubtful. In conclusion, the most important point in SET is the maximum use of the EFL teachers' ability and proficiency according to levels and real needs of EFL students and the facilities available in that geographical area.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

Most researches suffer from limitations and this study is no exception. First, persuading EFL teachers to fill out the questionnaires was not easy. Some of them were reluctant to participate in the study to show their real perceptions. Second, the study was conducted in a limited part of the country.

Since this study employed the data from Iranian high school EFL teachers, future studies need to be carried out with private language institutes or universities to add to the generalizability of the present research findings.

Implications

The results will complete preceding studies from which EFL researchers may carry on to bring together their experiential results with those perceptions of English teaching and learning. Besides, high school EFL teachers can benefit from the outcomes of the study, which encourage them to know more about the perceptions of their colleagues about success in teaching English.

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The findings can help policy workers at every level of the policy hierarchy to implement curriculum changes in the future. However, specific implications can be drawn from it, which might help policy workers and teacher trainers at every level of the policy hierarchy to craft and implement successful policy reforms in the future or revise those already in place. They can provide the required facilities, both financially and legally, to pave the way for the professional success of the teachers.

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Appendix

با نام خدا

پرسشنامه ای در مورد پندار معلمان زبان انگلیسی دوره متوسطه درباره تدریس موفق این زبان در مقطع متوسطه

همگار گرامی این پرسشنامه بمنظور گردآوری برداشت های شما از تدریس موفق زبان انگلیسی در دوره متوسطه طراحی

شده است. از همکاری شما بی نهایت سپاسگزارم.

قسمت اول:

				۱. جنسیت:
		مذکر:		مونث:
				۲. سابقه تدریس زبان انگلیسی : بین ... سال
بیش از بیست سال	شانزده تا بیست	یازده تا پانزده :	شش تا ده :	یک تا پنج :
				۳. مدرک دانشگاهی:
	دکتری:	لیسانس:		فوق دیپلم:
				۴. مقطع کنونی تدریس:
	هر دو دوره:	متوسطه دوم		متوسطه اول:
				۵. استان :

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قسمت دوم: لطفا هر گزینه را بخوانید و مقابل گزینه مورد نظر علامت بزنید.با توجه به سوال می توانید بیش از یک گزینه را انتخاب کنید. به سوالات تشریحی تا حدی که لازم می دانید به انگلیسی یا فارسی پاسخ دهید.

دانش آموزشی (pedagogical knowledge)
از نظر یک معلم زبان موفق ....
۱. چه مورد یا مواردی برای دانش آموزان بیشترین اهمیت را دارد؟ یادگیری تلفظ صحیح   یادگیری فصاحت صحیح   یادگیری دستورزبان صحیح ارتباط خوب همکاری داشتن با   داشتن به زبان انگلیسی
۲. کدام یک از فعالیت (های) زیر در تدریس موفق این درس موثر است؟ discussion   Information gap   role play   problem-solving   listing /ranking   games
۳. کدام مهارت (ها) زیر در یادگیری زبان اهمیت دارد؟ نوشتن   شنیدن   گفتن   خواندن
۴. لغت و گرامر را مستقیم یا ضمن آموزش مهارتها تدریس می شود؟
۵. بهتر است امتحانات کلاسی در طول ترم چه موقع برگزار گردد ؟ بنا به آمادگی دانش آموزان   تصادفی   با تعیین وقت قبلی
۶.چه تدابیری در خصوص پیشرفت دانش آموزان ضعیف در یادگیری زبان موثر خواهد بود؟
۷. داشتن تجربه کاری خود یا دیگرهمکاران در موفقیت چه مواردی موثر است؟
۸ اگرموانعی در تدریس موفق زبان انگلیسی دوره متوسطه وجود دارد لطفا نام ببرید.
۹. چه عواملی سبب موفق شناخته شدن یک معلم زبان انگلیسی میشود؟
۱۰. تا چه میزان از فعالیتهای گروهی یا دو نفره باید استفاده شود؟ چرا؟ همیشه   معمولا   اغلب   گاهی اوقات   بندرت
۱۱. آیا استفاده از تکنولوژی مثلا نمایش فیلم های انگلیسی در کلاس برای دانش آموزان کارایی دارد؟ چرا؟

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۱۲. تکرار کلمات یا عبارات بصورت دسته جمعی دریادگیری تلفظ موثر است؟ چرا؟
۱۳. ارزیابی یادگیری زبان دانش آموزان در هر جلسه به چه طریقی مفید خواهد بود؟
۱۴ .نحوه چیدمان صندلی کلاس در افزایش یادگیری زبان موثر است؟ چگونه؟
۱۵.آیا لازم است در مورد فرهنگ در کلاس صحبت کرد؟ چرا؟
۱۶. آیا استفاده از کتابهای کمک آموزشی در کلاس ضرورت دارد؟ چرا؟
۱۷.اولویت اول در تدریس موفق زبان، آموزش یک لهجه استاندارد است استفاده از لهجه های مختلف؟ چرا؟
دانش زبانی (English proficiency)
از نظر یک معلم موفق زبان انگلیسی...
۱.در کلاسهای کنونی زبان دوره متوسطه یک معلم زبان به کدام مورد یا موارد بیشتر نیاز دارد؟
تلفظ صحیح (Fluent in correct pronunciation) یک مدل ارتباطی(A communication model) فصاحت صحیح Fluent in eloquence دستور زبان صحیح Fluent in grammar مهیا کردن مواد درسیCurriculum provider مراوده با همکار (A co-communicator)
در ارتباط با حیطه کاری چه راهکارهایی موثر است؟ (self-assessment)۲. برای ارزیابی شخصی
۳. آزمون صلاحیت شغلی از معلمان زبان به چه صورت گرفته شود تا موثر باشد؟ این آزمون هر چند سال یکبار لازم است؟
مهارتهای ارتباطی (Organization and communication skill)
از نظر یک معلم موفق زبان انگلیسی...
بیشتری میتوان در کلاس فراهم کرد؟ (communicative activities) ۱.چه فعالیتهای ارتباطی
۲. چه تغییراتی باید اعمال شود تا فعالیتهای ارتباطی بصورت موثرتری در کلاس انجام شود؟
مهارتهای اجتماعی – عاطفی(Socio-affective skill)
از نظر یک معلم موفق زبان انگلیسی...
۱.چگونه میتوان به دانش آموزان در یادگیری زبان انگیزه داد؟
مواجهه با مشکلات رفتاری دانش آموزان ضروری است؟ اگر بله، چگونه؟۲.
۳.اگردانش آموزان اشتباهات دانش زبانی معلم خود را یادآور شوند؟ چگونه باید برخورد کرد؟
۴.آیا باید رفتار دانش اموز را در نمره درسی اش اثر داد؟ چرا؟