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Examining the Relationship between Iranian English Language Teachers' Oops-Moment Strategies and Their Personality Traits and Teaching Experience

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the most common oops-moment strategies of 11 Iranian novices and experienced English language teachers at private institutes in Zanjan, Iran, so as to find possible relationships among their oops-moment strategies, their personality, and teaching experience. To gather data about how they deal with hard questions in their English class, they were interviewed in their workplace. Their students were also interviewed in order to verify their teachers' claims. For the purpose of gathering the data related to teachers' personality, the 'Big Five' test of personality was utilized. The interviews were transcribed and imported to Nvivo 8 software for analyzing and coding the data, and the scores on the personality test were examined using IBM SPSS statistics 20. This research proposes five most commonly-used strategies among teachers including asking for time and checking the answer, confessing lack of knowledge, explaining the rules and the related information, asking smart students to answer the question, and postponing answering the question. The last strategy was found to be commonly used by novice teachers, the first and third strategies were mostly reported by experienced teachers. The findings also showed that the teachers who were open to experience and agreeable according to the personality test tended to use the second strategy, those who appeared to be emotionally unstable reported to use the first and the last strategies, and finally the teachers who were conscientious and extrovert tended to confess their lack of knowledge. The pedagogical implications are also discussed.

Keywords: Classroom management strategies, Experienced teachers, Oops-moment strategies, Teacher's personality traits.

I | INTRODUCTION



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Teaching is a complex skill and effective teaching can be defined in a variety of ways. People outside the profession may give a different definition rather than people who are directly involved in the teaching process and designing research based on it. [Good et al. \(2009\)](#) have defined effective teaching as “the ability to improve students’ achievements” (p. 803). In their study, effective teaching is defined as the ability to control the whole process of teaching from right the beginning up to the end.

Teachers of foreign languages have a significant responsibility to carry out their job, they are transmitters of a completely new knowledge and as they are trying to conceptualize unfamiliar



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concepts for excited learners, they need to balance students' consciousness toward both languages i.e., their mother tongue and the foreign language. Therefore, what teachers do in the context of a classroom, their ability to manage the whole process of teaching, decisions that they make, the way they try to interact with pupils and the methods used to convey information along with many other factors are of great importance to teachers of a new language.

The determinant role of schools and the essence of classroom management should not be ignored because schools and classrooms are places where students grow up, play, shape their personalities, make strategic decisions and start their academic life. Classroom management refers to all the activities which create in the classroom a suitable learning atmosphere, and results in established rules and procedures and produces involved and active students (Brophy, 2006).

Recently, there has been a growing interest in classroom management strategies (LLanos, 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2021). It is clear to all of us that a disorganized classroom hinders students' learning and results in students' demotivation. Marzano et al. (2001) bring into discussion the significance of a well-managed classroom. As they point out: "effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. If students are disorderly and disrespectful, and no apparent rules and procedures guide behavior; chaos becomes the norm, in these situations, both teachers and students suffer" (p. 1).

Teachers may find some moments of their teaching experience very demanding. Romano (2005) assigns the term "bumpy moment" to refer to these challenging circumstances and describes it as "a moment in teaching that requires a teacher to make an immediate decision about how to respond to a particular problem in practice" (p. 258).

Every teacher may have experienced times when a probably smart student asks a question the answer to which the teacher does not know, or the teacher may not be cognitively or provisionally ready to answer that question. Basically, the teacher may activate a certain kind of strategy from among preserved strategies to handle the situation. The teacher should make a quick decision, but when s/he is not ready to answer the question, the condition may become so demanding that the teacher may feel that his/her position as a reflective teacher is in danger.

This study is an attempt to broaden the concept of survival strategies which refer to those strategies that a teacher adopts to resolve the problems that take place in the process of teaching and the skill that teachers demonstrate to deal with these difficulties. It also resembles the decisions that a teacher makes to solve the problem (Maistre & Pare, 2008). We have called the survival strategies under a new umbrella named "oops-moment strategies".

1. Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions are investigated:

1. What are some common strategies adopted by Iranian EFL teachers when they encounter a knowledge gap or when they experience an oops-moment in the process of teaching?
2. How do teachers' years of experience relate to their use of oops-moments strategies?
3. How does teachers' personality relate to their use of oops-moment strategies?

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews previous research on classroom management, teachers' personality, teachers' survival strategies, teachers' knowledge, and teacher-student interaction.



1. Classroom Management

There is no doubt that managing a classroom effectively is a skill. Basically, a teacher who possesses this skill has achieved it through experience, training, and education. This is the reason that controlling the classroom and students' behavior is one of the biggest concerns of novice teachers. Since oops-moment strategies can be considered as a subcategory for classroom management strategies the main literature for this study turns around the works related to classroom management and issues connected to it.

Examining the level of anxiety of 700 student teachers, in relation to their classroom management and teaching management, [Oral \(2012\)](#) utilized two scales of “teaching management anxiety” and “behavior management anxiety” and concluded that classroom management anxiety has a direct relationship with school experience of teachers. As for those who did not have school experience, the anxiety level was higher. [Konti \(2011\)](#) explains that the lack of educational courses for in-service teachers and insufficient control from the side of school directors and principals have caused using deficient and old-fashioned methods of classroom management. He adds that the productivity of classrooms would be increased if teachers received special training under the control of school directors to manage their classes in the best possible way. The need to hold training programs for teachers was investigated by [Piwowar et al. \(2013\)](#) who studied 37 secondary school teachers. They designed a new teacher training program called KODEK and compared two groups of teachers based on their participation in the program. The result showed that teachers who participated in KODEK program outperformed teachers who participated in traditional training programs. They concluded that using a new teacher training program which consists of role-playing, using multimedia and lecturing would help teachers to promote their classroom management capabilities and increase students' involvement.

[Fowler & Sarpili \(2010\)](#) studying the expectations of English language students of an effective classroom management, classified classroom management techniques into two categories: intrinsic characteristics and extrinsic characteristics. The first one is related to students' intrinsic contentment. Strategies like letting students communicate and express their ideas and being reverential toward students. The second one deals with pupils' expectations of how a teacher should physically manage the classroom. For example, students like that teachers explain all the expected behaviors from students at the beginning of the term. The results showed that students expect a rule-governed and strict classroom. They need to be respected by teacher and they like to be allowed to talk freely and be admired by their teachers. [Schulz \(2001\)](#) conducted a similar study on fulfillment of students' expectations and its negative effects on their motivation and their desire to participate in classroom activities as well as their confidence about the credibility and competency of their teacher. [Cano-Garcia et al. \(2005\)](#) studied 99 teachers, and concluded that the highest scores in burnout were obtained by teachers who had high scores in neuroticism and introversion. It confirms that the quality of teacher's classroom management performance can be decreased when the teacher is neurotic, emotionally unstable and anxious.

2. Teachers' Personality

The personality of a teacher is very closely related to the way that teachers manage their classrooms. It also affects the quality of their association with students. [Pagliaro \(2011\)](#) mentions that “any strategy you implement with your class should not conflict with your philosophy of discipline or your personality” (p. 79). In this regard, [Arif et al. \(2012\)](#) studied 100 teachers from four teacher education universities in India. In their experiment teachers were compared based on their big five personality traits. They reported that the correlations of four personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism) were almost the same for all teachers but Openness personality trait showed a greater ratio. They also found that male and female teachers differed significantly based on their Extraversion and Agreeableness personality trait. The results also revealed that female teachers outperformed male teachers in possessing the necessary personality trait to become a prospective teacher. Similarly, [Blaskova et al.](#)



(2014) analyzed 27 university teachers through 3 controlled interviews and a questionnaire survey to find out the desirable personality competences of each teacher. They found 4 clusters of personality competence profiles including self-reflecting, self-renewing, self-motivating, and self-developing. Results showed that from the students' viewpoint, there were 3 important personality competences which included: professionalism, justice, and communication. These competences identify the requirements, elements, and features of a teacher's personality which affect the way a teacher undergoes the numerous difficulties of teaching.

Many studies have also advocated the influence of teacher's personality on the effectiveness of teaching. Klassen & Tze (2014) conducted research on 9216 participants from meta-analysis of 43 studies, exploring two psychological features (personality and self-efficacy) and concluded that teachers' personality has a significant, but small relationship with teaching performance ($r = 0.10$) and teachers' self-efficacy is strongly associated with teaching performance ($r = 0.12$).

3. Teachers' Survival Strategies

Teachers' survival strategies as defined by Maistre & Pare (2010) are strategies that a teacher adopts to resolve the problems that take place in the process of teaching and the skill that teachers demonstrate to deal with these difficulties. It also resembles the decisions that a teacher makes to solve the problem. Novice teachers who are commonly considered as beginners in the world of teaching usually announce many different problems in their beginning years of teaching. Basically, they need time to adapt themselves to the new context. During these years of trial and error, they adopt different strategies to cope with the unfamiliar difficulties of the new situation. They may need to reshape their beliefs and change their perceptions since they have entered a new world. They may try to construct new conceptions and expand their knowledge because they are in a condition which has never been experienced before. Gradually they will learn to cope with the situation, hence the term *coping strategy*.

A study by Lavigne (2014) confirmed that teachers' beliefs function as an adaptation and constructing positive beliefs helps teachers survive during the first 5 years of their teaching experience. He concluded that teachers modify and change their perceptions during the first five years of teaching. As a result of improving positive conceptualization, they try to expand their identity as teachers. This coupled with some training strategies (Mata, 2011) would have an influential effect on the development of methodological competencies.

4. Teachers' Knowledge

Teacher's possessing of sufficient knowledge is very important especially when talking about foreign language teachers because foreign language teachers are transmitters of knowledge of a new and unfamiliar language. Different studies about teachers' knowledge show that teachers' awareness of subject matter and knowledge of content affects their activities in the process of managing the class (Brophy, 1991). For language teachers, this knowledge can be summarized to the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, phonetics, and alphabets along with the knowledge of culture, idioms and collocations. But the problem is that possessing all of them in a native-like form and conveying them to students like a native language teacher is sometimes very difficult for non-native language teachers who do not have any experience of living in the target language country. Many studies (e.g., Roth et al., 1986; Grossman et al., 1989; Kennedy, 1991) have confirmed that teachers who possess good subject matter knowledge have a better ability to control the class, manage behaviors and organize effective interaction with students. They can also organize effective activities that promote students learning and make student-teacher interactions easier and more enjoyable. Lee (1995), for instance, found an interesting relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter and his/her classroom management practices. According to the findings, teachers' lack of sufficient content knowledge results in a more traditional classroom with a high dependency on textbook and students' knowledge and causes lack of effective teacher-student interaction. In the current study, teachers' knowledge is considered



important because one of the challenging issues of this work is the way that teachers handle students' numerous questions.

5. Teacher-Student Interaction

Teacher-student interaction theories are among supporting background theories for many issues which are directly or indirectly related to classroom management, strategies and teachers' practices that are related to it (Pagliaro, 2011). Emotions are one of the teachers' determinant factors in any kind of relationships. The interactions between teachers and students are one of the most important social relations that take place in the context of schools. Teachers stand on one side of this relationship and on the other side, there are students who have a thirst to learn and experience. Although teachers have the pivotal role in shaping and maintaining these relations, students' position should not be disregarded. Yan et al. (2011) surveyed six teachers' classroom teaching to understand how they get along with emotional events in the classroom and what strategies they adopt for managing events. They argued that improving emotional skills in classroom atmosphere results in enhanced learning outcomes, especially for elementary students.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

A total of 11 English language teachers (5 female, 6 male), teaching at private English language institutions in Abhar, Iran, voluntarily participated in this study. All of the teachers were teaching at advanced, intermediate and elementary levels. In order to obtain information about the participants' age, and years of experience, a demographic questionnaire was distributed among them at the beginning of the experiment.

Table 1. Descriptive information of EFL teachers of the study.

| Teaching experience | Frequency | Age range |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Less than 5 years | 4 | 24-34 |
| 5 to 10 years | 4 | 18-34 |
| More than 10 years | 3 | 35-54 |

2. Instruments

In order to gather information for the study, two main instruments were used. The first instrument used to specify teachers' personality was the "Big Five" personality traits questionnaire (Goldberg, 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1999). For the purpose of gathering data about teachers' oops-moment strategies, a set of interview questions was developed. Moreover, based on the observation checklist, in order to analyze the interview data which is described below, Nvivo 8 software was utilized to analyze and code the transcribed data.

2.1. Big Five Personality Trait Questionnaire

The Big Five questionnaire offers five domains of personality, including Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Neuroticism is defined as an individual's emotional stability, and includes facets of anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability. Those with high scores in neuroticism are more likely to experience psychological distress and show maladaptive coping. Those with low scores tend to be calm and relaxed and cope effectively with stress. They are more likely to have irrational ideas and exhibit impulsiveness. Extraversion exhibits the personality traits of people who tend to involve in social activities, have the company and acceptance of other people, and enjoy expanded social relations. They usually have optimistic and positive feelings



toward life and they have a busy, energetic life. They enjoy talking with other people and sharing their life feelings with them.

A combination of interpersonal interaction skills, positive affect and energy level make up the domain of extraversion. Warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity level, excitement-seeking behaviors and positive emotions are the facets of extraversion. Low scorers tend to prefer to be alone rather than with others, and they are more reserved and quiet than high scorers. Those who score high on extraversion are more social, energy-filled and optimistic.

Openness to Experience displays one's breadth of mind, willingness to obtain new experiences and mental curiosity. According to the Five Factor Model (FFM) by McCrae & Costa (1996), each variable of personality consists of some facets. The facets of this feature include Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings, Actions, Ideas, and Values (Jang et al., 1996). People who have high scores in this attribute like to have new experiences and break normal rules and traditions. They are aware of their own feelings and they are open-minded and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others and listen to their experiences as well. They are usually trying to learn new things. Agreeableness shows the feelings of friendliness, conformity to situation and collaboration. The facets of this attribute consist of Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness (Jang et al., 1996); those who score high in this trait think that people around them are truthful and friendly with positive intentions. They are sincere people who believe that there is no need to pretend so they are candid and mostly frank and they barely experience negative and pessimistic feelings. Agreeable people avoid conflicts so they easily conform themselves to different situations. Conscientiousness consists of six facets of Competence, Order, Dutifulness, Achievement, Self-Discipline, and Deliberation (Jang et al., 1996). People who score high in this trait are confident about themselves and their actions, deeply responsible and seek perfection. They are sure that what they are doing is the best choice. They believe that everything should be done correctly, orderly and according to rules.

2.2. Checklist

A checklist was created as a result of observing teachers for at least 10 sessions. The researchers prepared a checklist of strategies adopted by teachers to handle oops-moments and other similar conditions which required the teacher to make an immediate decision. The prepared checklists were about to be used later during the interviewing procedure to check teachers' trueness of claims about using of strategies.

2.3. Interview

The researchers constructed 10 open-ended questions, and the teachers were supposed to talk about each question for 2 minutes.

3. Procedure

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a mixed methods approach was employed. For the qualitative analysis of research questions, a triangular method of investigation was utilized. Therefore, the data were gathered through three stages including interviewing the teachers, and observing teachers in the classroom. In the first phase of our project, the process of teaching was observed. The observation took place in the institutions where teachers were working. Each teacher was observed for at least 10 sessions. Then every teacher was interviewed for 20 minutes after their classes. The researchers used 10 open-ended questions, and teachers were supposed to talk about each question for 2 minutes. They were assumed to give their own ideas about the topics. Teachers were asked to explain the demanding moments they experienced during their whole teaching experience, and they were supposed to talk about the type of strategies that they usually adopt to handle oops-moments. The researchers then checked the answers according to previously provided checklists to compare and make conclusions.



4. Specifying Themes, Coding and Managing Data

In this part of the project, the researchers transcribed teachers' interviews and imported them in Nvivo8 software to be coded and categorized. In order to make categorizations, encodings and nodes; the first step was finding themes and subthemes which later on had to be defined in the software in the form of categories and subcategories. Then cases, their attributes, and sets are needed to be specified and imported into the software. The next step is finding nodes according to the study's themes and subthemes and then relating each node to the specific category. Once all the nodes were specified, the coding procedure was done and the final step was analyzing coded data in queries and models which were generated by software and then making sound conclusions according to the provided analysis.

In the final phase of the study, the researchers attempted to find relationships between teachers' personality traits and their oops-moment strategies. In order to gather data for this purpose, the "Big Five personality trait" questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was handed out after the qualitative part. Because first, the researchers needed to find the strategies adopted by each group of teachers and make conclusions based on coded data and then find a connection between strategies and the teachers' personality traits. Finally, a comparison was made among teachers based on the findings.

IV. RESULTS

In this section the themes and their descriptions will be presented.

1. Themes

To answer the first research question concerning the strategies Iranian EFL teachers adopt when they encounter a knowledge gap or when they experience an oops-moment in the process of teaching, the researches imported the data in Nvivo 8 software. The scores of the personality test for each teacher were also analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics software and finally, related charts were organized through Microsoft Office Excel software. After identifying themes, categorizing them into nodes and sub-nodes, coding and investigating the coded data and according to the results provided by the software, five most frequently used strategies were distinguished as shown in the following figure:

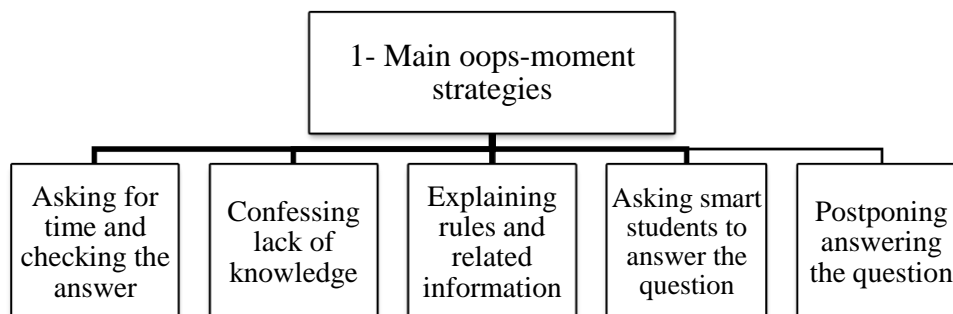


Figure 1. The main oops-moment strategies of teachers.

The above figure shows all of the main oops-moment strategies which are specified after coding the data by the software. These strategies were mentioned by the teachers, so the researchers coded them under the category of main oops-moment strategies, each of which will be explained below.

1.1. Asking For Time and Checking The Answer

Among eleven participants of this study, almost 63.6 percent of teachers (seven teachers) reported the using of this strategy. Teachers with more than 10 years of experience used this strategy more frequently. Teachers reported this strategy in different forms including checking books, booklets, phones, dictionaries, and



the net. In all of the referred forms, teachers provided the answer after making sure that they did not put it off to a later time.

In order to further clarify the use of this strategy, a class that was observed is reported here. A student asked a question about the right way of pronouncing the word “direct” in the American English language, the teacher is not sure to give the right answer, whether it was ‘dai+rect’ or ‘di+rect’ so he asked the student for a short time to check it in his cell phone, at the same time he encouraged students to search their dictionaries and assigned a positive point for the one who found the answer faster. One of the students shouted the correct pronunciation; the teacher gave the positive point and repeated the correct form showing his own dictionary too. Some other teachers announced having different types of dictionaries on their cell phones, some them used their laptops and the net. This strategy is in some ways identical to postponing answering questions because the teacher delays responding to the question but it is different in case that students reach their answers in that session and they do not need to wait until a later time.

1.2. Confessing Lack of Knowledge

In this study, confessing lack of knowledge means the ability to tell students “I don’t know the answer” honestly and frankly. The results showed that Iranian teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience felt easier to confess their lack of knowledge than those who had five to ten and less than five years of teaching experience.

Teachers expressed different ideas regarding the ability to confess their lack of knowledge, some of them believed that a good teacher should be honest and dare to tell students that s/he does not know the answer and it is a desirable feature. Experienced teachers of this study believed that being honest with students along with modesty and humbleness is an important part of teaching ethics. Some other teachers thought that it shows the teachers’ weakness and it is not acceptable to confess lack of knowledge.

1.3. Explaining Rules and Related Information

Some of the participants in the study believed that, when the exact answer does not come to the mind, the best way is to explain everything that the teacher knows about the general topic of the question. Teachers in this study referred to the use of this strategy in a variety of ways, including: giving related information about the topic of the question, telling pupils whatever comes to the mind about the answer, giving some related information as a clue and asking them to search, giving pupils a complex answer above their level of knowledge.

This strategy can also be called ‘wandering around’ because the teacher neither gives a direct answer nor reveals his/ her lack of knowledge, but s/he prefers to talk about the question and possible answers which come to his/her mind. The use of this strategy was observed only among teachers in this study who had 5 to 10 years of experience. In response to the use of this strategy by some teachers, other teachers felt that being honest with pupils and not losing control, seeing pupils as friends and not a threat, preparing and shaping their thoughts about what a teacher is and defining the role of the teacher in the classroom can help teachers to use more logical strategies. Teacher 2 said: “I have already prepared my students that I am not an authority with complete knowledge of the subject”.

Below is a related experience of another teacher in the study is given to clarify how they exactly adopted this strategy:

Once, one of my students asked me about the difference between two sentences both of which were conditionals, but one was type 2 and the next was of type 3. I knew that the sentences were conditional type 2 and 3 but I didn’t know exactly the difference and I was not really sure of the answer. On the other hand, I didn’t want to say that I don’t know, I didn’t want to destroy my face or make a fool



of myself in front of my pupils or they think that I am not a good teacher. I have a special kind of personality; I can never say I don't know. I feel bad about saying this sentence. So, at that time when she asked me that question, I knew it. But maybe I couldn't remember it, so I decided to explain all the conditional sentences and their rules and some examples. It was good both for me and for my student. When I did that she understood the difference between them and I could solve the problem without destroying my face.

However, none of the teachers with over 10 years of experience reported using this strategy.

1.4. Asking Smart Students to Answer The Question

In any class of any levels, there always exist students who are more prepared and active than others. This difference can be due to a variety of reasons including students' family backgrounds, their cognitive systems, their personality attributes, their English language backgrounds, etc. A good teacher, who probably has a friendly relationship with their students, knows them very well and is aware of students' educational levels. In English classes of public schools of Iran, it prevalently happens that teachers ask students to answer a question to which they have no answer themselves. This condition happens because many of the students have already gone to some other English language classes outside of this institute. They may have started learning English from early ages, so when they reach and attend this level, they are almost familiar with grammatical rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation of the English language. Some of them study at advanced levels, and their English knowledge is far more beyond the English books taught by teachers of public schools. Therefore, it is possible that in an oops-moment condition, the teacher asks smart students for help.

Among 10 participants of this study, six teachers reported using this strategy. Others believe that by asking students to answer the questions which are asked by other students from the teacher, students can lose their trust toward the teacher and the student who raised the question would feel unfulfilled and unsatisfied. According to one of the interviewees: "this action may cause a kind of clash between the two students because after the class the student who answered the question of his/her friend may humiliate him/her". However, one female teacher with 4 years of experience said: "I shift the responsibility to other students to check the answer because they should know that teachers are not oral dictionaries or encyclopedias". But why more experienced teachers do not use this strategy? One of the veteran teachers of this study who was almost near the retirement asserted that:

I do not do it because nowadays, students are too smart in a negative way. I mean immediately they will understand that you are unable to answer the question so you asked others for help. If I do it in the class, they will frankly tell me, don't you know the answer?

1.5. Postponing Answering The Question

Postponing answering the questions occurs when the teachers decide not to give an instant response to students' questions. Teachers reported two ways of adopting this strategy, one is bringing the answer for the next session and the other telling the students the answer at the end of the session. Among all of the reported strategies by teachers, 8 teachers announced employing this strategy. Hence, it can be concluded that postponing answering pupils' questions is the second most frequent strategy after confessing the lack of knowledge which was used by 82 percent of teachers (9 participants).

2. The Relation Between Oops-Moment Strategies and Teachers' Experience

As for the second research question, it was proved that there can be a relationship between teachers' choice of strategies at oops-moments and their teaching experience. Table 2 shows the frequency of oops-moment strategies adopted by teachers according to their experience levels. The purpose of this table is to show the strategies which are more common among teachers with different experiences ranging from low to high.



Table 2. Frequency of oops-moment strategies according to teachers' experience

| Level of experience Strategies | over 10 years | 5 to 10 years | less than 5 years |
|--|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| asking for time and checking the answer | 42.53%* | 23.38% | 15.49% |
| Asking smart students to answer the question | 0% | 25.97%* | 5.47% |
| confessing lack of knowledge | 36.21%* | 12.66% | 28.7% |
| explaining rules and related information | 0% | 8.77% | 0% |
| postponing answering the question | 5.17% | 19.48% | 33.71%* |

Note. The presented percentages show the frequency of cases coded according to each strategy under the coverage of teachers' years of experience. The sign (*) indicates the most frequently coded strategy.

According to the data, it is apparent that less experienced teachers used postponing answering the questions (33.71%) strategy more than other groups of teachers. Asking smart students of the class to answer the question is a reported strategy that is neither used by very experienced teachers nor by less experienced teachers. Mostly, teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience tend to ask smart students of the class to answer the question (25.97%). This strategy is never used by the experienced teachers and only 5.47 percent of less experienced teachers reported its use. In contrast, teachers with more than 10 years of experience made use of the two strategies more than their less experienced co-workers: asking students for time to check the answer (42.53%) and frankly confessing the lack of knowledge (36.21%).

3. The Relationship Between Teachers' Personality Traits and Their Oops-Moment Strategies

In this section of the study, the possibility of any relationship between teachers' type of personality and their use of oops-moment strategies will be discussed. The following diagrams which are in the form of bar graphs are exported from Microsoft Excel; they show the scores of five personality traits of each teacher considering "Big Five" personality traits of Goldberg (Goldberg, 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 2003). It should be mentioned that, since there was no explicit guiding key for analyzing the results of tests, the researchers decided to report the findings of personality test for each participant separately, then analyzed the scores of each attribute individually, scrutinized the coded interviews and examined extracted nodes and finally found a relationship between personality traits and oops-moment strategies of teachers. As another way of finding relations, the strategies used by each teacher is given below their diagrams, then the shared strategies among groups of teachers are discussed according to their personality characteristics.

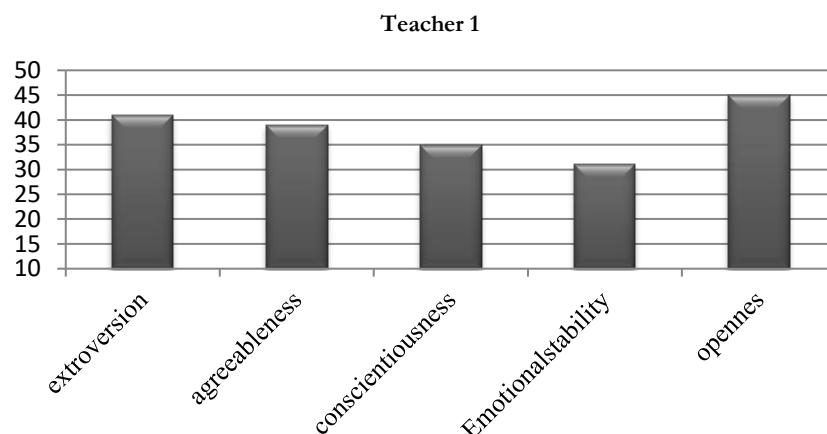


Figure 2. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 1.



From the above diagram, it can be seen that the two traits of openness to experience and extroversion were the highest attributes for Teacher 1. The overall strategies that this teacher has reported to use include: asking other teachers for help, asking students for time and then checking the answer, asking smart students to answer the question, confessing lack of knowledge, and postponing answering the question. As displayed in the diagram, the emotional stability (ES) score of this teacher is the lowest comparing with other traits. A review of the extracted nodes and themes, provides some ideas of the feelings of teachers' experiencing an oops-moment which seems to have commonalities with this aspect of personality. When Teacher 1 was asked about his feelings when he admitted his lack of knowledge, when he did not know the answer to the question and when he was criticized, he mentioned feelings of nervousness and anxiety and about appreciating students who remind him his mistakes, he said "why appreciate? Is it very good that you make a mistake that students grab your wrist and appreciate you for repeating it? It is an absurd reaction". This sentence shows the teacher's negative reaction and, in a way, can be seen as an indicator of anger/ hostility aspect of emotional stability. So, it can be concluded that there is also a relationship between his feelings and his type of personality.

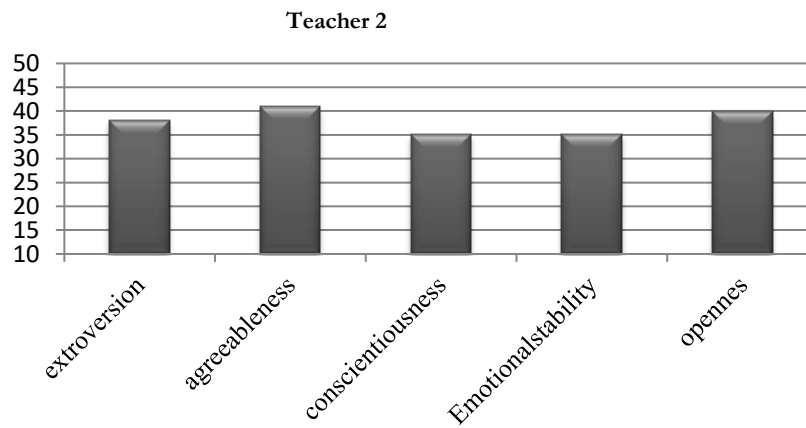


Figure 3. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 2.

For Teacher 2, the highest scores included agreeableness and openness to experience. The teacher's overall strategies self-reported by this teacher include: asking students for time and then checking the answer and confessing the lack of knowledge.

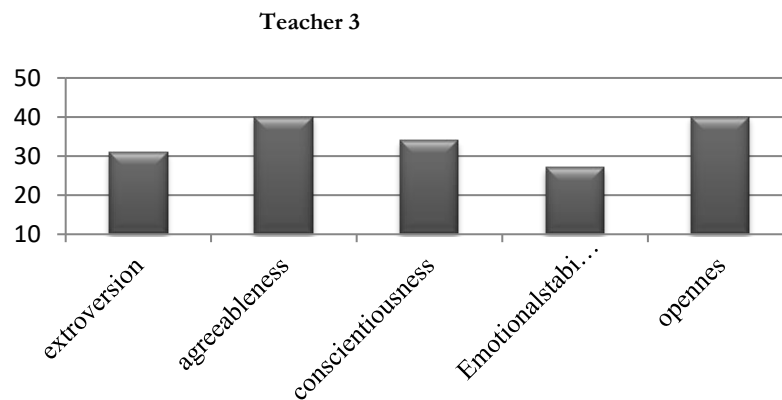


Figure 4. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 3.

Strategies reported by this teacher encompassed: asking students for time and then checking the answer, asking students to answer the question and postponing answering the questions. It is clear that the highest scores for this teacher as for the previous one were: openness to experience and agreeableness. The lowest trait was emotional stability.

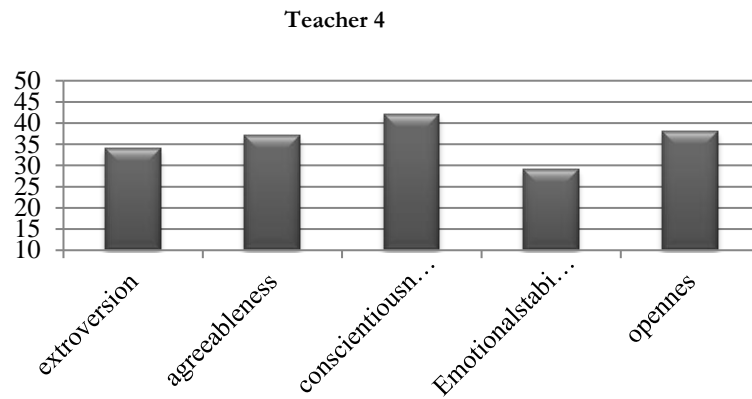


Figure 5. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 4.

As can be seen from the bar chart, this teacher had the highest score of conscientiousness and the lowest score for emotional stability is the lowest score. Teacher 4 described his choice of strategies as: asking smart students to answer the question, confessing the lack of knowledge, explaining rules and related information (wandering around the answer), and postponing answering the question.

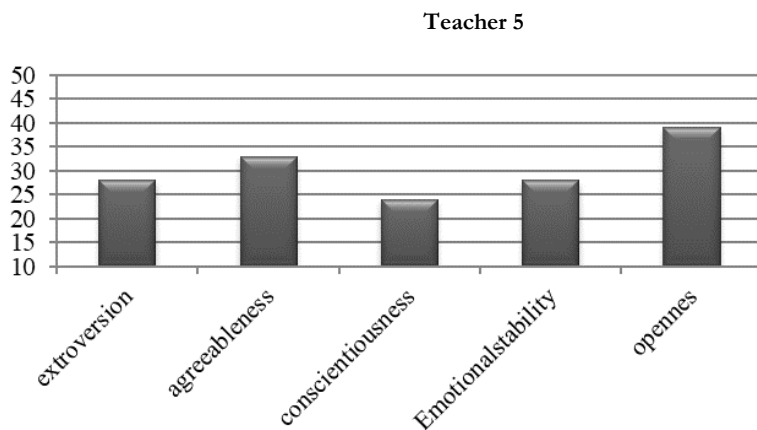


Figure 6. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 5.

Contrary to the previous teacher, this teacher’s Conscientiousness variable has the lowest score and the highest score pertains to the Openness variable. Teacher 5 reported to make use of the subsequent strategies as his dominant oops-moment strategies: asking students for time and checking the answer and confessing the lack of knowledge.

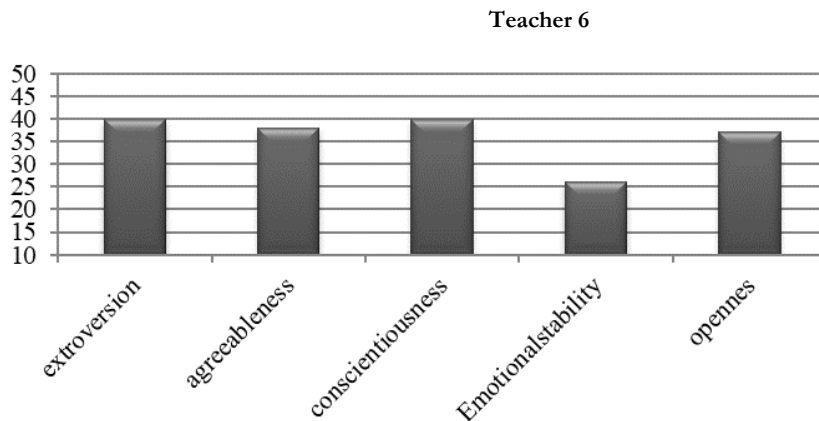


Figure 7. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 6.



As it can be observed from the diagram, this teacher had two equally high personality traits which were extraversion and conscientiousness. The lowest trait for him, similar to many of other teachers, was emotional stability. With the exception of emotional stability, the other scores were almost close to each other, but only in terms of quantity. He reported his two most commonly used oops-moment strategies as: asking students for time and then checking the answer and confessing the lack of knowledge.

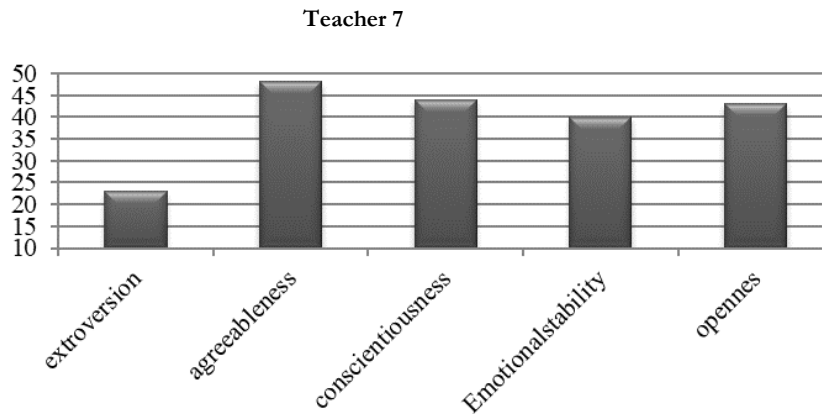


Figure 8. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 7.

The highest traits of this participant were agreeableness and conscientiousness. The lowest score belonged to extraversion. Contrary to the other participants, this participant had almost a high score for emotional stability. The reported strategies were: asking students for time and checking the answer, admitting the lack of knowledge, and postponing the answer.

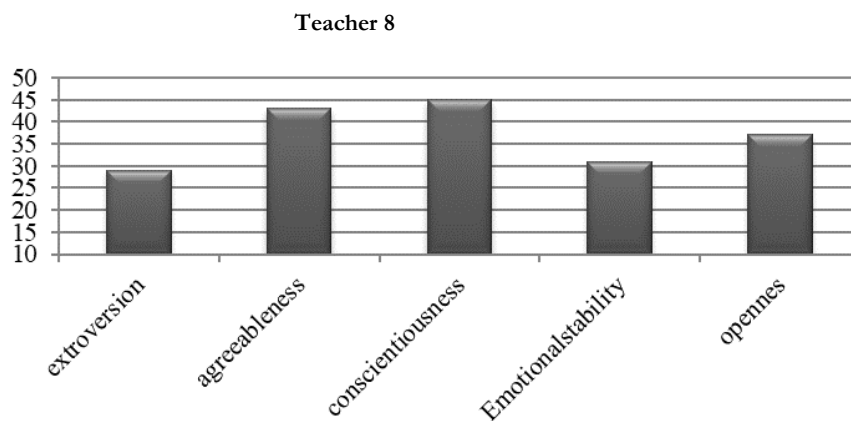


Figure 9. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 8.

The personality traits of Teacher 8 were almost similar to the previous teacher. As can be seen, the highest scores pertained to agreeableness and conscientiousness and the lowest score was related to extraversion. The choice of strategies for this teacher were also close to the previous one which included: asking smart students to answer the question, confessing the lack of knowledge and postponing answering the question.

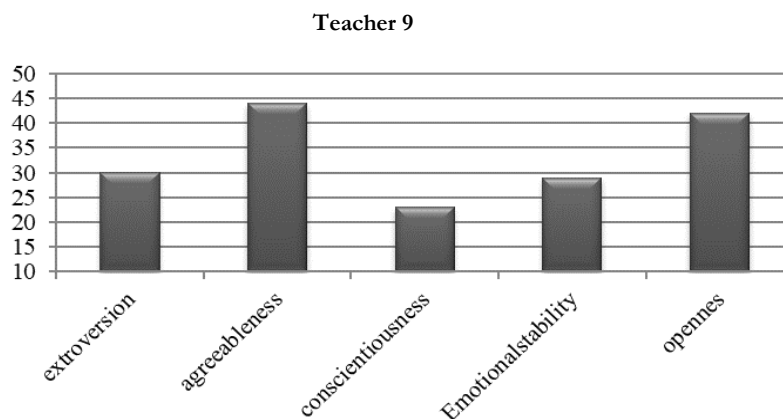


Figure 10. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 9.



Teacher 9 reported employment of three kinds of strategies experiencing an oops-moment, namely, asking other teachers for help, asking smart students to answer the question and postponing answering the question. As it is displayed above, the highest personality traits for this teacher included: agreeableness and openness to experience. Conscientiousness showed the lowest score.

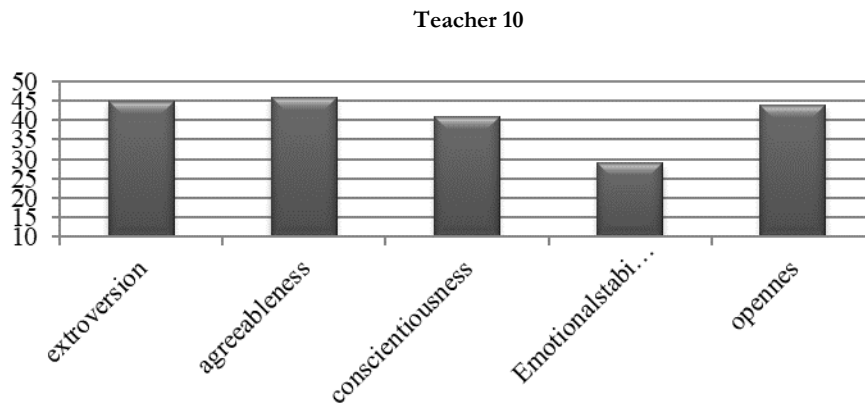


Figure 11. Scores of the test of personality for teacher 10.

The last teacher on the list of participants had emotional stability as her lowest score and agreeableness along with extraversion were the highest scores. Strategies self-reported by this teacher were: asking other teachers for help, asking students for time and checking the answer, confessing the lack of knowledge, and postponing answering questions.

The following table exclusively shows only the observed shared strategies among groups of teachers and their common personality traits. Therefore, it can be said that, in this section, strategies are organized and discussed on the basis of the common personality traits of teachers who had reported using different strategies.

Table 3. The oops-moment strategies of teachers according to their shared personality traits.

| Personality traits | Oops-moment strategies | | | | |
|--|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | O | A | N | E | C |
| Explaining rules and related information | * | * | | | |
| Confessing lack of knowledge | | | | * | * |
| Postponing answering the question | | | * | | |
| Asking smart students to answer the question | * | | | | |
| Asking students for time and checking the answer | | | * | | |

Note. (O) Stands for Openness to Experience, (A) for Agreeableness, (N) indicates Neuroticism, (E) shows Extroversion and (C) stands for Conscientiousness.

3.1. Explaining Rules and Related Information

Teachers 1, 9, and 10, who reported the employment of this strategy as their main oops-moment strategy, were found to have two personality traits in common. They had high scores on openness to experience and agreeableness. This suggests that agreeable teachers who are also open to experience, explain rules and related information to solve their classroom management difficulties. It should also be mentioned that adoption of this strategy seems quite reasonable considering their personality characteristics.

3.2. Confessing Lack of Knowledge

According to the findings of the study, conscientiousness and extroversion are the common features of Teachers 4, 6, 7, and 8, who all had significant scores on this trait and reported that they openly confess



their lack of knowledge. Teachers 1, 2, and 10 also used this strategy, but their common characteristic was observed to be high scores on extroversion. As a general conclusion, it can be said that those teachers who confessed their lack of knowledge in front of their students were extroverted and conscientious and their choice of strategies was somehow compatible with general features of these two personality traits.

3.3. Postponing Answering The Students' Questions

Teachers who reported using this strategy and who all scored low on emotional stability included: Teachers 1, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10. As discussed earlier, people who score low on emotional stability, tend to escape from stressful situations. Emotionally unstable people are generally unable to control anxiety-provoking situations. Therefore, this may be the reason why the afore-mentioned teachers with low scores of emotional stability, preferred to postpone answering the questions to a later time. As discussed in previous sections, students' questions were considered as a kind of threat for some teachers (Rop, 2002, p. 717).

3.4. Asking Smart Students to Answer Questions

The common personality trait of all teachers (Teacher 1, 3, 4, 9, and 10) who asked the smart students in the class to answer the questions was openness to experience. All of them had high openness scores. Probably, it can be deduced that teachers who were more open to experience tended to ask other students of the class and most likely, the smart students to answer questions instead of them.

3.5. Asking Students For Time and Checking The Answer

When analyzing the results, four teachers were found (teachers 1, 3, 6, and 10), who reported the use of this strategy and who all had low scores on emotional stability. The common personality trait among these teachers was neuroticism. It can be said that they probably used this strategy because they wanted to be sure of their answer and its correctness. Perhaps they were afraid of giving a wrong answer and being judged by students. Therefore, they asked for time to be sure about what they were saying.

V. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between oops-moment strategies and personality, and teaching experience of Iranian English language teachers. The findings show that teachers with different personality traits may employ different oops moment strategies. In this regard, Marzano et al. (2001) discuss the significance of a well-managed classroom "Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. If students are disorderly and disrespectful, and no apparent rules and procedures guide behavior, when chaos becomes the norm, in these situations, both teachers and students suffer" (p. 1). According to Katz (2005), inefficient classroom management has destructive effects. It can lead to aggressive behavior and other consequential misbehavior.

Regarding the oops-moment strategies used by the teachers and their personality types, the data of this study in Table 5 showed that 'explaining rules and related information' and 'confessing lack of knowledge' were reported by the majority of the personality types in dealing with oops-moment strategies, i.e., they were used by teachers with openness to experience, agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness personality types. Interesting to see was that 'confessing the lack of knowledge' was also valued by expert teachers. This allows for the inference that probably the above strategies are the ones that should be advocated. However, we need to investigate whether they are also efficient in terms of students' learning.

Concerning the teachers' admission of their lack of knowledge, and by comparing the teachers' ideas and claims, it can be concluded that the experienced teachers of this study do not feel ashamed to admit their weakness or their lack of knowledge, they are not afraid to tell the students that they do not know the right



answer. They believe that admitting a lack of knowledge is a way of being truthful and they believe that students also appreciate honest teachers. It also seems logical to conclude that experienced teachers, because of their acquired skills, have gained control over the whole teaching process, they know the students, and the students know them. They have built up their reputations over the years and their faces as effective teachers are protected by their qualifications and illustrious backgrounds. For novice teachers, however, the case may not be so simple. Students watch them closely and novice teachers are constantly trying to save their faces. During the process of collecting feedback, it was clearly observed that students easily make judgments about teachers and appreciate them only because of their honesty, openness, and sincerity.

The findings of this study are in line with many similar studies (Arif et al., 2012; Blaskova et al., 2014) conducted on this issue in the literature as they mostly prove the significant effect of teacher's personality on their effectiveness of teaching. Klassen & Tze's (2014) results and conclusions, for instance, were consistent with those of this study. They also emphasized that although studying the relationship between teachers' psychological characteristics and measures of teaching effectiveness is very important and expands our realm of knowledge about teaching and teachers, the interpretation of findings should be done carefully because researchers and policy-makers may exaggerate the significance of teachers having particular psychological characteristics. They caution us against the common tendency to overestimate the importance of teachers' psychological characteristics.

More specifically, for non- native English language teachers, the situation proves more difficult. They need to have a good command of a foreign language, a kind of native-like dominance. It seems reasonable, therefore, that they should not appreciate being open and revealing their lack of knowledge. A number of research articles in English language teaching (e.g. Faez & Valeo, 2012; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990) have supported this idea that factors, such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and classroom control ability along with many other related abilities improve as teachers become more experienced in the field. Therefore, we can assume that more experienced teachers have more self-centeredness and self-satisfaction (Ortan et al., 2021) in their jobs, they have become familiar with their job conditions and they have more control over students and the classroom; subsequently, they feel easy about not knowing answers, making mistakes or displaying their lack of knowledge.

The findings of this study confirm similar studies on the importance of teachers' classroom management skills (e.g., Lee, 1995; Pagliaro, 2011). Effective classroom management is a difficult responsibility on its own, but when a foreign language classroom is involved, it is an added difficulty. Fowler and Sarpili (2010) investigated English language students' expectations of effective classroom management. Similar to our findings, the researchers conclude that the classroom management is as important to English language learners as it is for teachers. Schulz (2001) also found that when students' expectations are not fully met, it has negative effects on their motivation and reduces their desire to participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, students may lose their confidence about the credibility and competency of their teacher.

The results in Table 5 of this study revealed another interesting point which relates to the strategies that neurotic teachers employ in relation to their oops-moment experiences. These strategies include postponing answering the question and asking students for time and checking the answer. Cano-Garcia et al. (2005) similarly confirmed that the quality of teacher's classroom management performance can be reduced when the teacher is neurotic, emotionally unstable and anxious. It also leads students to make negative comments about their teachers and it ruins their idea of a good and reflective teacher.

However, some teachers assume that pupils' questioning will disrupt the steady, regular state of the class. As Rop (2002) explains: 'Although thoughtful intellectual questions are valued as indicators of student's attitudes and understandings, they nevertheless create an interruption to the normal flow of things. To the teacher, such interruptions pose threats to his control of classroom events and his ability to cover the content of his course' (p.717).



He discusses that when a question is raised, teachers give meaning to it in order to find the best answer. Some questions are relevant and academic, some are not relevant and take time and some are asked with bad intentions and are seen as threats. Therefore, it can be concluded that the response to students' questions depends on the teachers' conceptualization of that question. If the teacher considers the question to be time-consuming or unrelated, he/she may put it aside or postpone to a later time.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research particularly takes into account parts of challenges faced by English language teachers, so it has significant implications for English language teachers especially for those who are new in the field of teaching, non-native and less experienced. As a result of this study, some explored classroom management strategies specifically 'oops-moment' and survival strategies that were adopted by experienced trained English language teachers are provided. Therefore, the implication is for novice teachers who have no idea of how to control oops-moments in their English classes. Oops-moments may be seen as a source of anxiety for novice teachers. Therefore, planning courses for novice teachers to deal with these situations can help them control their work-related stress and deal with their oops-moments with more ease and confidence. Previous research (Piwowar et al., 2013; Oral, 2012; Konti, 2011) also shows that teachers who received training in classroom management strategies were able to control their teaching anxiety in the face of questions raised by their students. Piwowar et al. (2013) maintained that the use of a new teacher training program consisting of role-playing, the use of multimedia and lecturing help teachers improve their classroom management skills and increase student engagement. Mata (2011) argued for a program to promote teachers' methodological competence. She found that training strategies have a great effect on the development of methodological competencies. This study was conducted to find and explain the oops-moment strategies of Iranian novice and experienced English language teachers as well as their relationship with their personality characteristics. Due to the limitations of this study, as enumerated below, some further experiments on the topic may be helpful.

As a limitation, this study was conducted in a limited context with a limited number of participants. It is recommended that other researchers conduct a similar study in a broader context with more participants. Future studies need to address the relationship between personality of teachers and other variables related to their classroom management strategies, such as behavior management strategies. Moreover, occupational variables were not incorporated to this study; therefore, other job-related factors like payment and salary, principal control, and working place conditions are suggested to be addressed in future studies. Finally, the feelings of the teachers experiencing oops-moments were not fully measured, and all of the analyses were based on their self-reports. Future studies are expected to include teachers' feelings and emotions during oops-moments.

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