Students' Perceived Classroom Climate and Their Achievement Goal Orientations in an Iranian EFL Context

Saeedeh Mohammadi, Ph.D. Candidate, English Department, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran
s.mohammadi.TEFL@gmail.com
Mohammad Aliakbari*, Professor, English Department, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran
Maliakbari@hotmail.com

Abstract
Classroom climate has been demonstrated to associate with individuals' various attributes and outcomes. Recent research has also confirmed students' goal orientations deserving to be recognized as a significant achievement-related outcome. In this line, the current study intended to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL students' perceptions of their classroom environment and their achievement goal orientations. The study also aimed to see whether different genders held different perceptions concerning the main study variables. To accomplish this aim, 570 high school students were randomly recruited and the two scales of students' perceived climate questionnaire (WIHIC) and achievement goal orientation questionnaire (AGQ) were applied. The results indicated that learners held distinct perceptions of classroom climate and different goal orientations with gender having a significant influence on some of their components. Furthermore, correlations were obtained among diverse factors of the study scales. The findings provide implications for understanding the EFL learners' perceived classroom climate and their achievement goals and hence planning the learning environments taking into account the students' goal orientations and the significant role of gender.

Keywords: classroom climate; students' perceptions; achievement goal orientations; gender; EFL; Iranian high schools

Introduction

EFL classroom climate is a perceived, actual, or preferred quality of the foreign language setting and deals with the characteristics of the EFL teachers and the pupils, the interactions among them, and the whole activities occurring in the classroom. Further, learners' perceptions of classroom climate conceived as feedback taken from the learners are among the determining factors in the development of the practices at the level of teaching and learning (Comenius project, 2006).

Concerning the contribution of students' perceived classroom climate to their motivational patterns and goals, among various motivational theories, achievement goal theory is of crucial importance. Wang, Liu, and Chye (2010) highlighted that the achievement goal approach to motivation being conceptually and operationally fruitful, "has been tremendously helpful in acquiring an understanding of affect, cognition, and behavior in academic setting." (p. 2). An achievement goal refers to the outcome an individual desires from a learning situation or his/her reason for doing a task including either increasing his competence through learning or demonstrating his competence through performance (Elliot, 2007; Elliot & Dweck, 2007). Despite the traditional distinctions, Elliot (1997) and Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) have argued for a more comprehensive account of the achievement goals taking into consideration the approach-avoidance and mastery-performance distinctions. Based on these distinctions, there are four types of achievement goal orientations, namely mastery approach and mastery avoidance

goals (the goals in which individuals tend to increase their mastery of new tasks and reach competence or avoid it) and performance approach and performance avoidance goals (the goals in which individuals desire to demonstrate ability to others and avoid demonstrating their lack of knowledge by outperforming others).

Considering the interplay of the two variables discussed, people differ in the way they approach and perceive the situations and adopt different goals in different achievement situations. As Kaplan and Flum (2010) put it, school plays a role in providing guidelines for environmental strategies that would encourage students to adopt adaptive achievement goal orientations. Moreover, Dweck and Leggett (1988) claimed that situational factors can potentially alter the probabilities of adopting particular goals and behaviors. These situational factors, in the achievement goal theory, known as *motivational climate* (Ames, 1992) involve all the social and contextual signs with which the learners can define their achievements.

To better understand the specific EFL climate in Iran and the reason for its exploration, an examination of the nature of EFL setting in Iran is in order. As cited in Talebinezhad and AliAkbari (2002), "the dominant trend in ELT context in Iran is toward more, not less, language teaching" (p. 21). The variety of English institutes in Iran signifies the great tendency to learn English. However, language instruction in Iran schools mostly focuses on learning and memorizing grammatical rules and does not lead to the development of oral abilities. According to Dahmardeh (2009), in countries like Iran, there is a constant pressure on teachers to teach textbooks imposed on them, follow the same syllabus, and prepare pupils for school exams.

Overall, in order to improve the instructional environment and quantity and quality of learning, understanding the students' perceptions of the classroom climate and the related factors seems to be a recognized necessity for researchers as well as teachers. Although various aspects of EFL classrooms can have great contributions to learners' different capabilities, they have been scarcely studied specially in an Iranian context. Thus, it is also worth emphasizing that the present study is one of the rare learning environment studies concerning EFL classroom settings in Iran. Moreover, examining and understanding the learners' reasons for achievement can lead the researchers to identify the underlying factors including motivational factors in the environment. Though, the potential associations between diverse components of classroom climate and EFL learners' goal orientations have been ignored in the past studies in Iran.

In essence, the goal of this particular research is to identify how EFL learners perceive their classroom climates and what their achievement goal orientations are. Besides, the study is to explicate whether the classroom climate can contribute to the learners' achievement goal orientations through analyzing the students' perceptions of the classroom environment factors and mostly focusing on the teachers' various behaviors and environment's psychological aspects. Further, the current study scrutinizes the effect of gender in students' perceived classroom environment and their achievement goal orientations in order to recognize its potential impact on each of the variables. This, to a large extent, helps to elucidate whether there is any difference in the way different genders perceive their classes as well as their achievement goals and the way different genders are treated in EFL classroom climates in Iran.

Based on the issues mentioned, this research sought to address the following five questions:

Q1. How do EFL students in Iran high schools perceive their classroom climates?
Q2. What are the achievement goal orientations of these students?
Q3. Is there any relationship between the learners' perceived classroom climate factors and their achievement goal orientations?

Q4. Is there any statistically significant difference between different genders in their perceived classroom climate factors?
Q5. Is there any statistically significant difference between different genders in their achievement goal orientations?

Literature Review

Classroom climate

Lately, the issue of classroom climate has been of great interest to many researchers and educational policy makers to identify the classroom characteristics that promote students' school success (Doll, Spies, LeClair, Kurien, & Foley, 2010). The important role of psychological climate of the classroom in the learning success and effectiveness has also been profoundly confirmed in the past research (Flanders, 1960; Majeed, Fraser, & Aldridge, 2002; Moos, 1979; Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, & Morrison, 2008 ; Walker & Fraser, 2005). The evidence, therefore, suggests that students' active engagement in learning can be partly attributed to characteristics of their educational context (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004).

In general, the literature shows that the students' perceptions of the learning environment are significantly associated with achievement related outcomes (Dorman, 2001; McRobbie & Fraser, 1993; Moos, 1979; Rajoo, 2013;Wong & Fraser 1996;) as well as socially and emotionally oriented outcomes (Fraser, 1994; Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Goetz, Pekrun, Hall, & Haag, 2006; Turner, Midgley, Meyer, Gheen, Anderman, Kang, & Patrick, 2002). The studies conducted by Margianti, Fraser, and Aldridge (2001), Fraser and Chionh (2000), and Riah and Fraser (1998) have provided convincing empirical evidence for Fraser's (1998) idea that the quality of the classroom environment in schools is a significant determinant of student learning. Most of the studies have suggested that in case that the students perceive the classroom environment positively, they can learn better and enjoy their lessons to a greater extent.

It is worth emphasizing here that few studies on language and language-related classroom environments have reported the evaluation, exploration or improvement of language learning classroom environments (e.g., Ebrahimi, Eskandari, & Rahimi, 2013; Chua, Wong, Thanq, & Chen, 2011; Wei, Brok, & Zhou, 2009).

Achievement goal orientations

One of the most critical determinants of students' level of cognitive engagement in school work or their choice of cognitive strategies is their motivation to learn (Wang, Liu, & Chye, 2010). The situation of how the achievement goal orientations were related to students' learning motives and achievement behaviors has been the concern of a number of empirical studies (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Green & Miller, 1996; Nolen, 1987). It has also been identified that mastery and performance goals adopted and perceived by the learners appear to be important factors in students' school behavior (Chan, Lai, Liun, & Moore, 2002). Generally, researchers have regarded achievement goal orientations as strong determinants of students' motivation and achievement behaviors. Moreover, prior research indicated that mastery orientations lead to challenge seeking, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and persistence, whereas performance orientations lead to a maladaptive pattern, task and challenge avoidance, and low motivation (Ames, 1992; Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Dweck, 1986; Midgley, 2002).

Concerning the contributions of each of the achievement goal orientations to other variables including students' cultures (e.g., Niemivirta, Rijavec, & Yamauchi, 2001), age (e.g., Akin, 2012), students' university course and level (e.g., Sepehri & Latifian, 2008; Matuga, 2009),

different studies have been conducted. Also, associations have been found between achievement goal orientations and learning strategies (e.g., Barzagar, 2012; Chan & Lai, 2006; Kahraman, 2011).

Classroom climate and goal orientations

There has been little analysis of actual classroom structures examining how certain structures within the classroom can make different goals salient (Ames, 1992). However, learners' behavioral engagement in the classroom is relevant to their adoption of different goal orientations (Anderman & Patrick, 2012). As Bulus (2011) stated, "since the literature shows that the achievement goal orientation is an important determinant of student behaviors in educational settings, researchers must focus on the classroom environment and teacher related variables that affect the development of mastery goal orientation" (p. 542).

A student's goal orientation as the predominant conceptualization of achievement motivation in the past decade (Watson, Meade, Surface, & VandeWalle, 2007) and whether one is oriented toward a learning or performance goal have been shown to be induced by situational constraints (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Midgely, 2002). Nonetheless, the links between classroom environment and students' motivation in terms of their achievement goal orientations have been explored by a few researchers applying different questionnaires. Ames (1992) examining the classroom environment in relation to achievement goal theory, confirmed that aspects of classroom climate including task, evaluation and recognition, and authority can contribute to different types of achievemnet goals. Turner et al. (2002) analyzed the relation between the learning environment (e.g., students' perceptions of the classroom goal structure and teachers' instructional discourse) and students' reported use of avoidance strategies and preference to avoid novelty in mathematics. Results indicated that students' reports of avoidance behaviors varied significantly and a perceived emphasis on mastery goals in the classroom was positively related to lower reports of avoidance.

Church, Elliot, and Gable (2001) identified that while mastery goals were linked to the presence of lecture engagement and the absence of a harsh evaluation, performance-approach goals were linked to the presence of evaluation focus. While the perceived classroom environment indirectly influenced achievement goal adoption, this achievement goal adoption, directly influenced graded performance and intrinsic motivation. Patrick, Ryan, and Kaplan (2007) found relations between students' mastery orientation and their amount of discussion of school work with other students and seeking their help. Mastery goal orientation has been also found to be associated with positive academic behaviors and putting much effort (Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, & Nichols, 1996). Considering assessment as part of the classroom environment, Alkharusi (2009) also testing a causal model demonstrated how different types of the classroom assessment environment directly and indirectly influenced students' adoption of mastery goals. Badri Gargari, Aryan Pour, and Farid (2011) examined Iranian high school students' goal orientations and their preference of the mathematics classroom environment and indicated that mastery-avoidance oriented learners preferred having responsibility in class activities. However, performance oriented learners preferred the classes emphasizing evaluation of their individual abilities.

The role of gender

As to the effect of gender, few studies have addressed the learners' perceived or preferred classroom climate and their achievement goal orientations across different genders. However, some conflicting findings have been offered. Hoang (2008) investigated different factors

including gender and grade level that might affect the attitudes and learning environment perceptions of high school mathematics students in Los Angeles. The results showed that males consistently reported slightly more positive perceptions of classroom environment and attitudes than did females. Moreover, Chan et al. (2002) analyzed the relationship between goal oientations and gender and recognized that female students were more performance goal oriented than male students, the reasons being related to socio-cultural factors. Yet, the results of a similar research done by Fouladchang, Marzooghi, and Shemshiri (2009) in Iran provided support for few of the western findings that males have a greater performance-approach goal orientation than females. With respect to research in the EFL field, Nakayama, Heffernan, Matsumoto, and Hiromori (2012) explored the relationship among non-linguistic variables (e.g., goal orientations, beliefs, and anxiety), past language experiences, and gender differences, and their impact on learning behaviors (e.g., strategies). They found that it is possible to "predict the tendency of our students' behaviors in learning English from their type of goal orientations and this provides room for us to prepare teaching plans based on the preference of the students' use of strategies" (p. 35).

Taken together, among the very few studies concerning the relationship between classroom climate and goal orientations, no studies have explored the EFL classroom environment and the achievement goals of EFL learners in specific. Besides, no study has been reported in this respect in Iran. It is worth noting that the conducted studies have used different methodologies and instruments putting distinct objectives into consideration. However, they have mostly focused on some selectively chosen components of classroom climate and some specific types of achievement goal orientations, mostly mastery goals. Furthermore, the role of gender has not been considered with regard to all the mentioned categories. Putting these shortcomings in the literature into consideration, the present study is to focus on different aspects of EFL classroom climate through an inclusive data collection instrument taking into account all the categories of achievement goal orientations and the effect of gender.

Methodology

Participants

Participants included 570 (319 females and 251 males) students at public schools in Ilam and Zanjan provinces in Iran, selected through cluster random sampling. They were of 14-18 years of age with the mean age of 17 and recruited in different grades of high school and drawn from 19 different schools and 55 classes.

Instrumentation

The two scales were translated into Persian in order to easily use them in the study; namely, students' perceived climate questionnaire and goal orientation questionnaire. Reliability and validity of the translated versions were also put into consideration. These steps are discussed in the subsequent parts. The measures are elaborated in detail in the following.

Classroom climate questionnaire

A striking feature of the field of climate research is the availability of reliable and valid questionnaires that have been developed and used for assessing students' perceptions of classroom environment (Fraser, 1998). Given this, the questionnaire, "What Is Happening in This Class? (WIHIC)" was found as a more recent and appropriate one for assessing the classroom climate in the specific situation of high schools. WIHIC consists of 56 items and seven subscales: *Student cohesiveness, teacher support, involvement, investigation, task orientation, cooperation,*

and *equity.* Each subscale contains eight 5-point Likert-type items ranging from 'Almost never' to 'Almost always'. Students were asked to rate each item based on their perception of the classroom learning environment. Typical items include: "I make friendships among students in this class." (Student cohesiveness), "I give my opinions during class discussions." (Involvement), and "I know the goals for this class" (Task orientation).

This questionnaire was also validated by Nikdel, Kadivar, Farzad, and Karimi (2010) and the factor analysis confirmatory indices were found to be appropriate (goodness of fit index 0.96; adjusted parameters of goodness of fit 0.94). In this study, the total value of test internal consistency was also 0.89 whereas values in sub scales internal consistency were respectively for students' cohesiveness (0.74), teacher's support (0.71), students' involvement (0.80), investigation (0.85), task orientation (0.84), cooperation (0.76), and equity (0.82).

Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ)

Elliot and McGregors' (2001) AGQ was applied to measure achievement goals in the classroom context. The AGQ is a twelve item scale which allows responses ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me) and represent four possible goal orientations. It comprises four subscales (mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance avoidance). Typical instances include "It is important for me to do better than other students" (performance-approach) and "My goal in this class is to avoid performing poorly" (performance-avoidance). The internal consistency coefficients of the mastery-approach goal (.79), performance-approach goal (.88), mastery-avoidance goal (.79), and performance-avoidance goal (.73) have been found to be satisfactory for the original questionnaire.

Validation of the translated version of the scales

To ascertain the validity for the use of the two scales in a non-English speaking culture, providing validity information is of critical importance. The scales were translated into Persian and two Ph.D. students in the field of translation studies were asked to verify the translation. They were back-translated by two other Ph.D. candidates in the same field to ascertain the translation fidelity. In order to confirm the sufficiency of sampling and appropriateness of the factor model for each of the main variables in the two scales, KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. As shown in Table 1, all the statistics for KMO measure were greater than 0.5 implying sufficiency of sampling. Furthermore, confidence level of 0.00 for Bartlett's test conveyed appropriateness of factor model for all of our main variables. No missing data was also found.

Table 1. *KMO and Bartlett's Test of Study Variables*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.825
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1314.707
	Df	66
	Sig.	.000

Then, to ensure the fitness of relationships among variables to the collected data, it was necessary to perform a confirmatory factor analysis with the help of AMOS 21 program. The calculated fitness indices (Table 2) indicated that the posited model of the relationships among study main variables fitted the data.

Table 2. *Structural Equation Model: Fit Statistics*

Fit statistics	Acceptable level	Current level	Evaluation
Normal chi-Square	2 <(x2/df) <5	4.269	Accept
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	RMSEA < 0.05	0.0442	Accept
Root Mean Squared Residual	RMR ≥ 0	2.105	Accept
Goodness-of-Fit Index	GFI > 0. 9	0.917	Accept
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	AGFI > 0.85	0.872	Accept
Normal Fit Index or Bentler-Bonett Index	NFI > 0.90	0.971	Accept
Comparative Fit Index	CFI > 0. 90	0.910	Accept
Incremental Fit Index	IFI > 0. 90	0.913	Accept

The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis revealing an integrated conceptual model of the relationships among the variables made us ensure the validity of the scales and led us to continue the research process.

Procedure

The study was conducted during winter and spring 2017. Consent was sought from the school directors as well as the classroom teachers for the students to participate in the study. Then, a survey questionnaire was administered, including classroom climate questionnaire and goal orientation questionnaire. The participants were ascertained of the confidentiality of their responses, and no student refused to take part. They were also asked to supply demographic information including their age, grade level, and gender. Before applying the statistical techniques for responding to the research questions, preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. To answer the first two research questions, descriptive statistics were applied. However, the third question was answered through correlation analysis and the last two questions were answered applying multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Results

Piloting results for the scales of WIHIC and AGQ

The two measures were administered to 100 students to explore their reliability. The results of the pilot study indicated an overall internal consistency of .933 for classroom climate questionnaire. Furthermore, Cronbach alphas for the subscales of student cohesiveness, teacher support, involvement, investigation, task orientation, cooperation, and equity were found to be .732, .769, .762, .866, .863, .761, .902 respectively. Moreover, concerning the achievement goal orientation questionnaire, a reliability of .746 was identified. Cronbach alphas for the subscales of performance-approach, performance-avoidance, mastery-approach, and mastery-avoidance were .585, .520, .610, .616 respectively. The findings let the study move a step forward to administering the scales for larger participants.

Research Question One

As regards how learners perceive their EFL classroom climates, the findings of each subscale in the questionnaire are put into consideration. With respect to *student cohesiveness* indicating the degree to which students know and assist each other, the Iranian high school students perceive their cohesiveness with their classmates as to be of high amount (M=30.70). The findings suggest that they highly have friendly relations with others, help them and get help from others. Related to *teacher support*, the mean score (M=23.14) indicates that the learners perceive a rather low degree of teachers' assistance, trust, friendliness and intimacy as well as lack of interest in the students' personal problems and feelings. Considering the third subscale, learners are not very actively involved in classroom discussions and are not very attentively interested in doing additional activities and enjoying asking and answering questions and generating ideas and explanations (M=25.06). As table 3 reveals, students' *investigation* is at the lowest amount (M= 22.60) compared with other variables in the scale suggesting subtle emphasis on the skills and process of inquiry and learners' involvement in problem solving opportunities. Concerning the subscale of *task orientation*, as shown in table 3, learners recognize completing and fulfilling the predetermined tasks and homework as being of overriding significance. Moreover, being matched with the subject matter and its mastery are preferred by most of the learners rather than acquiring extra skills and doing unnecessary activities which are not included in their course books (M=28.67). Related to the *cooperation*, it can be identified that learners are moderately involved in cooperative tasks and team work activities. Yet, it can be perceived from the responses to the questions, that if there were more cooperative opportunities for the learners to work together, they would prefer to be involved in such activities (M=25.40). Regarding the last subscale, the scores indicates that learners, to a great extent, are treated equally by their teachers having equal chances to participate in the class, ask and answer questions, and get help from their teachers (M=29.59).

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for the Scales of Perceived Classroom Climate and Achievement Goal Orientation*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
student cohesiveness	30.7081	5.34006	.27762
teacher support	23.1459	7.21714	.37520
Involvement	25.0649	6.96768	.36223
Investigation	22.6000	7.08194	.36817
task orientation	28.6703	5.74050	.29843
Cooperation	25.4081	7.17708	.37312
Equity	29.5973	7.33278	.38121
performance approach	17.3297	4.25787	.22136
performance avoidance	13.5000	4.68015	.24331
mastery approach	18.0730	3.79953	.19753
mastery avoidance	13.8081	5.18790	.26971

Research Question Two

As table 3 represents, most of the students perceived themselves as being mastery approach (M=18.07) and performance approach oriented (M=17.32) rather than mastery avoidance (M=13.80) and performance avoidance oriented (M=13.50). A large number of students tend to approach rather than avoid mastery and performance goals. They are less avoidance oriented than approach oriented. In other words, learners place more importance on learning, mastery, and demonstration of their abilities than on avoiding unfavorable situations and judgments. Moreover, most of the learners are mastery oriented meaning that they desire enhancing their knowledge and mastery of new tasks and materials in the class.

Research Question Three

Pearson correlation was applied to explore the relationships between variables of classroom climate and achievement goal orientations. According to Cohen (1988), a correlation of r= .1 to .29 is interpreted as small, r=.30 to .49 as medium, and r= .50 to 1.0 as strong. As table 4 indicates, regarding the performance approach, there were low positive correlations with the components of the perceived classroom climate. However, it was identified to have significant medium correlations with variables of involvement (r= .405), and task orientation (r= .423). With respect to performance and mastery avoidance variables in learners' achievement goal orientations, we identified very low correlations between performance and mastery avoidance and all the components of learners' perceived classroom climate. Yet, there were moderate correlations between learners' mastery approach and their perceptions of components of the classroom climate including student cohesiveness (r= .448), involvement (r= .465), cooperation (r= .487), and equity (r= .460). There was also a statistically significant strong correlation between learners' mastery approach and their task orientation (r= .617, sig= .0<.01)

Table 4. *Pearson Correlations between Subscales of Classroom Climate and Achievement Goal Orientations*

	performance approach	**performance avoidance**	**mastery approach**	**mastery avoidance**
student cohesiveness	.148**	.046	.448**	.123*
teacher support	.243**	.053	.232**	.075
Involvement	.405**	.029	.465**	.079
Investigation	.281**	.104*	.296**	.232*
task orientation	.423**	.127*	.617**	.315**
Cooperation	.361**	.095	.487**	.148**
Equity	.247**	-.014	.460**	.078

Research Question Four

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied so as to identify whether gender affects learners' perceptions of their classroom climate. As Table 5 illustrates, there is a statistically significant difference between learners' perceptions of the factors in classroom climate within sex group at both .05 and .01 level (Pillai's Trace = .136, F (8.159), sig=.000 and Wilks' Lambda = .864, F (8.159), sig= .000). Further exploration of the resulting tables indicated the significant differences lied in the subscales including student cohesiveness, involvement, task orientation, cooperation and equity.

Table 5. *MANOVA for the Impact of Gender on Learners' Perceived Classroom Climate and Achievement Goal Orientations*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	student cohesiveness	497.776	1	497.776	18.273	.000
	teacher support	90.705	1	90.705	1.745	.187
	Involvement	521.029	1	521.029	11.024	.001
	Investigation	41.089	1	41.089	.819	.366
	task orientation	1049.112	1	1049.112	34.748	.000
	Cooperation	1245.363	1	1245.363	25.802	.000
	Equity	757.475	1	757.475	14.607	.000
	performance approach	84.278	1	84.278	4.695	.031
	performance avoidance	32.025	1	32.025	1.464	.227
	mastery approach	447.634	1	447.634	33.760	.000
	mastery avoidance	12.916	1	12.916	.479	.489

Moreover, a comparison of the mentioned components of significant difference between genders in table 6 revealed that female students had higher mean scores than male students. This implied that females perceived more student cohesiveness, involvement, task orientation, cooperation and equity in their classroom climates than males. However, both genders expressed almost equal amounts of teacher support and investigation in their classes.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics for the Learners' Variables with respect to Gender*

Gender		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	performance approach	251	3.00	21.00	16.7550	4.98794
	performance avoidance	251	3.00	21.00	13.8543	4.63810
	mastery approach	251	3.00	21.00	16.7483	4.48586
	mastery avoidance	251	3.00	21.00	14.0331	5.01254
	student cohesiveness	251	9.00	42.00	29.3113	5.93092
	teacher support	251	8.00	40.00	22.5497	7.27066
	Involvement	251	8.00	40.00	23.6358	7.19582
	Investigation	251	8.00	39.00	22.1987	7.13771
	task orientation	251	11.00	40.00	26.6424	5.13465
	Cooperation	251	8.00	37.00	23.1987	7.23327
	Equity	251	9.00	40.00	27.8742	7.11084
	Valid N (listwise)	251				
Female	performance approach	319	3.00	21.00	17.7260	3.63063
	performance avoidance	319	3.00	21.00	13.2557	4.70393
	mastery approach	319	6.00	21.00	18.9863	2.92173
	mastery avoidance	319	3.00	21.00	13.6530	5.31124
	student cohesiveness	319	14.00	40.00	31.6712	4.66705
	teacher support	319	8.00	40.00	23.5571	7.16773

involvement	319	9.00	40.00	26.0502	6.64515
investigation	319	8.00	39.00	22.8767	7.04627
task orientation	319	12.00	40.00	30.0685	5.72936
cooperation	319	8.00	40.00	26.9315	6.74366
equity	319	8.00	40.00	30.7854	7.26273
Valid N (listwise)	319				

Research Question Five

MANOVA was applied again in order to respond the question leading to the recognition of whether gender affects learners' achievement goal orientations. Representing multivariate tests as shown in table 5, the differences were significant within sex group at both .05 and .01 levels (Pillai's Trace = .108, F (11.00), sig=.000 and Wilks' Lambda = .121, F (11.00), sig= .000). Further test showed that the significant differences were at the approach subscales of performance and mastery and a study of the mean scale scores of the sex groups in Table 6 indicated that female learners had more inclination toward performance and mastery approach goals than male learners whereas avoidance goals showed no significant difference across sex groups.

Discussion

Learners' perceived class climate has been shown to be significantly attributed to their success and achievement in the past research (e.g., Majeed, Fraser, & Aldridge, 2002; Walker & Fraser, 2005). In this line, the first research question was addressed to analyze EFL learners' perceived classroom climate. The findings revealed that students being very cohesive with their classmates in most of the team work opportunities are almost highly task oriented and prefer going in line with the predetermined course book contents and teacher set materials. This also indicates the compliance of the learners with the particular characteristics of the EFL learning setting in Iran as elaborated above. Moreover, notwithstanding that they feel less support and intimacy from their teachers, they judge their teachers' various actions as equitable and impartial enough. Besides, the results purport to indicate a moderate degree of student involvement and cooperation in the class activities. However, the students are significantly less involved in the mindful investigation of challenging questions and issues at home or during class time.

Whether one is oriented toward a mastery or performance goal has been demonstrated to be a function of individual differences and situational constraints (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). With respect to the EFL learners' types of achievement goal orientations, this specific study also shows that students are, to a large extent, more mastery oriented than avoidance oriented in terms of both approach and performance goals. To wit, they prefer to master the materials presented by the teacher and boost their understanding of the introduced topics and contents in the class. Yet, they do not much care about avoiding inappropriate learning chances or unpleasant teacher or classmate way of thinking. This has been frequently observed in our school classes.

As Ames (1992) and Bulus (2011) held, elements of classroom climate and students' goal orientations need to be considered as having important contributions to each other. A further step in the study illustrated significant moderate relationships between the goal orientation of performance approach and factors of classroom climate including involvement and task orientation and between the goal orientation of mastery approach and the factors of student cohesiveness, involvement, cooperation, and equity. These findings are, to a great extent, in line with the findings of Ames (1992) and Midgley (2002).

The results of the current study also considerably represents that the students who are performance approach oriented are more likely to be involved in the classroom practices and prefer mastery of class materials and course book contents. Additionally, mastery approach oriented learners are plausibly more interested in cohesively organized, individual and cooperative involvement in the class tasks and discussions and most probably they are treated equitably by their teachers. The relation between mastery orientation and involvement including effortful and attentive participation in the class has been also demonstrated by Miller et al. (1996). Meanwhile, regarding its link with student cohesiveness and cooperation, this study provided support for the research done by Patrick, Ryan, and Kaplan (2007).

Church, Elliot, and Gable (2001) identified mastery goals to be connected with the presence of lecture engagement and the absence of harsh evaluation. Our study, yet, revealed a statistically significant strong correlation between learners' mastery approach and their task orientation indicating that mastery oriented learners in terms of goal orientation are more task oriented concerning their classroom climate. This association has been ignored in the previous studies. Though, we found low correlations between performance and mastery avoidance and all the components of learners' perceived classroom climate.

Another phase of the analysis of the results pertinent to the role of the gender revealed significant differences between different genders in the subscales of classroom climate including student cohesiveness, involvement, task orientation, cooperation, and equity. It significantly implies that female students perceive much more amount of these five components in their classroom climates than males. This finding is in contrast with the results of the study conducted by Hoang (2008). This highly suggests that females are more cohesively tied with their friends in the EFL classes and they are more involved in most individual or cooperative tasks than males. They are also treated more equally by their teachers throughout classroom back and forth interaction than males. Nevertheless, equal amounts of teacher support and investigation in their classes were reported by the EFL learners for both genders.

Related to the role of gender in students' achievement goal orientations, we uncovered significant differences across gender lying in the variables of performance approach and mastery approach. This finding again significantly led to the conclusion that female learners are more approach oriented regarding either mastery or performance than male learners. This partly provides parallel evidence for the previous research conducted by Chan et al. (2002) which indicated that female students were more performance goal oriented than male students. Though, the present study provides contrasting findings with the research which was done by Fouladchang, Marzooghi, and Shemshiri (2009) who found male students more performance approach oriented than females.

Conclusion

The findings of the current research illustrated that Iranian EFL students perceived their classes in particular ways which can be remarkably conceived as contributing to leaners' various attributes and outcomes. In addition, learners' perceptions of their EFL environment need to be considered by classroom teachers in order to make them capable of complying with their students' specific demands and choosing the most appropriate methods and activities in line with those characteristics. Meanwhile, the study also revealed the EFL leaners' types of goal orientations and their existing significant associations with leaners' perceived classroom climate. Also gender was shown to have significant relations with students' perceptions of some climate factors and achievement goal orientations. The results provide useful information and implications for EFL teacher educators and researchers, as well as syllabus designers in the

identification of the achievement goals of the students and planning the classroom environments in line with their goals accordingly. Moreover, EFL instructors and scholars should take into consideration the significant role of gender in specifying and understanding various facets of classroom climate and learners' needs and goals.

This paper can also be of interest from the standpoint of providing cross-cultural validation of the two instruments of classroom climate questionnaire and achievements goal orientations scale. Notwithstanding, the translation of the measures into different language results is limitations to the technical adequacy of the measures. Besides, the current study could be replicated to see the results concerning the learners' perceptions of their classroom climate, their achievement goal orientations, and their corresponding relations in places other than public schools like private schools, language institutes, and universities which either teach English as a general course or for specific proposes. The results might vary in different EFL settings in Iran since each of these environments entails distinct features and a variety of students' perceptions. Furthermore, future research can be conducted to see the possible relations between leaners' perceived classroom climate factors and other cognitive and affective variables in diverse EFL settings.

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