

# Student perceptions of teacher immediacy, credibility, and love of pedagogy in enhancing engagement and motivation in higher EFL education

Amel Shoaib 

King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Western Region, Saudi Arabia

Received: Sep 15, 2023 / Revised: Sep 29, 2023 / Accepted: Oct 5, 2023 / Published Online: Oct 15, 2023  
© Pioneer Publications LTD 2023

## Abstract

The study provides an exploration into the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship within an EFL context. Through the use of qualitative analysis, it investigates the effect of immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love on student engagement and motivation within a Saudi Arabian higher education setting. The study reveals that the three dispositions, when interconnected, can foster a conducive learning environment that encourages active student participation and enhances academic learning. The importance of prioritizing emotional connections over purely linguistic goals and integrating cultural and social beliefs into pedagogical practices were also explored. It also underscored the importance of using the vernacular in promoting cultural identity and positioning teachers as influential role models. The study further identifies student perceptions of respect from authoritative figures as significant and that teacher energy, both physical and intellectual, as critical in shaping student acceptance of the learning environment. Lastly, it highlights a generational shift in teaching methodologies towards a more modern, humanistic style in line with changing generations. The research ends with recommendations for professional development to engage language learners effectively and improve educational outcomes.

**Keywords** teacher immediacy, credibility, love of pedagogy, motivation, engagement, higher EFL education, Saudi Arabia

## 1. Introduction

Many educators in higher education do not fully recognize the significance of teacher behavior on English as a foreign language (EFL) students. New generations of learners expect a more interactive and inclusive learning experience, placing equal importance on both academic and social growth. They desire a teacher who can hold their attention, maintain a good rapport, encourage engagement, and foster fairness. It has been empirically proven that immediacy, credibility (Guo et al., 2022; Liu, 2021), and love of pedagogy (Vanderheiden, 2023) can increase student motivation and enjoyment in EFL educational settings. Therefore, it can be argued that these dispositions can connect instructors and students because of their potential to create a positive educational environment. However, within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), teacher psychology research is still scarce and has been overshadowed by the focus on learners (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). Moreover, the field is still in its infancy especially in the Middle East, and in Saudi Arabia specifically. Therefore, empirical research is needed to understand the effect of the above-mentioned dispositions. This work attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of how EFL students

perceive their collective impact and what influences their engagement and motivation. Most importantly, it provides practical suggestions for pedagogical application. Thus, this study aims to examine EFL student perceptions of teacher immediacy, credibility, and love of pedagogy in a Saudi Arabian higher education context.

## 2. Literature Review

Within the field of EFL education, the influence of teacher immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love on student learning and motivation is a subject of growing importance as it can impact learner engagement, enthusiasm, and academic success. By examining the interplay of these three dispositions within the context of EFL instruction, a better understanding of the dynamics that foster a conducive learning environment can be reached. Accordingly, this review is divided into four sections: immediacy, credibility, pedagogical love, and ends with an exploration of cultural issues focusing on Saudi Arabian higher education.

### 2.1. Teacher Immediacy

The behavior of language teachers plays a pivotal role within the classroom. Teacher immediacy is rooted in the

clinical psychology work of Albert Mehrabian and encompasses actions that emotionally or physically connect individuals (Mehrabian, 1971). While initially explored in other areas, Anderson's (1978) study introduced the concept to education, prompting subsequent research on its significance in affective learning and motivation (Liu, 2021). The foundation of teacher immediacy traces back to theories of interpersonal attraction (Nayernia et al., 2020) and approach-avoidance theory (Hsu, 2010). Extending these assumptions to education, Estep and Roberts (2015) suggest that students are drawn to teachers who minimize psychological and emotional distance via verbal and nonverbal behavior as both are crucial in the classroom. Nonverbal cues include eye contact, smiles, relaxed body posture, and gestures (Chesbro & McCroskey, 2001). They create rapport between instructors and students (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021) and extend to virtual learning such as responsiveness, use of media (Fahara & Castro, 2015), caring, (Walkem, 2014), and the use of fonts and emoticons (Al Ghamdi, 2017). Conversely, verbal immediacy involves language-based behavior such as using student names, inclusive language, conversation engagement, asking questions, and sharing personal examples (Gorham, 1988). Tone of voice (Pawlak et al., 2020), humor, praise, and encouragement of voiced opinions and questions (Scales, 2016), irony (Fadel & Al-Bargi, 2018), and spontaneous humor (Neff & Dewaele, 2023) are also examples. In online settings, similar practices also apply, such as the use of open-ended questions (Fahara & Castro, 2015), self-disclosure (Song et al., 2016), and e-feedback (Conrad & Dabbagh, 2015).

Teacher immediacy significantly impacts student motivation. It garners respect and 'liking power' from students (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000), leading to compliance and reduced psychological distance, ultimately improving academic achievement (Özdaş, 2022). It fuels motivation and cognitive mastery (Ai & Giang, 2018), while reducing emotional exhaustion (Gholamrezaee & Ghanizadeh, 2018). Furthermore, when perceived positively, it can foster cooperation and engagement (Katt & Condly, 2009). According to Yan (2021), it can also enhance the feeling of classroom justice. However, Claus et al. (2012) warns that low immediate teachers often encounter resistance from students. In language education, immediacy is vital for second language (L2) learning. It shapes student attitudes toward a foreign language (De Smet et al., 2018), thus enhancing motivation (Hussain et al., 2021) and creating environments that combat burnout (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) and anxiety (Kelly et al., 2015). It can also improve the willingness to attend classes which can lead to better academic achievement (Sheybani, 2019). Student perceptions of immediacy behavior can also create an educational setting with less stress, more student concentration (Farnia & Mohammadi, 2021), metalinguistic awareness, interest (Askildson, 2005), pragmatic proficiency (Hempelmann, 2016) and decreased boredom (Qin, 2021). It also enhances self-confidence, retention, and learning outcomes (Frymier et al., 2019). According to Ai and Giang (2018), this behavior can increase future enrolment of students with the same instructor, attachment to a subject, degree completion,

and even institutional integration. Consequently, because of its potential to enrich L2 learning and motivation, there is a need to improve teachers' awareness of its pedagogical worth.

## 2.2. Credibility

Similar to immediacy, credibility is also an important disposition in the learning process. While the former relates to communication behaviors fostering engagement and reducing psychological distance, credibility centers on a teacher's professional qualities, encompassing competence, caring, and trustworthiness (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). High teacher credibility correlates with increased motivation and achievement (Santilli et al., 2011). It shapes teacher-student interactions and learning outcomes (Al-Zoubi, 2016), driving attendance and engagement (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Trustworthiness and caring foster students' willingness to talk in the classroom (Myers, 2004), while enthusiasm enhances perceptions of approachability (Stipek, 2006). Gutiérrez et al. (2023) claim that for instructors to be perceived as credible, they should only share personal information that is relevant to the course and avoid exhibiting improper behavior. Cross-cultural studies mirror credibility's positive impact on learning and motivation with increased affective and cognitive learning and high motivation (Myers & Martin, 2018). Furthermore, recent research reveals its connection to student engagement and satisfaction (Froment & Gutiérrez, 2022).

Credibility also extends to immediacy, as students associate nonverbal cues with higher credibility levels (Klebig et al., 2016). This means the two concepts intertwine, driving motivation and affective learning (Pogue & AhYun, 2006). When students perceive immediate behavior as appropriate and relevant, teachers are viewed as competent, trustworthy, and caring (Schrodt, 2013). Within the EFL context, positive perception of teacher immediacy helps the formation of a favorable attitude towards credibility, which in turn encourages classroom participation (Asiri, 2013). These perceptions can even motivate English communication, transcending native speaker status (Lee, 2020). Within Eastern cultures, Safaei and Shahrokhi (2019) argue that EFL teachers generally maintain a certain distance from students to uphold classroom order, especially in big classes. Sarani et al. (2019) results investigate a different perspective emphasizing that instructors with more native-like accents are perceived as more credible. Finally, credibility can affect language achievement as it is a significant predictor of willingness to attend EFL classes (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Moreover, both credibility and immediacy are closely related to the concept of *teacher energy*. This concept can be defined as an instructor's investment in terms of time, sensory, and emotional involvement, as well as effort in the classroom as Pishghadam et al. (2023) state. They emphasize the need for congruency between a teacher's perceived enthusiasm and student perceptions as it can enhance classroom dynamics, engagement, and learning outcomes. Therefore, recognizing such interconnectedness can guide effective pedagogical practices, creating an enriching and motivating

educational experience for EFL learners.

### 2.3. Pedagogical Love

This construct is intricately linked to immediacy and credibility, as love for students and teaching is pivotal in education (Freire, 2005). Zhao and Li (2021) advocate for a deeper understanding of its relevance to SLA. Pedagogical love is defined as positive and empathetic attitudes and behaviors towards students (Chen, 2023) that foster self-discovery and humanize learning (Grimmer, 2021). It is associated with kindness, empathy, and care (Zhao & Li, 2021). Cuddy et al. (2008) assert that people are cognitively more receptive to signals of warmth over competence. Furthermore, pedagogical love is connected to positive student emotions such as enjoyment and enthusiasm (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). Dewaele and Thirtle (2009) argue that students need to perceive language acquisition as enjoyable and attainable, as the quality of instruction is the most crucial determinant of their success. Teacher enthusiasm is also associated with love of pedagogy. It plays a significant role in effective instruction and student learning (Keller et al., 2016) and can help motivate students to attend classes (Brewer & Burgess, 2005) and continue their academic pursuits (Wheless et al., 2011). Pedagogical love can also create a platform for problem-solving, emotional encouragement, heightened classroom engagement, and successful achievements (Yin et al., 2019). Finally, Barcelos and Coelho (2016) underscore its role in nurturing student potential, empathy, and individual strengths.

Unfortunately, within the L2 field, scholarly research on love of pedagogy is scarce and focuses mainly on teacher perspectives (Chen, 2023). Researchers such as Wang et al. (2022) highlight its L2 potential and note that Asian societies, being collectivist cultures with group-oriented viewpoints, may be more receptive to its adoption than Western settings. Furthermore, Li and Rawal (2018) found that good student relations improve understanding and acceptance. Therefore, understanding the role of pedagogical love in relation to student perception is vital as it mirrors the importance of other dispositions such as immediacy and credibility. The construct's potential to enhance engagement, emotional well-being, and overall learning experiences, underscores the need for further exploration within educational settings.

### 2.4. Intercultural Issues

It is generally accepted that cross-cultural similarities and differences between societies exist, and that perceptions of immediacy and credibility can differ (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Neuliep, 1997). However, existing literature is limited. Of note is McCroskey et al.'s (1996) study which finds that Eastern culture students show a stronger connection between high teacher immediacy and enhanced cognitive learning than Western ones. Neuliep's (1997) research highlights that nonverbal immediacy was more predictive of learning outcomes for Asian students whereas verbal immediacy was prevalent in Western environments. On a similar note, López-Ozeiblo's (2015) work finds a lower inclination for nonverbal teaching behaviors in Hong Kong, contrasting with

Western learners. Santilli et al. (2011) found that Brazilian students rely heavily on nonverbal cues in their evaluation of instructors as it can enhance credibility and help increase student learning. That said, a study by Johnson and Miller (2002) claims that teachers who demonstrate greater immediacy are perceived as more credible by both US and African students. Thus, these mixed results show there is a need for more culture-specific educational research because of the crucial role it plays in influencing student perceptions in different societies.

In Saudi Arabia, studies on teacher behavior are scarce. There are only three studies, to the researcher's knowledge, that investigate student perceptions about immediacy and none touching on credibility or pedagogical love. Asiri's (2013) mixed research findings reveal that verbal cues are often more effective than others. He also highlights that in collectivist societies, social harmony is important and therefore nonverbal cues might be used to hide negative feelings and express positive ones. Furthermore, he asserts that when teachers use verbal cues, the impact of nonverbal immediacy on cognitive learning seems to be minimal. However, his findings collaborate with other studies that find immediacy helps cultivate interpersonal student relations, enhance communication, and promote student learning and success. A similar study also investigates immediacy but in a virtual setting. Al Ghamdi's (2017) quantitative work identifies a positive correlation between lecturers' immediacy and affective/cognitive learning. He claims that positive immediacy perceptions influence student attitudes towards virtual education. Moreover, he finds that male students were generally more receptive to learning when the lecturer demonstrated immediate behavior. The study by Alharbi (2018) signifies the importance of teachers taking cultural factors into consideration when implementing e-immediacy practices, specifically family restrictions and urban/rural backgrounds. Her mixed methods approach identifies responsiveness, providing feedback, offering guidance and instructions, asking questions, and demonstrating care as the most frequently employed immediacy practices. In summary, despite their number, these studies highlight the importance of investigating the impact of teachers on student learning.

Notwithstanding the existing research, limited attention has been given to EFL students' perceptions of immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love in virtual and in-person learning environments in the Middle East. This research is not only crucial in Western contexts but also in other cultures; therefore, there is a need for more empirical investigations (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Accordingly, this study aims to explore the impact of these three constructs on Saudi Arabian EFL students. In order to do this, two research questions have been put forward:

1. What teacher immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love behaviors and characteristics are significantly associated with student engagement and learning motivation in a higher EFL Saudi Arabian education context?

2. How does teacher immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love enhance the learning environment for Saudi Arabian EFL students in higher education?

The aim of this study is to delve into the nuanced

dynamics of these constructs and their effects on student engagement and motivation. As education continues to evolve, understanding the interplay between teacher behavior and student responses becomes crucial in shaping effective and engaging learning environments.

### 3. Methodology

As the existing literature has not provided a detailed overview of the three dispositions and their impact on students in the Saudi Arabian context, it is imperative to gain a more comprehensive understanding of learner insights and perceptions of their teachers. To explore this phenomenon, a qualitative approach is deemed most suitable. It allows participants to be contextualized within their unique experiences and provides insights into the complex dynamics that underlie behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### 3.1. Participants

For this study, seven university students in their final semester were purposefully selected as participants. These students, aged between 22 and 26, were enrolled in a four-year English BA program and were known to the researcher. All participants were female Saudi nationals, and pseudonyms were employed to ensure confidentiality. All of them provided informed consent to take part in the research and for any related interview material to be published.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Method

The study employed a focus group approach, facilitated by a semi-structured interview guide. This method is particularly suited for exploring emerging topics in-depth, providing a balance between standardized questions and the flexibility to probe further when necessary (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants were instructed to collectively choose an instructor who had taught them in two or more courses and had made a notable impression on them. It is worth noting that although they mentioned she was young, they did not disclose her name to the researcher during or after the focus group, so the study's credibility and validity would not be affected. Most of the courses took place during the COVID-19 online learning period but three of the students also had face-to-face experiences with the instructor as well. The focus group lasted approximately three hours, and was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. A colleague from the same department reviewed the transcription and compared it to the recording to ensure accuracy. Additionally, she also reviewed the Arabic translation, given participants' language preferences during the interview.

#### 3.3. Trustworthiness & Reliability

Rigorous measures were taken to ensure the credibility of the work. Apart from rich description and participant cross-validation, strategies such as audio recording, personal transcription, and literature alignment were employed. These measures enhanced the credibility

of the findings and accuracy of the analysis. The aim was not to make generalizations but develop and describe themes in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, all the data were stored on the researcher's computer and will be there for five years in compliance with APA regulations (Nezu, 2018). Additionally, approval was granted by the university's ethics review board.

#### 3.4. Data Analysis

The researcher used Dedoose (Version 9.0.17, 2021), a cloud-based application, to organize and analyze data. According to Kaczynski et al. (2019), it is a software-based platform designed to make coding and reaching credible evidence easier. To understand the interconnections within the dataset, the interview was analyzed following a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The process commenced with repeated readings of the transcript to become familiar with the dataset. After that, several initial codes were constructed using the literature review as a starting point. Subsequently, more codes emerged and were then organized systematically. Next, relationships were formulated. These were refined and adjusted to ensure that the developed codes accurately encapsulated the content of the interview. Each main theme had detailed sub-codes that helped categorize the data. For instance, one example was 'Instructional strategies.' The sub-codes for this theme were 'creative pedagogy use,' 'interactive class activities,' 'rich media integration,' and 'reflective feedback.' They were all related to the teaching approach the instructor used and were therefore grouped together. To minimize bias, an intercoder reliability check was conducted by another colleague. In the final phase, the researcher made sure the codes corresponded with the study aim and that data saturation was attained. Overall, the coding system facilitated the analysis of the data and helped identify specific themes in the study.

### 4. Results

The analysis revealed distinct personal traits of the selected instructor that led students to perceive her as an immediate, credible, and pedagogically affectionate. These characteristics were notably salient across the dataset. Thus, these core attributes were classified into four predominant themes: teacher-student interaction methods, instructional strategies, classroom management and environment, and cultural/linguistic sensitivity. Additionally, a fifth theme, emerged during the analysis which unveiled the complex interplay and interconnectedness of the first four themes and their collective impact on student motivation and engagement.

The first theme, *teacher-student interaction strategies*, refers to the methods employed by the teacher to engage with students and build rapport. These encompass both verbal and non-verbal techniques. Initially, her continuous display of respect, care, and empathy emerged as a prime example of immediate behavior and played an essential role in enhancing student motivation. This was noted by one of the interviewees:

*“She used to respect students in class. Even if a student gave a wrong answer, she would never say to the student like ‘Stupid, stupid answer!’ This was not her way.”* (P1). This deliberate choice to avoid belittling behavior not only secured students' feelings towards her but also increased her credibility and illustrated her love of the profession and to her students. The educator also expressed empathy, as one student exemplified, *“When the girls used to tell her we are stressed because of quizzes, she would use stickers like ‘You are almost there’ or ‘You can do it’ in our WhatsApp group to kind of ease the situation and make us feel more motivated and want to keep trying”* (P2). The excerpt demonstrates the teacher's acknowledgment of academic challenges and her innovative approach to addressing them. This behavior can inspire students to participate actively in learning and encourage target language risk-taking. Furthermore, open dialogue was encouraged as one student explained, *“We had the freedom to interact with her and ask questions whenever we liked. I believe that is what made her classes really motivating.”* (P3). Her actions not only fostered strong rapport and motivation but also eliminated barriers to learning.

Humor also played a significant role in the interactional practices of the EFL teacher. The goal was to enhance student learning without compromising the educational process. As P4 noted: *“Too much humor will make students lose respect for their doctor but she was able to have a balance between seriousness and humor.”* The quote highlights the significance of maintaining such an approach as its excessive use might compromise respect for the instructor. Moreover, the teacher's use of humor was always within educational boundaries as another student added: *“Her humor always stays within the course, and this is something we all really like about her”* (P5). This excerpt highlights the importance of the appropriate use of humor as it influences the way credibility is perceived. However, the students also mentioned conditions for them to accept its use such as having a connection with the teacher. Another condition is its proper use so not to disrupt the learning process. Finally, a teacher should be skilled in the art of blending various humorous components for a balanced and effective integration. One of the learners explained this as follows:

*She likes to play with words, and it isn't boring. With her, it is all about using a little of everything. A little humor, a little sarcasm, a few jokes here and there, the element of surprise from time to time and of course the way she uses her voice.* (P6)

The quote provides insight into the strategic use of wordplay in the classroom as it can break monotony and sustain interest. Moreover, its use can also inspire a similar response from students as asserted by P5: *“it enables me to also be humorous if I wanted to.”* This reciprocal exchange of humor encouraged free expression and gave students the option of being more responsive. That said, both verbal and nonverbal behavior affected learners. The teacher's use of tone not only broke the dullness of the lecture, but also helped maintain student focus. Additionally, eye contact emerged as a powerful tool in promoting teacher-student interaction, especially during

in-person teaching as noted by one of the students, *“It helped me feel like I am a part of the group if that makes sense... she looks at you, she makes you feel you want to get involved, you want to talk.”* (P1). The quote illustrates a sense of belonging, making the student feel that she was an integral part of the class rather than just a passive recipient of information. It also promoted an educational environment conducive to the willingness to communicate.

*Instructional strategies* is the second theme that emerged from the data. It refers to the methods/techniques used by an educator to facilitate learning and enhance student comprehension to achieve educational objectives. Firstly, the teacher used creative pedagogy in her courses which was done by using non-traditional EFL classroom assignments. According to P3, they drew out personal skills: *“She just gave us these small assignments ... We were just given the freedom to be as creative as we wanted with them and that brought up so much potential we never knew we had.”* Providing opportunities for creativity allowed learners to tap into latent capabilities. She also used interactive activities in class to create a motivating learning atmosphere, as one student explained: *“She makes us watch movies and clips and this makes the class so much fun. Her questions after we watch the movie are funny and the acting that we do is even more fun.”* (P2). The excerpt demonstrates how the teacher leveraged various instructional strategies to promote a stimulating learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the instructor also integrated rich media in her teaching as P7 explained: *“Sometimes the instructor uses memes in her slides. The memes she uses really attract me because I love memes. We all love memes. I think she understands us very well.”* A teacher's effort to remain in tune with student interests and incorporate them into the classroom experience demonstrates adaptability to changes in social norms and technology. Finally, the instructor also used reflective feedback as a tool to reflect on her learners' overall learning experience and academic goals. It is worth noting she did this for both online and in-person teaching. One of the participants explained as follows:

*It was our last assignment, and she was evaluating it and she wrote each of us a long comment about our progress and our efforts and even wished us luck on our finals and memories and stuff like that...it was something to cherish!* (P3)

The quote demonstrates a deep level of engagement and personal connection that signifies investment in students' personal growth and validates their efforts. This reiterates that teaching and learning extend beyond the impartment of knowledge.

The third theme identified was *classroom management and environment*. Firstly, the teacher's code of conduct played a crucial role in molding the educational setting. P1 explained its importance as follows: *“I was taught by many instructors but not all of them cared that the students take each other's time in class. ... But not her, she cared.”* The teacher's implementation of a value system instilled a sense of justice and fairness in the students. This type of action signified her genuine concern for them. Still, another teacher characteristic that stood out in the dataset was the unique teacher-student relationship as P5

explained: “She is professional but at the same time she gives us the impression that she is our friend or our sister.” The teacher’s deep affection for her profession and her students was evident. Although she had a strong bond with them, it was exercised in moderation to ensure focus remained on professionalism and academic goals.

Additionally, energy emerged as a central theme perceived as a key to successful teacher-student dynamics. One of the learners elaborated on this: “We respond to energy! And we as students pick up on a teacher’s energy. Our response to them as a person depends on their energy towards us.” (P6). This quote underscores the pivotal role of positivity and enthusiasm as the students are likely to react to it. Interestingly, this construct was multifaceted in nature. It can extend beyond the stereotypical enthusiasm-tag leading to high confidence in one’s abilities as P7 explains, “Energy is body movement, it’s tone, it’s motivational words, it’s small pieces of advice throughout the lecture to make a student feel and know that they’re capable of anything and everything.” It could also be the intellectual part of a teacher’s energy which is more than just personal enthusiasm. As one interviewee described:

*It’s how the instructor feels towards the course being taught ... how far she has interest in that field, and how she is up to date with the new studies in the arena of that field and how much she is excited and motivated to give the material, all of that will reflect on the class’s atmosphere, and the students will feel it and respond to it depending on the degree of all of that. (P3)*

Interestingly, this quote depicts energy as an amalgamation of a teacher’s passion for the subject which can lead to heightened interest and engagement.

The fourth theme to emerge from the dataset was *cultural and linguistic sensitivity*. There was a consensus among all participants that the teacher respected Saudi Arabian culture, a characteristic they also valued. During the focus group, they were asked specific questions about inappropriate language use in the classroom. Interestingly, the discussion around this topic focused on an understanding of the constraints of culture, by both the teacher and students. Given the conservative nature of the society, the use of such language is rarely used within academic settings. P4 elaborated on this: “I feel the Saudi culture seeps into the university and that is why she doesn’t do it and her students don’t do it as well because they understand how the system works.” Respecting the cultural nuances of society played a crucial role in maintaining communication without crossing cultural boundaries. From a language perspective, the teacher also exhibited sensitivity in her use of vernacular varieties of both English and Arabic. The EFL students believed their instructor was an admirable language role model. Many of them admitted to having a collection of her quotes for keepsake as she was described as “our role model” (P2). This shows that the instructor was not only credible but also had a positive impact on language learning motivation. Moreover, all the interviewees agreed that standard English was the main language of instruction. However, they also reported sporadic use of nonstandard varieties which motivated them as P5 elaborated: “Because she is professional and uses standard English you wouldn’t

expect her to say something funny but then she inserts a vernacular word, and it makes it so funny, so she surprises you and makes you laugh.” While the teacher understood how to make the lessons engaging and memorable, more importantly, she offered real-world examples of authentic English language usage. From another perspective, when asked about the effect of accent on them, one of the students explained: “To be honest, I don’t think it made a difference to us ... What mattered was her character with us, how she dealt with us, her humor, her tone, and the energy she gave off.” (P4). This illustrated that effective teaching relies more on the teacher’s ability to connect with students on an emotional level than a linguistic one. Contrastingly, the final language related impact was the use of Arabic in class. According to the learners, the use of their native language was significant. P1 provided an example to elaborate: “She would use English to explain all this and then all of a sudden, she uses an Arabic colloquial phrase like ‘fabrijal tijfish’ (the guy gave up). It just made it so funny!” It is apparent that the instructor understood how to reach these students and use Arabic for impact and trust building.

The final theme relates to the impact of the aforementioned four themes on learner engagement and motivation. It directly affected the classroom environment, student learning attitudes, and their academic performance. Firstly, a strong educator can dramatically enhance the enjoyability of the learning process. Despite this study’s reliance on qualitative methods, it was noteworthy that references to the teacher’s reactions, teaching, stories, and expressions were described as either fun or funny occurred over 60 times within the interview context. Her teaching was, as articulated by one participant, “A combination of so many things!” (P7). This enhanced students’ perceptions that her class was more special than other ones as P6 claimed: “I really feel it helped with motivation; motivation to go to class, motivation to pay attention, motivation to do the work ... because it was different from the other classes.” This difference even affected the way her courses were perceived by the students. As P4 claimed, “All the courses I took with her were the least pressured.” The creation of such an atmosphere illustrates a positive image and nurturing learning environment. Interestingly, one of the students compared this teacher with a more serious one as follows:

*We had this one teacher who was so serious, and we couldn’t ask anything because she gets distracted if we do and she sometimes even gets really mad, so we stopped asking questions in her class, but this teacher uses humor and fun in all her classes. We can make conversations with her and even collaborate with her in the lecture with our ideas but not with the other one. (P3)*

The quote contrasts the experiences and outcomes between the two teaching styles. It sheds light on the importance of creating a space conducive to learning as P7 explained:

*She created a strong bond because you know when the class or the atmosphere in it is so serious and all the information is also serious and requires a lot of focusing but then the teacher just throws some humor in there in*

*her different ways, the students know that it's really a comfortable and safe place where they can ask questions and make conversations with the teacher.*

The instructor's personality was perceived as approachable, thus creating strong rapport and fostering high engagement. It helped "*students remember things better because they actually had fun*" (P6). The previous response also suggests that the teaching strategy applied managed to effectively align with the student learning style and aided in the successful acquisition of knowledge. Interestingly, it had another lasting impression on them as P5 mentioned, "*That is what made us love literature!*" Through the teacher's genuine passion and enthusiasm for her field, she managed to inspire the students and ignite a similar interest in them. This facilitated deeper learning as students were intrinsically motivated to be in the class and to understand the subject.

The student environment and the attitudes they had to learn all played a role in their successful academic achievement. Most of the students described the classroom environment as stress-free learning zones that facilitated better absorption and retention of information. As P7 explained: "*I came out of the course with big knowledge. My final was so good. ... It was kind of like a revision. I understood everything we took.*" This emphasizes that being in an enjoyable course can enhance understanding, shaping a student's readiness towards course assessments and ultimately, academic success. It is worth noting that class attendance could have helped as many of the courses took place during the COVID-19 pandemic period. According to student testimonies, they all commented on their high attendance rates for her classes. P2 summed it up: "*Her classes were so much fun! I don't think I ever missed any of them and I took three courses with her.*" This excerpt exemplifies the profound impact a teacher's efforts can have on students. Their satisfaction with her as a teacher could explain the increased enrollment in her courses. They were comprehending complex concepts and performing better academically due to the stimulating environment she created.

## 5. Discussion

The insights and perceptions of the students in the study showed that they understood the characteristics of an immediate, credible, and pedagogical loving teacher. Their four-year experience in higher education gave them ample time to observe and interact with numerous instructors and observe a diverse range of classroom environments. Such experiences enabled them to identify an effective educator through the recognition of behavioral traits that contributed to enriching their learning journey.

The data unveiled several teacher behaviors that the students believed supported effective learning. The *teacher-student interaction strategies* played a major role in creating a nurturing learning environment. Three of the main traits identified were related to the teacher's personal characteristics, mainly respect, care, and empathy. All three are associated with immediacy (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000; Walkem, 2014) and pedagogical love (Zhao & Li, 2021). They depict perceptions of the teacher's

sincere consideration for the students' emotional welfare. These traits helped create a classroom ethos that nurtured language students and increased teacher credibility. Moreover, they aligned with studies emphasizing the pivotal role they make in fostering positive classroom environments that can enhance affective and cognitive learning as discussed by Teven and McCroskey (1997). These opportunities build confidence in EFL students, making them feel appreciated, leading to enhanced engagement, active participation, and increased motivation. That said, out of all three characteristics, 'respect' has a high value in Middle Eastern societies, particularly towards elders and figures of authority. However, receiving the same level of respect from an older authoritative figure, profoundly influenced their perception. This was viewed as a departure from the norm especially in Saudi Arabian higher education where few academics teach humanistically.

Another interaction strategy emerging from the analysis was the use of open dialogue similar to what has been reported by Scales (2016). This motivated students to actively participate in English language learning (Lee, 2020) and strengthened the 'liking power' of the teacher (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000) which made them more involved in the educational process. These strategies helped learners accept language challenges as part of the academic journey and aided resilience and effort to overcoming them, thereby promoting a more positive approach to learning. The analysis also identified humor as an effective interactive behavior in EFL teaching. However, the students in the study emphasized that careful, balanced implementation is required to ensure it enhanced rather than undermined learning. This is analogous to previous warnings in the literature of its excessive and inappropriate use in the Saudi context (Fadel & Al-Bargi, 2018). It could also risk decreasing the seriousness of academic content and even damage teacher-student respect. Nevertheless, humor alignment with course content is appreciated similar to its identification by other scholars (Gutiérrez et al., 2023). This highlights the need for teachers to understand its proper use as its effectiveness appears to depend on the teacher-student relationship, indicating its implementation should be well-timed and appropriate (Garner, 2006). Interestingly, the students in the study all remarked on the importance of humor, irony (Fadel & Al-Bargi, 2018), spontaneous wit (Neff & Dewaele, 2023), and different tones (Pawlak et al., 2020). This variety can enrich the educational experience by maintaining student interest and encouraging humorous interaction. Finally, the use of eye contact in teaching is a subtle yet powerful nonverbal behavior that can lead to a heightened sense of involvement for both parties. For the teacher, it shows her investment in her students' learning via care and understanding. A finding resembling other Saudi research conclusions (Alharbi, 2018). For learners however, it encouraged a sense of involvement and enhanced language risk-taking, thereby accelerating learning.

The second emerging theme, *instructional strategies*, highlighting the role of innovative pedagogy in stimulating EFL student comprehension and participation. The teacher fostered a lively classroom ambience through her

use of diverse, student-friendly activities that spurred student participation, decreased pedagogical boundaries, and lent a fun, less intimidating aspect to learning. Her approach towards homework was also of note. Assigning innovative tasks fostered student potential with long-term learning implications. Her creative pedagogy encouraged active participation and forged a strong connection with the students. Furthermore, she used contemporary rich media similar to other digitally competent educators (Fahara & Castro, 2015); however, unlike older multimedia discussed in previous research (Al Ghamdi, 2017), she used memes. This depicted her understanding of modern, female learner preferences which made teaching more relatable to them. Finally, the constructive personalized feedback the teacher gave not only acknowledged and validated student efforts, but also provided clear direction for continued growth and achievement. These instructional strategies reduced the psychological distance and substantially reinforced her credibility. Consequently, this had a strong impact on student beliefs of self-confidence, engagement, satisfaction, and motivation; perceptions congruent with previous literature findings (Froment & Gutiérrez, 2022) and highlights the fact that positive attitudes in student EFL development should not be underestimated (Wang et al., 2021).

The third emerging theme was *classroom management and environment*, which also emphasized the critical role of teacher immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love in formulating a successful learning environment. A key finding was the teacher's commitment to establish a fair value system in the classroom. The use of respectful conduct during activities differentiated her from other instructors, demonstrating a high level of care and justice as mentioned by Yan (2021). By prioritizing an environment of mutual respect and student contributions, credibility is solidified. Moreover, the teacher managed to establish a professional rapport with her learners. This resonates with Chen's (2023) theory of pedagogical love by maintaining a healthy balance between warmth and professional boundaries. More importantly, the students perceived that it improved acceptance and understanding as proven in the literature (Li & Rawal, 2018). Energy also emerged as a key element in effective classroom management. Students are very sensitive to a teacher's energy, which influenced their response and overall attitude in the class. This not only covered the physical manifestation of energy, but also the intellectual one. Teachers with such enthusiasm motivate learners, encourage interest in academic study, and promote persistence similar to Wheelless et al.'s (2011) conclusions. The three emerging themes validate the literature and indicate a positive relationship between a teacher's characteristics and how the cultivation of a dynamic environment can enhance engagement and learning outcomes.

In addition, cultural and linguistic sensitivity was the fourth theme highlighted in the results. Collectively, the participants attested to and admired the teacher's mindfulness. They believed she demonstrated a good understanding and respect for societal and cultural nuances. The students viewed her cultural sensitivity as impactful. Her pedagogical practices filtered through

cultural beliefs which enabled the use of more effective communication using culturally appropriate examples, analogies, and humor. It not only helped improve student comprehension but also assisted in maintaining discipline in the classroom in a way that connects with Saudi societal norms. It is worth noting that violations of these rules are not only viewed as disrespectful towards the instructor but also towards the norms and values of the collectivist community they live in. Hence, maintaining discipline aligns with these values and is necessary for the smooth functioning of the class and effective learning. From a different perspective, the teacher's linguistic sensitivity was another compelling facet of the results. Her use of funny and spontaneous vernacular (Neff & Dewaele, 2023) exposed learners to authentic uses of the language. It made them perceive her as a language role model indicating her positive influence on their learning motivation. Moreover, an interesting finding surfaced when students were questioned about the significance of their teacher's American accent. Although they found proficiency to be important, accent did not hold the same status, contradicting previous findings such as Sarani et al. (2019). One explanation could be that they valued her character, teaching style, relationship, and overall classroom management more. This finding highlights that emotional connections with students can take precedence over linguistic factors for effective EFL teaching (Cuddy et al., 2008). Another significant observation was that while the students had a fairly good command of the language, the teacher still used some Arabic as a communication method. However, it was used differently than cases reported in the literature which focused on communicating explanations and facilitating comprehension within Saudi educational contexts (Alharbi, 2019). The local language in this study was utilized to validate linguistic and cultural heritage and promote cultural identity. Consequently, both uses of vernacular enhanced memory retention and created a sense of familiarity and trust. This type of language use enhanced the teacher's credibility and could explain the positive engagement, satisfaction, and motivation reported. She knew how to effectively reach her Arab students and make them more receptive to learning.

While the previous four themes directly respond to the first research question by identifying behaviors that enhance student engagement and motivation. Their interconnectedness and cumulative influence on EFL students in higher education as well as the shift in social development in Saudi Arabia addressed the second question. The perception of the teacher's triadic characteristics led to positive learning experiences very similar to those identified previously in the literature (Guo et al., 2022; Liu, 2021; Vanderheiden, 2023). These include information retention, heightened subject interest, willingness to attend classes, more risk-taking communication, increased rapport, and enhanced engagement. These shared perceptions became the catalyst for the success of the learning process in this study. Interestingly, it is worth remembering that the country is collectivist in nature (Shoaib & Zahran, 2021), which could have strengthened their reception to these traits (Wang et al., 2022). However, while they are also considered a low-immediacy Eastern culture (McCroskey et al., 1996), the



students still showed a strong connection to their immediate, pedagogical loving teacher and reported positive experiences. Finally, the learners cautioned that less immediate or credible behavior that was not based on pedagogical love could suppress inquisitive learning and lead to negative academic experiences as mentioned by Claus et al. (2012).

On a final note, the study provides new insights on the shifting roles of educators in the generation gap (Mikušková, 2023). It has shown that teachers in the Saudi Arabian higher education setting can significantly impact levels of respect, empathy, and emotional bonding. Specifically, it highlights that younger teachers who have matured in an evolving global landscape appear to have a more modern understanding of learning, which incorporates intellectual growth as well as emotional and social development. They often adopt a more humanistic approach to teaching, in contrast to some older instructors who still use traditional methodologies that predominantly focus on academic knowledge and rigid classroom rules. Recent social developments in Saudi Arabia has resulted in a more global and liberal outlook that has directly impacted generations of traditions and beliefs (Ryan, 2023). This shift signals a potential local evolution in teaching practices towards a style that values socio-emotional aspects of learning. Therefore, bridging this generational gap through professional development and training programs is critical, as emphasizing these new pedagogical approaches can align teaching practices across generations, break socio-cultural barriers, and enhance educational outcomes.

## 6. Conclusion

By delving into the teacher-student relationship through a qualitative lens, the study has shed light on a less-explored topic in pedagogy, contributing to the broader understanding of EFL educational dynamics. This investigation identified and addressed two research questions. Consequently, several primary findings were highlighted. Of importance, the study found that immediacy, credibility, and pedagogical love, when collectively interconnected, promote a safe, encouraging, and motivational learning environment that can help improve academic success in EFL settings. Another finding relates to prioritizing emotional connections with students as they supersede linguistic goals thus highlighting the significance of injecting cultural and social beliefs in pedagogy. Moreover, the constructive role of vernacular in validating cultural identity, the sense of belonging, and the impact of a role model is equally important. It also highlights the perception of respect in Middle Eastern contexts and its ability to influence students when received from an authoritative figure. Furthermore, it identified the critical influence of teacher energy, both in its physical and intellectual manifestations, on student acceptance of the learning environment. Finally, the study emphasizes a generational shift in teaching approaches in favor of a more modern, humanistic style. Thus, there is a need for professional development to reconcile these elements to promote effective communication with language learners

and improve educational outcomes.

To conclude, this research serves as a starting point for future discussions surrounding the collective use of the three above mentioned dispositions and the unique cultural elements that directly impact teaching environments in the Middle East. Nevertheless, certain limitations warrant consideration. The relatively modest sample size and the focus on only one instructor may limit the study's generalizability, offering a narrow perspective on the potential impact of teachers in the EFL context. Furthermore, the research focused on female participants, neglecting the potential diversity of male perspectives. Another limitation is the exclusive focus on a specific academic level which restricts the study's applicability across different educational tiers. Future research could explore how the examined dispositions evolve across diverse academic stages, genders, and geographic locations. Given the importance of this area of investigation, more comprehensive qualitative and quantitative approaches could yield richer data. A broader examination of the triadic relationship, conducted by researchers with diverse professional backgrounds, and global contexts could provide a broad perspective. Incorporating teacher viewpoints could further enrich the discourse while delving into gender-based behavioral norms and social interactions presents an avenue for future studies. In conclusion, advocating for the integration of such important dispositions into the Middle Eastern higher education system is essential to optimize learner motivation and engagement through inspiring learning environments.

**Amel Shoab** holds a PhD in applied linguistics from the School of English Studies at the University of Nottingham, and an MA in English Language Teaching from the School of Education from the same institution. She is a qualitative researcher interested in the topics of teacher/student motivation, blended learning, edutainment, immediacy, and academic integrity and their relationship to enhanced learning in higher education.

Email: [amshoab@kau.edu.sa](mailto:amshoab@kau.edu.sa)

## References

- Ai, T. H., & Giang, L. H. (2018). The role of teacher immediacy as a motivational factor in student learning. *J. Glob. Socio-Economic Dyn*, 6, 54–63. [https://doi.org/10.35678/2539-5645.6\(13\).2018.54-63](https://doi.org/10.35678/2539-5645.6(13).2018.54-63)
- Al Ghamdi, A. (2017). Influence of lecturer immediacy on students' learning outcomes: Evidence from a distance education program at a university in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 7(1), 35–39. <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijiet.2017.7.1.838>
- Al-Zoubi, Z. (2016). Student perceptions of college teacher misbehaviors and teacher credibility as perceived by Jordanian university students. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 324–330. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n2p324>
- Alharbi, A. O. (2019). The impact of Saudi Arabian teachers' beliefs on their use of L1 or L2 in the

- classroom in the context of communicative language teaching: A literature review. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(4), 344-355.  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no4.25>
- Alharbi, S. (2018). *Immediacy practices in a virtual learning environment: Perceptions of tutors and female students at a Saudi university* [PhD thesis, University of Reading].
- Asiri, A. (2013). *The impact of instructor immediacy on college student communication and learning outcomes in Saudi Arabia* [PhD thesis, Victoria University].
- Askildson, L. (2005). Effects of humour in the language classroom: Humour as a pedagogical tool in theory and practice. *Arizona Working Papers in SLAT*, 12, 45-61.
- Barcelos, A. M. F., & Coelho, H. S. H. (2016). Language learning and teaching: What's love got to do with it? In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 130-144). Multilingual Matters.  
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783095360-006>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Brewer, W. E., & Burgess, N. D. (2005). Professors' role in motivating students to attend class. *Journal of STEM Teacher Education*, 42(3), 23-47.
- Chen, S. (2023). Modeling the effect of loving pedagogy dispositions and teacher self-efficacy on teacher burnout. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1157324.  
<http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1157324>
- Chesebro, J. L., & McCroskey, J. C. (2001). The relationship of teacher clarity and immediacy with student state receiver apprehension, affect, and cognitive learning. *Communication Education*, 50(1), 59-68.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520109379232>
- Claus, C. J., Chory, R. M., & Malachowski, C. C. (2012). Student antisocial compliance-gaining as a function of instructor aggressive communication and classroom justice. *Communication Education* 6(1), 17-43.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2011.619270>
- Conrad, S. S., & Dabbagh, N. (2015). Examining the factors that influence how instructors provide feedback in online learning environments. *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design*, 4(5), 47-66.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/IJOPCD.2015100104>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 61-149.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(07\)00002-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(07)00002-0)
- De Smet, A., Mettwie, L., Galand, B., Hiligsmann, P., & Van Mensel, L. (2018). Classroom anxiety and enjoyment in CLIL and non-CLIL: Does the target language matter? *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(1), 47-71.  
<https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2018.8.1.3>
- Dedoose. (2021). SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC. <https://www.dedoose.com>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Dewaele, L. (2020). Are foreign language learners' enjoyment and anxiety specific to the teacher? An investigation into the dynamics of learners' classroom emotions. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 10(1), 45-65.  
<https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2020.10.1.3>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Thirtle, H. (2009). Why do some young learners drop foreign languages? A focus on learner-internal variables. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(6), 635-649.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802549656>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Estep, C. M., & Roberts, T. G. (2015). Teacher immediacy and professor/student rapport as predictors of motivation and engagement. *NACTA J*, 59, 155-163.
- Fadel, S. A., & Al-Bargi, A. (2018). The use of humour in EFL classrooms: Comparative conversational analysis case study. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(2). <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.18>
- Fahara, M. F., & Castro, A. L. (2015). Teaching strategies to promote immediacy in online graduate courses. *Open Praxis*, 7(4), 363-376.  
<https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.7.4.228>
- Farnia, M., & Mohammadi, S. (2021). Exploring EFL teachers' and learners' perception of L2 humor: A case study of Iranian English language institutes. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 151-168. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.911225>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*. Westview Press.
- Froment, F., & Gutiérrez, M. (2022). The prediction of teacher credibility on student motivation: Academic engagement and satisfaction as mediating variables. *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, 27(2), 149-157.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicod.2022.04.003>
- Frymier, A. B., Goldman, Z. W., & Claus, C. J. (2019). Why nonverbal immediacy matters: A motivation explanation. *Communication Quarterly*, 67, 1-14.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2019.1668442>
- Garner, R. L. (2006). Humor in pedagogy: How ha-ha can lead to aha! *College Teaching*, 54, 177-180.  
<https://doi.org/10.3200/CTCH.54.1.177-180>
- Gholamrezaee, S., & Ghanizadeh, A. (2018). EFL teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy: A study of its impact on students' emotional states, cognitive learning, and burnout. *Psychological Studies*, 63(4), 398-409. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-018-0467-5>
- Gorham, J. (1988). The relationship between verbal teacher immediacy behaviours and student learning. *Communication Education*, 37(1), 40-53.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528809378702>
- Grimmer, T. (2021). *Developing a loving pedagogy in the early years: How love fits with professional practice*. Routledge.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. T. (1997). *Communicating*

- with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication* (3rd ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Guo, H., Gao, W., & Shen, Y. (2022). L2 enjoyment of English as a foreign language students: Does teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy matter? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.897698>
- Gutiérrez, M. D., Froment, F., & Flores, J. G. (2023). Teacher credibility and learner engagement in traditional and nontraditional education university students. *Revista de Educación*, 400, 301-321. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2023-400-94263>
- Hempelmann, C. F. (2016). Humor in the teaching of writing: A microethnographic approach. *EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages*, 3(2), 42-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.5.72>
- Hsu, L. (2010). The impact of perceived teachers' non-verbal immediacy on students' motivation for learning English. *Asian EFL Journal*, 12, 188-204.
- Hussain, T., Azeem, A., & Abid, N. (2021). Examining the correlation between university students' perceived teacher immediacy and their motivation. *Psychology and Education*, 58(1), 5809-5820. <https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i1.1990>
- Johnson, S., & Miller, A. (2002). A cross-cultural study of immediacy, credibility, and learning in the U.S. and Kenya. *Communication Education*, 51(3), 280-292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520216514>
- Kaczynski, D., Eli Lieber, E., & Salmona, M. (2019). *Qualitative and mixed methods data analysis using Dedoose: A practical approach for research across the social sciences*. Sage.
- Katt, J., & Condly, S. (2009). A preliminary study of classroom motivators and de-motivators from a motivation-hygiene perspective. *Communication Education*, 58(2), 213-234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520802511472>
- Keller, M. M., Hoy, A. W., Goetz, T., & Frenzel, A. C. (2016). Teacher enthusiasm: Reviewing and redefining a complex construct. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(4), 743-769. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9354-y>
- Kelly, S., Rice, C., Wyatt, B., Ducking, J., & Denton, Z. (2015). Teacher immediacy and decreased student quantitative reasoning anxiety: The mediating effect of perception. *Communication Education*, 64(2), 171-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2015.1014383>
- Klebig, B., Goldonowicz, J., Mendes, E., Miller, A. N., & Kat, J. (2016). The combined effects of instructor communicative behaviors, instructor credibility, and student personality traits on incivility in the college classroom. *Communication Research Reports*, 3(3), 152-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2016.1154837>
- Lee, J. H. (2020). Relationships among students' perceptions of native and non-native EFL teachers' immediacy behaviours and credibility and students' willingness to communicate in class. *Oxford Review of Education*, 46, 153-168. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2019.1642187>
- Li, W., & Rawal, H. (2018). Waning and waxing of love: Unpacking layers of teacher emotion. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 41(4), 552-570. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2018-0038>
- Liu, W. (2021). Does teacher immediacy affect students? A systematic review of the association between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 90-102. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713978>
- López-Oziedo, R. (2015). Cultural aspects of immediacy in an Asian classroom context. *Estudios de Lingüística Inglesa Aplicada (ELIA)*, 15, 13-34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/elia.2015.i15.02>
- McCroskey, J. C., Sallinen, A., Fayer, J. M., Richmond, V. P., & Barraclough, R. A. (1996). Nonverbal immediacy and cognitive learning: A cross-cultural investigation. *Communication Education*, 45, 200-211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529609379049>
- McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs*, 66(1), 90-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759909376464>
- Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Wadsworth.
- Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mercer, S., & Kostoulas, A. (2018). *Language teacher psychology*. Multilingual Matters.
- Mikušková, E. B. (2023). Generational differences in teachers' professional competencies. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 12(4), 1657-1665. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.12.4.1657>
- Myers, S. A. (2004). The relationship between perceived instructor credibility and college student in-class and out-of-class communication. *Communication Reports*, 17(2), 129-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08934210409389382>
- Myers, S. A., & Martin, M. M. (2018). Instructor credibility. In M. L. Houser & A. Hosek (Eds.), *The handbook of instructional communication: Rhetorical and relational perspectives* (pp. 38-50). Routledge.
- Nayernia, A., Taghizadeh, M., & Farsani, M. (2020). EFL teachers' credibility, nonverbal immediacy, and perceived success: A structural equation modelling approach *Cogent Education*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1774099>
- Neff, P., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2023). Humor strategies in the foreign language class. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 17(3), 567-579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2088761>
- Neuliep, J. W. (1997). A cross-cultural comparison of teacher immediacy in American and Japanese college classrooms. *Communication Research*, 24(4), 431-451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365097024004006>
- Nezu, M. (2018). Series foreword. In K. R. Berenson (Ed.), *Managing your research data and documentation*. American Psychological Association.
- Özdaş, F. (2022). Teachers' immediacy behaviors and

- academic achievement: A relational analysis. *Sage Open*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221091>
- Pawlak, M., Kruk, M., Zawodniak, J., & Pasikowski, S. (2020). Investigating factors responsible for boredom in English classes: The case of advanced learners. *System*, 91, 102259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102259>
- Pishghadam, R., Derakhshan, A., & Zhaleh, K. (2019). The interplay of teacher success, credibility, and stroke with respect to EFL students' willingness to attend classes. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 50(4), 284-292. <https://doi.org/10.24425/ppb.2019.131001>
- Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., & Al Abdwani, T. (2023). Development and validation of the teacher energy scale: A movement toward metapathy. *Language and Translation Studies*, 56(1), 1-38. <https://doi.org/10.22067/lts.2022.78969.1160>
- Pogue, L. L., & AhYun, K. (2006). The effect of teacher nonverbal immediacy and credibility on student motivation and affective learning. *Communication Education*, 55, 331-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520600748623>
- Qin, W. (2021). EFL teachers' immediacy and professional commitment on students' boredom: A review of literature. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.808311>
- Richmond, V., & McCroskey, J. (2000). *Nonverbal behavior in interpersonal relations*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Ryan, M. (2023). Higher education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges, opportunities, and future directions. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 43, 1-15.
- Safaei, N., & Shahrokhi, M. (2019). Relationship between teacher self-disclosure and teaching style: Perception of EFL teachers. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1678231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1678231>
- Santilli, V., Miller, A. N., & Katt, J. (2011). A comparison of the relationship between instructor nonverbal immediacy and teacher credibility in Brazilian and U.S. classrooms. *Communication Research Reports*, 28(3), 266-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2011.588583>
- Sarani, A., Negari, G. M., & Sabeki, F. (2019). Educational degree, gender and accent as determinants of EFL teacher credibility. *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 8(4), 2476-3187.
- Scales, J. (2016). *Immediacy-related influences on student success in a college algebra course: A qualitative case study* [PhD thesis, Northcentral University].
- Schrodt, P. (2013). Content relevance and students' comfort with disclosure as moderators for instructor disclosures and credibility in the college classroom. *Communication Education*, 62, 362-375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.3013.807348>
- Sheybani, M. (2019). The relationship between EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their teacher immediacy attributes: A structural equation modelling. *Cogent Psychology*, 6, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2019.1607051>
- Shoab, A. M., & Zahran, K. A. (2021). Systematic collective e-cheating in a Saudi Arabian higher education context: A case study. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 11(2), 92-111. <https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v11i2.1264>
- Song, H., Kim, J., & Luo, W. (2016). Teacher-student relationship in online classes: A role of teacher self-disclosure. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 45, 436-443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.037>
- Stipek, D. (2006). Relationships matter. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 46-49.
- Teven, J. J., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The relationship of perceived teacher caring with student learning and teacher evaluation. *Communication Education*, 46, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529709379069>
- Vanderheiden, E. (2023). 'I could never think of education without love'- Pedagogical love in the context of adult education. In C.-H. Mayer & E. Vanderheiden (Eds.), *International handbook of love: Transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives*. Springer.
- Walkem, K. (2014). Instructional immediacy in elearning. *Collegian*, 21(3), 179-184.
- Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., & Pan, Z. (2022). Positioning an agenda on a loving pedagogy in second language acquisition: Conceptualization, practice, and research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.894190>
- Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., & Zhang, L. J. (2021). Researching and practicing positive psychology in second/foreign language learning and teaching: The past, current status and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.731721>
- Wheless, V. E., Witt, P. L., Maresh, M., Bryand, M. C., & Schrodt, P. (2011). Instructor credibility as a mediator of instructor communication and students' intent to persist in college. *Communication Education*, 60(3), 314-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2011.555917>
- Xie, F., & Derakhshan, A. (2021). A conceptual review of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in the instructional context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.708490>
- Yan, P. (2021). Chinese EFL students' perceptions of classroom justice: The impact of teachers' caring and immediacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.767008>
- Yin, L. C., Loreman, T., Majid, R. A., & Alias, A. (2019). The dispositions towards loving pedagogy (DTLP) scale: Instrument development and demographic analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102884>
- Zhao, S., & Li, M. (2021). Reflection on loving pedagogy and students' engagement in EFL/ESL classrooms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.757697>

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

*Copyright © 2023 Shoaib. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.*

## Call for Papers

Submit via <https://jlt.ac/>

Areas of Interest:

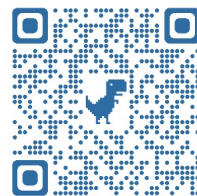
Language teaching intervention and experiments; Curriculum development; Language teacher education; Bilingual education; New technologies in language teaching; Testing, assessment, and evaluation; Educational psychology, and more.

We accept the following types of submission:

1. Research article: (6,000 to 8,000 words)
2. Review: (3,000 to 8,000 words)
3. Book review: (up to 3,000 words)
4. Features: (3,000 to 8,000 words)

Scan to submit your articles\* &  
read more articles for free.

\*Article Processing Charges Apply.



Contact: [editor@jlt.ac](mailto:editor@jlt.ac)



ISSN (Online)  
2770-4602