

THE ROLE OF TEACHER INTERPERSONAL VARIABLES IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT, SUCCESS, AND MOTIVATION

EDITED BY: Ali Derakhshan, Reza Pishghadam and
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THE ROLE OF TEACHER INTERPERSONAL VARIABLES IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT, SUCCESS, AND MOTIVATION

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Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and the Retention Intention of Kindergarten Teachers: A Chain Intermediary Effect Analysis

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Objective: To investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in mainland China and the internal mechanism of action.

Methods: A total of 554 kindergarten teachers were investigated by scales for psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention.

Results: (1) Psychological empowerment was positively correlated with psychological capital and job involvement. Psychological capital was positively correlated with job involvement. Psychological empowerment, psychological capital, and job involvement were significantly and positively correlated with retention intention. (2) Psychological empowerment influences kindergarten teachers' retention intention mainly through three indirect effects: the single intermediary effects of psychological capital and job involvement and the chain intermediary effect of psychological capital → job involvement.

Conclusion: Psychological empowerment can not only indirectly predict the retention intention of kindergarten teachers through the single intermediary effects of psychological capital and job involvement, but also indirectly predict the retention intention of kindergarten teachers through the chain intermediary effect of psychological capital and job involvement.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, retention intention, chinese kindergarten teacher

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INTRODUCTION

Retention intention usually corresponds to turnover intention. Turnover intention is the intensity of an individual's tendency to leave his or her current post and seek other job opportunities (Jg and Simon, 1958), while the intention to not seek other posts is retention intention (Mowday et al., 1979), which reflects the possibility of an individual's self-perception of continuing to work in the organization (Price and Mueller, 1981). Teachers' retention intention is affected not only by objective factors such as school atmosphere (Ingersoll, 2001), occupational reputation (Wynn et al., 2007), working conditions (Kelly, 2004), and leadership support (Brown and Wynn, 2009), but also by demographic characteristics such as teachers' age, teaching experience, and

educational background (Hughes, 2012). In addition, occupational commitment (Ingersoll, 2001), job satisfaction (Shann, 1998; Ouyang and Paprock, 2006), and autonomy (Johnson, 2006) have an important impact on teachers' retention intention. At present, the issue of how to retain teachers has become the focus of global attention. A large number of studies have shown that the retention of teachers in recent years is not good, with the estimated range of loss ranging from 20 to 50% (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003; Latham and Vogt, 2007; Perrachione et al., 2008). Researchers agree that the root of the teacher availability problem is not the insufficient supply of teachers but the inability to retain trained teachers (Hammond, 2006). In the current study, few researchers pay attention to retention intention, while many pay more attention to turnover intention, which is often used as a reverse representation of the stability of the teaching staff. However, the reasons for leaving are not always the same as the reasons for staying (Steel et al., 2002). Even when the reasons for leaving and staying are the same, they have two different psychological mechanisms. Thus, the factors that affect retention intention may not be the converse of the factors that affect turnover intention (Yan, 2017). The two-factor theory proposed by Herzberg et al. (1967) can explain the different mechanisms behind resignation and retention. He proposed two different factors, including hygiene factors and motivating factors. Hygiene factors are related to the external environment of work such as working conditions, salary, welfare policies, etc. The deterioration of these factors will result in employee's dissatisfaction, and further cause employees to leave. However, even if these factors are met, they may not lead to positive attitudes. Motivating factors are related to the job, such as achievement, appreciation, development opportunities, autonomy, etc. These factors can stimulate the motivation of individuals to work. When individuals are truly motivated to engage in work, they can maintain the persistence of their career choices. This phenomenon shows that hygiene factors can prevent employees from leaving only to a certain extent, but they cannot effectively promote employees' long-term retention. Zhao's (2018) research also found that merely increasing salary and remuneration did not significantly promote employees' willingness to stay, while nonmonetary incentives (such as those meeting psychological needs) have a more positive significance in retaining teachers. Therefore, it is very necessary to pay attention to teachers' retention intention and to explore in depth the factors that promote it. In addition, most of the existing research has focused on nurses and knowledge workers, while there is less research on teachers, especially on Chinese kindergarten teachers. To sum up, this study takes kindergarten teachers in China as the research object to explore the relationship and mechanism between psychological empowerment and retention intention.

Psychological Empowerment and Retention Intention

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed the concept of psychological empowerment, believing that psychological empowerment is a synthesis of the psychological state or

cognition experienced by individuals, and put forward the cognitive evaluation model theory of psychological empowerment. This theory reflects the whole cognitive process of psychological empowerment, in which intrinsic motivation is the core element of psychological empowerment, and the degree of empowerment depends on employees' evaluation of work tasks in four aspects (meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence). Meaning is an individual's value judgment of the current task and target according to their own values and standards. Competence is the degree to which an individual feels capable of completing a task. Self-determination is the cognition that an individual can make decisions on their method of working, which reflects the individual's autonomy in work. Impact is the extent to which actions affect the outcome of the work being done. In general, when individuals experience a high level of empowerment, they feel the meaning and competence of their work and gain the feeling of independent decision-making and influence over their work. These positive feelings cause them to recognize the organization more; thus, they are more willing to stay in the organization. According to Klerk (2013), a significant relationship obtains between psychological empowerment and retention. He found that individuals were more likely to stay if they experienced a higher level of empowerment. In addition, some recent studies have also shown that psychological empowerment can positively predict retention intention (Iqbal and Hashmi, 2015; Meng et al., 2015; Sandhya and Sulphrey, 2020).

Psychological Empowerment, Psychological Capital, and Retention Intention

Psychological capital is an internal positive psychological resource of individuals that includes four aspects: confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2004). At present, the concept of psychological capital has been localized in China, where it specifically refers to a measurable, developable, and positive mentality or mental energy possessed by individuals in the process of dealing with people and doing things in the context of an organization (Sun and Zhang, 2013). First, psychological empowerment can positively predict psychological capital. According to social exchange theory, the premise for employees to contribute to the organization is that the organization has certain incentives for employees, so employees can engage in more positive behaviors through the investment of time and energy (Banard, 1938). Therefore, when an organization takes empowerment as an incentive, employees will have a higher experience of psychological empowerment and believe that they are of higher value to the organization. They will face their work in the organization with an optimistic attitude and be full of hope for their future. At the same time, they will contribute more to the organization. Therefore, psychological empowerment can enhance psychological capital. Furthermore, previous studies have reported that psychological empowerment can have a positive effect on psychological capital (Zhang, 2012; Ou, 2017; Hu et al., 2018; Wang D. et al., 2021). Second, psychological capital can positively predict retention intention.

We can use the conservation of resources theory (Salanova et al., 2010) to explain the relationship. According to this theory, the accumulation of resources (including relationships and individual resources) is the key driving force to motivate and maintain individual's behaviors, and psychological capital is essentially an important individual resource that can help individuals have positive work attitudes and behaviors as well as loyalty to the organization, so they are willing to work for a long time. Furthermore, the conservation of resources theory (COR) predicts that initial resource gains lead to future gains, thus forming a revenue spiral. This prediction means that individuals will not only maintain and protect existing resources but also strive to obtain more resources, and having psychological capital means they are more able to access other resources, leading to more positive results. The latest research found that psychological capital can not only reduce work stress and job burnout (Kim and Kweon, 2020) but also positively predict life satisfaction, happiness, retention intention, and better performance (Kim and Yoo, 2018; King and Caleon, 2020; Rodríguez-Cifuentes et al., 2020; Santisi et al., 2020).

Psychological Empowerment, Job Involvement, and Retention Intention

Job involvement is the degree with which an individual psychologically identifies with their work (Lodahl and Kejnar, 1965) and holds an internal cognition or belief in it (Kanungo, 1982), which will change with changes in work environments or characteristics (Li and Long, 1999). On the one hand, psychological empowerment can positively predict job involvement. Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct that comprises individual cognitions and perceptions that constitute feelings of behavioral and psychological investment in work (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment plays an important role in the attitude and performance of employees. Empowered employees have more intrinsic motivation, they perceive stronger work significance and self-determination in work, and they have a higher sense of self-efficacy (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Demir (2020) found that, when teacher self-efficacy is higher, so was their job involvement. Razak et al.'s (2017) survey of 151 bank managers confirmed a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and job involvement. In China, Jiang and Han (2010) and Chen (2013) also found a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job involvement. On the other hand, job involvement can positively predict retention intention. Job involvement is an individual's psychological recognition of and devotion to their work. Individuals with high job involvement have a stronger sense of accomplishment and identification with their work (Kanungo, 1982). These feelings are an important prerequisite for individual willingness to remain in the organization. According to Brown (1996), job involvement plays a central role in whether an individual stays in organizational work. Compared with people who have low job involvement, people who have high job involvement are much less likely to intend to resign. In recent years, some studies have also found that job involvement can

increase the retention intention of individuals (Curtis and Wright, 2001; Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2019).

Psychological Capital and Job Involvement

A recent study showed that psychological capital as a personal resource can stimulate individual motivation and thereby promote work engagement (Mao et al., 2019). Previous studies on psychological capital have also shown that it can have a positive impact on work input. For example, self-efficacy and optimism as important dimensions of psychological capital can significantly positively predict work input (Halbesleben, 2010; Wang et al., 2017). Other researchers have found that psychological capital not only has a direct positive predictive effect on work input but also can alleviate the negative impact of work requirements on work input (Sheng et al., 2019). In addition, a large number of studies have found that psychological capital can significantly and positively predict job involvement (Wang and Luo, 2015; Cheng and Gao, 2019; Mao et al., 2019; Wang J. et al., 2020).

Hypotheses of This Study

In summary, the existing research provides a preliminary understanding of the relationship between psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention. We want to verify whether the relationship between the psychological empowerment and retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China is affected by the intermediary role of psychological capital and job involvement, and whether the chain intermediary composed of psychological capital → job involvement is an important means of psychological empowerment affecting the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China. Therefore, according to the cognitive evaluation model theory of psychological empowerment, social exchange theory, conservation of resources theory, and recent studies, we propose four research hypotheses.

- H1: Psychological empowerment can positively predict the retention intention of Chinese kindergarten teachers.
- H2: Psychological empowerment can indirectly predict the retention intention of Chinese kindergarten teachers through the intermediary role of psychological capital.
- H3: Psychological empowerment can indirectly predict the retention intention of Chinese kindergarten teachers through the intermediary role of job involvement.
- H4: Psychological empowerment can indirectly predict the retention intention of Chinese kindergarten teachers through the chain mediating effect of psychological capital and job involvement.

It is of certain theoretical and practical significance to discuss these issues. In terms of theory, it is helpful to explore the process mechanism of psychological empowerment affecting the retention intention of Chinese kindergarten teachers, which may thereof enrich the relevant theoretical basis. It is of more practical significance to discuss the issue of how to retain kindergarten teachers from the perspective of resignation and retention, which is key to ensuring the stability of kindergarten teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and Procedure

In this study, a convenience sampling method was adopted to collect data from teachers from 20 kindergartens in Yinchuan, Wuzhong, Guyuan, Zhongwei, and Shizuishan in Ningxia, China, from November 1 to November 15, 2019 using the Questionnaire Star online questionnaire platform. To ensure the effectiveness of the network questionnaire, we first contacted the principals of each kindergarten, who then distributed the scale at a teachers meeting, the teachers answered the questions and submitted the scales. All the participants volunteered to participate and were told that the study was for academic purposes and that participants would receive no compensation of any kind. We issued 596 scales. After eliminating the invalid scales, 554 valid scales were obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 93%. Among the participants, 550 were female (99.28%), and four were male (0.72%). One hundred sixty-eight (30.32%) had been teaching for <1 year, 229 (41.34%) had been teaching for 2–5 years, 84 (15.16%) had been teaching for 6–10 years, and 73 (13.18%) had been teaching for more than 11 years. Ninety-eight respondents (17.69%) had a technical secondary school or high school education, 361 (65.16%) had a junior college education, 93 (16.79%) had a bachelor's degree, and 2 (0.36%) had a master's degree or above. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Ningxia University.

Measures

Psychological Empowerment

Due to Chen's 2018 revision of the preschool teachers' psychological empowerment scale, the scale includes four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The 22 items use a 5-point Likert-type scoring system ranging from one "completely does not conform" to five "completely in line with." All items together take their average score; when the score is higher, so is the psychological empowerment level. After research and testing, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.95, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the four dimensions ranged from 0.88 to 0.92. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model were ideal (RMSEA = 0.042, NFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, GFI = 0.96) (Jin et al., 2020). In addition, Fu et al. (2020) conducted a scale survey among 395 preschool teachers in China and again verified that the scale had good reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.92). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale in our study was 0.92. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model in our study were ideal (RMSEA = 0.05, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.97, IFI = 0.97).

Psychological Capital

The teacher psychological capital scale revised by Zhang Wen (Zhang, 2010) was adopted, which contains 19 items in the four dimensions of confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. A 6-point Likert-type scoring system is used, which ranges from one "strongly disagree" to six "strongly agree." The average score of all items is calculated by adding the scores; when the score is

higher, so is the psychological capital level. After research and testing, the total scale and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the four dimensions ranged from 0.61 to 0.80. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model were ideal (RMSEA = 0.06, IFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.84) (Peng et al., 2018). In China, some other studies have tested the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale with results from 0.82 to 0.84 (Liu and Zhou, 2016; Zhou et al., 2019; Qiu and Wang, 2020). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale in our study was 0.87. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model in our study were ideal (RMSEA = 0.07, NFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.93).

Job Involvement

The job involvement scale developed by Kanungo in 1982 and translated by Zhou and Li (2006) consists of 10 independent items. A 5-point Likert-type scoring system is used, which ranges from one "strongly disagree" to five "strongly agree;" the second and seventh items are reverse scored, and the rest are graded forward. The scores of all the items are added to obtain an average. When the score is higher, so is the level of work involvement. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the original scale was 0.87 (Kanungo, 1982). The Cronbach's alpha in the Chinese version is 0.85, and the KMO test coefficient is 0.88 (Zhou and Li, 2006), showing good reliability and validity. In China, some other studies have also tested the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale with results between 0.84 and 0.87 (Hu and Qiu, 2016; Liu and Gu, 2018). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale in our study was 0.82. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model in our study were ideal (RMSEA = 0.044, NFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99).

Retention Intention

The kindergarten teacher retention intention scale prepared by Shi (2019) was adopted, which contains eight independent items. A 5-point Likert-type scoring system is used, which ranges from one "strongly disagree" to five "strongly agree." The average score of all items is calculated by adding the scores; when the score is higher, so is the retention intention. The Cronbach's alpha and KMO coefficients of the original scale were 0.95 and 0.92, respectively (Shi, 2019). Guo and Cai (2021) tested the reliability and validity of the scale, and the results showed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.93, and the confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model were ideal (RMSEA = 0.046, NFI = 0.996, CFI = 0.997, GFI = 0.994). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale in our study was 0.91. The confirmative factor analysis results showed that the fitting indexes of the model in our study were ideal (RMSEA = 0.054, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99).

Data Analysis

To ensure the objectivity and authenticity of the research results, the scale was completed anonymously on the Internet. After the teacher respondents answered the scale and basic information anonymously through the scale link, they submitted the completed scales through the Internet platform. IBM SPSS

22.0 was used for preliminary data processing, descriptive statistics, and the reliability and correlation analyses among the variables. Model 6 in the SPSS macro program (<http://www.afhayes.com>) was used to analyze the mediating effect of psychological capital and job involvement in the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention.

Assessment of Common Method Variance

To test the common method deviation or systematic measurement error caused by the self-described questionnaire collection of all data, the Harman single factor test was carried out in the study (Harman, 1976), and an exploratory factor analysis was performed on all items consisting of four variables, namely, psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention. The results showed that nine factors had eigenvalues >1. The first factor explained 30.80% of the total variation, which was less than the 40% threshold criterion proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2003). This result does not eliminate the possibility of common method variance; however, it suggests that common method variance is unlikely to confound the interpretations of the data analysis results.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and the Correlation Between the Main Variables

Table 1 shows the general means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention. The results suggest that all the variables are significantly correlated with each other. Psychological empowerment is positively correlated with psychological capital and job involvement ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$; $r = 0.47, p < 0.01$). Psychological capital is positively correlated with job involvement ($r = 0.58, p < 0.01$). Psychological empowerment, psychological capital, and job involvement are significantly positively correlated with retention intention ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$; $r = 0.56, p < 0.01$; $r = 0.64, p < 0.01$).

Chain Mediation Model Analysis

Psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention are significantly correlated, which meets the statistical requirements for the further mediating

effect analysis of psychological capital and job involvement (Wen and Ye, 2014). After controlling for the teaching experience and educational background, Model 6 in the SPSS macro program (<http://www.afhayes.com>) compiled by Hayes (2012) was used to analyze the mediating effect of psychological capital and job involvement in the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention.

Table 2 shows the regression analysis results of the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention, in which teaching experience and educational background are the control variables. The results show that psychological empowerment has a significant positive predictive effect on retention intention ($B = 0.419, p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 1 has been tested. When psychological capital and job involvement are included in the regression equation, psychological empowerment significantly predicts psychological capital ($B = 0.500, p < 0.001$) and job involvement ($B = 0.226, p < 0.001$). Psychological capital significantly predicts job involvement ($B = 0.464, p < 0.001$) and retention intention ($B = 0.249, p < 0.001$). In addition, job involvement is a significant positive predictor of retention intention ($B = 0.444, p < 0.001$). At this point, the direct effect value of psychological empowerment on retention intention is significantly reduced ($B = 0.091, p < 0.05$). These results indicate that psychological capital, job involvement and the chain mediating effect of psychological capital → job involvement are significant among the influences of psychological empowerment on retention intention. Hypotheses 2–4 are confirmed.

Table 3 shows the mediating effect value of psychological capital and job involvement between psychological empowerment and retention intention. Figure 1 is a chain mediating model between psychological empowerment and job involvement. Table 3 and Figure 1 show that psychological capital and job involvement play a significant mediating role between psychological empowerment and retention intention, and the total standardized mediating effect value was 0.328. Specifically, the mediating effect is composed of three indirect effects: path 1—psychological empowerment→ psychological capital→ retention intention (0.124), path 2—psychological empowerment→ job involvement→ retention intention (0.101), and path 3—psychological empowerment→ psychological capital→ job involvement→ retention intention (0.102). The ratios of the three indirect effects to the total effect are 29.83, 23.87, and 24.58% for paths 1, 2, and 3, respectively, and the 95%

TABLE 1 | Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the major study variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Psychological empowerment	3.89	0.61	1.00			
2. Psychological capital	4.52	0.60	0.50**	1.00		
3. Job involvement	3.58	0.57	0.47**	0.58**	1.00	
4. Retention intention	3.90	0.68	0.44**	0.56**	0.64**	1.00

N = 554.

** $p < 0.01$; All tests were two-tailed. This table shows the general means, standard deviations, and correlations of the four major variables. **indicates a significant correlation between the variables, which obtains between all the variables.

TABLE 2 | Regression analysis of the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention.

Regression equation		Fitting index			Significance	
Result variable	Predictor variable	R	R ²	F	B	t
Retention intention	Teaching experience	0.450	0.202	46.485***	0.073	2.785**
	Educational background				-0.068	-1.188
	Psychological empowerment				0.419	10.810***
Psychological capital	Teaching experience	0.504	0.254	62.300***	0.011	0.414
	Educational background				-0.001	-0.023
	Psychological empowerment				0.500	13.333***
Job involvement	Teaching experience	0.621	0.385	85.965***	0.037	1.599
	Educational background				-0.011	-0.228
	Psychological capital				0.464	11.967***
	Psychological empowerment				0.226	5.775***
Retention intention	Teaching experience	0.691	0.478	100.237***	0.052	2.436*
	Educational background				-0.062	-1.343
	Job involvement				0.444	11.266***
	Psychological capital				0.249	6.213***
	Psychological empowerment				0.091	2.451*

N = 554.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. All variables in the model have been standardized. Teaching experience and educational background are the control variables, psychological empowerment is an independent variable, and retention intention is a result variable. This table presents the results of the multiple hierarchical regression analysis of psychological empowerment, psychological capital, job involvement, and retention intention.

TABLE 3 | Psychological capital and job involvement in the mediation effect analysis.

	Indirect effects	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Relative mediation effect
Total indirect effect	0.328	0.034	0.266	0.397	78.28%
Indirect effect 1	0.125	0.027	0.076	0.183	29.83%
Indirect effect 2	0.100	0.023	0.058	0.150	23.87%
Indirect effect 3	0.103	0.016	0.074	0.134	24.58%
Compare 1	0.024	0.040	-0.058	0.100	
Compare 2	0.022	0.031	-0.040	0.084	
Compare 3	-0.002	0.027	-0.056	0.050	

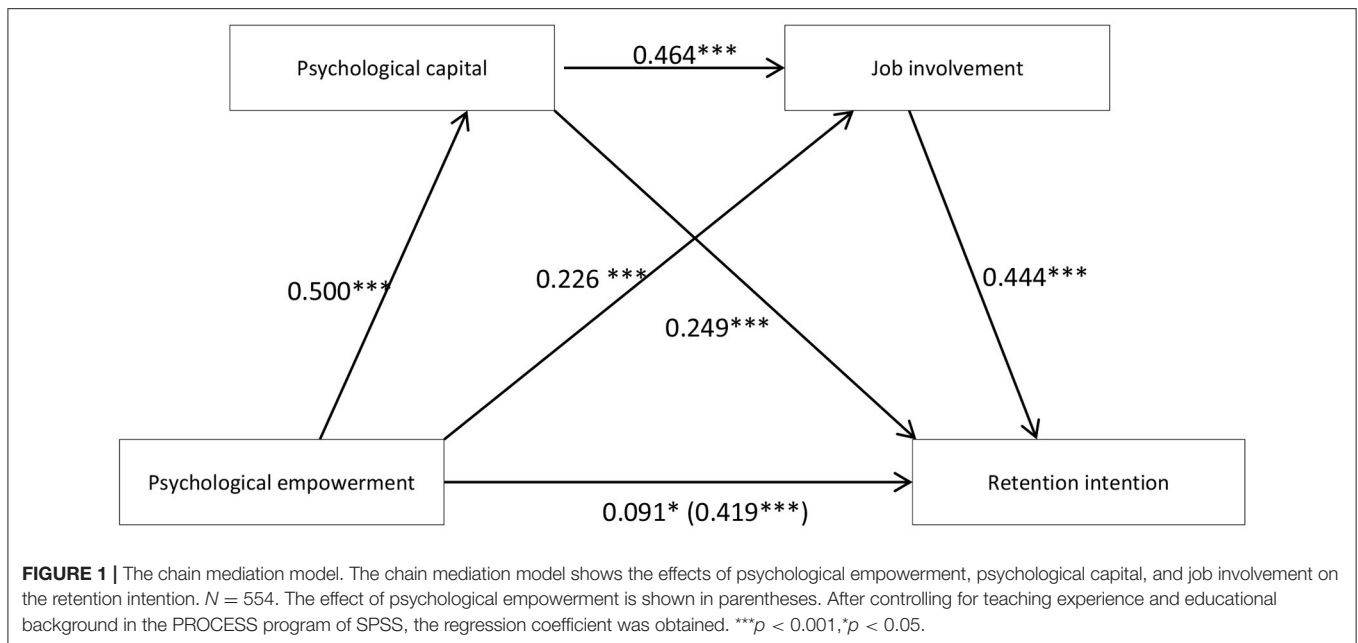
The direct and indirect effects of psychological empowerment on retention intention are shown in this table. Boot SE, Boot LLCI, and Boot ULCI refer, respectively, to the standard error and the lower and upper limits of the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects estimated by the percentile bootstrap method with deviation correction. Indirect effect 1: psychological empowerment → psychological capital → retention intention; indirect effect 2: psychological empowerment → work involvement → retention intention; indirect effect 3: psychological empowerment → psychological capital → job involvement → retention intention.

confidence interval of the above indirect effects does not contain the zero value, indicating that all three indirect effects reach a significant level. Hypotheses 2–4 are thus confirmed again. Comparison 1 shows that the bootstrap 95% confidence interval for the difference between indirect effects 1 and 2 contains a 0 value, indicating that there is no significant difference between them. Using the same comparison approach, no significant difference is found between indirect effects 1 and 2 or between indirect effects 2 and 3. These results indicate that psychological empowerment can indirectly predict retention intention not only through the single mediating effect of psychological capital and

job involvement but also through the chain mediating effect of psychological capital and job involvement. The single mediating effect of psychological capital accounted for the highest ratio of the total effect (29.83%).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the mediating effects of psychological capital and job involvement may contribute to understanding the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention in a sample of Chinese



kindergarten teachers. First, consistent with a prior study (Meng et al., 2015), we found that psychological empowerment can significantly positively predict the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China; that is, when the psychological empowerment level is higher, the retention intention is stronger. This result means that psychological empowerment in the Chinese context is an important incentive for kindergarten teachers' retention intention. The experience of empowerment enhances their perception of their own value and the meaning of their work, thus improving their sense of competence and autonomy in completing their work, which is of positive significance in encouraging them to stay in kindergartens for a long time.

Although previous studies have confirmed that psychological empowerment can affect retention intention, how does psychological empowerment affect retention intention? The internal process mechanism is not clear enough. Previous studies have found that psychological empowerment can improve employee satisfaction, thus promoting employee retention (Elnaga and Imran, 2014; Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2015). Our study further examined the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention from different perspectives. For the first time, we found that psychological capital is a mediating variable by which psychological empowerment affects retention intention. This finding means that psychological empowerment can promote retention intention by enhancing psychological capital. China has a typical cultural characteristic of high power distance, and kindergartens often adopt a highly centralized teaching management mode (Wang et al., 2015). In such a context, the empowerment experience is extremely valuable. Once kindergarten teachers are empowered, they are liberated from the high-control mode; thus, they feel that they have influence

and autonomy over their work. In exchange, they will be full of trust and hope for kindergarten, and they will treat their work more positively and confidently, which plays an important role in enhancing their psychological capital. This finding further explains the viewpoint of social exchange theory (Banard, 1938). In addition, some studies have found that psychological capital is a protective factor against pressure and challenges (Wang et al., 2014). Kindergarten teachers in China are generally faced with heavy tasks. They shoulder up high expectations from parents, principals and social groups, so they need to do a better job in child care and education. Furthermore, they also need to face various emergencies while ensuring the safety of children (Wang et al., 2014). Therefore, they are under great physical and psychological pressures and are prone to depression, anxiety, burnout and other negative psychological states. Under this kind of high working pressure, psychological capital is particularly important. Kindergarten teachers with high psychological capital have more personal resources, which are conducive to helping them in a high-stress working environment to treat pressures and difficulties as challenges rather than threats so they can adopt a positive and optimistic coping style, which enhances their retention intention. This further explains the theory of conservation of resources (Salanova et al., 2010) and is consistent with previous research results (Kim and Yoo, 2018).

In the mechanism of psychological empowerment affecting the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China, we also found that job involvement is an important mediating variable. Previous studies have proven that job involvement is an intermediary of psychological empowerment affecting turnover intention, that is, people with psychological empowerment are more engaged, and these people reflect a lower turnover intention (Bhatnagar, 2012). Our study verifies the role of job involvement in psychological empowerment and retention

intention from a positive perspective, which indicates that psychological empowerment can enhance retention intention by promoting job involvement. First, we found that psychological empowerment promotes job involvement. Previous studies have shown that psychological empowerment is an important incentive resource and can enhance employees' job involvement (Ugwu et al., 2014; Razak et al., 2017), our study confirms this relationship. The nature of kindergarten teachers' work is different from that of primary and secondary school teachers. The educational object they face is immature children, so they need more of a sense of responsibility. At the same time, the curricula and activities of kindergarten are flexible and generative. Therefore, kindergarten teachers need more autonomy in their daily work. Psychological empowerment can well meet the requirements of kindergarten teachers, which allows them to perceive the value of their work and willing to have more patience and a greater sense of responsibility. At the same time, autonomy can ensure kindergarten teachers work efficiently and experience a sense of accomplishment. The high sense of accomplishment will cause them to be immersed in their work. In this state, they are enthusiastic about their work and willing to be energetic in achieving their goals (Consiglio et al., 2016), further enhancing their job involvement. At the same time, job involvement further promotes retention intention. The increase of job involvement means the increase of the psychological identification degree of kindergarten teachers, which inspires them to love the occupation of preschool teachers more and produces a strong sense of belonging and loyalty, which plays an important role in improving their retention intention.

Finally, we found for the first time that the chain intermediary constituted of psychological capital \rightarrow job involvement is also an important way psychological empowerment affects the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China. This finding means that psychological empowerment can enhance the psychological capital of kindergarten teachers, and psychological capital can promote their job involvement to further promote the retention intention. This finding also indicates that the process of psychological empowerment's influence on retention intention is relatively complex. Although our study has found the separate mediating effects of psychological capital and job involvement, as well as the chain mediating effect they form, they all produce partial mediating effects. Therefore, they cannot fully explain the relationship between psychological empowerment and retention intention. In fact, other factors may be at work, which is worth further study. Furthermore, we find that, among all the paths in which psychological empowerment affects the retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China, the path of psychological empowerment \rightarrow psychological capital \rightarrow retention intention has the highest indirect effect value, accounting for 29.83% of the total effect. This result shows that psychological capital is very important for kindergarten teachers who experience great pressure and carry a large burden in China, and it is an important "incentive factor" in promoting the retention intention of kindergarten teachers. Therefore, in exploring how to retain kindergarten teachers in China, we should

pay more attention to the construction of teachers' internal psychological resources.

Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations of the Study

In conclusion, the purpose of our study was to explore the relationship and mechanism between the psychological empowerment and retention intention of kindergarten teachers in China. We constructed a chain intermediary model and found that psychological empowerment can not only directly predict retention intention but also indirectly predict retention intention through the separate mediating effects of psychological capital and job involvement. Meanwhile, it can also indirectly predict retention intention through the chain mediating effect of psychological capital and job involvement.

This study can provide insights for effectively improving the retention intention of kindergarten teachers. First, psychological empowerment can directly predict the retention intention of kindergarten teachers. Therefore, attention should be paid to the empowerment experience of kindergarten teachers, which should not only improve their sense of work meaning and impact through empowerment behavior but also enhance their sense of self-determination and competence through personalized care to improve their retention intention. Second, psychological empowerment can affect the retention intention of kindergarten teachers through psychological capital, job involvement and the chain intermediary between these two factors, which indicates that psychological capital and job involvement are key factors affecting the retention intention of kindergarten teachers. On the one hand, attention should be paid to the construction of kindergarten teachers' psychological resources; Luthans' psychological capital intervention (PCI) model (Luthans et al., 2005) can be used as a reference for improving kindergarten teachers' psychological capital based on the four dimensions of confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. On the other hand, attention should be paid to kindergarten teachers' cognition and attitude toward their work. Only by helping kindergarten teachers have positive cognition and belief toward their own work value can their job involvement level be promoted.

This study also has some shortcomings. First, due to space and time limitations, this study adopted a cross-sectional study design. Although previous studies have provided a foundation for this type of study, it is still difficult to draw an exact causal relationship using this approach. In future studies, longitudinal or experimental approaches could be used to further investigate the causal relationship of various variables. Second, the results of this study cannot be applied to all kindergarten teachers. The object of this study is kindergarten teachers in China, 99% of whom are female; thus, the sex ratio is not balanced. In future studies, the sex ratio of the participants should be considered, and the retention willingness of kindergarten teachers in different countries should be studied for comparisons. Third, since this study adopted a self-report questionnaire approach, it is difficult to exclude the possibility that the respondents' answers are

conservative or exaggerated compared with the actual situation; therefore, future studies should try to collect data from multiple information sources.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Ethics Committee of Ningxia University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

LM: propose hypotheses, collect data, and complete paper writing. HL: analysis data and translation. FZ: revise and perfect the thesis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Book Review: 17 Things Resilient Teachers Do (and 4 Things They Hardly Ever Do)

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A Book Review on

17 Things Resilient Teachers Do (and 4 Things They Hardly Ever Do)

Bryan Harris (New York, NY: Routledge), 2021, xiii+124 pages, ISBN: 978-0-367-52036-6

The paramount role of the high-quality teaching profession and teacher effectiveness persistently elucidates that teachers' classroom practices have an undeniable impact on student learning and achievement. Furthermore, research has substantiated that how teachers feel about their personal lives and the extent to which they are fulfilled with the quality of their professional career can have thoroughgoing implications for their continuing professional development and their practices (Leithwood, 2018). Although there has been a surge of interest on teacher resilience, lively and engaging guidelines and hands-on strategies that explicate the significant role resilience plays remain scanty. Similarly, the question of how to prepare and nurture teachers to become great teachers to manage and tackle the challenges of the “uniquely demanding and emotionally taxing nature” (p. xi) of the teaching profession in an intellectual and emotional context of school and/or university has been contemplated for many years. The down-to-earth monograph, entitled *17 Things Resilient Teachers Do (And 4 Things They Hardly Ever Do)*, written eloquently by the bestselling author and educational consultant Bryan Harris, provides lucid answers to the abovementioned concerns. The prime objective of this volume is to help teachers develop, refine, sustain, and renew their capacities to manage stress and be finally resilient.

Structurally, following the introductory chapter, the book encompasses two parts, including 21 chapters. In the introductory chapter, the author succinctly conceptualizes teacher resiliency, justifies its indispensable role in teacher education, and encourages teachers to be resilient in order to be “the best teachers we can” (p. xi). In the rest of this chapter, the author delineates the structure of each chapter, mentioning that each chapter comprises three main sections. *In a Nutshell* section, a panoramic view of each chapter is illustrated; in the *Digging Deeper* section, insights, evidence, research, and anecdotes are presented; and in the most practical section, *Application Points*, specific strategies and techniques to build, nurture, and nourish resilience are provided.

Preceding the first chapter, the author revisits the definition of stress and its different types and argues rightly and cogently that the perception and control of stress are two central ideas that should be taken into account to be resilient. Put simply, the author stipulates that “if stress is the problem, resiliency is the answer” (p. 4). Moreover, Harris concludes his argument by stating that resiliency consists of *how* we think and *what* we do. In other words, it includes “our mental models, our mindsets, and our beliefs along with a specific set of coping mechanisms” (pp. 4–5).

Part I contains 17 chapters that thematically focus on what resilient teachers do. Space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of each individual chapter, so we give an overview of these 17 things that resilient teachers do. Commencing the first chapter with *Resilient Teachers Take Care of Their Health* puts a premium on the fact that “When you're healthy, the very best of you can

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be on display” (p. 6). Chapter 2, *Resilient Teachers Practice Gratitude*, emphasizes that expressing gratitude fosters resiliency by helping to mitigate the negative effects of the stressors around us. In order to achieve perspective and control and balance our thinking, we need to embark on framing, i.e., cognitive re-appraisal or positive self-talk, which constitutes the essence of Chapter 3, *Resilient Teachers Practice Framing*. In Chapter 4, Harris believes that *Resilient Teachers Understand the Power of “No”* by enumerating seven applicable points. Since “teaching is an emotionally taxing, tremendously rewarding roller coaster of a job” (p. xi), *Resilient Teachers Manage Their Emotions* (Chapter 5).

As teachers, we need to be equipped with some strategies to relieve our stress, so Chapter 7 presents these tools as *Resilient Teacher Practice In-The-Moment Stress Relievers*. Chapter 8, *Resilient Teachers Develop a Professional Support Network*, argues that possessing an amicable network of friends, colleagues, and mentors improves job satisfaction, strengthens our immune system, and assists us in managing stress. “Remembering our faith tradition, attending to ordinary things and giving attention to passions and interests not related to the profession” (p. 44) entail that *Resilient Teachers Have a Life Outside the Classroom*. Because being disorganized makes us stressed out, Chapter 10 accentuates that *Resilient Teachers Get Themselves Organized*.

Resilient Teachers Focus on What They Can Control (Chapter 11) and *Resilient Teachers Know How to Receive Feedback* (Chapter 12) are two other important tools that can help us bounce back and navigate difficult waters in our teaching profession. Another pivotal resiliency strategy is encapsulated in Chapter 13, *Resilient Teachers Advocate for Themselves*. The author opines that self-advocacy and self-efficacy are two other

ingredients of successful resilient teachers. Since setting goals empowers teachers, Chapter 14 echoes that *Resilient Teachers Create and Track Goals*. The other three chapters in Part I deal with *Resilient Teachers Unplug* (Chapter 15), *Resilient Teachers Laugh and Have Fun with Their Students* (Chapter 16) and *Resilient Teachers Help Students Build Resiliency* (Chapter 17). What has intrigued us the most as the reviewers is that the strategy in Chapter 17 strengthens the teacher-student relationship, which makes the cornerstone of the teaching and learning process.

Focusing on the four things resilient teachers hardly ever do is the focus of Part II, which comprises the remaining four chapters. The author convincingly argues that resilient teachers hardly ever beat themselves up over past mistakes, spend much time complaining, freak out about the change, and shy away from conflict.

All in all, we believe that this insightful and thought-provoking monograph invites us to explore deeper into the dynamics and complexities of teacher resiliency and reminds us that nurturing and nourishing the capacity for resilience is more than an individual responsibility. Hence, we fully endorse this user-friendly contribution since this opportune volume cultivates healthy individual and collective learning opportunities which help teachers live a *resilient* and *stress-free* profession.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

XJ took the lead in writing the manuscript. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research.

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Book Review: Second Language Learning Motivation in a European Context: The Case of Hungary

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Keywords: motivation, hungary, second language acquisition, second language, language learning

A Book Review on

Second Language Learning Motivation in a European Context: The Case of Hungary

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Being considered as one of the quintessential components of individual differences in relation to language learning, second language (L2) motivation has received significant momentum in second language acquisition (SLA) research because it impacts learners' use of L2 learning strategies, their interaction with classmates, their general proficiency, and their L2 maintenance skills. Equally importantly, demotivational, amotivational, and remotivational factors play decisive roles in the process of language learning and teaching, so they need to be meticulously identified in each idiosyncratic learning context to help not only learners but also teachers to stay motivated. Kata Csizér's monograph, entitled *Second Language Learning Motivation in a European Context: The Case of Hungary*, furnishes a rundown of L2 motivation research in the Hungarian context, which has demonstrated to be an excellent laboratory for this kind of research. This volume provides a glimpse into the theoretical research on L2 motivation, coupled with comprehensive information on vast L2 motivation studies in Hungary. Being cognizant of the interdisciplinary nature of L2 motivation, Csizér also integrates qualitative analyses of the most significant investigations with quantitative data on teachers' opinions about success in L2 learning. Consisting of five chapters, this thought-provoking monograph meticulously delves into the constructs of L2 motivation from the perspectives of learners and teachers and sets forth future paths for L2 motivation research.

In Chapter 1, Csizér, sets the scene by informing the readers of the Hungarian education system, syllabi, and curricula, arguing convincingly that "teaching and learning involve teacher-student and student-student interaction within the classroom setting and different types of L2 programs (p. 16)." The author elucidates that various course books are taught in Hungarian schools, and the books "did not always match the proficiency level of the students, which might be demotivating for both students and teachers" (p. 18), justifying the pressing need to scrutinize the role of L2 motivation in the Hungarian context.

Chapter 2 foregrounds that L2 motivation theories have largely been inspired by research in the field of psychology. Being informed by Dörnyei (2001) and Gardner (1985) theoretical postulations, the author lays the foundations for different theoretical underpinnings of motivation. Conceptualizing motivation as "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiated, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out" (p. 25), Csizér declares that inner drive is the most important factor in learning. In the rest of the chapter, the author elaborates on the classic theories of L2 motivation and accentuates that self-confidence and self-efficacy, as two determinants of

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motivation, play a pivotal role in second/foreign language learning.

Putting a premium on the role of student motivation, Chapter 3 brings to the fore the significant role of language choice in the Hungarian education system and highlights how such individual-related variables as the Canadian influences, autonomy, emotions, and cognitive factors can have a bearing on L2 motivation. Besides, the author stresses the role of the milieu by reporting the results of one of her previous studies. This chapter seems enlightening in that it also elucidates the pivotal role of intercultural contact, demotivation, and special educational needs of learners such as dyslexic and deaf language learners regarding L2 motivation.

Inasmuch as the fact that learning outcomes and success are assessed from the point of view of language learners, literature on L2 learning motivation is replete with the surge of interest on language learners, echoing what Dörnyei (2019) argues by reiterating that L2 motivation researchers are motivated “in their interest in the personality/identity of the language learner” (p. 31). Besides, the author cogently argues that teacher’s motivational profiles, as well as teachers’ techniques to motivate their learners, should be taken into account. To bridge this gap, the penultimate chapter illuminates the role of *teacher* motivation, their dispositions, their attitudes, and experiences by sketching the conceptualizations and theoretical frameworks. The chapter also presents the results of Csizér (2020) empirical study to corroborate how substantial the role of teacher’s motivation can be. The author concludes that “it is the love for the job that helps teachers develop professionally rather than cognitive variables” (p. 135).

The closing chapter recapitulates the preceding chapters and opens up some avenues for further research. The chapter recommends some research directions for both student- and teacher-focused L2 motivation. Investigating L2 motivation in a dynamic way within the paradigm of attribution theory, exploring the demotivational and remotivational processes from multifarious perspectives, and scrutinizing the role of various

cognitive variables are some of the student-related directions for further research. Moreover, the author highlights that we need to move toward a theoretical model of language teacher motivation by running confirmatory studies in various educational contexts, and teachers should be encouraged to devise motivational strategies to pique students’ interest and focus in the classrooms. The monograph closes its mission by calling for novelty in research methods on L2 motivation.

All in all, had the author added some first-hand empirical studies instead of reporting her previous research, the authors would have benefitted more. However, this book is theoretically comprehensive, pedagogically viable, and intellectually thought-provoking because it reconciles theory and practice by providing thorough, contextualized, and refreshing information on L2 motivation in the Hungarian context, so I am confident to mention that this book is beneficial for a wide array of scholars interested in the role of L2 motivation, including methodologists, curricula designers, researchers, teachers, and students.

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Supporting Learner Success: Revisiting Strategic Competence Through Developing an Inventory for Computer-Assisted Speaking Assessment

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This study investigated English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners' strategic competence in the computer-assisted integrated speaking tests (CAIST) through the development and validation of the *Strategic Competence Inventory for Computer-assisted Speaking Assessment* (SCICASA). Based on our review of the literature on the CAIST, strategic competence, and available instruments for measuring the construct, we defined EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST as learners' use of four metacognitive strategies: Planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating, with each of them consisting of various components. These metacognitive strategies formulated the four factors and scale items of the SCICASA under validation. An exploratory factor analysis of responses from 254 EFL students and the subsequent confirmatory factor analysis of data collected on another sample of 242 students generated 23 items under the four factors. The high validity and reliability of the SCICASA reveal that EFL learners' strategic competence operates in the forms of the four metacognitive strategies in the CAIST. This will lend some new supporting evidence for Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model while providing implications for metacognitive instructions and test development. Concomitantly, the findings show the inventory as a valid instrument for measuring strategic competence in computer-assisted foreign/second language (L2) speaking assessment and relevant research arenas and beyond.

Keywords: computer-assisted integrated speaking tests, strategic competence, strategic competence inventory for computer-assisted speaking assessment, English as a foreign/second language, language testing

INTRODUCTION

The motivation of this study has to do with one of the authors' teaching experience related to the computer-assisted integrated speaking test (CAIST) in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms. The CAIST measures EFL learners' speaking ability associated with their strategic competence. Such ability is highly valued in tertiary education and is considered as one of the central factors affecting academic success as well as for engaging learners for sustainable growth in language proficiency (Zhang and Zhang, 2019; Teng and Zhang, 2020). Furthermore, the test has

been evidenced, though not sufficiently, to elicit strategic competence relevant to tertiary domains (Frost et al., 2020). The close relationship among the CAIST, strategic competence and tertiary education has made the test an effective measurement tool in EFL classroom-based learning (Bahari, 2020). However, when performing the CAIST, students often do not achieve what teachers expect them to achieve, as observed in the classroom teaching. This can be regarded as a concrete example that suggests the necessity of researching EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST for helping them achieve academic success (Bachman and Palmer, 2010; Frost et al., 2020).

In actuality, the rapid advance of computer technology and unexpected natural disasters that limit physical contact such as the COVID-19 pandemic have made computer-assisted L2 assessment (CALA) pervasive in L2 learning and teaching at various levels, particularly at the tertiary level (Zhang and Qin, 2018; Qin and Zhang, 2019; Sasere and Makhasane, 2020). As one form of CALA, the CAIST integrates multiple language skills (e.g., reading, listening and speaking) to replicate the authentic language use tasks for evaluating learners' ability to deal with daily language use activities. Such authenticity not only enhances the positive washback effect of the test on classroom-based L2 learning but also improves test fairness, which elucidates the recognition of such a test format as an indicator of the future direction of CALA, and its progressing prominence in high-stakes L2 tests (Bahari, 2020; Frost et al., 2020).

Despite this, as pointed out by some scholars (e.g., Huang and Hung, 2018; Frost et al., 2020), insufficient attention has been devoted to the CAIST, especially EFL learners' strategic competence in the test. In respect to the more general context of the CALA, Winkle and Isbell (2017) commented that the primary focus within CALA is on technological elements, and how strategic competence works in CALA is not clear and needs to be redefined. As the core component of language ability, strategic competence is broadly acknowledged as learners' metacognitive strategy use in L2 assessment, which is well-illustrated in Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model (Seong, 2014). According to Bachman (2007), understanding strategic competence is critical to understanding language ability, which is the essence of L2 assessment. Based on this view, research on EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST is essentially internal to comprehending the tests *per se*, which will further replenish our apprehension of the CALA, L2 speaking assessment and even L2 assessment at large.

However, although the importance of strategic competence has been recognized across disciplinary boundaries, studies on this construct mainly focus on listening, reading, and writing in non-testing contexts (e.g., Teng and Zhang, 2016, 2020), and hence how strategic competence operates in authentic speaking tests remains unclear (Huang and Hung, 2018; Frost et al., 2020). In addition to the complex nature of strategic competence (Barkaoui et al., 2013), some researchers (e.g., Hughes and Reed, 2017) attributed this research actuality to the complexness of L2 assessment, while the others (e.g., Luoma, 2004; Tarone, 2005) held that as the most difficult language skill for human beings to master, speaking, particularly L2 speaking, is understandably too complex to be researched. The complexity of strategic

competence, L2 assessment, speaking, and L2 speech production jointly justify the scant literature regarding the construct in the CAIST on one hand, and the significance of the research attempts that can provide additional evidence for the literature on the other. Given the increasing predomination of CALA in today's educational system and the relationship between strategic competence and the CAIST stated earlier, such research attempts also make great sense to EFL education.

Nevertheless, the research attempts are challenged by the absence of a valid and reliable instrument. To assess individuals' internal strategic processes, including their strategic competence, inventories or questionnaires are regarded as types of effective instruments (Oxford, 2017). Although some inventories are available for investigating learners' strategic competence, they mostly target non-testing contexts (e.g., Oxford, 1990). To our knowledge, inventories that can be employed to examine strategic competence in the CAIST are not yet available. In fact, inventories that can be used in CALA and the more macro L2 speaking assessment are unavailable either. The unavailability has led to the commonly decontextualized use of the accessible strategic competence inventories in empirical studies despite having been criticized by many scholars (e.g., Oxford, 2017; Takeuchi, 2020). Against this background, a valid and reliable inventory is warranted to address the research gap.

Taken together, the scantiness of the exiting literature on researching EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST, and the absence of an applicable inventory for such a research attempt indicate the research gaps that the current study is set up to bridge. To this end, we embedded our investigation of strategic competence in the development and validation of a desired inventory in line with some researchers' prior work (e.g., Purpura, 1997; Zhang and Goh, 2006; Teng and Zhang, 2016). Considering the relationship between CALA and the CAIST, our inventory focuses on the more global context of CALA for wider applicability, though our investigation was conducted in the CAIST. For this purpose, we developed and validated the Strategic Competence Inventory for Computer-assisted Speaking Assessment (SCICASA). As our study is the first to integrate research on EFL learners' strategic competence in computer-assisted L2 speaking assessment with instrument development and validation, the uniqueness will provide some new insights into research designs for empirical studies on L2 speaking assessment. Additionally, the findings are expected to offer a valid and reliable inventory for assessing EFL learners' strategic competence in L2 speaking assessment, additional validity evidence for Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model, and pedagogic implications for metacognitive scaffolding in EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Computer-Assisted Integrated Speaking Tests

A computer-assisted integrated speaking test (CAIST) is a test format that delivers an integrated speaking test via computer technology. It involves two strands of "young

and dynamic” development in L2 assessment: Computer-assisted language assessment and integrated speaking tests (Winkle and Isbell, 2017, p. 313).

Computer-assisted language assessment (CALA), also known as computer-assisted language testing (Pathan, 2012), refers to the use of computer technology for facilitating, contextualizing and enhancing the assessment of test takers’ language ability. Concomitant with the speedy and extensive propagation of computer use, CALA has become increasingly common since computers were first employed to score test items in L2 assessment in the 1930’s. The growth of CALA has expanded the L2 assessment field and triggered influential washback effects in the L2 classrooms (Winkle and Isbell, 2017). Some researchers (e.g., Booth, 2019) have anticipated CALA as an inevitable and irreversible trend in L2 assessment, which indicates the future of this field due to its advantages, including the individualized test process and simplified test administration. On the other hand, the on-going spread of COVID-19 has further facilitated this trend after online learning and online assessment have been acknowledged as an effective means to normalize the delivery of teaching and learning in challenging situations caused by natural disasters (Sasere and Makhasane, 2020). Based on a review of approximately 300 studies spanning 2002–2018 that examined the mainstream assessment tools in computer-assisted language learning, Bahari (2020) pointed out that CALA is moving toward integrated language skills assessment.

Research efforts focusing on integrated language skills assessment began in the 1970’s (Cummings, 2014), but few investigated the integrated speaking tests (Frost et al., 2020). Integrated speaking tests are so called because they integrate reading, listening and speaking to duplicate authentic language use, making it possible to measure learners’ ability to communicate in English in real-life settings (Huang and Hung, 2018). It is believed that if learners do well on the tests, they have shown their abilities required in real language use situations where multiple language skills are needed (Luoma, 2004). Built upon the working model of language use in an authentic academic context, integrated speaking tests are theoretically considered as an expanded version of Bachman’s (1990) Communicative Language Ability Model. As such, they “broaden the scope of strategies called upon (Barkaoui et al., 2013, p. 16), and are immediately close to the metacognitive strategies of pre-assessment and pre-planning, online planning and monitoring, and post-evaluation (Cohen, 2014). Although the metacognitive strategies assumed to be elicited by integrated speaking tests have not been sufficiently evidenced, as noted earlier, this test format indicates the paramount role of metacognitive strategy use in L2 speech production (Skehan, 2018).

In L2 speech production, monitoring works both covertly and overtly for task completion, and speakers use planning to seek knowledge at hand and monitoring to compensate for, and facilitate, their oral production (Bygate, 2011). In the meanwhile, monitoring operates in conjunction with evaluation (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990; Purpura, 1997), and the speakers have to solve various problems caused by their incomplete L2 knowledge through the use of problem-solving (Kormos, 2011). EFL speakers’ metacognitive strategy use in L2 speech production

essentially reflects their strategic competence in L2 assessment (Seong, 2014). In other words, the metacognitive strategies that are assumed to be called upon by integrated speaking tests illustrate the equally important part that strategic competence plays in this specific testing context, as it does in L2 assessment (see the subsection of strategic competence). Such importance further warrants a study as the current one.

The delivery of integrated speaking tests by means of CALA is the CAIST, which is typically represented by one of the most influential high-stakes tests: The TOEFL iBt integrated the speaking section (Hughes and Reed, 2017). This explains why existing studies on strategic competence in the CAIST were commonly conducted in the context of the TOEFL iBt (e.g., Barkaoui et al., 2013), which rationalizes the role of this specific test as the research context of our study.

Strategic Competence

In the research field of L2 assessment, strategic competence is conceived as a set of metacognitive strategies that “provide a management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities” (Bachman and Palmer, 2010, p. 48), irrespective of the ambiguity plaguing the conceptualization of the construct (Seong, 2014). Such a conception is due to the profound influence of Bachman and Palmer’s (1996; 2010) language ability models, where strategic competence serves as the core component and works independently or interactively with other test factors such as test tasks to considerably influence test performance (Bachman and Palmer, 2010; Skehan, 2018). To illustrate such a core role, several researchers (e.g., Piggan, 2012; Zhang, 2017) regarded strategic competence within the language ability models as an independent model and termed it Bachman and Palmer’s strategic competence model, which operates in three forms of metacognitive strategies: Goal setting, appraising, and planning. Goal setting concerns language users’ decision on what they seek to do for a given language use task. Appraising helps learners assess the feasibility of task completion. Planning is about deciding how to use language knowledge for task completion. As a result, researchers typically describe strategic competence as metacognitive strategy use in empirical studies (Seong, 2014).

However, the insufficiency of empirical evidence for the validity of Bachman and Palmer’s (2010) strategic competence model makes it hard to define what metacognitive strategies are actually used by learners in real L2 assessment (Ellis et al., 2019). Hence, researchers tended to take an exploratory approach to investigating strategic competence in accordance with the literature on L2 assessment, metacognition, and learning strategies rather than simply defining them as goal setting, appraising, and planning. For example, Barkaoui et al. (2013) discovered that the metacognitive strategies used by Chinese EFL learners were: Identifying the purpose of the task, setting goals, evaluating previous performance, and evaluating the content of what is heard/said. By contrast, in Zhang’s (2017) study, the metacognitive strategies that she identified were: Assessing the situation, monitoring, self-evaluation and self-testing. Following these researchers, we defined strategic competence as metacognitive strategy use which was investigated in an exploratory approach. Such an approach is simultaneously

TABLE 1 | Definitions and taxonomies of strategic competence in this study.

MS Taxonomies		Definitions
Planning	Setting goals	Identify the purpose of the task
	Directed attention	Decide in advance to focus on particular tasks and ignore distractions
	Activate background information	Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task
	Prediction	Anticipate information to prepare and give direction for the task
	Organizational planning	Plan the task and content sequence
	Self-management	Arrange for conditions that help you learn
Problem-solving	Inference	Make guesses based on previous knowledge
	Substitute	Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words
Monitoring	Selective attention	Focus on key words, phrases, and ideas
	Deduction/induction	Consciously apply learned or self-developed rules
	Personalize/personal experience	Relate information to personal experiences
	Take notes	Write down important words and concepts
	Ask if it makes sense	Check understanding and production to keep track of progress and identify problems
Evaluating	Self-talk	Talk to yourself to reduce anxiety by reminding yourself of progress, resources available, goals
	Verify predictions and guesses	Check whether your predictions or guesses are correct
	Check goals	Decide whether a specific goal was met
	Evaluating performance	Judge how well you did in the task

MS, metacognitive strategies.

consistent with the common practice in inventory development (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

As an interdisciplinary concept, metacognitive strategies are well-illustrated by the extensively applied three-component model which encompasses planning, monitoring, and evaluating in the research domains of metacognition and language learning strategies (Purpura, 1997; Zhang, 2003; Zhang and Zhang, 2018, 2019). The three components correspond to the constituents of the Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model, but they fail to explain problem-solving, the critical strategy in L2 speech production (Bygate, 2011; Kormos, 2011). Additionally, as Seong (2014) commented, derived from Sternberg's (1988) intelligence theory which refers to planning, monitoring and evaluating individuals' problem solving, Bachman and Palmer's (2010) model is considerably influenced by Canale and Swain (1980), who proposed strategic competence as problem-solving mechanisms. Therefore, in the investigation of strategic competence in L2 speaking assessment, it is imperative that problem-solving, side by side with planning, monitoring and evaluating, should be taken into consideration. In light of such imperativeness and guided by an exploratory approach, we adopted Chamot et al.'s (1999) Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning in formulating the working definitions of the assumed strategic competence elicited by the CAIST.

Comprised of planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating, Chamot et al.'s (1999) model is built upon interdisciplinary studies on metacognitive strategies involving L2 learners with various backgrounds. It is therefore accepted as empirically grounded (Chamot, 2009). According to Chamot et al. (1999), the inclusion of problem-solving as one component of metacognitive strategies is due to its "usefulness and

applicability to a broad range of learning tasks" (p. 11). Moreover, Chamot (2005) pointed out that almost all the models that highlight metacognitive strategies in L2 learning include problem-solving as the fundamental component with planning, monitoring and evaluating (e.g., Chamot et al., 1999; Rubin, 2001; Anderson, 2002). The features of the Chamot et al.'s (1999) model obviously established its correspondence to Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model in L2 speaking assessment, but the inclusion of problem-solving makes it better than the latter to theoretically depict the construct in the CAIST. Yet, as Chamot et al.'s model was mainly for non-testing settings, only the components consistent with test contexts are appropriately applicable in the CAIST. In accordance with this, the working definitions and the taxonomies of EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST under investigation are formulated in **Table 1**.

Measuring Strategic Competence

In empirical studies on strategic competence or metacognitive strategy use, the commonality is that inventories or questionnaires are employed thanks to the properties of the instrument: (a) Easy administration on a large sample size; (b) little intrusiveness; (c) applicability in many statistical analyses; (d) rather high validity and reliability (Craig et al., 2020). In L2 assessment, Purpura's (1997) Metacognitive Strategy Questionnaire (MSQ) has been used extensively for eliciting strategic competence (e.g., Phakiti, 2003, 2008). The 40-item questionnaire has four sections: Assessing the situation, monitoring, self-evaluating and self-testing. A 6-Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (always) is used to assess the frequency of the individuals' on-line and off-line metacognitive strategy use in performing reading test tasks. However, the

tense and the content of the item questions show that this questionnaire was not designed specifically for L2 assessment. Nevertheless, as this questionnaire was validated by Purpura with structural equation modeling, it has been adapted by several researchers in L2 assessment, including Phakiti (2003), who devised his cognitive and metacognitive questionnaire on EFL reading tests based on the MSQ. Phakiti used fewer items (35 items) and a 5-point Likert scale, which makes his questionnaire more user-friendly. Besides, the past tense and the content in each item have turned the questionnaire into an off-line self-report suitable for the context of reading tests. Later, Phakiti (2008) refined the questionnaire, changing it into an even simpler one with 30 items.

As metacognitive strategies are considered as the subordinate language learning strategies, many questionnaires on this construct are developed in accordance with language learning strategies. One actual instance is Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), which has been adopted in numerous empirical studies with its high reliability and validity. The SILL is aimed at general learning strategy use, and thus it comprehensively includes six types of strategies: Memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies with 50 items. Each strategy elicited by one item is measured by its frequency reported on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never use it) to 5 (often use it). Though employed widely, for any specific context (e.g., L2 speaking assessment), the SILL is unlikely to be applied directly due to its generalness (Sun et al., 2016).

With regard to L2 speaking, questionnaires that examine metacognitive strategy use in this context are severely lacking. Only one such questionnaire is available: The Metacognitive Awareness Inventory in Listening and Speaking Strategies (MAILSS) developed by Zhang and Goh (2006); see also Zhang (2021). The MAILSS includes 40 items, and the strategies for speaking and listening are categorized into use-focused learning strategies, form-focused learning strategies, comprehension strategies, and communication strategies. The first two strategies are for improving individuals' speaking and listening abilities, while the other two are for enhancing one's comprehension and communicative competence in real-world reciprocal interactions. The use of the metacognitive speaking strategies is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "Never" (1) to "Very Often" (5). Although the MAILSS can be used to measure metacognitive speaking strategies, it is not developed especially for speaking with its focus on EFL learners' development of metacognitive awareness in non-testing conditions. Because of the limitation, the inventory has not been applied broadly in testing situations (Craig et al., 2020).

From the above exposition, it can be seen that the advantages of questionnaires in assessing metacognitive strategy use rationalizes our development of the SCICASA for investigating EFL learner's strategic competence. In addition, the features of the above four questionnaires, including validity, the participants on whom the instruments are used, the language skills investigated via the instruments, and the contexts (testing or non-testing) where they are applied, account for why

we considered these instruments as the original sources of the SCICASA.

METHODS

SCICASA Development

The development of the SCICASA was essentially a process of narrowing down the strategic competence under investigation. As our research focus was on strategic competence and the research context where the inventory is expected to be applied is computer-assisted L2 speaking assessment, in developing the inventory, we regarded reading, listening, and speaking involved in the CAIST as a macro speaking modality that integrates reading and listening as a prior knowledge provider rather than independent language skills in line with the interpretation of the test format by English Testing Service (ETS) (ETS, 2021a), the developer and organizer of the TOEFL iBT. This indicates that the items in the inventory only relate to speaking, and based on this, we synthesized the scale items in the four questionnaires that suggest EFL learners' metacognitive strategy use in L2 speaking assessment.

Consequently, a total of 40 items that are assumed to elicit the metacognitive strategies and hence to indicate EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST were generated, which were classified into planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating, the four dimensions of the inventory (see **Table 1**). A sample item on planning was "I knew what the task questions required me to do." A sample item on problem-solving was "I drew on my background knowledge to complete the task." Items such as "I knew when I should complete a task more quickly" were used to examine monitoring use and "I evaluated whether my intended plans worked effectively" was one item that investigated the use of evaluating. A 6-point Likert scale was used for each item: 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), 4 (usually), and 5 (always). Though the SCICASA was developed in English, each item was operationalised as a written statement in Chinese, the native language of the participants, to reduce possible misunderstandings and enhance the reliability. Five questions on EFL learners' background information such as age and their EFL learning experience were also included in the SCICASA (Sun et al., 2016).

SCICASA Validation

The validation of the the SCICASA was parsed into two stages: Initial validation relating to its face validity and content validity, and factorial validation focusing on the construct validity and the reliability of the instrument (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). It was in the second stage that we administered the probe into strategic competence in the CAIST.

Initial Validation

For face and content validity, four PhD students majoring in applied linguistics were consulted on the layout, wording, redundancy, and logic consistency of the inventory. One item that caused misunderstanding was removed. Two Chinese professors with a background of English linguistics were invited to examine the translation of the inventory from original English to Chinese. They scrutinized the items in

regard to redundancy, sequencing, clarity, readability, and comprehensibility. Based on their feedback, potentially confusing instructions, interpretations, and the scale items were revised. Modifications were made in item wording, and one new item was added. The modified inventory was then piloted with 22 students to evaluate the wording, the structure and the clarity of the items for the readability and the understandability of the instrument in its actual users (Byrne, 2016). After piloting, the SCICASA (the first draft version) was subject to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for its construct validity (Kline, 2016).

Factorial Validation and Reliability Evaluation

Participants

The two factor analyses included data from 496 students based in two universities in a Northern city in the People's Republic of China. The students were recruited via convenience sampling on a voluntary basis, with males and females accounting for 37.64% ($N = 189$) and 63.68% ($N = 307$), respectively. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 21 years, and on average, they reported 10 ($M = 10.36$, $SD = 1.95$) years of formal English language learning experience.

Almost all the students were enrolled either in the Faculty of Foreign Language Studies or the International Cooperation Programmes in the selected research sites and were in their final academic year before starting their internship or studying abroad related to English, respectively. This English-related background enabled the students to be interested in this study which, they believed, potentially benefited them in their language preparations for their future career or study. Their interest contributed to their cooperation, helping to improve the accuracy of their responses, and hence the validity of the SCICASA was enhanced (Daniel, 2011; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the score range of the students on CET-4, an authoritative test for English language proficiency in China (Zhang, 2017), was from 425 points to 500 points. According to the official scoring interpretation of the test published by the National Education Examinations Authorities (2020), this score range suggests that the students' language proficiency was at an upper-intermediate level as required to take the CAIST (Kyle et al., 2016; Huang and Hung, 2018; Frost et al., 2020).

Instruments

To establish a research context of authentic speaking tests, and in line with "cultural neutrality, religious neutrality, and low controversy-provoking possibility" (Huang and Hung, 2013, p. 250), we selected one TOEFL iBt integrated speaking section composed of four tasks from TOEFL practice online data (TPO2). TOEFL practice online tests are official practice tests that feature real past test questions and aim at allowing learners to experience taking the real TOEFL iBt test (ETS, 2021b). Our brief survey showed that none of them had used these practice tests, as they had not been aware of their availability. This ensures the authenticity of the four tasks adopted in our study.

The four speaking tasks involve topics on campus life and academic lectures. The tasks require learners to read and listen

or to listen before speaking in response to different task types such as stating an opinion, and arguing for a feasible solution to a problem, during which various amounts of preparation time are provided. We used the test tasks without any changes for authenticity, validity and reliability (Huang and Hung, 2018). It should be noted that the four speaking tasks come from the old version of TOEFL iBt which underwent reform in late 2019.

Data Collection

The first cohort of student participants ($N = 254$) was invited to answer the first draft of the SCICASA after they performed the four test tasks in multimedia laboratories. Data collected were used for the EFA, generating the second draft of the SCICASA administered on another different sample of students ($N = 242$) for CFA after they completed the same tasks. To counterbalance the carryover effect, a 20-minute interval between tasks was provided, and the order effect was minimized through a Latin square design (Corriero, 2017). Completing the SCICASA took each student about 20 min, and ethical issues were appropriately addressed after the study was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (Reference Number 020972).

Data Analysis

Three steps were involved in EFA: (a) The examination of the feasibility for EFA with reference to Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (> 0.7); (b) factor extraction; and (c) evaluating scale items loading on a particular factor (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation and Promax rotations were adopted for factor extraction and rotation, respectively (Beavers et al., 2013). In our examination of factor loadings we removed the items that had a factor loading below 0.4 or that loaded on more than one factors from the draft SCICASA (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

The model extracted through the EFA was then cross-validated in CFA on AMOS 0.24 (Windows version), which started with model specification, model identification, and assumption tests. Model specification was built upon the structure generated from the EFA. Model identification was conducted with reference to the guidelines proposed by Byrne (2016) and Kline (2016), which include: (a) Scaling latent variables (the variance of the first indicator of factors was fixed to a value of 1.0); (b) deciding on the number of parameters (the number of figures reflected by the input matrix should be not less than the number of freely estimated model parameters); and (c) deciding on the number of indicators of each latent variable (≥ 3). The examination of model fit was based on the fit indices, including Goodness-of-fit (GFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and the root-mean-square error approximation (RMSEA). The acceptable cut-off points for GFI, IFI, TLI and CFI were > 0.9 and that for RMSEA was < 0.8 . After factor analyses, the reliability of the inventory was evaluated with reference to the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the thumb-up criterion was over 0.8. In the

CFA, the estimation method of ML was employed as in the EFA (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

RESULTS

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Assumption Tests

Descriptive analysis revealed that there were no missing data. Values of the skewness of the items were between -0.018 and 0.427 , and the figures for kurtosis ranged from -0.902 to 0.273 , all falling within the acceptable bounds for univariate normality. However, 30 multivariate outliers were discovered and removed, making the final sample size to be 224 participants for a 40-item scale, meeting the thumbs-up rule: The subject-to-variable ratio should be 5:1 (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

The subsequent regression analysis displayed that values of tolerance of the items were all above the cut-off point of 0.2, and the numbers of their variance inflation factor (VIF) were all < 5 , the cut-off boundary. Such results indicated the absence of multicollinearity. Given the rather large number of items in the SCICSA, linearity was examined between the item with the strong negative skewness and the item with the strong positive skewness via a scatterplot, which also disclosed the multivariate normality. To evaluate the factorability of the dataset, we examined the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and KMO test via initial factor analysis. The results showed that the strength of the relationships between variables was statistically significant: $\chi^2 (df = 780) = 4740.273$, $p < 0.001$, which evidenced that the number of the items ($N = 40$) of the draft SCICASA was statistically sufficient for an EFA procedure (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Factor Extraction and Rotation

In the initial round of the EFA, with reference to the eigenvalues, the scree plots and the percentage of variance, eight factors were extracted, which explained 62.159 % of the total variance. However, 39 items with their factor loadings above the cut-off value of 0.4 fell on one extracted factor. After factor rotation, numbers from the Pattern Matrix showed that items with factor loadings above 0.4 scattered among the eight factors. Despite this, none of the factors had at least three items (the cut-off criterion), indicating the failure of the factor extraction. Given the parsimony and the meaningfulness of the eight-factor solution in light of the working taxonomies of strategic competence presented in **Table 1**, an alternative approach to extracting factors was employed in accordance with our review of the relevant literature (Qin, 2003; Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016) and our consultation with an in-house professor of statistics: The number of factors and their name were determined prior to factor extraction. Accordingly, four factors were generated: Planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating.

After the first round of EFA on the four-factor solution, the four factors only explained 49.96 of the total variance, and indices of the model fit (GFI) of this solution [$\chi^2 (df = 626) = 1105.671$, $p \leq 0.001$] did not demonstrate improvement compared with the eight-factor solution [$\chi^2 (df = 488) = 700.17$, $p \leq 0.001$]. Meanwhile, values in the Pattern Matrix showed that factor loadings of six items were < 0.4 on any of the four factors. After

the exclusion of these undesired items in the second round of EFA, a dramatic improvement was seen in the model fit: $\chi^2 (df = 321) = 590$, $p \leq 0.001$, and the total variance explained by the four factors increased to 54.94%. Following the same procedure, we conducted five rounds of extractions and rotations, which generated a structure composed of 28 items underpinned by the four factors. The proportions of the variance explained by the factors were 39.23% (planning), 6.66% (monitoring), 6.14% (problem-solving) and 6.14% (evaluating), and the model fit indexes were: $\chi^2 (df = 272) = 526.27$ ($p \leq 0.001$), which suggested a good structure. In addition, the output of the Component Correlation Matrix revealed moderate inter factor correlations (≥ 0.3 but ≤ 0.8), indicating the appropriateness of the Promax rotation run on this dataset (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Reliability Evaluation

Reliability analysis after the EFA included evaluating the subscale reliability and the full-scale reliability with reference to Cronbach's alpha coefficient α . Results showed that both were above 0.8, revealing good consistency within each factor and within the SCICASA. The factor loadings of the 28 items and their internal and the overall reliability are reported in **Table 2**.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model Specification and Model Identification

After model specification and identification, a zero-order model (Model A) composed of four correlated factors was established. In the model, variance of the first indicator of each of the four factors was fixed to 1 by default on the AMOS. Based on the formula of $1/2 [P(P + 1)]$ where P refers to the number of the items of the SCICASA after EFA ($P = 28$), the number of the parameters in the matrix was 406, greater than that of freely estimated model parameters (62). Moreover, each of the four factors had more than three indicators, the boundary criterion: Nine indicators for planning and monitoring, and five indicators for problem-solving and evaluating. Each indicator was constrained to only one factor with error terms associated with each indicator variable uncorrelated (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Assumption Tests

In accordance with the cut-off criteria explained above in EFA, values of the skewness (0.051–0.264) and the kurtosis (-0.897 to -0.397) of the 28 items indicated the approximate normal distribution. The subsequent visual inspection of the histograms with normality curves, box plots, and Q-Q plots further evidenced the data normality (Kline, 2016).

In light of the Chi-square value (56.892, $\alpha = 0.001$, $df = 28$), a total of 24 undesired cases were removed, which reduced the sample size to 218, meeting the suggested requirement: The sample size > 200 is considered as a large sample size for CFA. The regression analysis revealed that the values of tolerance were above the cut-off value of 0.2, and the values of their VIF fell within the acceptable boundary (≤ 5), indicating the absence of multicollinearity. Nonetheless, collinearity and homoscedasticity testing showed that there was bivariate non-normality in the

TABLE 2 | Results of EFA and the reliabilities of the four-factor SCICSA.

Factors	Items	Factor loadings				α
		P	M	PS	E	
P	Q1	0.521				0.886
	Q2	0.513				
	Q3	0.670				
	Q4	0.809				
	Q5	0.734				
	Q6	0.626				
	Q7	0.523				
	Q8	0.683				
	Q9	0.679				
PS	Q14			0.643		0.845
	Q15			0.645		
	Q17			0.740		
	Q19			0.701		
	Q20			0.719		
M	Q23		0.563			0.871
	Q24		0.430			
	Q26		0.473			
	Q27		0.610			
	Q28		0.474			
	Q29		0.787			
	Q30		0.505			
	Q31		0.625			
E	Q35				0.621	0.859
	Q36				0.595	
	Q37				0.677	
	Q38				0.880	
	Q39				0.654	
Overall reliability		0.941				

P, planning; PS, problem-solving; M, monitoring; E, evaluating; Q, question; α , Cronbach's alpha.

variables; hence, the comprehensive multivariate normality was violated (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Examination of Offending Estimates

Examining the offending estimates was to ensure the feasibility and the statistical significance of all the parameters estimated. It was a fundamental step before model fit evaluation, which included the inspection of the correlation between constructs (convergent validity), standardized factor loadings and standard errors. According to Byrne (2016) and Kline (2016), values of correlation coefficients between constructs should be <0.8 ; values of standardized factor loadings cannot be close to or exceed 1; and the standard errors should be >0 . After the first round of CFA, all these parameters were shown as not offending estimates, though the correlation coefficient between monitoring and evaluating was 0.81, slightly >0.8 . Such results suggested the appropriateness of model fit evaluation (Kline, 2016).

Model Evaluation

As multivariate normality was violated, multivariate normality was re-investigated during the first round of the CFA. The value of the Mardia's coefficient multivariate kurtosis was found to be 136.091, and its critical ratio or C.R. was 24.286, both greater than the threshold criteria: Normalized multivariate kurtosis should be <5 , and the value of C.R. should be <1.96 . Therefore, multivariate non-normality was identified. For non-normal correction, bootstrapping procedure was run so that the bias-corrected confidence intervals of the parameter estimate, and the corrected general model fit indices were examined for model evaluation (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Results of the model fit indices of Model A were: $\chi^2 (df = 344) = 750.034$, $p = 0.000$. As the value of χ^2/df was 2.18, larger than the cut-off point (≥ 2), and the p -value was found to be 0.00, less than the thumb-up value of 0.05, the model was not satisfactory. Additionally, values of CFI, GFI, and TLI were all <0.9 , the criteria for an acceptable model. Given that these indices were estimated under the condition of multivariate non-normality, bootstrap standard errors of each parameters and bootstrap confidence were inspected for bias corrected parameters. After the bias correction, all these indices were statistically significant: p -values of the bootstrap standard errors were <0.001 , while their bootstrap confidence did not fall on the value of zero. Bollen-Stine bootstrap value was also examined for the bias-corrected general model fit which was equal to zero. The outcome of the bootstrapping was consistent with the original model fit examination, suggesting that Model A did not fit the current dataset and therefore modification was needed for a better model fit (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016).

Model Modifications

Model modification was conducted with reference to factor loadings, modification indices and standardized residual weights. As Byrne (2016) and Kline (2016) proposed, an ideal factor loading should be >0.7 . Further, the observed variables with standardized residual weight >1.6 for $p < 0.05$ may indicate areas of strain and should be removed. In line with this, two undesired items were deleted, which improved the model fit and generated Model B. The inspection of the modification indices of Model B led to the inclusion of extra six paths between error terms, which resulted in a better Model C. Final modification involved the deletion of variables with undesired standardized residual weights. After the modification, Model D composed of 23 items was established with desired model fit indices: Although the index of CFI (0.892) was still less than the cut-off value of 0.9, other indices were satisfactory. In addition, the bootstrap estimates proved that the bias-corrected bootstrap standard errors and the intervals of the parameters in the model were all acceptable. In addition, a bias-corrected p -value of Model D was 0.204, much greater than the threshold (0.05), indicating the statistical significance of the model fit. Detailed model indices of the four models generated in CFA are summarized in **Table 3**, and **Figure 1** illustrates the factor loadings of the 23 items and the correlation coefficients of the four factors in Model D.

Validity and Reliability

Model validity and reliability were assessed with reference to the values of the Composite Reliability (CR > 0.7), Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5) and Maximum Shared Variance (MSV ≤

AVE). As shown in **Table 4**, the values of CR for the factors were satisfactory; the value of AVE for monitoring was a little less than the cut-off criterion of 0.5; and the values of MSV for monitoring

TABLE 3 | Model fit indices for four rounds of modifications.

Models	χ^2	CMIN/DF	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMESEA	SRMR
Model A	750.034	2.18	0.884	0.799	0.872	0.074	0.0616
Model B	628.765	2.14	0.897	0.814	0.886	0.073	0.0608
Model C	553.975	1.93	0.919	0.839	0.908	0.066	0.0567
Model D	302.577	1.388	0.968	0.892	0.963	0.043	0.0512

TABLE 4 | Validity and reliability of Model D.

Factors	CR	AVE	MSV
M	0.893	0.483	0.664
P	0.910	0.558	0.452
PS	0.878	0.591	0.436
E	0.867	0.566	0.664

M, monitoring; P, planning; PS, problem-solving; E, evaluating.

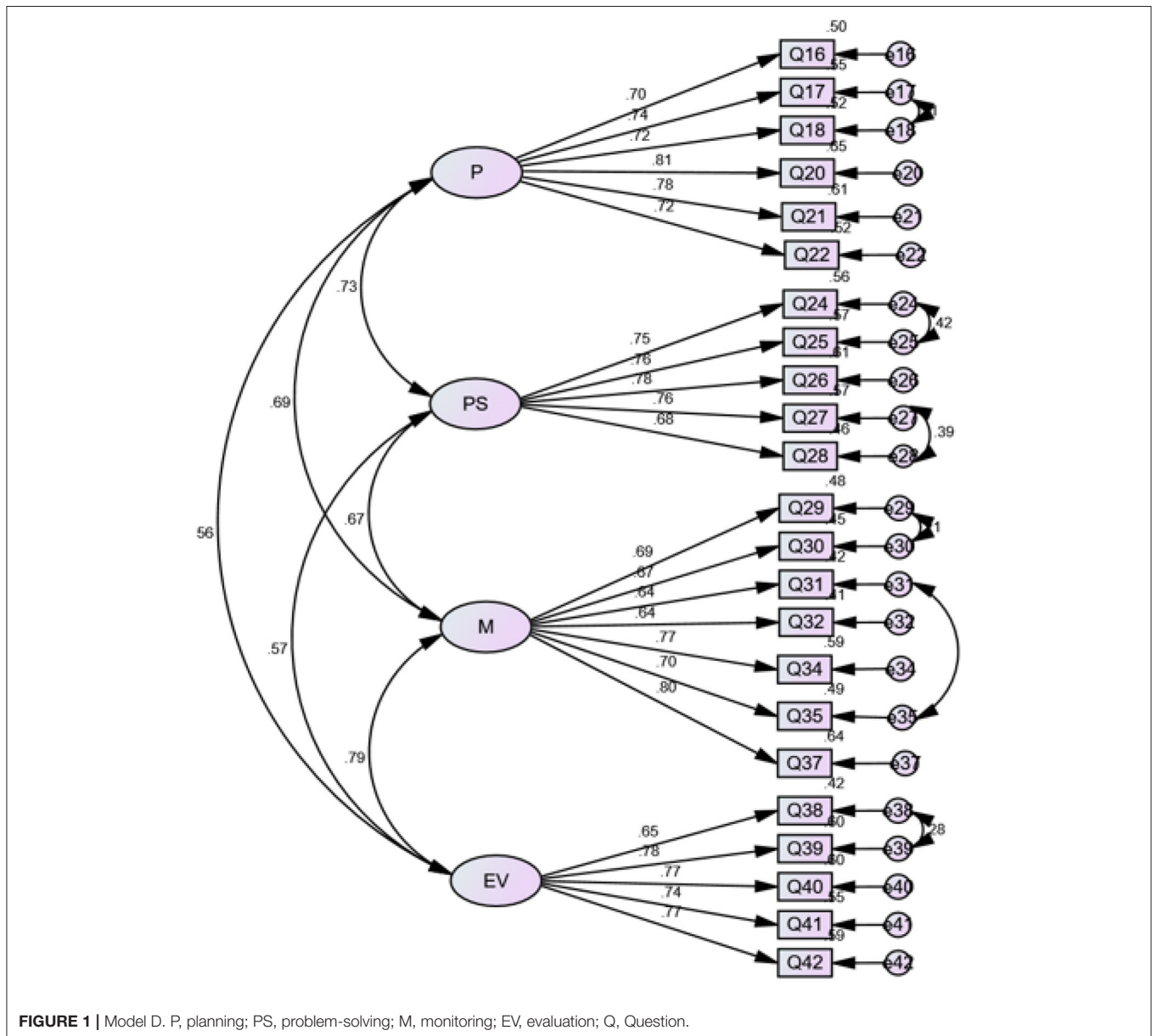


FIGURE 1 | Model D. P, planning; PS, problem-solving; M, monitoring; EV, evaluation; Q, Question.

and evaluation were slightly greater than the values of their AVE. Those numbers indicated that Model D did not meet the requirements on construct validity. Despite this, given the fairly large sample size, and the ideal overall fit indices demonstrated by **Table 3**, this minor discrepancy between the actual values and the cut-off points was tolerable (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). Therefore, Model D was accepted to fit the dataset.

DISCUSSION

The development and validation of the SCICASA was essentially a process in which we probed the EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST. The 4-factor model validated via EFA and CFA (see **Figure 1**) revealed EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST. To be specific, the first factor, linguistically labeled planning, refers to EFL learners' determination of their objectives and how to achieve the expected goals in test performance. This planning construct is reflected by six items (e.g., I was aware of the need to plan a course of action). The second factor is labeled problem-solving, which is highly related to what the EFL learners did when encountering problems in the test such as making a guess or using a substitute. Five items represent this factor and examples of these items include "I guessed the meaning of the unknown words or expressions by using my knowledge (e.g., words in the context, knowledge of word information and of the topic)." The third construct is monitoring which refers to the EFL learners' examination of what they did in the test for a given plan. An example item is "When I was speaking, I knew when I had spoken in a way that sounded like a native speaker." The fourth factor is evaluating, which displayed the EFL students' response to post-test self-evaluation. The construct is represented by items such as "I evaluated my performance satisfaction as I moved along the task." Detailed constructs and the item scales of the SCICASA that reflect EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST are presented in the **Appendix**.

In addition, the SCICASA helped us identify that problem-solving, though typically not included in the widely applied three-component model of metacognitive strategies, is one of the fundamental components of EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST. Given that the participants are Chinese EFL learners, such identification is supported by studies such as Sun (2016) and Zhou (2020), who postulated that problem-solving is one of the key strategies that Chinese EFL learners must master in their daily EFL learning activities. Learning experiences of such likely made it natural for the participants to use problem-solving in L2 assessment. Chinese EFL learners' problem-solving strategy use as evidenced in the inventory was also reported in the study by Yin (2013), who discovered that problem-solving worked more effectively in Chinese EFL learners' performance on speaking tasks. In fact, this phenomenon is not unique to Chinese EFL learners. According to Cohen (2018), L2 learners tend to use strategies in line with a specific language skill or modality, which put strategy use in a well-placed position. Additionally, such a relationship coincides with the view held by Oxford (2017), who proposed that the use of L2 learning strategies, including

metacognitive strategies, is associated with a specific language skill area.

Furthermore, the validation provides empirical support for some researchers who advocated the inclusion of problem-solving in the metacognition model (e.g., Chamot, 2009). It accordingly proves that Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model should be reconsidered, and the problem-solving strategy is expected to be included. The inclusion will serve as a research effort to respond to the proposal from some scholars in L2 assessment: Metacognitive strategies validated by empirical studies should be included in Bachman and Palmer's (2010) strategic competence model for its comprehensive validity (e.g., Phakiti, 2016). On the other hand, the validation of planning, monitoring, and evaluating reflected in the SCICASA lends support for Bachman and Palmer's (2010) model. Moreover, the high correlation coefficients of the four constructs validated by the CFA demonstrate the interactions of the four individual metacognitive strategies with one another in the EFL learners' response to L2 speaking assessment. The interactions are consistent with the working mode of the construct advocated by scholars such as Flavell (1979) and Takeuchi (2020): Metacognitive strategies operate either independently or interactively in task performance. Finally, from the perspective of speaking, the inventory adds validating evidence for the L2 speech production models proposed by Kormos (2011) and Bygate (2011), where planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating work independently and interactively.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We conducted our investigation into EFL learners' strategic competence in the CAIST through developing and validating the SCICASA. The high validity and reliability of the inventory reveal that in performing the test, EFL learners used planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and evaluating as assumed. Our pioneering attempt to integrate our study on strategic competence in L2 speaking assessment into instrument development and validation will provide some new insights into research design for researchers in this field. Given the decontextualization of the available metacognitive strategy questionnaires in the field, the presence of the SCICASA may help address, to some degree, this problem in empirical studies. In addition, the availability of the inventory will permit language educators to understand learners' internal strategic response to L2 integrated speaking test tasks. Considering the extensively recognized washback effect of the test format, such an understanding will provide pedagogical implications for EFL teachers' classroom instructions related to metacognitive scaffolding, especially in teaching EFL learners in China, a context where English is not widely used as a common lingua franca. In the Chinese context, research on strategic competence mainly focuses on the teachability of the construct, and little is known on how Chinese EFL learners' strategic competence works in actual learning activities (Wang et al., 2015). Similarly, the new instrument might have a role in helping test developers examine

whether test tasks truly elicit assumed strategic behaviors from test-takers as required for meeting the assumptions of test validity and reliability (Bachman and Palmer, 2010). Furthermore, the use of the SCICASA may help redefine strategic competence in CALA for the advancement of such a cutting-edge format in L2 assessment advocated by some researchers (e.g., Park, 2018).

Of note is that, although the context where the SCICASA was custom-designed is the CAIST, the contextualisation does not exclude the employment of the inventory in speaking tests in any forms and the speaking activities in non-testing contexts. The reason has to do with the diverse sources from which the inventory was developed.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STEPS

Due to the convenience sampling, the participants had similar backgrounds, particularly, in their English learning experience and the level of EFL proficiency. Additionally, a total of 496 participants might meet the sample size requirement for EFA and CFA (e.g., Byrne, 2016), but may not reach the thumb-up criterion expected by others. As a result, the limitations caused by the participants' homogeneity and the sample size may restrict the generalisability of the research results to other populations (Gurven, 2018). Further, although the SCICASA is expected to be used in the computer-assisted L2 speaking assessment, the scale items primarily focus on strategic competence and hence do not reflect the properties of the computer-assisted testing, which may weaken the contextualization of the inventory.

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It is therefore necessary for us to recommend that a larger sample size characterized by more heterogeneity be adopted in future research so that the representativeness of EFL learners will be enhanced. In addition, the items pertaining to the characteristics of the computer-assisted assessment context, such as EFL learners' familiarity with the testing equipment that may influence their strategy use, should be included in the inventories of relevance for better contextualisation.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

WZ conceived of the initial idea, fine-tuned by LZ and AW. WZ designed the study, collected, analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. LZ and AW revised and proofread the manuscript. LZ finalized and submitted it as the corresponding author. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

The Strategic Competence Inventory for Computer-Assisted Speaking Assessment

Part One

Please provide your information by ticking (✓) in the box or write your responses in the space so we can better understand your answers.

- Code:
- Age:
- Gender: Male Female Gender diverse
- The years you have been learning English to present:
7~9 years 10~12 years 13~15 years Others _____.
- English proficiency reflected by test
CET4 CET6 BEC IELTS TOEFL

Part Two

Please read each of the following statements and indicate how you thought about completing the task during the integrated speaking test by ticking (✓) 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), 4 (usually), and 5 (always)

Your thinking	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. I knew what the task questions required me to do						
2. I was aware of the need to plan a course of action.						
3. I thought about what to do to complete the task well						
4. I made sure I clarified the goals of the task						
5. I understood the essential steps needed to complete the task						
6. I organized the structure of what I was going to say before speaking.						
7. I guessed the meaning of the unknown words or expressions by using my knowledge (e.g., words in the context, knowledge of word information, knowledge of the topic.						
8. I used the context to guess the topic						
9. I drew on my background knowledge to complete the task						
10. I made up new words or guess if I didn't know the right ones to use						
11. I used a word or phrase that means the same thing when I could not think of a word in English.						
12. I knew when I should complete a task more quickly						
13. I knew when I should complete a task more carefully						
14. I knew how much time had gone by.						
15. When I was speaking, I knew when I had spoken in a way that sounded like a native speaker.						
16. I related the incoming information to what I had known						
17. When I was performing my task, I took notes on the important words and concepts.						
18. I knew what to do if my intended plan did not work efficiently during the task.						
19. I mentally give myself a grade after I finished my task						
20. I checked whether I had accomplished my goal after completing my task.						
21. I checked the mistakes I had made in the task.						
22. I evaluated my performance satisfaction as I moved along the task.						
23. I evaluated whether my intended plans worked effectively						



University Teachers' Teaching Style and Their Students' Agentic Engagement in EFL Learning in China: A Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory Integrated Perspective

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As a relatively new dimension of student engagement, agentic engagement has received growing research interest in recent years, as it not only predicts academic achievement and other positive outcomes, but also benefits reciprocal teacher-student relations. In the educational context, teachers' teaching style exerts a crucial impact on students' engagement. However, research on how perceived teachers' teaching style influences students' agentic engagement is inconclusive. To address this lacuna, this study, taking an integrated perspective that draws on Self-determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory, investigated the relationship of three types of teaching style (i.e., perceived autonomy support, social relatedness, and controlling) to university students' agentic engagement in EFL learning in China, especially through the mediation of mastery-approach goals and performance approach goals. Structural equation modeling showed that perceived autonomy support positively predicted agentic engagement through the mediation of mastery-approach goals, whereas perceived controlling negatively predicted agentic engagement through the mediation of performance-approach goals. Comparatively, the relationship of perceived social relatedness to agentic engagement was fully mediated by both mastery-approach and performance-approach goals. After discussing these results, practical implications as well as suggestions for future studies were given.

Keywords: teachers' teaching style, self-determination theory, achievement goal theory, achievement goals, agentic engagement

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, academic engagement has been a key and heavily researched topic for psychologists and educational researchers (see Boekaerts, 2016), even in the fields of second or foreign language education (e.g., Sun and Zhang, 2020; Zhang and Zhang, 2020; Jiang and Zhang, 2021). It is well-established that high levels of engagement are reliable forerunners of students' learning satisfaction, positive academic outcomes, perseverance, and school completion

rates (Wang and Holcombe, 2010; Uçar and Sungur, 2017). Agentic engagement, on top of cognitive, emotional, and behavior engagement, is a relatively new dimension (Reeve and Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013). Rather than merely representing students' reaction to the learning conditions and to teachers' instruction behaviors like the other three types of engagement, agentic engagement also emanates students' agency to proactively personalize and contribute to knowledge construction and the on-going flow of instruction (Reeve and Tseng, 2011). In recent years, this concept has received growing research interest as it not only predicts academic achievement and other positive outcomes, but also benefits reciprocal teacher-student relations. However, compared with the other three types of engagements, empirical research on the determinants and correlates of students' agentic engagement is inconclusive.

As a key component for understanding teaching and learning in the educational context, teachers' interpersonal teaching style exerts a crucial impact on students' engagement. Informed by Self-determination Theory (SDT), a bulk of studies have investigated the effects of teachers' teaching style on students' need satisfaction, motivation, emotion, and learning outcomes (e.g., Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; Jang et al., 2012; Haerens et al., 2015). However, research on how it influences students' agentic engagement is still in its infancy. The few studies that have examined this issue are grounded in SDT and focus primarily on the bearing of autonomy-supportive teaching on students' motivation or needs satisfaction, which in turn, affects their agentic engagement (e.g., Jang et al., 2012; Cheon and Reeve, 2013; Reeve and Shin, 2020). Other types of teaching style still await investigation. Moreover, students' goal pursuit, which is the focus of Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), another important motivational theory complementary to SDT, is also an important motivational predictor of students' engagement. Actually, there is a growing call for these two theories to be neatly integrated in exploring students' motivated behavior (e.g., Ciani et al., 2011; Soini et al., 2014). To this effect, we attempt to take an integrated perspective drawing on both SDT and AGT to entangle the relationship between teachers' teaching style, students' achievement goals, and agentic engagement in EFL learning.

Given that teachers' teaching style includes multiple aspects (see e.g., Reeve, 2013; Soini et al., 2014; Wang and Zhang, 2021), the present study focuses specifically on three of them: autonomy support, social relatedness, and controlling. For one thing, the relationship between autonomy-supportive teaching and agentic engagement has been studied only by a limited number of studies, hence the need to enrich this line of research. Meanwhile, we assume that, as the opposite of autonomy support, controlling should influence agentic engagement in a different pathway which is worth exploration. For another, the rationale to include the aspect of social relatedness lies in our intention to extend previous research on teachers' teaching style and cater to culture-related concern. Regarding that agency may be culturally-distinctive (Markus and Kitayama, 2003), we are curious about the way that the agentic engagement of Chinese university students, who have grown up in a collectivistically oriented culture, can be affected by teachers' teaching that

promotes social relatedness. Moreover, this study is set in the context of teaching English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) to complement previous relevant studies that were mostly set in disciplinary areas such as physical education or mathematics. It is believed that the present study will be conducive to a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers' teaching style influences students' agentic engagement both theoretically and empirically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory: A Necessity to Integrate

Self-determination Theory (SDT, Deci and Ryan, 1985) has been established as a heuristic theoretical framework to study peoples' motivated behavior in various contexts including school settings (Ryan and Deci, 2020). It posits that people have three innate psychological needs: autonomy (i.e., experiencing a sense of volitional and psychological freedom), relatedness (i.e., experiencing closeness and mutuality in interpersonal relationships), and competence (i.e., experiencing personal effectiveness). The nurturing of these needs is positively associated with high-quality motivation, engagement, well-being, and adaptive functioning. In contrast, thwarting these needs would undermine individuals' psychological well-being and generate negative affect, amotivation, and maladaptive functioning (e.g., Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; Cheon and Reeve, 2015).

SDT assumes that individuals' motivated behaviors vary contingent on the extent to which they are experienced as autonomous vs. controlled. Following Deci and Ryan (1985), the prototype of autonomy (or self-determination) is intrinsic motivation, and intrinsically motivated people engage in an activity for its own sake rather than for external pressure of outcomes separated from the activity *per se*, as in the case of extrinsically motivated behavior. In other words, SDT differentiates between autonomously motivated behaviors endorsed by volition and psychological freedom and controlled behaviors executed with a sense of pressure or obligation. From an SDT view, motivation exists along a continuum of relative autonomy. Extrinsic motivation can become intrinsic motivation through the process of internalizing the initially external regulation for behaviors. External regulation, such as rewards, punishment, and deadlines, is the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. When partially internalized by the individual, external regulation becomes introjected regulation. When introjected regulation is further internalized by the individual who identifies with the value of an activity, it becomes identified regulation. External regulation and introjected regulation are categorized as controlled motivation, whereas intrinsic motivation and the identified regulation are regarded as autonomous or self-determined motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2020).

Apart from SDT, Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) provides an alternative and complementary theoretical perspective on

individuals' motivated behavior (Wolters, 2004). AGT proposes that in an achievement-related situation like an educational context, a person's motivation and achievement-related behaviors is affected by his/her goal orientations, which refer to how success is perceived and competence evaluated. Traditionally, two goal types have been primarily emphasized, namely mastery goals, and performance goals. The former focus on the development of competence through task mastery, whereas the latter highlight the demonstration of competence in comparison with others.

To date, the mastery and performance dichotomy has been extended to a 2×2 conceptualization including a distinction between approach goals and avoidance goals, representing the distinction between the need for success and fear of failure (Elliot and McGregor, 2001). Students adopting a mastery-approach goal orientation prioritize learning as much as possible and increasing their level of competence. Students with a mastery-avoidance goal orientation tend to work to avoid lack of mastery of knowledge. Students holding a performance-approach goal orientation are inclined to demonstrate their ability relative to others. Finally students with a performance-avoidance goal orientation would try to avoid looking incompetent or less able than their peers (Wolters, 2004).

Both SDT and AGT see learning environment as important affordance for students' engagement. A theoretical proposition of SDT is that contextual features, especially teachers' interpersonal teaching style, can influence students' motivation and engagement by nurturing vs. thwarting three basic psychological needs (see Wang and Holcombe, 2010). In a similar vein, AGT also endorsed the important role of teachers' teaching style. AGT assumes that students' engagement is influenced by goal pursuits which can be directed by classroom goal structures created largely by the teacher. In most cases, when students perceive the predominant instructional and evaluation practices and strategies as mastery goal oriented in the classroom contexts, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement. Conversely, a performance goal structure is often found negatively correlated with students' school engagement (see Meece et al., 2006; Diseth and Samdal, 2015). However, an obvious distinction between the two theories is that AGT operates mainly with perceived competence, which is considered the main motive of human behavior, whereas in addition to the perception of competence, SDT also involves autonomy and social relatedness as important predictors for motivation and behavior. Yet SDT does not treat competence as multidimensional as AGT.

Considering the connection and distinction between the two theories, it is necessary to take an integrated perspective in investigating the influence of teachers' teaching style on students' engagement.

Teachers' Interpersonal Teaching Style

Informed by SDT, teachers' interpersonal teaching style can differ in the extent to which it supports students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. To date, a multitude of research on teachers' interpersonal teaching style in the SDT tradition has focused on the effects of autonomy support teaching and controlling teaching on students' need satisfaction, motivation, emotion, and learning outcomes (e.g., Jang et al.,

2012; Cheon and Reeve, 2013; Haerens et al., 2015). Autonomy support is understood as a cluster of teachers' instructional behaviors to provide students with an environment and a teacher-student relationship that can support students' needs for autonomy. Autonomy-supportive teachers adopt various strategies to frame the lesson within a context of intrinsic goal pursuits and autonomy support, and provide explanatory rationales when requesting students to engage in less interesting activities. Research has found that autonomy-supportive teaching can promote students' identified regulation of the activity and their internalization of motivation, and consequently has positive effects on students' needs satisfaction, high-quality motivation, and engagement (e.g., Jang et al., 2012; Jin et al., 2020).

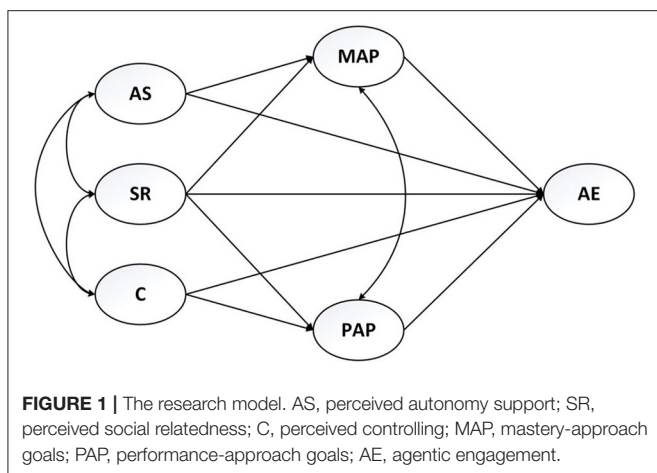
Controlling teaching, on the contrary, involves utilizing intrusive behaviors to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way prescribed by the teacher (Reeve, 2009). A controlling teaching style can manifest primarily in two ways: direct (or external) control, and indirect (or internal) control. Teachers demonstrating direct control through using overt external compulsions to motivate students to act, including the imposition of punishments, rewards, deadlines, and verbal commands. Indirect control involves teachers using more covert tactics to motivate students, such as arousing students' feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety, threatening to withdraw attention, and cultivating perfectionist standards (Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2010). Both direct and indirect controlling would induce controlled regulation on the part of the students (Reeve, 2009). Such low-quality motivation, as shown in prior research will undermine students' full range of engagement (e.g., Reeve, 2009; Haerens et al., 2015).

Compared with autonomy-supportive teaching, controlling teaching is relatively less investigated in its own right (Haerens et al., 2015). In some studies, both teaching styles were assessed as dual processes informed by SDT (e.g., Jang et al., 2020), which have yielded particularly useful insights showing that different teaching styles influence students' behavior in different ways. As Haerens et al. (2015) argued, it is necessary to consider the contribution of both styles, for the absence of one does not necessarily imply the presence of the other. Additionally, they may show differential associations with different types of students' motivation and behavior.

However, compared with autonomy support and controlling teaching, other types of teaching style, such as relatedness-supportive teaching, structuring teaching, task-involving support teaching, and ego-involving support teaching, among others (see Soini et al., 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2017), are relatively rarely researched in terms how they influence students' motivation and learning behavior. It is necessary to extend previous literature by examining these other types of teaching style.

Students' Agentic Engagement

Students' learning engagement refers to "the quality of a student's connection or involvement with the endeavor of schooling and hence with the people, activities, goals, values and place that compose it" (Skinner et al., 2009, p. 494). Most engagement theorists conceptualize it as a multidimensional construct, which is generally assumed to include three interrelated



and well-studied dimensions: emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. Emotional engagement represents students' positive or negative affective states when the students are doing the learning activities. Cognitive engagement concerns psychological investment and being strategic or self-regulating in learning. Behavioral engagement represents students' observable behaviors showing on-task effort and commitment in learning (Skinner et al., 2009).

The concept of agentic engagement is initially proposed by Reeve and Tseng (2011) and defined as "students' constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (p. 258). Similar to the above three types of engagement, agentic engagement is also a student-initiated pathway to academic progress, but it is a uniquely proactive and transactional type of engagement. It is proactive in the sense that agentively engaged students take action before a teacher-initiated or directed activity begins. It is transactional because students will agentively work for a more motivationally supportive learning environment through, for instance, expressing their preferences and interests, asking questions, and expressing their needs (Reeve, 2013). In addition, students' agentic engagement can lead to reciprocal causation in teacher-student interactions, which means the teacher's behavior and the students' behavior will mutually influence each other during instruction. Overall, agentic engagement is a crucial element to improve students' learning and render the learning environment more motivationally supportive (Reeve and Shin, 2020).

Compared with behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagements, there is a relative paucity of empirical research regarding agentic engagement. Reeve and Tseng (2011) made a comparison of the four dimensions of engagement and found agentic engagement predicted independent variance in the participants' achievement. Employing a 3-wave longitudinal design, Reeve (2013) validated a positive association between agentic engagement and autonomous motivation. His research also found that agentic engagement contributes to greater achievement and a supportive learning environment, thus indicating its reciprocal potential to change the learning context. The potential for agentic engagement to predict

teachers' autonomy-supportive motivating style is empirically validated by a few longitudinal studies (e.g., Reeve, 2013; Matos et al., 2018; Reeve and Shin, 2020). A limited number of studies have suggested teachers' autonomy-supportive teaching style as a predictor of students' agentic engagement (e.g., Jang et al., 2012; Cheon and Reeve, 2013; Reeve and Shin, 2020). Most of this line of research is informed by SDT, thus taking either motivation (i.e., intrinsic motivation, external motivation, amotivation) or need satisfaction and frustration as the mediators in the relationship of autonomy-supportive teaching to students' agentic engagement. More empirical research with new theoretical perspectives and affecting factors is imperative.

Master-Approach and Performance-Approach Goals as Potential Mediators

In the first section of theoretical elaboration, it can be seen that both SDT and AGT are useful in understanding students' motivation, its antecedents, and ensuing behavioral patterns like engagement. A body of research has examined the association between AGT- and SDT-based concepts and ideas. It is indicated that motivation and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs can act as the antecedents of people's goal adoption (see Ciani et al., 2011). For instance, master-approach goals were found to be positively related to intrinsic and identified motivation, but negatively to external motivation, whereas performance goals were either unrelated or negatively related to intrinsic motivation (Barkoukis et al., 2007). In a similar vein, studies examining autonomous and controlling reasons underlying the pursuit of mastery and performance goals suggest that when students act out of autonomous reasons, i.e., reasons that are consistent with intrinsic motivation or identified regulation in nature, they are more likely to pursue mastery-approach goals. Conversely, when students act out of controlled reasons, i.e., reasons aligned with introjected regulation and external regulation (extrinsic motivation), they are more likely to pursue performance-approach goals (e.g., Gaudreau, 2012; Benita et al., 2014; Gillet et al., 2015). Moreover, basic needs satisfaction can be the source of intrinsic motivation, which subsequently predicts mastery-approach goals (Ciani et al., 2011).

Informed by SDT and AGT, teachers' interpersonal teaching style is an important motivational element in the learning environment that will affect students' motivation and achievement goal orientation, which can subsequently affect engagement. Meanwhile, different types of teaching style may work on students' motivated behavior in distinctive ways, as they may cause different reasons for motivated action. These reasons can promote either mastery-approach goals or performance-approach goals, which will subsequently affect students' behavior. Therefore, it is expected that mastery-approach and performance-approach goals may function as mediators between students' perceived teaching style and their agentic engagement.

Hypotheses and Question

Taking an SDT and AGT integrated perspective, the present study aims to entangle the relationship among university students' perceived autonomy support, controlling, and social relatedness (i.e., students' perception of three types of teaching style), mastery-approach goals and performance approach goals, and their agentic engagement in EFL learning in China. Considering that different types of teaching style can influence engagement through distinct pathways as informed by the above literature review, the present study makes two hypotheses (i.e., H1 and H2) regarding how perceived autonomy support and controlling will influence students' agentic engagement. However, as there is a lack of empirical literature on the how perceived relatedness will influence agentic engagement, we raise an exploratory question, which is to be answered through testing the hypothetical pathways in the researched model. **Figure 1** shows the researched model demonstrating the two hypotheses and the hypothetical pathways to answer the question.

H1: Students' master-approach goals will mediate the relationship of perceived teacher autonomy support to their agentic engagement in EFL learning.

H2: Students' performance-approach goals will mediate the relationship of perceived teachers' controlling teaching to their agentic engagement in EFL learning.

Question: How does perceived social relatedness relate to agentic engagement in EFL learning? Is their relationship mediated by mastery-approach goals and/or performance-approach goals?

METHOD

Context and Participants

English is a mainstream subject in the curriculum of secondary education and a common core course for most undergraduates in universities in China. In secondary education, the primary objective of English teaching is to set a solid language foundation for students, and as a subject, English takes up a considerable proportion of the total score in important high-stake exams, such as the Gaokao, which is also known as the National Higher Education Entrance/Matriculation Examination. In university, the objective of English teaching, while continuing and heightening that of secondary education, is to cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence, and to promote their language proficiency for academic or professional purposes (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). In most universities, English for general purposes and English for academic purposes are among the major English courses available to undergraduate students (non-English majors). In terms of pedagogy, in the past two decades, English teaching has gradually shifted its focus from teacher-centered grammar teaching to student-centered communicative-competence development in both secondary and higher education.

In the present study, we targeted student participants who are non-English majors admitted to universities after taking the Gaokao and have been attending an English course for at least

half a semester, because they can represent the English learning experience of most Chinese university EFL learners.

Instrument

We assessed students' perception of their EFL teachers' autonomy support, controlling and social relatedness using *Perceived Teachers' Teaching Style Scale* (PTTSS), which was adapted first through consulting the Motivational Climate in Physical Education Scale (Soini et al., 2014). This scale contains four factors assessing students' perceptions of autonomy support, social relatedness, mastery goal motivational climate, and performance goal motivational climate that are afforded by the learning environment, especially by teachers' interpersonal teaching style. The autonomy support and social relatedness scales were selected. We kept but rephrased the original items by adding a stem or elaboration to some of them. For instance, the original item "It is important for the students to try to improve their own skills" was rephrased as "Our English teacher makes me aware that it is important to try to improve my own skills." Then, to assess teachers' controlling teaching style, we referred to Reeve's (2016) description of teachers' controlling teaching behaviors, which compared to similar measures in some other research, are more close to the reality of university EFL teachers' practice. We adapted and included in 5 items (e.g., "Our English teacher does not understand our learning needs, objectives, or preference"). In this manner, the PTTSS ended up with three scales, i.e., autonomy-supportive teaching (with 5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$), social relatedness motivating teaching (with 4 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$), and controlling teaching (with 5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$).

To assess students' mastery-approach goals and performance-approach goals, we adopted the corresponding items from Elliot and McGregor's (2001) Achievement Goal Questionnaire. Each dimension has three items slightly revised to be contextualized (i.e., the words "In our English class" was added initiate each item, such as "In our English class, it is important for me to do better than other students"). The Cronbach's α for mastery-approach goals was 0.82, and 0.83 for performance-approach goals.

Students' agentic engagement in EFL learning was assessed using the corresponding items from Reeve's (2013) work. The original items were slightly contextualized by adding words like "In our English class." This scale contains 5 items and demonstrated good reliability in the present study (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$). See **Appendix** for the details of the whole questionnaire.

Data Collection

With the help of 9 university EFL teacher colleagues, we distributed an online questionnaire that was available on Wenjuanxing, an online crowdsourcing platform, to potential participants in the middle of the winter semester of 2020. Participation was voluntary and responses were confidential and anonymous. Finally, 632 undergraduate students (71.5% females, 28.5% males; 77% Year 1; 22% Year 2) from different universities (73% national universities; 27% provincial universities) in mainland China (86% northern China, 14% eastern and southern China) completed the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

SPSS 22 was utilized to conduct descriptive analysis, bivariate correlational tests, and reliability tests of the questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 23 was then performed to validate the instruments. During the initial process of establishing the measurement model, the composite reliability (CR), the average variance extracted (AVE), and the square roots of average variance extracted were calculated to assess the reliability and validity of each variable. Afterwards, structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 23 was adopted to confirm the measurement model and test the model fit of the structural model. The indices used to test the fit of the models include the χ^2 statistics, Tucker-Lewis index ($TLI \geq 0.95$), comparative fit index ($CFI \geq 0.95$), root-mean-square error of approximation ($RMSEA \leq 0.06$), and standardized root mean square residual ($SRMR \leq 0.08$, Hu and Bentler, 1999). It should be noted that the χ^2 statistics is sensitive to sample size, so the above alternative indices were primarily consulted for data-model fit evaluation, and a value of 5 or less for the ratio between chi-square and degree of freedom ($\chi^2/df \leq 5$) was adopted following Schumacker and Lomax (2004).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

We first intended to check the inter-relationships among the variables of perceived autonomy support (AS), social relatedness (SR), controlling (C), mastery-approach goals (MAP), performance-approach goals (PAP), and students' agentic engagement (AE). Our analysis of the questionnaire data produced interesting results. **Table 1** presents the correlational coefficients, means, and standard deviations of these focal variables. Based on the results, perceptions of all three types of teaching styles (i.e., autonomy support, social relatedness, and controlling) were positively correlated with the hypothesized mediators of goal orientations (i.e., mastery-approach goals and performance-approach goals), as well as the outcome of agentic engagement, except for the only non-significance between perceived controlling and mastery-approach goals.

Measurement Model and Common Method Variance

Prior to the structural model analyses, we assessed the measurement model including the six latent variables (i.e., perceived autonomy support, perceived social relatedness, perceived controlling, mastery-approach goals, performance-approach goals, and agentic engagement) by means of confirmative factor analyses (CFA). The results indicated an acceptable model-data fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.59$; $CFI = 0.95$; $TLI = 0.94$; $RMSEA = 0.05$; $SRMR = 0.06$. In addition, all factor loadings ranged from 0.60 to 0.92 at the significant level of $P < 0.001$ (see **Table 2**).

As the data were collected from the self-reported measures, it is necessary to examine whether the common method bias would affect the results. Following the suggestions of Podsakoff et al. (2003), we conducted the single factor analysis with all 25 items forced to load on a single factor, which extracted

only 36.35% of the total variance, a percentage well below the warning cut-off criterion of 50% (Cao et al., 2020). The results showed that common method bias may not be a problem for the present study.

Structural Model Analyses

After confirming the measurement model, we then assessed the structural model which received an acceptable model-data fit as well: $\chi^2/df = 2.59$; $CFI = 0.95$; $TLI = 0.94$; $RMSEA = 0.05$; $SRMR = 0.06$. **Figure 2** presents the standardized path coefficients. According to the results, perceived autonomy support negatively predicted mastery-approach goals ($\beta = -0.32$, $p = 0.008$) and positively predicted agentic engagement ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived social relatedness positively predicted mastery-approach goals ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) and performance-approach goals ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), but was non-significant for agentic engagement ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.187$). The last type of teaching style, namely perceived controlling, positively predicted performance-approach goals ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), but negatively predicted agentic engagement ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = 0.013$). Finally, both mastery-approach goals ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.042$) and performance-approach goals ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$) positively predicted agentic engagement.

Mediational Analyses

Mediating effects of mastery-approach goals and performance-approach goals were examined by means of the bootstrapping method in SEM. According to Shrout and Bolger (2002), when the 95% confidence intervals (CI) does not contain zero, we determine that the indirect effect can be significant.

The result revealed that AS had significant and indirect relationships with agentic engagement (95% CI $[-0.135, -0.003]$), and this relationship was mediated by mastery-approach goals. Thus, H1 was supported. It was also revealed that perceived controlling had a significant and indirect relationship with AE (95% CI $[0.026, 0.092]$), and this relationship was mediated by perceived-approach goals. Therefore, H2 was supported. Perceived social relatedness had a significant and indirect relationship with agentic engagement (95% CI $[0.054, 0.247]$), and this relationship was fully mediated by mastery-approach goals and performance approach goals, since the direct pathway between perceived social relatedness and agentic engagement was non-significant. Thus, the answer to the research question is that both mastery-approach and performance-approach goals fully mediated the relationship of perceived social relatedness to agentic engagement (see **Figure 2**).

DISCUSSION

Drawing on a combined perspective of SDT and AGT, we undertook the present study to investigate how Chinese university students' perceptions of three dimensions of teachers' interpersonal teaching style (i.e., autonomy-support, social relatedness, controlling) may play a role in their agentic engagement in EFL learning, specifically through the mediation of their master-approach and performance-approach goal orientations.

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the scales ($n = 632$).

Measurement variables	AS	SR	C	PAP	MAP	AE
AS	1					
SR	0.67**	1				
C	0.24**	0.4	1			
PAP	0.23**	0.15**	0.26**	1		
MAP	0.23**	0.34**	-0.02	0.3**	1	
AE	0.54**	0.43**	0.1**	0.31**	0.28**	1
Mean	4.01	4.45	2.71	3.41	4.17	3.61
SD	0.80	0.60	1.02	0.89	0.68	0.82
Skewness	-0.39	-0.78	0.74	-0.24	-0.43	0.04
Kurtosis	-0.46	-0.40	0.23	0.15	-0.29	-0.32

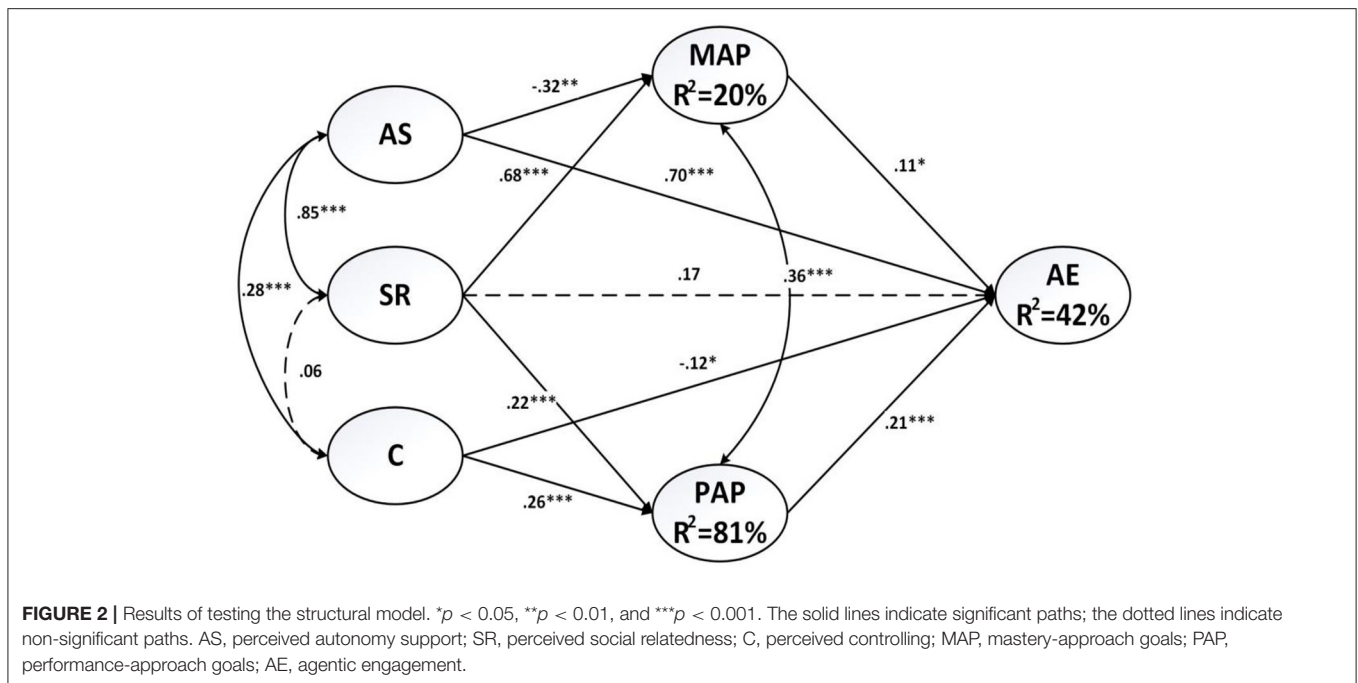
** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 2 | CFA results of the measurement model ($n = 632$).

Factors	Factor loading	CR	AVE	Square roots of AVE
Autonomy support (AS)		0.86	0.55	0.74
AS1	0.73			
AS2	0.71			
AS3	0.78			
AS4	0.75			
AS5	0.74			
Social relatedness (SR)		0.79	0.49	0.70
SR1	0.66			
SR2	0.61			
SR3	0.68			
SR4	0.82			
Controlling (C)		0.82	0.49	0.70
C1	0.77			
C2	0.78			
C3	0.63			
C4	0.60			
C5	0.69			
Mastery-approach goal (MAP)		0.82	0.61	0.78
MAP 1	0.79			
MAP 2	0.79			
MAP 3	0.76			
Performance-approach goal (PAP)		0.84	0.64	0.80
PAP1	0.81			
PAP2	0.90			
PAP3	0.68			
Agentic engagement (AE)		0.92	0.70	0.84
AE1	0.83			
AE2	0.82			
AE3	0.85			
AE4	0.85			
AE5	0.84			

We first hypothesized that mastery-approach goals would mediate the relationship of perceived autonomy support and agentic engagement. The results supported this hypothesis in

an interesting way. Convergent with previous studies (Jang et al., 2012; Cheon and Reeve, 2013), perceived autonomy support positively predicted agentic engagement in this study.



However, the relationship between perceived autonomy support and mastery-approach goals was negative. So we guess that the significant positive predication of perceived autonomy support on agentic engagement might occur largely through the mediation of students' need satisfaction (Jang et al., 2012; Cheon and Reeve, 2013; Reeve, 2013; Reeve and Shin, 2020) and students' perceived autonomous reasons for action (Benita et al., 2014) from an SDT perspective. In the context of EFL teaching, take writing class for instance, various sources of feedback, either technology-assisted automatic feedback, teachers' feedback, or peers' feedback, which are intended to support students' autonomy, can promote students' agent engagement in teacher-student and student-student interactions, largely because these sources satisfy students' needs for competence, i.e., to improve their language proficiency (see Tian and Zhou, 2020). However, the result that autonomy support was negatively associated with master-approach goals is a bit beyond expectation, because theoretically as previous elaborated, teachers' autonomy supportive teaching contributes to building an autonomy supportive classroom goal structure, which in turn, should promote students' master-approach goal orientation (Meece et al., 2006). We reckon the conflicting result of the present study may be ascribed to two reasons. One is that the predicative power of autonomy supportive teaching on goal orientations may be influenced by some other motivational variables, like self-efficacy as suggested in Greene et al.'s study (Greene et al., 2004). The other reason is related to our curiosity that to what extent an autonomy supportive teaching style can gauge the goal orientations of students who are still new to such a style. The majority of the participants in this study were in their first year of university. Though the curriculum reform has long been endeavoring to transform

Chinese schooling from teacher-centered education to student-centered learning characterized by active student engagement, and has achieved some positive outcomes (see Adams and Sargent, 2012), the long established exam-oriented middle education context headed by the Gaokao (i.e., National Higher Education Entrance Examination) may push students to learn for non-self-determined reasons (see Yu et al., 2016 for a systemic review). The highly competitive and controlling environment, and the emphases on out-performing peers in middle schools, might have deprived students of the chance to explore and form genuine identity, interests, self-values or definite direction for life before they enter university (Yu et al., 2016). Facing an autonomy-advocated teaching style more prevalent in higher education contexts, which might be in sheer contrast to their familiar controlling system in previous learning contexts, it is understandable that students may temporarily fail to develop goals for knowledge mastery and self-improvement. Or even worse, it could be the case that the more teachers give them autonomy, the more students would feel at a loss concerning their goal orientation.

In the second hypothesis, we assumed that perceived controlling would predict agentic engagement through the mediation of performance-approach goals. This hypothesis was supported by the results. First, informed by SDT, controlling teaching is prone to induce controlled regulation on the part of the students (Reeve, 2009). Subsequently, controlled regulation, or controlled reasons as it also called, tends to induce performance goals as theoretically explained in both SDT and AGT literature (e.g., Gaudreau, 2012; Benita et al., 2014; Gillet et al., 2015). Such a chain relationship is empirically validated by the significant positive prediction of perceived controlling on students' performance-approach goals in the

present study. Moreover, the result that performance-approach goals positively and significantly predicated agentic engagement suggests that performance-approach goals can contribute to agentic engagement in certain educational context like EFL teaching and learning. Specifically, as elaborated in the above paragraph, the majority of the participants in this study had left behind a competition-oriented context pressured by the Gaokao not long ago. Even in university, there is still the competition for scholarship, GPA ranking or better job opportunities. In this situation, learning for higher grades and outperforming others may still be the major goal for some students. To achieve this goal may give them the incentive to work for a preferable learning environment conducive to achieving their goals. In this sense, the result supports the view that performance-approach goals can be beneficial and adaptive in the educational context (see Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; Ciani et al., 2011). Additionally, this result also extends previous research examining the influence of performance-approach goals on engagement, as a good deal of evidence has to do mainly with cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement but ignores agentic engagement (e.g., Greene et al., 2004; Wang and Holcombe, 2010; Uçar and Sungur, 2017; Sun and Zhang, 2020).

However, though perceived controlling positively predicted performance-approach goals which in turn positively predicted agentic engagement, perceived controlling was negatively associated with agentic engagement. A possible explanation is that for the participants in this study, the combined effect of perceived controlling and performance-approach goal is too strong for their agentic engagement. This is because perceived controlling teaching is closely related to need frustration and subsequent controlled motivation, amotivation, and maladaptive functioning (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; Cheon and Reeve, 2015; Haerens et al., 2015). Performance-approach goals can be related to anxiety, disruptive behavior, and low retention of knowledge (Midgley et al., 2001). When such negative effects and outcomes aggregate, it is presumable that the participants' initiative to join force with the teacher to build a more preferable learning environment will be thwarted.

As for the research question, the results suggested both mastery-approach and performance-approach goals played a full mediating role in the relationship of perceived social relatedness to agentic engagement. This result can shed light on how relatedness acts as a precursor to achievement goals in a certain context. It also indicates that satisfying students' needs for relatedness is crucial in EFL teaching and learning, as it is in other disciplinary settings such as physical education (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; Cheon and Reeve, 2013; Jang et al., 2020). Given that English teaching changed its focus from teacher-centered grammar teaching to student-centered communicative-competence development in China in the past two decades, task-based language teaching has been extensively advocated and applied in secondary and higher education sectors (Zheng and Borg, 2014; Xu and Fan, 2021). To complete tasks successfully requires students' frequent collaboration with peers (e.g., in the form of pair-work or group-work). When teachers' teaching promotes social relatedness in EFL learning, students' basic need for relatedness is satisfied, and their closeness with

peers can make collaboration more enjoyable and effective. This can not only affords them with autonomous reasons for learning, and thus can stimulate their pursuit for mastery-approach goals, but also promotes their performance-approach goals. Both goal orientations are positive predictors of students' agentic engagement in EFL learning. Additionally, this result also supports the cross-cultural validity of SDT. Some cross-cultural researchers have argued that psychological need satisfaction proposed by SDT might not yield the same education benefits for Eastern collectivistic cultures as found in Western cultures (see Jang et al., 2009 for a review). However, our research, congruent with Jang et al.'s (2009) work, suggests that satisfied needs for social relatedness indeed produce positive learning experience for students as it can promote students' agentic engagement in China, another Eastern country of collectivistic cultural heritage.

The findings of this study might have practical implications. First, when trying to encourage students' agentic engagement through various teaching styles, teachers should take student's achievement goal orientation into consideration. While both mastery-approach goals and performance-approach goals can boost agentic engagement, not every teaching style can definitely influence these goals in all conditions. In order for autonomy-supportive teaching style to generate more positive outcomes, it is necessary for teachers to consider students' prior learning experience, especially their personal values, interests, and authentic identity related to learning. Moreover, controlling teaching is not always negative. Under certain conditions, it helps to enhance students' performance-approach goal pursuits, which may subsequently generate positive outcomes. However, for fostering students' agentic engagement, controlling teaching is not a good strategy in general. Finally, teachers might want to adopt a relatedness motivating teaching style, which is not only conducive to students' agentic engagement, but can play a vital role in affecting their goal orientations.

CONCLUSION

We also need to point out two possible limitations. First, we conducted a cross-sectional examination of the focal issue, but peoples' motivation and goal orientation are dynamic (e.g., Reeve, 2013; Matos et al., 2018; Reeve and Shin, 2020). Most of the participants in this study were still new in university, their experience of and reaction to teachers' teaching style may subject to change over time, and so are their motivational states. It is therefore meaningful to conduct longitudinal studies to examine the dynamics of the relationship among teachers' teaching style, achievement goals and agentic engagement. In addition, we only located two types of achievement goals as the mediators. However, as speculated in the discussion, the variables including need satisfaction and frustration, and the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as frequently examined in the SDT literature, may join force with achievement goals to influence the relationship of perceived teachers' teaching style to students' agentic engagement. Future studies involving, say, both need satisfaction and mastery-approach goals as mediators, may help to generate more insights.

Despite these limitations, the findings of the study can add new knowledge to the literature on students' agentic engagement by uncovering how perceived autonomy support, social relatedness and controlling may play a role with the mediation of master-approach and performance approach goals. To the authors' knowledge, this study can be the first to reveal the relationship of these variables informed by an SDT and AGT integrated perspective. In addition, the results also add empirical evidence to the merit of marrying the two theories in revealing the relationship between teachers' teaching style and students' motivated behaviors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Northeast Normal University. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this

study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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Book Review: Student Engagement: Effective Academic, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Affective Interventions at School

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Keywords: student engagement, interventions, school, learning strategies, contemporary education

A Book Review on

Student Engagement: Effective Academic, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Affective Interventions at School

Amy L. Reschly, Angie J. Pohl and Sandra L. Christenson (Cham: Springer) 2020, xxi +347 pages, ISBN: 978-3-030-37284-2

Echoed as the “the holy grail of learning” (Sinatra et al., 2015, p. 1), engagement has been one of the most prevailing research areas in contemporary education, which has piqued the interest of many scholars from different disciplines. It is generally postulated that student engagement has four pivotal characteristics; it is action-based, context-specific, object-oriented, and dynamic (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Therefore, a learner’s engagement does not happen in a vacuum; it dynamically emerges as a result of the interaction with families, schools, peers, classrooms, cultures, activities, as well as tasks which *per se* impact multifarious layers of engagement and learning emotionally, academically, cognitively, and behaviorally. As such, it is vivid why student engagement has gained significant momentum among scholars and practitioners. One such surge of interest is instantiated in *Student Engagement: Effective Academic, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Affective Interventions at School*, edited professionally by Amy L. Reschly, Angie J. Pohl, and Sandra L. Christenson who are distinguished scholars in studies on student engagement. This compendium provides evidence-based strategies and interventions that aim at targeting students’ engagement at school. This volume is the outcome of a 29-year history of the Check & Connect Model that aims to (a) foreground the engagement subtypes that underscore Check & Connect and (b) explore rigorously based interventions that boost student engagement subtypes, so it is a much-to-be-welcomed contribution.

Structurally, the book encompasses five parts, organized thematically into 16 chapters. Part I, comprising four chapters, focuses on the relevance of student engagement and the impact of implementing Check & Connect (Chapter 1), presents the evolution of the student engagement construct and school dropout (Chapter 2), exemplifies a wide range of techniques that can measure students’ academic, behavioral, cognitive, as well as affective engagement (Chapter 3), and delineates how treatment fidelity, as an evidence-based intervention, can be applied to enhance implementer success and boost student outcomes.

Part II, entitled Academic Engagement, includes three chapters. Chapter 5 conceptualizes academic engagement, justifies its significance in student achievement, and provides different ways to promote it. Chapter 6 reports on the findings of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)

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as a classroom-based intervention to strengthen reading and math outcomes which leads to an academic safety-net for students. Being cognizant of the pivotal role of homework in success and engagement, the authors in Chapter 7 highlight the importance of the Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills (HOPS) intervention for engaging students in the learning process.

Part III, Behavioral Engagement, contains four chapters. Chapter 8 defines academic engagement, justifies its significance in student achievement, and offers different interventions to promote it (see Table 8.2). Chapter 9 elucidates how learners' behavioral engagement can be optimized through the Good Behavior Game, an adaptable and acceptable model to promote positive classroom learning environments, which accentuate "group contingency classroom behavior management and instructional support approach" (226). In Chapter 10, the authors flesh out how a system of support rooted in a solid foundation can increase students' engagement in school settings. They postulate that School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) can systematically increase behavioral engagement. What seems genuinely engaging in Chapter 11 is to see how Check-In, Check-Out (CICO), an evidence-based intervention, is influential in bolstering the majority of students' involvement.

Part IV, Affective Engagement, encompasses two chapters. Chapter 12 defines affective engagement, enumerates its core components, and stipulates that affective engagement, as a multitiered and dynamic dimension of engagement, is amenable to prevention and intervention enterprises. The other chapter in this section takes advantage of Banking Time as another intervention technique to engage students in the process of learning and teaching emotionally. The authors cogently argue "*Banking Time* is an affective intervention that evidences good usability, transportability, and sustainability within the school context" (p. 342–343).

Part V, Cognitive Engagement, includes 3 chapters. Chapter 14 brings to the fore the importance of cognitive strategies and interventions in students' learning and mental engagement. The penultimate chapter explicates the theoretical, instructional, and empirical foundations for another intervention program, called Self-Regulation Empowerment Program (SREP), to engage students cognitively. Since SREP is still in its infancy, the author convincingly calls for some more empirical studies to be conducted on the applicability of this program across different

grades and levels. In the closing chapter, the authors adroitly touch upon growth mindset as an insightful topic to promote cognitive engagement. The authors postulate that students' cognitions about their ability, intelligence, and effort improve their growth mindset and provide some viable strategies to enhance their cognitive engagement.

This compendium offers a number of thought-provoking insights and lessons. First, inasmuch as the fact that student engagement is not a mono-dimensional phenomenon, the editors have sagaciously incorporated all the dimensions, including academic, affective, behavioral, and cognitive, in this volume. Secondly, the volume is replete with theoretically rich, methodologically rigorous, and pedagogically convincing chapters which can be applied in different contexts to minimize school dropout and maximize student achievement. Thirdly, the validated instruments utilized and suggested in some of the chapters can be a treasure-trove for other researchers to embark on them in their own contexts. Nonetheless, we expected that the editors include one or two chapters on how student engagement can be defined and operationalized in cross-cultural studies. Besides, scrutinizing developmental and longitudinal trajectories of student engagement remains scanty.

All in all, this enlightening and groundbreaking compendium is a must-have source that remains contemporary for a long time for professionals, researchers, graduate students, education policymakers, and government advisors on education and human development.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

FH and DL both contributed to the design and writing of the work.

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Book Review: The Big Five in SLA

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Keywords: second language acquisition, neuroticism extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness

A Book Review on

The Big Five in SLA

Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel (Cham: Springer) 2020, xix+238 pages, ISBN: 978-3-030-59323-0

The importance of learning individual differences (IDs) has been well-documented in the existing literature. Personality trait as one of these IDs has been the focus of attention in psychology, but it has received little attention in second language acquisition (SLA) studies. Consequently, there is a dire need for SLA researchers to come to the grips with scrutinizing personality traits from different vantage points. To bridge this gap, Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel's well-written monograph, entitled *The Big Five in SLA*, is an opportune volume that unpacks how the Big Five dimensions (Neuroticism Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) and their subsequent six facets can be implemented theoretically and empirically in SLA studies.

This thought-provoking monograph comprises four chapters, the first two of which deal with psychology, whereas the other two consecutive chapters primarily pertain to SLA. Chapter 1 is divided into three sections. The first section presents a panoramic synopsis of personality studies and sketches the historical and theoretical conceptualizations and foundations of personality, focusing on humanistic, psychoanalytic, as well as viewpoints. The prime aim of the second section is to delineate two trends, namely type and trait theories, with a focus on measuring instruments. Whereas type theories, enlightened by Jung's (1923) and Myers's (1980) taxonomies, concentrate on qualitative diversities and discrete classifications, trait theories, conceptualized by Allport's (1961), Cattell (1980), and Eysenck's (1950) ramifications, focus on formulating the latent structure of personality on the basis of statistical analyses. The author aptly justifies that the trait model has made the theoretical underpinning of the Big Five. The third part is designated to an elaboration of the significant theories, scrutinizing the advancement of personality across a lifespan based on psychosexual, psychosocial, cognitive, and social-cognitive perspectives.

Chapter 2 is the lengthiest and most comprehensive chapter, which expounds on the analysis of the Big Five traits, their theoretical underpinnings, and their consequences. Informed by the Five-Factor Theory, Piechurska-Kuciel thoroughly explicates the detailed review of each personality trait, which lucidly refer to its higher-order meta-trait of Stability or Plasticity and lower-order phenotypic dimensions. Chapter 2 also contains a succinct explanation of the prevailing tools used to assess personality traits. To me, what seems genuinely informative in this chapter is the elaborate discussion on each of the five dimensions along with their six facets, which are subsumed under each dimension. Equally importantly, each dimension is scrutinized in terms of its most dominant cognitive and academic, socio-affective, and behavioral consequences which are vividly instantiated in the social and cognitive nature of language learning in both academic and naturalistic contexts. Finally, the chapter describes gender and age differences, which is followed by a synopsis of the advancement of the Big Five traits across the lifespan in language learning.

Highlighting the pivotal role of personality traits in SLA is the focus of Chapter 3. This chapter succinctly overviews studies in SLA, elaborates on the fundamental terminologies,

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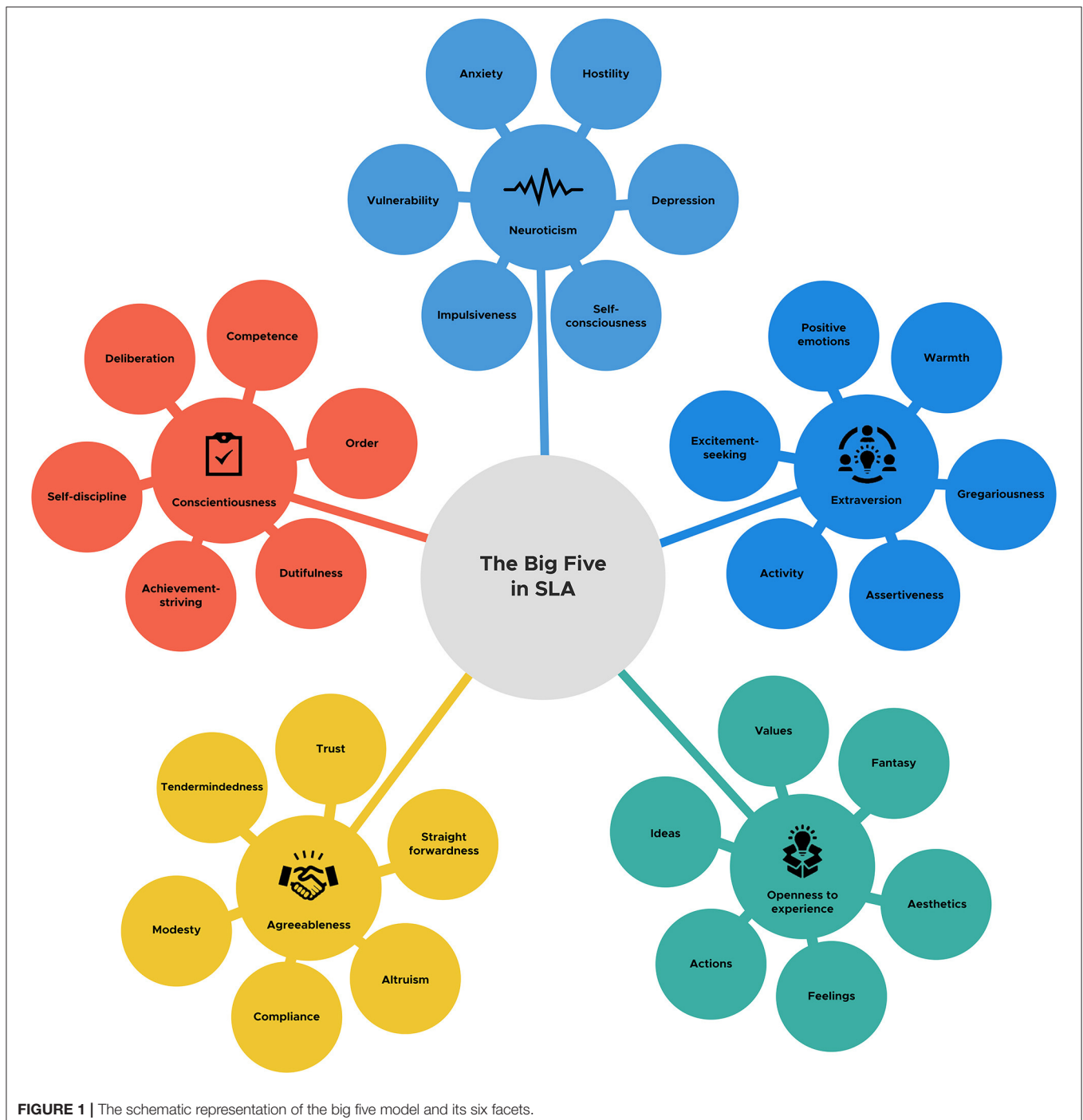
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presents the idiosyncratic nature of SLA, and outlines the typologies of individual learner differences. Furthermore, the chapter thoroughly appraises the theoretical propositions and empirical approaches for every dimension of the Big Five, with respect to behavioral, cognitive and academic, social, and affective ramifications.

Chapter 4 integrates the theoretical and empirical studies on personality traits in SLA, paving the way for avenues for

future research. Moreover, it problematizes the inconclusive research findings on personality studies in SLA and outlines the pedagogical interventions to boost specific strengths of given traits to attain a more comprehensive picture of foreign language learning effects. The chapter concludes with heightening the significance of scrutinizing personality not only to improve the teaching expertise but also the common well-being.



This informative monograph benefits its readers. Firstly, it comprehensively reviews the theoretical postulations and empirical studies of personality traits with regard to the Big Five traits. Secondly, the integration of the Big Five traits within the SLA studies is another unique feature of this volume that sheds more light on our understanding of the critical role of personality traits in our EFL/ESL classes. The third merit of this book is that it scrutinizes each dimension of the Big Five with respect to higher-order meta-trait of Stability or Plasticity and lower-order phenotypic aspects that help teachers and learners know how to be well-socialized in the pursuit of their personal growth. However, had the author elaborated on how biological and genetic approaches can affect personality traits, how culture can influence the Big Five, and how our personality and identity can impact each other, it would have been more insightful. Moreover, the readers would have been engaged more interactively had the author included a schematic representation of the Big Five Model and all its six facets for each of its dimensions as shown in **Figure 1**.

To conclude, this thought-provoking monograph provides plenty of food for thought for those who are enthusiastic about

learning about the intricacies of personality traits in the context of SLA, including applied linguists, teachers, students, researchers, teacher educators, and syllabus designers. It is hoped that more empirical studies, using longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, are conducted on how the Big Five model can be practically applied in second and foreign language classrooms.

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Book Review: Student Engagement in the Language Classroom

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A Book Review on

Student Engagement in the Language Classroom

Phil Hiver, Ali H. Al-Hoorie and Sarah Mercer (Bristol: Multilingual Matters), 2021, xvii+300; ISBN: 9781788923590

Although learner engagement has gained tremendous momentum in education (Reschly et al., 2020), it has received scant attention in language learning education. Therefore, *Student Engagement in the Language Classroom*, edited by Phil Hiver, Ali H. Al-Hoorie, and Sarah Mercer, aims to theoretically and empirically fill some gaps in L2 learning and opens up some innovative directions for future research, highlighting that L2 engagement is a pivotal condition for optimal learning.

The book is organized into two parts, preceded by an introductory chapter. The first part, encompassing four chapters, pertains to the definitional, conceptual, and measurement concepts about engagement. In the introductory chapter, the editors define engagement, relate it to the L2 classroom, and set the scene by outlining the following chapters. The authors in Chapter 2 aptly look at engagement from different dimensions: academic (task-based), affective, behavioral, cognitive, and social. They juxtapose engagement with investment, interest, and motivation, putting forward a continuous agenda for L2 engagement studies, aiming to reconcile theory and practice. Chapter 3 highlights a special type of engagement: *engagement with language* (EWL), focuses on how focus-on-form(s) can make learners meaningfully involved, and recapitulates some germane theories. Focusing on learner engagement with the written corrective feedback (WCF) at the micro and macro level of interactions is the objective of Chapter 4, proposing a critical standpoint at present research objectives. The last chapter in Part I highlights the role of the measurement of engagement. Synthesizing the literature on student engagement, not only do the authors argue that there is still some uncertainty on how engagement is operationalized and evaluated, but also they provide some avenues for further research about how learner engagement can be assessed in the L2 classroom.

Part II encompasses 10 chapters that empirically scrutinize L2 learner engagement from different vantage points. For instance, Chapter 6, set in the French context, concludes that the learning environment has a decisive role in L2 classroom engagement since the interconnectedness of peers, teachers, and learning tasks can interactively impact learners' involvement. Set in the Spanish context, Chapter 7 explores the role of face-to-face and synchronous computer-mediated communication in the affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement of L2 students, concluding that mode of task-based negotiations can differentially engage learners.

Chapter 8 seems genuinely appealing to me because of its exploratory nature of engagement from the learners' viewpoints. This chapter reports that sometimes learners deliberately manipulate their conduct to pretend involvement to mask disengagement and fulfill social expectations in the

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L2 classroom. The authors judiciously remark that we need to be cognizant of overreliance on observable classroom behaviors, and we should not consider them as an unproblematic enterprise for considerable engagement in learning. Focusing on the emotional engagement and embarking on the mixed-methods data, Chapter 9 unravels how the impact of action choice and options choice through both negative and positive emotions can contribute to varying manifestations of emotional engagement, performance, and task focus.

Important is the exploration of *prosocial engagement*, defined as “as a type of engagement in which students’ perceptions of their mutually constructive participation matter to them in their academic achievement” (p. 182), as an innovative approach to learner engagement. The authors, in Chapter 10, persuasively endorse that prosocial engagement is influential to fight learners’ passivity, disengagement, and reluctance to involve students based on their mind–time frames that can be instantiated in prosocial engagement. Chapter 11 is an outstanding contribution in this volume that follows a theory meets-practice approach and scrutinizes deeply how immersion in virtual contexts can focus on all dimensions of student’ involvement. The chapter specifically highlights the advancement of a virtual reality project whose focus is to reconstruct an authentic, experiential, and game-like milieu, which can foster social negotiation.

Set in the Japanese context, Chapter 12 draws on the longitudinal study to elucidate how young learners made substantial improvements in cognitive engagement in the language classroom. Rarely explored in the Iranian context is the role of positive and negative L2 classroom emotions and grits in the reading comprehension classroom. In Chapter 13, the author examines how classroom emotions and grits are predictive of L2 engagement, and how L2 engagement relates to learners’ L2 reading comprehension. In Chapter 14, set in the German context, the authors embark on the longitudinal case study to showcase that learner’s willingness to engage

(WTE) is an indispensable antecedent situation that materializes before the students’ actual involvement. The authors argue that success in L2 learning is contingent upon the proactivity and involvement of learners. Finally, Chapter 15 closes this volume by recapitulating the results of the preceding chapters and outlining some avenues for future research.

This thought-provoking compendium enjoys many merits. First, the contributions in this volume are from diverse geographical locations, indicating the sagacious selection of the editors who are cognizant of the context-specific, culture-bound nature of L2 engagement. Secondly, this volume has done its best to reconcile theory and practice by foregrounding the theoretical postulations and pedagogical implications of these robust, innovative, and diverse data-driven studies in language learning. Thirdly, the empirical studies have utilized diverse methodological designs, rigorous data collection instruments, innovative concepts, making this volume a substantive resource for the readers. Finally, the volume has focused on L2 engagement not only at the school level but also at the tertiary and higher education level. However, had the editors included studies about the impact of administrative staff on learner engagement, it would have been insightful.

In sum, we feel confident to recommend this theoretically robust and empirically insightful compendium as a treasure chest of resources to language students, language learning theoreticians, researchers, practitioners, teachers, syllabus designers, and policymakers who will find this collection a rich and contemporary addition to the literature on L2 learner engagement.

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Book Review: Interpersonal Interactions and Language Learning: Face-To-Face vs. Computer-Mediated Communication

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Keywords: F2F (face-to-face), communication, second language acquisition, interpersonal interaction, language learning

A Book Review on

Interpersonal Interactions and Language Learning: Face-to-Face vs. Computer-Mediated Communication

Shin Yi Chew and Lee Luan Ng (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 2021, 108 pages, ISBN 978-3-030-67424-3

The use of synchronous and diachronous technology has been exponentially surging lately and has been dramatically and abruptly augmented by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic that has coerced EFL/ESL educators and students to struggle over online classes. With the recognition of computer-mediated communication (CMC), online discussions have also gained tremendous momentum in the teaching and learning process. Given that learners are the key stakeholders in this process, their individual characteristics such as personality, motivation, anxiety, confidence, as well as language proficiency among so many other factors need to be carefully considered. Therefore, *Interpersonal Interactions and Language Learning: Face-to-Face vs. Computer-Mediated Communication*, co-authored by Shin Yi Chew and Lee Luan Ng, is a timely contribution that focuses on the synchronous text-based CMC where language learners with diverse individual differences and language proficiency levels communicate with each other by typing their messages which are read by other users on computer screens synchronously.

Collectively, this monograph consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 foregrounds the crucial role of communication in second language acquisition by scrutinizing the historical and theoretical developments of learning approaches and justifying the growing popularity of communicative language teaching. The chapter also succinctly elaborates on some of the germane theories in communication, elucidates how technology has brought about some changes in the Malaysian context, and accentuates the potential of collaborative discussion as a communicative learning task in the L2 classroom because “discussions can serve three important roles for participants: to ask for information, clarify matters and share information” (p. 8).

Chapter 2 makes a demarcation between face-to-face (F2F) and online communication by describing such communication models as (a) the simplest model which involves the sender and receiver of the message; (b) Shannon’s (1948) information theory model that demonstrates the way communication takes place between a sender and receiver in telecommunication; (c) the intermediary model that constitutes a gatekeeper who has the ability to “choose, decide and even change what messages to be received by the audience” (p. 18); (d) the interactive or cybernetic

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model adds the cybernetic notion of feedback, so the sender of the message can modify or correct it; (e) the transactional model which expands communication to other interactive media such as emails, radio, and letters; and (f) Foulger's (2004). Ecological Model of Communication which pertains to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of communication between the interlocutors.

Chapter 3 comprehensively makes a distinction between CMC and F2F communication. The authors stipulate that CMC and F2F interactions differ in terms of communication skills, language, collaboration, turn-taking, and nonverbal cues. Furthermore, the chapter overviews the pertinent early theories and models of the effective use of communication such as social presence theory, the lack of social context cues hypothesis, and media richness theory as well as some current theories and models, including common ground theory, media synchronicity theory, social information processing (SIP) theory, hyperpersonal model of CMC, efficiency framework, and ICT succession framework. The chapter finishes with some viable pedagogical implications of CMC in language classrooms.

Focusing on learning individual differences (IDs), namely learners' personality and language proficiency, is the objective of Chapter 4. The chapter also brings to the fore the impact of these two IDs on the learners' participation styles, lexical complexity, and interactive competence of learners with diverse personalities across different levels of proficiency when they are engaged in discussions in conventional F2F and synchronous online text-based discussion. Furthermore, the authors opine that since learners are complex and dynamic, we need to explore the impact of other IDs such as motivation, confidence, and language anxiety. The chapter problematizes that we need to understand the potential disruptions and noises in different discussion environments, so we know how to make ourselves ready to tackle the contingent problems.

The penultimate chapter encapsulates the pedagogical implications and some recommendations for language instructors and discussion facilitators who are involved in group discussion activities. It is highly suggested that teachers need to be strategic to deal with idiosyncratic individuals with various emotional, cognitive, social, and academic characteristics. For instance, it is recommended that language teachers "gain a

better understanding of the learners in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, aims, interests, expectations, motivations" (p. 86), through establishing some benchmarks for students' behavior in group discussions, and "carry out online text-based discussions to promote balanced participation in a mixed classroom" (p. 87).

The final chapter offers a short and sweet overview of the current advancements in the employability of technology in communication and language learning. More specifically, the chapter highlights the advantages of multimodality in communication, mobile-mediated communication (MMC), computer-assisted language learning, online video conferencing, and online gaming. The chapter rightly cautions us that "despite the benefits technology has to offer, we need to use it carefully due to the potential distractions it carries" (p. 96), and it should be judiciously and strategically utilized for different students to realize and optimize its full potential.

The present monograph could have been more insightful if the authors had elaborated on massive open online courses (MOOC) which have been one of the prevailing modes of CMC. Moreover, in Chapter 2, the authors highlighted the role of cognitive learning theories and lost sight of including (Vygotsky's, 1986) sociocultural theory and its related approaches, highlighting that interaction, negotiation, collaboration, and culture play an indispensable role in communication. However, regardless of these pitfalls, I recommend this didactic and timely contribution to EFL/ESL students, teachers, teacher educators, and syllabus designers who are interested in IDs and CMC.

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The Impact of Gender, Nativeness, and Subject Matter on the English as a Second Language University Students' Perception of Instructor Credibility and Engagement: A Qualitative Study

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In instructional contexts, instructor credibility or ethos is deemed to play a paramount role in teacher–student interaction and relationships. Much effort has been devoted to instructor credibility conceptualization, measurement, and its association with other instructional variables of interest in dominantly quantitative inquiries. However, little research has been undertaken in second-language education in which communication is both a means and an end. This qualitative research set out to explore the perception of the students of instructor credibility in the context of higher English education and how gender, nativeness, and subject matter might impact their perceptions. It also aimed to study how instructor credibility could, in turn, influence the engagement and success of the students. Thirteen senior students of English as a foreign language from a university in Iran participated in this study. They were given a scenario about their prospective professors for two courses of “Research Methodology” and “Essay Writing.” The professors included four native English- and Persian-speaking male and female PhD holders. The participants were, then, interviewed about their perceptions of instructor credibility, their choices of instructors, and how they would affect their engagement. The data were recorded, transcribed, and recursively analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis. While instructor credibility is commonly characterized as a three-dimensional construct, involving competence, character, and caring, the data analysis generated a new component of performance concerned with the effectiveness of classroom knowledge presentation and activity organization. Caring also emerged as a constituent of a more inclusive component of rapport. Interestingly, albeit they viewed native English professors as generally more competent due to their nativeness, they perceived non-native professors as more credible for both courses, mainly because of their rapport building and familiarity with the needs and challenges of the students. Most of the participants also viewed male professors as more competent and communicative for both courses. The participants also tended to argue that perceived instructor credibility would encourage them to put in more effort in

their academic undertakings and to engage in class activities. This would ultimately enhance their academic achievements and success. The paper discusses the findings and implications for second-language instructor credibility conceptualization and practice.

Keywords: instructor credibility, second-language instructor, engagement, nativeness, subject matter, gender

INTRODUCTION

Persuasive communication and the impact of its source have been studied by rhetorical and communication scholars for several decades (Hovland et al., 1953; Andersen and Clevenger, 1963; Berlo et al., 1970; McCroskey and Young, 1981; McCroskey and Teven, 1999; Umeogu, 2012). Source credibility, or *ethos* in Aristotelian terms, emerged to study the attitudes toward the source of communication and persuasion, and how much credibility that source carries. Source credibility is, therefore, viewed as a significant facet of the communication process affecting the believability of the message sent by its source. Message persuasiveness and source credibility were conceptualized by Aristotle and Hovland et al. (1953), respectively, who contended that the credibility status of the source and the message efficacy and internalization are affected by the receivers' perceptions of the source.

In the mid-1970s, the source credibility or *ethos* of instructors attracted the attention of the researchers in instructional contexts (Finn et al., 2009). It was deemed to play a paramount role in instructor–student interaction and learning outcomes. Credible instructors, as sources of change and influence in classrooms, arguably play a key role in developing and maintaining interest and engagement in teacher instruction and course work; uphold devotion to the principles of professional integrity and expertise; and display exemplary behaviors to students. An effective instructor produces significant social and instructional changes in the classroom and, in doing so, enhances the evaluation, interaction, and learning of the students (Fisher and Frey, 2019).

Instructor credibility generates from competent, caring, and reliable messages capable of impacting the perceptions, learning, and behavior of the students within educational contexts, and is associated with instructional communication behaviors such as affinity seeking (Frymier and Thompson, 1992), ego support (Frymier and Houser, 2000), assertiveness and responsiveness (Martin et al., 1997; Teven, 2001; McCroskey et al., 2004), expertness and verbal fluency (Myers and Bryant, 2004), argumentativeness (Schrodt, 2003), confirmation and clarity (Schrodt et al., 2006, 2009), and self-disclosure (Sorensen, 1989; McBride and Wahl, 2005).

According to Thweatt and McCroskey (1998), the fundamental aim of classroom communication is to generate understanding by engaging both the affect and cognition of the students. Instructional communication is then investigated in terms of relational and rhetorical theories (Mottet and Beebe, 2006). The relational approach to communication is grounded in the reciprocal, cooperative nature of communication or interaction between students and instructors, who make an equal contribution to the classroom instruction and enhance shared knowledge and cocurricular opportunities. In contrast, in rhetorical

communication, instructors are the primary senders of classroom messages as well as the sole creators of the meaning and experience, informing instructional practices and learning direction. This model accounts for a rather linear process and passive learning in which learners are the receivers of the messages and instructions (2006).

Instructor credibility theoretically bears affinity with the rhetorical approach to communication since instructors are the social persuaders and communicators of knowledge and meaning. Increased perceived instructor credibility is then dependent on the transfer of information (McCroskey et al., 2004). However, more recently, examining perceived instructor behavior and effectiveness, Myers et al. (2017) suggested that instructor credibility is both rhetorical and interpersonally driven, that is, the content delivery and task management of the instructors are viewed as rhetorical by students, whereas his/her character and personality traits, such as empathy and sociability, are assumed to be part of relational behaviors that affect interpersonal communication.

Despite having revised the source dimensions or conceptualizations by adding a new component or rewording the existing ones, researchers have generally agreed that the two dimensions of competence and trustworthiness are pivotal to perceptions or views of credibility (McCroskey and Teven, 1999). This is because the two constructs of trustworthiness and caring behaviors are deemed to represent the interpersonal communication and involvement of the instructors (Myers, 2004). Over the past decades, underscoring credibility in classroom communication and learning instructional scholars have also persistently attempted to dimensionalize credibility (Finn et al., 2009; Schrodt et al., 2009). The credibility components were thought to involve intelligence, character, and goodwill according to Aristotle, and expertness, trustworthiness, and intention toward the receiver as conceptualized by Hovland et al. (1953). In one of the earliest experiments, McCroskey et al. (1974) developed five dimensions of source credibility, including “composure,” “extroversion,” “competence,” “character,” and “sociability,” although acknowledged that the two latter credibility components are likely to be conjoined.

Later in 1981, McCroskey and Young (1981) disputed the multiplicity of the source dimensions and even contended that attempts at dimension development minimize the objectivity of the findings. They proposed that there are three underlying constructs of source credibility, however, when a factor analyzed, “goodwill” overlapped with the two dimensions of competence and trustworthiness, and ultimately collapsed into one of these two stand-alone constructs. This conceptualization was also later challenged, owing to the measuring instrument and methodology employed and revisited by McCroskey and her colleagues. They maintained that goodwill, which concerns the

welfare, educational, and psychological needs of the students, merits isolation from the two constructs of competence and trustworthiness (Teven and McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey and Teven, 1999). They also emphasized the impact of goodwill in increasing communication skills, personal involvement, and the cognitive and affective learning of the students. This was also confirmed by Finn et al. (2009), contending that perceived caring importance and contribution dwarf those of other source credibility constructs. Caring instructors, according to McCroskey (1992), communicate openly with students, welcome their unsuccessful attempts and errors, assume the best in the students, and, overall, are understanding, empathic, and responsive. In other words, "students certainly are going to listen more attentively to a person who they believe cares about them and has their best interests at heart" (p. 110).

Thweatt and McCroskey (1998) reconceptualized the credibility model and added two new components of dynamism and immediacy in addition to trustworthiness and competence. They argued that dynamism signals instructor passion and enthusiasm for the subject matter, and immediacy signals the psychological and social closeness of the instructors. They also found that an instructor who is perceivably immediate, albeit less able, communicates more concern and caring to students than an accomplished instructor who is non-immediate and concluded that immediacy mediates the credibility perceptions of the students and produces desired learning outcomes.

McCroskey and Teven (1999) developed an 18-item semantic referential scale to measure the perceptions of the students of instructor credibility and demonstrated that competence, character, and caring construct instructor credibility. This classical study and three-partite conceptualization are often drawn upon and most cited in instructor credibility research (Finn et al., 2009). Drawing on this credibility characterization, Myers and Bryant (2004), for example, found the content expertise and verbal fluency of the instructors indicate the competence of the instructors; their integrity, immediacy, flexibility, and understanding indicate their character; and their responsiveness, accommodation, and accessibility convey their caring.

However, other studies tended to limit the construct of credibility to one or two components influencing instructor credibility status or image and views of the students. For example, a qualitative study by Hendrix (1997) indicated that the single component predicting and mediating instructor credibility in the eyes of her students was competence, comprising subject matter knowledge, work experience, good teaching techniques, and clear instructions. In her auto-ethnographic study of the perceptions of the students of foreign instructor credibility, effectiveness, and communication, Zhang (2014) also reported rapport and competence as dimensions leading to improved instructor evaluation and a positive classroom climate conducive to learning. She further highlighted that good rapport is associated with those interpersonally driven communication behaviors, including understanding, openness, role modeling, and appropriate use of space, whereas competence concerns content-based dimensions represented in subject expertise, presentation clarity, and relevant knowledge. Subscribing to two-dimensional instructor credibility, Chory (2007) maintains

that responsiveness, accommodation, and accessibility characterize instructor caring, while affinity-seeking behaviors, flexibility, trustworthiness, and understanding define perceived instructor character.

Credibility research, including instructor credibility, has been much centered around attempts to decompose the construct and its components. More recently, scholars also have turned their attention to how the components are impacted or assisted by other instructional variables of interest. For instance, some scholars (e.g., Paige, 1990; McCroskey, 2002, 2003; Meyer and Mao, 2014; Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2014; Pishghadam et al., 2021) examined perceptions of credibility in terms of the nativeness and gender of the instructors, as the two variables of interest in this study. Interestingly, they suggested that domestic instructors received higher evaluations than foreign instructors. Cross-cultural studies of the credibility of native and non-native instructors (e.g., Rojas Gomez and Pearson, 1990; Neves and Sanyal, 1991) have also revealed that students rated domestic instructors more highly in terms of character and communication while perceiving intercultural instructors as more competent. Thus, students had a tendency not to sign up for classes conducted by international instructors (McCroskey, 2002). Furthermore, some researchers noted that the expertise and immediate behavior of the instructors are more likely to affect the judgments and learning of the students than variables such as their gender and nativeness (McCroskey, 2002, 2003; Glascock and Ruggiero, 2006). Therefore, if students' learning and perceptions are lowered, it is presumably due to communication breakdown, resulting from language barriers and less speech clarity of the instructors (McCroskey, 2002, 2003).

In view of gender, students were found to perceive female instructors as reflecting more on students' milieu and, therefore, higher in character and credibility than male instructors (Rojas Gomez and Pearson, 1990). Conversely, in the study of Hargett (1999), male instructors were rated more highly and thought of as more credible than female instructors. To confound the picture, in the study of Statham et al. (1991), female and male instructors were rated equally. Perhaps, the inconclusive findings are due to the role of a multitude of contextual factors at play in instructional context, resulting in different perceptions by the students.

Instructional studies on credibility have also had an intrinsic motive to see the influence of perceived instructor credibility on classroom learning and course outcomes of the students. Instructor credibility can improve students' quality learning indicators and desired outcomes such as increased motivation to learn (Frymier and Thompson, 1992; Martin et al., 1997; Tibbles et al., 2008), higher affective and cognitive development (Teven and McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey et al., 2004; Tibbles et al., 2008; Finn et al., 2009), willingness to talk (Myers, 2004), and self-efficacy (Won et al., 2017).

McCroskey et al. (1974) examined the hypothesized association between instructor credibility and the ability to recall information as a learning outcome. Their experiment suggested that competent instructors could provoke and improve the attention, memory, and recall of the students. They, in addition, found that instructor temperament as an instructor communication behavior affects

the credibility evaluations of the students and their academic achievement. Furthermore, credible pedagogues, who are immediate, homophilous, and passionate about the course content and instructions, play a considerable role in student persistence in and commitment to the academic studies and undertakings (Wheeless et al., 2011). The support that instructors provide also fosters learning and student–instructor communication (Schrodt et al., 2009). Students whose instructors are nonverbally immediate are unlikely to miss their classes (Rocca, 2004) and might even take additional courses (Witt and Wheeless, 2001). They also tend to participate and engage in classroom discussion and conversation, and solicit information when they perceive their instructors as attractive, respectable, and extroverted (Wheeless, 1975).

Although instructor credibility research and theory are rich in conceptualization and measurement and have seen much effort in exploring their association with other instructional variables of interest, the approaches taken have been dominantly quantitative (Hendrix, 1997; Finn et al., 2009). Few studies have also been undertaken in second-language education in which communication is essentially both a means and an end. This qualitative research set out to explore the perceptions of the university students of instructor credibility in the context of higher English education. More specifically, it is intended to study how the gender and nativeness of the professors, and subject matter might impact on English as the perceptions of the second-language (EFL) university students of the credibility of their instructors. It also aimed to study how instructor credibility could, in turn, influence the engagement and success of the students. The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How is instructor credibility perceived in the context of university EFL courses?

RQ2: How is perceived instructor credibility in the context of university EFL courses affected by an instructor's nativeness, gender, and subject matter?

RQ3: How does perceived instructor credibility affect university EFL students' academic engagement and success?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

From among 30 Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) EFL students, 13 students consented to participate in the study. They were all Persian-speaking senior students from a university in Iran in the first semester of the academic year 2020–2021. They were four males and nine females with an age range of 22–29. All the participants had taken courses in which they covered and discussed language teacher characteristics, including instructor credibility.

Data Collection

This study reports the findings from a larger study on the credibility of the EFL instructors from the point of view of postgraduate and graduate EFL students. When designing the study and, particularly, the interview questions, we had two

options, that is, using the same general questions for both groups or developing more specific and contextualized questions for the graduate students. Since we did not expect the graduate students to give us expert views and that we sought to elicit their contextualized perceptions of EFL instructors, we opted to design a scenario for the interview questions. More specifically, the interview questions were based on the scenario situating the research questions in an EFL university context (see **Appendix A**). This helped us to generate more context-specific themes. The scenario described their prospective professors for two two-credit courses of “Research Methodology” and “Essay Writing” from among required courses from the program. We deliberately selected these two courses, which are intended to develop a subject matter area and English proficiency, respectively. The professors also included two native English (male and female) and two Persian-speaking (male and female) PhD holders. We asked them to choose the instructors for these two courses and then tell us why they preferred them and how they perceived their credibility.

The interview questions were developed based on a review of instructor credibility literature and in line with the research questions. The scenario and interview questions were both piloted with two students from the same class. They were requested to respond to the questions and also comment on the clarity of both the scenario and the questions. This piloting led us to amend some wording for more clarity. Interviews were conducted individually over the telephone, taking no more than 25 min. Prior to the interviews, the students were given a copy of the scenario so that they could refer to the information in it during the interview.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and recursively analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis. The analytic process was followed in three basic steps of data familiarization, code generation, and theme extraction (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During the initial phase of the analysis, the interview data were transcribed verbatim and studied thoroughly for issues or views of interest. Following this, several tentative coding categories emerged, which were then constantly examined and revised when new codes or discrepant instances were encountered (Tesch, 1990; Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Emergent codes were then juxtaposed and drawn together to generate underlying themes. The identified themes were organized and interpreted by cross-referencing among and across the transcripts. The themes which summarized the narratives of the participants, along with some exemplary perceptions, were incorporated into the final report.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several steps were taken. To ensure the accuracy of the coding and to reduce bias or uncertainty, field notes were also taken while interviewing the participants. In addition, memos were recorded and referred to for more precise data analysis (see Saldaña, 2011). In order to ensure data coding and analysis consistency, the interview data were first coded and analyzed by the second researcher, and a portion (20%) of it was reanalyzed by the first researcher. Inter-coding reliability was

initially 85%. Areas of disagreement were discussed and resolved, followed by a reanalysis of a new portion (10%) by both researchers, which resulted in an agreement rate of 96%. The data were then analyzed again by the second researcher for any amendments. As recommended in qualitative research (for more details, see Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998), the findings and the interpretations made were returned to a couple of the students for member checking (Harvey, 2015) to see whether they resonated with their perceptions.

The Study Findings

In what follows the key findings, along with some illustrative comments and quotes, are presented and discussed in relation to the research questions.

RQ1: How is instructor credibility perceived in the context of university EFL courses?

The first research question concerned the perceptions of the students of the characteristics and skills of a credible instructor in the context of university EFL courses. Four key components or themes, along with several subcomponents of the credibility construct, emerged. The results revealed that a credible EFL instructor, in the eyes of the student participants, possesses both professional and linguistic knowledge, is able to establish rapport with students, has an appealing character, and can organize and present knowledge and skills well. **Figure 1** depicts the instructor credibility framework developed in this study and the one advanced by McCroskey and Teven (1999).

Competence was perceived as the most significant indicator of the instructor's credibility. The most prevalent theme that the students expressed in relation to the first research question comprised professional or linguistic knowledge. Describing a credible instructor, Zeynab, for example, stated that the greater the knowledge, the greater the trust. For some students (e.g., Arash, Zohre, and Fatemeh), only competent instructors have the knowledge and ideas to communicate with confidence. Competent instructors "know what they are doing," Fatemeh argued. She also commented that credible instructors can always create and foster knowledge and communication in the classroom by stimulating the participation and contribution of the students. The students repeatedly pointed to a "broad knowledge base," "vast competence and competency," and "expertise" when describing credible EFL instructors. We asked the respondents to further characterize such general attributes of credible instructors.

What they additionally expressed included content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, general knowledge, and knowledge of both languages (L1 and L2). For Arash and Zohre, an instructor "should have deep knowledge of the subject" in order to stimulate the positive perceptions of the students and earn their trusts; otherwise, as commented by Ali, "I do not ask my questions...I do not seek help when I have a problem in my course." Zahra added that a credible instructor has both content literacy and general knowledge, which are required to integrate current content with prior knowledge within and across the subjects and to relate what they learn from the

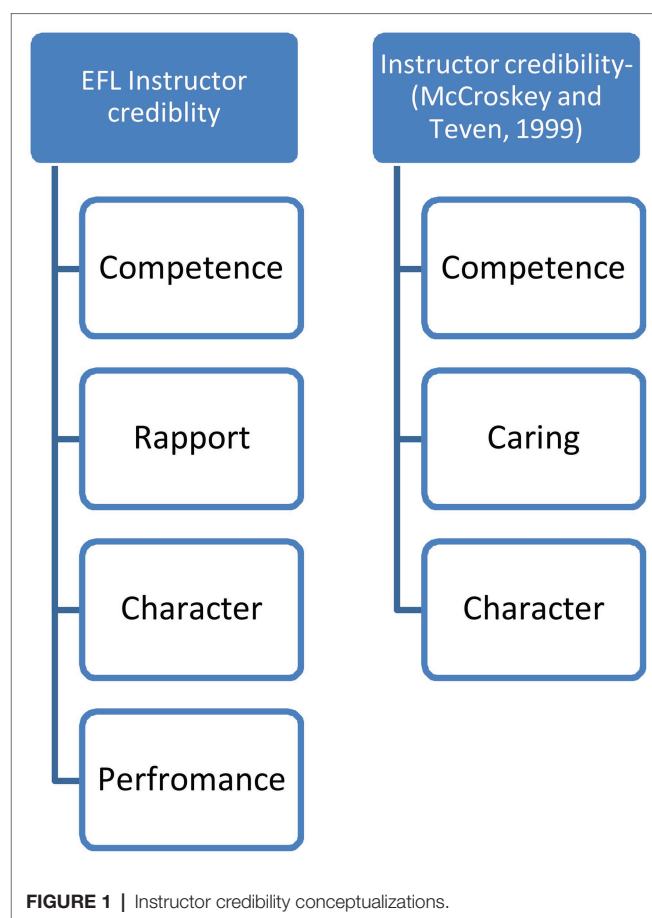


FIGURE 1 | Instructor credibility conceptualizations.

real-life experiences of the students. Another salient and prevailing comment of the EFL respondents was the competence and mastery of an instructor of L1 and L2. Zohre, for example, commented that an English instructor "needs to be fluent in both languages and be able to make comparisons between them." She interestingly maintained that "Since we are always instructed by non-native instructors...they have got to know both the English and Persian literature, speak with fluency and accuracy to first convince us that they themselves know what they teach" "to be dependable."

In addition to the types of knowledge, students also viewed the quality of knowledge communicated by the language instructor as significantly affecting the teaching quality and their perceptions and evaluation. The qualities encompassed clarity, adequacy, and currency. The subject matter or course content is, according to Arash and Ahmad, to be communicated clearly through the effective communication and proper teaching procedure of the instructors. The participants perceive instructors highly when they possess the knowledge and are able to communicate it clearly. This is particularly evident when they can provide satisfactorily clear and adequate answers to questions or solutions for problems. Interestingly, when they refer students to reliable sources when teaching or for further study, the students take it as evidence that their instructors are also reliable for they are current and aware of academically reliable resources, Zohre commented.

The second credibility component emerging from the data is rapport of instructors. This perceived instructor rapport, indicating mutual understanding and compromises between the instructor and the students, exemplifies communicative qualities such as caring, empathy, encouragement, and immediacy. In the eyes of the participants, interpersonal interaction and communication of instructors play a very important role in their credibility. One aspect of this social interaction involves caring. Credible instructors “care about students’ emotional well-being, intellectual needs and concerns” and “are willing to listen attentively to what we [they] have to say,” Shahla stated. For Zohre, instructors’ asking students about their problems, questions, and comments or suggestions is an indication of the instructors caring about them and their learning.

In addition, credible instructors are perceived as empathetic and understanding of struggles and progress of students, particularly when learning a foreign language. Emphasizing instructor rapport and understanding, Maryam recalled that some instructors might just evaluate assignments and class performance of their students to shape their communication with the students. In comparison, she reasoned credible instructors empathetically understand psychological or emotional state of their students and know that classes and learning, particularly in a new language, may involve tension and anxiety, which reduce when they are heard, negotiated, or dealt with properly. A repeated theme we noted from the comments, although we did not ask them about the consequences of lack of understanding of instructors, was that it may not only erode perceptions of students of rapport and credibility of the instructors but also affect their interest and motivation to continue learning. In words of Maryam, it might make an instructor “to fall from grace.” Finally, students also assessed encouraging and immediate behaviors of instructors and their association with credibility. In view of the participants, a highly immediate instructor “creates a feeling of comfort and intimacy in the classroom,” “feels more connected,” and “feels he/she is one of us” (Shahla and Ali).

Responses of students also generated a third credibility component of “character” concerned with personal characteristics and behavior patterns of instructors, affecting their credibility. A credible instructor is ethical, possesses a good character, and values students and does not humiliate them, argued by Maryam and Ahmad. Morality, thus, does have a significant impact on instructor credibility, “no matter what their academic ranks or professional statuses are,” Maryam commented. She also added that “I do not mind whether he’s well-educated or not, an assistant or associate professor...as long as he does not show a moral character, he is little credible.” This perceived character, in further analysis, comprises multiple qualities such as courtesy, realisticness, humor, and enthusiasm.

Perceived courtesy plays a significant role in inspiring interest and respect of students, developing an appreciation of the course content and the instructor, and promoting their motivation to learn and remain active throughout the course. This instructor courtesy or respect, in Zahra’s view, also fosters “a relationship of trust between instructors and students.” Perceived realisticness was also deemed as important in increasing perceptions of

students of instructor credibility. Some students like Fatemeh complained about the unrealistic and heightened expectations demanding them “to bite off more than [what] we can chew,” which unfavorably affects their perceptions of the character of the instructor. Another important facet of credible character of instructors was their sense of humor. This, according to some of the students like Negin, makes learning fun, reduces fatigue and anxiety in language learning classes, to the extent that “it can compensate for inadequacies in knowledge and performance of an instructor.” A relevant attribute arising from the analysis was the passion or enthusiasm of instructors for teaching and for classes which attracts “positive attitudes of students toward the instructor and the course,” Fatemeh commented.

The last data-driven component is the classroom “performance” of the instructors or their ability to organize and present activities, personalize learning to meet varying needs of students and interact well with the students. A common theme was that those who hold a professorship at a university must have met the acquired competence and skills, and what makes a difference is their actual in-class performance. According to Mohamad, instructors need to be able to put to use what they learned in theory, or, in the words of Fatemeh, instructor credibility is not just a question of “what” but also of “how.” Students will be increasingly disappointed if their instructors fail to set up and organize various instructional activities, assignments, and discussions to convey knowledge and skills. In other words, the teaching of instructors will demonstrate and foster instructor credibility in the long run. Ali indicated that, since he is a student of language teaching, he usually waits to “see how the instructors teach through the term” and whether “they practice what they preach” to evaluate them. Initial perceptions of instructors, positive or negative, might change through actual classroom observation of what instructors “do, and not pretend,” Maryam stated. It is worth noting that there were variations in the perceptions of the respondents of other components of instructor credibility; however, when it came to this aspect, they rather unanimously pointed to or implied the importance of performance.

RQ2: How is perceived instructor credibility in the context of university EFL courses affected by an instructor’s nativeness, gender, and subject matter?

The second research question probed the preferences of the EFL students in relation to their perceptions of instructor credibility. Since the scenario leads them to think of the prospective instructors in terms of nativeness, gender, and subject matter, the emergent themes are presented in relation to these variables. When we were designing the scenario, we thought that most EFL students would probably select native speakers of English for “Essay Writing,” but we had no idea as to how many of them would opt for non-native (Persian-speaking) instructors for “Research Methodology” courses. However, only two students (Shahla and Zohre) preferred native instructors for both courses because of their competence while the majority ($n = 11$), although with the same view about the higher competence of the native instructors, opted to take both courses with non-native instructors

for their rapport with the students and their understanding of the needs and challenges of the students.

As for writing in English, native instructors of English were generally deemed to have sophisticated and in-depth competence engendered by first-hand and long exposure to English as their mother tongue and longer experience in English writing. They have to write in English, "so practice made them perfect," as commented by Ali. The vast knowledge of English enables native instructors to discuss and cover the subtleties of Essay Writing, which might be impossible for a non-native instructor to acquire and teach. This competence superiority, particularly in English proficiency, led only two students to prefer native instructors. Zohre and Shahla were also concerned about international examinations like IELTS and TOFEL. They heard that the writing section of such tests is demanding, and native instructors could be very helpful. For the same reason, they preferred native instructors. Also, assuming that such teachers are competent and expert in subject matters, they maintained that they could draw on up-to-date and effective teaching methods to enhance the knowledge and skills of the students. When justifying her preference, Shahla recalled having watched instructional YouTube videos, demonstrating native English instructors teaching international students by incorporating "real-life examples" and "hands-on experiences" that she valued much.

Regardless of the competence and language proficiency of the native instructors, the other students evaluated the credibility of the non-native instructors more highly for both courses because they were thought to be aware of and sensitive to the educational and psychological needs and problems of the EFL learners. Mohamad regarded non-native instructors as more caring and capable of relating to students well because "they have gone through the same things." These instructors, according to the students like Nahid and Zahra, are more likely to demonstrate empathy with the needs and problems of the students because they live in the same community, and have experienced the same cultural and educational norms, expectations, and standards. In doing term research and class English essays, they were viewed to know and understand their limitations as students of a foreign language. Informed of the recurrent problems in the EFL context, they might not "expect too much and can help us," Shima contended. Sometimes, "even if you do not say anything, non-native instructors can understand you and your mood from your eyes and face," stated Shima.

As indicated above, we anticipated that the students will prefer native instructors at the very least for the Essay Writing course just for being a native speaker of English. Conversely, some students pointed to knowing and using Persian as an asset in teaching English. This was not the primary factor to convince most of the students to prefer non-native instructors, but the prevalence of its mention makes it worth noting. It seemed that occasional and limited use of Persian would give the students some relief from the anxiety inherent in learning English or a subject through English. Convincingly, Arash argued that, since non-native instructors are not perfect in English as the medium of instruction and communication,

"they know that, sometimes, we cannot follow them and may get frustrated," so they can also use Persian occasionally when it comes to sophisticated subject matter content or details of English language.

In view of gender, most of the students preferred male professors for both courses because they were perceived to be more competent and communicative. Those few students who selected female instructors thought that the female professors were fairer in grading and more understanding in interaction with students. They, including Mohamad, thought that female instructors usually treat everyone equally and respectfully in the class regardless of the sex, status, intelligence, and appearance of the students. They were much concerned about bias in assessment and discrimination in interaction and, rather passionately, thought that the female instructors are more sensitive to their impact on the academic engagement of their students.

Most students preferred male instructors since they evaluated more highly their competence and rapport with students. Comparing male and female instructors, they thought that male instructors are usually more competent and also confident about teaching. According to Zahra, for example, male instructors have a broad knowledge base, "they do not always go by the book and they often rely on their own experiences," and can cope with problems in classes like "challenging questions." Or based on Zahra's personal experience, she notes that, "some of my [her] female instructors know a lot, but they do not seem as confident when teaching or when somebody comments or asks many questions." In addition, male instructors were deemed to enjoy speech clarity as commented by Zahra and Nahid. In their views, they are likely to show more flexibility, understanding, and tolerance, even when students make mistakes; ask tricky questions; and share their stories, or, simply, in Ahmad's words, "with them, I may get along very well."

RQ3: How does perceived professors' credibility affect their academic engagement, efforts, and success?

Instructor credibility was also investigated in terms of its impact on the academic engagement and achievement of the students. Overall, data analysis suggested that perceived instructor credibility would encourage students to put in more effort in their academic undertakings and to engage in class activities and course requirements. We looked into the responses and the emergent themes in relation to the instructor credibility components. For example, the students argued that, if their instructor is caring, they will feel more hopeful to succeed, work harder, and address their weaknesses and mistakes.

Caring instructors were thought to be more likely to observe the growth of their students to offer progressive advice. This was seen by Zohre to give them hope that, with the aid and care they receive, "they will be academically successful." Similarly, for Arash, caring instructors are appreciated because they "motivate and encourage us to keep it up until we get what we want." According to Ali and Zeynab, when someone is close, encouraging and more experienced with whom the students can share their problems and challenges, they will try harder not to disappoint their instructors. Students learn

by trial and error; thus, when the students make errors or think to have certain weaknesses, they prefer to refer to instructors who are caring, Ahamd said.

It was also noted that some of the students had a tendency to listen or refer to instructors they thought are more competent. For example, Maryam commented that she asks her questions in the class or goes to the office of an instructor for assistance only if she is sure, through experience, that the instructor has something further to teach and she can help her get along. Competent instructors were viewed to be able to guide students and further point to extra resources, critical in higher education. Nahid and Zahra, associating the competence of the instructors with clarity of guidance and instruction, argued that such proficient instructors have various ways at hand to get the content across to the students, particularly when the medium of communication and instruction is a foreign language. They also contended that this understanding is the key to active engagement in classwork and ultimately academic success.

Since the respondents were EFL students, it did not surprise us that they frequently pointed to their objectives in learning English and how essential it is for an instructor to be competent or more specifically proficient in English. Through the analysis, this was most prevalent that they expected their instructors to set themselves as examples or models. An interesting comment was made by Shahla: "A proficient instructor indirectly tells me that if she could acquire English, why not? I can learn it as well." Such instructors were also thought to be very helpful in providing ongoing exposure to English that is critical to learning English in an EFL context.

Finally, the students evaluated the influence of the character of the instructors, particularly instructor enthusiasm on their engagement and success. The interests and enthusiasm of the instructors are communicated through instructions and interaction. Ahmad stated that whether "instructors are interested in what they teach is clear and will interest me accordingly." Shima and Mohamad also find energetic and excited instructors naturally attractive and motivating. It might be unrealistic to expect students to actively engage in classwork and academic assignments when the character of the instructors or class interaction is not encouraging enough, given the stressful nature of foreign language learning contexts.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the perceptions of the EFL university students of instructor credibility and its association with nativeness, gender, and subject matter. While instructor credibility is commonly characterized as a three-dimensional construct, involving competence, character, and caring (McCroskey and Teven, 1999), the data analysis generated a new component of performance in the context of EFL university education concerned with the effectiveness of classroom knowledge presentation and activity organization. It can be argued that the perception of credibility is relative to the views and interpretations of the students across different campuses and institutions (Hovland et al., 1953). Nonetheless, there are commonalities in

the viewpoints acknowledged in the literature and supported in this study. For example, few conceptualizations or empirical studies did not take into consideration the competence of the instructors as a key component, although there has been variation in the interpretation of its importance and the implication it might have for the achievements of the students.

Among the credibility components, competence was most frequently cited by the participants and deemed as essential for credibility construction and learning enhancement. An EFL instructor was, therefore, assumed to be competent in pedagogical and linguistic knowledge areas in order to be able to provide clear, adequate, and current instructions to guide and facilitate the learning of the students. Because this study was conducted in a foreign language learning context, it was not surprising to see a variation in the perception of competence. Studies (e.g., Tucker, 1971; Wheelless, 1974a,b; Hendrix, 1997) have suggested that competence made the greatest contribution to the perceptions of the students of the instructor credibility; however, the perceptions as to what constructed competence varied as a function of different predispositions and preferences of the students for certain teaching behaviors. For example, in the study by Hendrix (1997), the participants described subject matter knowledge, teaching techniques, and expertise as the key areas of competence.

The students perceived the rapport of the instructors as an important part of the instructional/interpersonal process that also involves caring or having the best interests of the students in mind, empathy with the struggles and needs, support and encouragement, and closeness or immediacy of the students. Although in most experimental studies (e.g., Teven and McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey and Teven, 1999; Myers and Bryant, 2004; Teven and Hanson, 2004; Brann et al., 2005; Finn et al., 2009), caring was characterized as one dimension of tripartite classification of instructor credibility, in this study, it was eclipsed by and subsumed under the inclusive component of rapport. The instructor rapport, according to the students, can mitigate the effect of adverse psychological factors surrounding foreign language learning (e.g., anxiety). Foreign language anxiety, for example, can reduce when instructors create an understanding, friendly, and immediate environment in which students would be less afraid of making mistakes, which is one of the main causes of reticence and passivity of the L2 learners (for a discussion, see Cheng, 2000). The students frequently pointed to the anxiety in learning English, following instructions, and managing interaction both in a foreign language. L2 learning contexts are specifically associated with and affected by anxiety, which is argued to be different from the general trait anxiety (Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989; Ellis, 1994; MacIntyre, 1998; Horwitz, 2001; Dörnyei, 2005). This apprehension involved in L2 communication, evaluation by others, and L2 assessment (Horwitz et al., 1986) can be aggravated by lack of teachers' support (Tsui, 1996; Oxford, 1999; Young, 1999; Horwitz, 2001). This might be the reason rapport emerged as a significant credibility component.

The character associated with the personality traits and behaviors of the instructors, including courtesy, realismness,

humor, and enthusiasm, was also perceived to play a key role in instructor credibility and, in turn, in the achievements of the students. Although the two subcomponents of courtesy and realisticness are new to credibility theorizing, humor and enthusiasm have been acknowledged in other instructor credibility studies (see, for example, Wanzer et al., 2010; Wheelless et al., 2011; Keller et al., 2013; Myers et al., 2017; Bolkan et al., 2018). The students supposed that L2 learning classes need the respect of the instructors for the character of the students, which is usually at risk and a realistic demand noting that students learn variously at different paces. The lack of these two instructor attributes, however, would drive a wedge between students and instructors, and negatively impact the perceptions of the students of instructor credibility and their motivation to learn. Instructors' humor was also perceived as important because it provides entertainment, reduces tension, and promotes motivation as also indicated in the literature (e.g., Cabello and Terrell, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001; Provine, 2002; Aboudan, 2009; Myers et al., 2017). The enthusiasm of the instructors was thought to reinforce the intent of the students to pursue educational studies. Benefits of the enthusiasm of the instructors have been linked to the motivation of the students and effective teaching in general education (Patrick et al., 2000; Witcher et al., 2001; Long and Hoy, 2006; Wheelless et al., 2011) and higher education (e.g., Jackson et al., 1999) as the focus of this study.

Instructor performance, incorporating activity-based instructions and classroom interaction, was also deemed as significant for producing greater perceptions of credibility. The frequency of comments on instructor performance led us to recognize that the classroom practice and performance of the L2 instructors, such as activity organization, task presentation, and preparation, affect the engagements of the students. Thus, noting the absence of "performance" in the credibility conceptualization, the results of this study induce that classroom performance of instructors also provokes the perceptions of the EFL students of the credibility of their instructors. From their points of view, possessing knowledge and skills is necessary but not enough. There should be actual use and reflection of what they know about their teaching to be more credible. As Hurt et al. (1978) put it, "there is, indeed, a difference between knowing and teaching, and that difference is communication in the classroom" (p. 3), which is essential for building credibility. This new component, emphasizing how an instructor performs in the classroom, is supported by the more recent literature on teacher quality such that measures have favored more output (i.e., performance) qualities than input qualities like certifications of teaching courses intended to equip teachers with knowledge bases (for a discussion, see Campbell et al., 2000; Caughlan and Jiang, 2014).

The study also examined the association of instructor credibility with a number of variables of interest (i.e., instructors' gender, nativeness, and subject matter). The results revealed that, although most students consistently viewed native English-speaking instructors as generally more competent in subject matter and language, unexpectedly, only two students were willing to take "Research Methodology" and "Essay Writing"

courses with these professors. The participants contented that native instructors enjoyed supremacy in the English language and subject matter knowledge because of their wide and first-hand linguistic experience and expertise. Their vast and flexible knowledge base in English also enables them to discuss the details of the content knowledge and to set real examples. These instructors, as also supported by the literature, are viewed to be providing a standard language model (Jieyin and Gajaseeni, 2018; Okuda, 2019). The students who preferred these native instructors wished to improve the quality of their writing in the international proficiency tests, such as IELTS and TOFEL and, as demonstrated in the literature (Jieyin and Gajaseeni, 2018), native English-speaking instructors were viewed to have the capability to provide authentic exposure that is essential for linguistic accuracy and fluency (Doerr, 2009; Tajeddin and Akeh, 2016) for the students preparing for international exams. Native instructors are also thought to be able to create a simulating learning environment that involves new hands-on practice and extracurricular activities, bringing variety and creativity to classroom learning (Gurkan and Yuksel, 2012). The advantages for native English-speaking instructors, however, were not viewed as highly in convincing the majority of the respondents to take the prospective courses with them.

Non-native Persian-speaking instructors were viewed by most of the respondents as more credible because of their rapport building and familiarity with the needs and challenges of the students. These instructors, according to the participants, understand the cultural and educational backgrounds of the students and their learning experiences. Having had similar experiences, non-native instructors are likely and willing to show an understanding of the shortcomings of the students in both Research Methodology and Essay Writing and their frustrations in learning a foreign language as also supported by Ma (2012). In addition, the participants referred to the ability of the non-native instructors to code-switch when they think the course content of instruction is hard to follow or they cannot make themselves understood. The L2-only position is associated with earlier language teaching methodologies like "The Direct Method" (Cook, 2001), mainly because of the advantages of exposing the L2 learners to only L2 input (MacDonald, 1993; Mattioli, 2004). More recently, however, cognitive and interactional advantages have been acknowledged for the feasible use of L1 (Brooks and Donato, 1994; Swain and Lapkin, 2000; Cook, 2001; Turnbull, 2001; Liu et al., 2004; Latsanyphone and Bouangeune, 2009). When the L2 was felt to be a barrier to knowledge and skills development, particularly while focusing on the nuances in university courses, the students in this study also preferred the prospective instructors to be able to resort L1 for the sake of content and details.

It is worth noting that, in a majority of teacher credibility studies, domestic and international professors were compared. Consistent with these studies (e.g., Rojas Gomez and Pearson, 1990), the findings from this study indicated that domestic professors (in this study, non-native instructors) were generally viewed as credible communicators of feelings and attitudes,

more caring, empathetic and supportive of the students as compared with native English-speaking instructors. Studies (e.g., Bruce, 1986; Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2014; Zhang, 2014) highlighted the common challenges that international instructors and domestic students might both face in the classroom due to cultural assumptions and language barriers. They might upset effective teaching and learning, demotivate students, lower instructor-learner interaction, and ultimately decrease the students' credibility perceptions of international instructors.

The results also indicated that, while only a few participants selected female instructors because of their fairness in interaction and grading practices, most of them preferred and viewed male professors as more competent and communicative due to their confidence, effective knowledge presentation, flexibility, and speech clarity. The study supports the findings by Hargett (1999), reporting the higher male instructor credibility, and conflicts with the study of Rojas Gomez and Pearson (1990), in which female instructors were found to be more competent, communicative, and credible than male counterparts. A common theme in the discussion of female and male instructors is the continuing tension in what distinguishes them and how they might be perceived by their students, given the historical, social, and cultural milieus (Clemmensen, 2002). How college students respond to or perceive their instructors differs and depends on how they are perceived by the respective instructors and how they are treated (Hoffmann and Oreopoulos, 2009). In this study, the preference of the students might be affected by their experience in a field, which is commonly dominated by male instructors in Iran.

An important issue in this study concerned how instructor credibility impacted the motivation, engagement, and success of the students. Perceived instructor credibility, according to the participants of the study, would drive them to put in more efforts in their academic study, engage in activities and classroom instruction, and face the learning challenges. The findings, hence, supported the argument that different dimensions of credibility engender different learning outcomes; for example, the instructor caring increases the effort and intention of the students to keep learning and furthering their education (Won et al., 2017), as well as their willingness to articulate their challenges and weaknesses (Muller, 2001). Instructor competence can improve the classroom engagement, knowledge retention, and learning of the students by enabling them to seek advice, raise questions, and complete assignments and in-class tasks (Frymier and Houser, 2000). Instructor enthusiasm was also found to affect the students' motivation and interest in learning English. Instructor credibility, overall, produces positive outcomes that influence both the current decisions and intentions, and the future plans of the students.

In line with the findings of Myers et al. (2017), this study demonstrated that the participants valued a host of relational and rhetorical communicative behaviors (e.g., clarity and humor). Course-related behaviors of the instructors enhance the perceptions of the students of instructor credibility and promote entertainment and their learning, recall, and retention capabilities. The study, in other words, suggests that, in addition to demonstrating subject knowledge mastery and linguistic

proficiency (rhetorical ethos), L2 instructors, if to attain credibility, should constantly ensure the interest and engagement of the students with the course content of instruction, thus relying on the relational ethos (for a discussion, see Mottet et al., 2006; Beebe and Mottet, 2009) or interpersonal dimension of the teacher-student interaction. Understanding the teachers of the needs and preferences of the students, and communication of caring and character are also components of this interpersonal and instructional interaction that assists the construction of credibility and learning.

Teaching, in effect, is described as a dual process involving advancing the content and relation. Effective teaching is thus equated with fostering interpersonal relationships between instructors and students through communicating character and caring, and fostering classroom learning through communicating knowledge competently (Frymier and Houser, 2000; Marzano and Marzano, 2003). It can be thus argued that instructor credibility and effectiveness are the results of instructor communication behaviors that lead to the learning outcomes of the students, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral achievements (McCroskey et al., 2004; Finn et al., 2009; Schrodt et al., 2009). These outcomes are most likely to be achieved through providing an environment in which the questions of the students are answered, their thoughts are shared, their voices are heard, and their feedback is welcomed (Schrodt et al., 2009). This, in turn, leads to a positive caring, interpersonal relationship and interaction between students and instructors (Brann et al., 2005).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that instructor credibility, in the context of EFL higher education, was viewed by the students to be a quadripartite construct, involving competence, rapport, caring, and performance. Discussing the findings, the study, in particular, highlighted the conceptualization of two components of "rapport" and "performance" and argued that, in the context of L2 learning, interpersonal relationship and in-class practice of the instructors have considerable significance, as they can reduce the anxiety and passivity associated with or resulting from L2 learning, and provoke classroom engagement of the students. The study also looked into the association of instructor credibility with gender, subject matter, and nativeness as instructional variables of interest. Interestingly, albeit being native meant being more competent in subject matters and proficient in L2, non-nativeness elicited more positive perceptions of credibility because of further perceived rapport building and caring, the qualities which male instructors were viewed to possess more than female counterparts. Another important conclusion, which can be drawn from this study, is that positive instructional outcome, such as motivation, engagement, persistence, and, ultimately, success imp on the perceptions of the students of the credibility of their instructors. Given the import of communication quality and instructor credibility, an overarching implication of the study findings for the context of EFL higher education is to encourage EFL instructors to enhance their

ethos as an “instructional communication super-variable” (Teven and Katt, 2016, p. 184) by developing and sustaining rhetorical and relational skills.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This qualitative study intended to investigate the voices and views of the university students to see what knowledge, behaviors, and skills characterize, enhance, or undermine instructor credibility in the classroom rather than those of researcher-imposed conceptualizations or operationalization. As such, we designed a scenario to conceptualize the findings in an EFL context and in relation to three variables of interest in higher EFL education. Furthermore, we sampled students from only one university in Iran. The perceptions of these students of the credibility of the EFL instructors might be affected by the cultural and instructional norms, and, as it is acknowledged in the literature, they may change during the education of the students (Hendrix, 1997; Schrodt et al., 2009). The nature of this qualitative study and the deliberate attempts made to contextualize it limits the generalization of the results, although we maintain that the understanding generated can be extrapolated to similar contexts. Future research can continue this line of

investigation to employ other research methods or involve other important variables in other primary or higher education EFL contexts to heighten awareness and understanding about this critical concept.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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APPENDIX A: SCENARIO

Please read the following before I ask you a few questions about your preferences:

Suppose that the University is going to invite some visiting professors to teach some of your courses. You can choose from among native English-speaking (**from the same English-speaking country**) and non-native Persian-speaking teachers who are **female or male PhD holders** (assistant professors of applied linguistics). Their age range is from 40 to 45.

1. A female professor (First language: Persian)
2. A female professor (First language: English)
3. A male professor (First language: Persian)
4. A male professor (First language: English)

Interview questions – teacher credibility:

In general, what does instructor/professor credibility mean to you? What instructor/professor do you think is credible? Why? For your course of writing, which professor do you think is most credible? Female/male, native/non-native professors. Why? Does it make any difference if the course is “research”?

With which professor and in which course do you think you will get the highest score? Why?



Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment Through Effective Feedback: Effects on Students' School Identification and Behavioral Engagement

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Previous research revealed the connection between students' behavioral and emotional engagement and a supportive classroom environment. One of the primary tools teachers have to create a supportive classroom environment is effective feedback. In this study, we assessed the supportive classroom environment using the perception shared by all students from the same classroom of teachers' use of effective feedback. We aimed to explore the effect of such an environment on students' behavioral engagement and school identification. Using a probabilistic sample of 1,188 students from 75 classrooms across 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th grades, we employed multilevel regression modeling with random intercept and fixed slopes. We explored the effects of both individual perceptions of teachers' use of effective feedback and the supportive classroom environment on student engagement. The analyses identified that students who perceived that their teachers use more effective feedback had a higher level of behavioral engagement and school identification. Once we controlled the effects of these individual perceptions of teachers' effective feedback, we still observed the effect of a supportive classroom environment on student engagement. So, in classrooms where teachers used more effective feedback creating a supportive classroom environment, students had higher school identification and behavioral engagement levels, regardless of their individual perceptions of teachers' feedback. The association between variables remained significant even after controlling students' characteristics (gender, nationality, mother's level of education, history of grade retention) and classroom characteristics (grade level, type of school, number of students at grade level). Our findings support the potential of teachers' feedback practices to foster students' school identification and behavioral engagement to build a more inclusive school environment and value students' diversity.

Keywords: teachers' feedback practices, school identification, behavioral engagement, supportive classrooms, multilevel analysis, middle school, secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Students' behavioral engagement and school identification are considered a critical catalyst for their learning and performance (Korpershoek et al., 2019). Students who value school and feel that they belong there are more likely to behaviorally engage in school activities, experience more in-depth learning, and improve their academic achievement (Voelkl, 2012). These feelings can contribute to reducing school dropout and social exclusion. According to Voelkl (2012), the development of a sense of identification is mediated by contextual factors—namely, perception of teacher support. These factors can be modified to improve school outcomes. According to Voelkl (2012), a caring, supportive teacher can impact students' identification with school. If students feel that they are cared for and are allowed to participate actively in classroom activities, they believe that the school climate is positive, supportive and it promotes the sense of belonging and value of the school (Adomnik, 2012). Therefore, understanding what teachers can do to support and foster students' engagement is vital. In the present study, we investigated one factor identified as having critical effects on students' achievement and students' engagement: teachers' feedback (Wisniewski et al., 2020). When performing learning tasks and activities, feedback is a relevant aspect present in the teacher-student relationship that can create a positive and supportive classroom environment (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Black et al., 2004; Voelkl, 2012). Feedback may have consequences on students' school experience, subsequently improving or impairing their school identification and behavioral engagement and, in turn, affecting their academic achievement (Reeve, 2012; Reschly and Christenson, 2012; Voelkl, 2012; Burns et al., 2019; Wang and Zhang, 2020). Previous research has demonstrated that students' perception of teachers' use of feedback plays a significant role in student engagement (Koka and Hein, 2005; Koka and Hein, 2006; Price et al., 2011; Leh et al., 2014; Conboy et al., 2015; Burns et al., 2019; Kyaruzi et al., 2019; Wang and Zhang, 2020). Most of this research had investigated perceived teacher feedback at the individual level (e.g., Koka and Hein, 2005; Koka and Hein, 2006; Leh et al., 2014; Conboy et al., 2015; Vattøy and Smith, 2019; Wang and Zhang, 2020). This means that the effectiveness of teacher feedback can promote learning, increase achievement and foster student motivation and engagement.

Thus, as mentioned before, students' perception of teacher "feedback has individual effects on students" engagement and on their school identification (Pianta et al., 2012; Voelkl, 2012). However, the teaching and learning process is not only a simple relationship between the teacher and students, but also among students themselves. In this interrelation, teachers' behaviors are fundamental in promoting positive interactions in the classroom (Conroy et al., 2009). As teachers and students share several learning environments and experiences, they build perceptions about the teaching-learning process that allows them to make interpretations about the interactive dynamics in the classroom in a very consistent way. In these interactions, teachers can help model constructive feedback and can help develop the group's competence to give effective

feedback and create a positive classroom climate, increasing students' engagement.

Consequently, it is relevant to understand how the context created by teachers' feedback are likely to impact on students' behavioral engagement and on their school identification. Based on previous studies (e.g., Burns et al., 2019; Kyaruzi et al., 2019), we suggest that the use of effective feedback (assessed by the shared perceptions among students of the same classroom about their teachers' feedback) create a supportive classroom environment that will positively influence of students' school identification.

The majority of research regarding students' perceived feedback and their engagement has focused on the student-level characteristics with less consideration for the contexts in which they are taught (Burns et al., 2019). Therefore, in the present study, we used a multilevel design to investigate how these factors function at both the student and classroom level. We studied the link between perceived teachers' use of effective feedback and students' levels of school identification and behavioral engagement at the individual and classroom levels. The central question is whether the supportive classroom environment created by the teachers' use of effective feedback affects students' behavior after controlling their individual perceptions and the differences at the individual level and at classroom-level.

Teachers' Feedback

One of the primary tools teachers have to create this supportive class environment is feedback (Price et al., 2011; Reeve, 2012; Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Feedback is conceptualized as information students receive about their performance or understanding (Hattie and Timperley, 2007) that reduces the discrepancy between what the student knows and what is aimed to be known. Students must also make sense of that information and use it to enhance their learning (Carless and Bound, 2018).

Much has been studied about the effectiveness of feedback, but there is much more to learn about how to optimize its power in the classroom. As Janosz (2012) indicated, the feedback information that students receive and interpret from their schooling experience plays a crucial role in assisting students in improving their motivation and engagement and is a decisive factor implicated in academic achievement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Nevertheless, we also know that the variability of feedback effectiveness is vast and that there are certain types of feedback that are more effective than others (Hattie and Yates, 2014). Thus, different types of feedback allow the student to close the gap between current knowledge and a more desirable level of achievement with different levels of effectiveness. Hattie and Timperley (2007) specified some forms it should take; The authors use three feedback questions such as where am I going (feeding up), how am I going (feeding back) and where to next (feeding forward) to clarify the goals and criteria for students. For feedback to be effective, these questions must be answered by the student and feedback needs to work at different levels of cognitive complexity: Task and product level, i.e., corrective feedback; Process level, i.e., providing task processing strategies and cues for information search so students can develop their own learning strategies; Self-regulation level, i.e., providing students with information that allows them to improve their competence to

monitor their own learning and progress. According to the authors (Wisniewski et al., 2020), feedback is more effective the more information it contains. So high-information feedback contains information on task, process and (sometimes) self-regulation.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) considered that the feedback needs to focus on the appropriate question and level of cognitive complexity. If not, it risks being ignored and misunderstood and never used by the student. Generally, it has been shown that feedback at the process and self-regulation levels seems to be more effective in enhancing deeper learning, improving task confidence and self-efficacy, and leading to more internal attributions about success or failure (Hattie and Yates, 2014). Furthermore, the meta-analyses of Wisniewski et al. (2020) also suggest that feedback is more effective the more information it contains, while simple forms of reinforcement and punishment have low effects.

The literature also suggests that feedback is related to a positive student-teacher relationship, which is an essential aspect of a positive classroom environment (e.g., Burnett, 2002; Gutierrez and Buckley, 2019). Burnett (2002) observed that students who perceived receiving feedback focused on their effort were more likely to report a positive teacher-student relationship. The author also reported that students who perceived receiving frequent ability feedback from their teachers were also more likely to perceive the classroom environment in a positive way. On the contrary, teacher praise was not related to students' perception of the classroom environment or their relationships with their teachers.

Therefore, teachers' feedback is crucial in improving this supportive class environment by establishing good relationships with students and offering both personal and academic support (Allen et al., 2018). Studies have also determined that a supportive class environment could improve students' school identification and behavioral engagement (Voelkl, 2012; Allen et al., 2018; Olivier et al., 2020). Students need to be supported and cared for by teachers to develop and maintain a sense of identification with the school that reinforces their behavioral engagement with the school's activities (Voelkl, 2012). So, Burnett (2002) recommends that teachers should be careful when providing feedback to students as their relationships with students can influence how students perceive the classroom environment.

In sum, feedback is more effective if it helps students understand what mistakes they made, why they made these mistakes, and what they can do to avoid them in future (Wisniewski et al., 2020). Therefore, the effective feedback sets clear standards and expectations that promote a supportive classroom environment, encouraging students' autonomy, school identification and engagement (Pianta et al., 2012; Voelkl, 2012).

Behavioral Engagement and School Identification

The role of student engagement has been considered to be relevant in the literature since authors identified that it improves achievement and persistence in secondary school (Finn and Zimmer, 2012; Korpershoek et al., 2019). Engagement is a complex multidimensional construct defined as

the energy and effort that students employ within their learning community, observable via any number of behavioral, cognitive or affective indicators across a continuum. It is shaped by a range of structural and internal influences, including the complex interplay of relationships, learning activities and the learning environment (Bond et al., 2020, p. 3).

Similarly, well supported by research, school identification has become an important educational goal (e.g., Christenson et al., 2008; Christenson et al., 2008; Reschly and Christenson, 2012; Voelkl, 2012). School identification can be defined as students' attitudes about their school, and it is an affective form of student engagement comprising two needs: Belongingness and Valuing. Belongingness refers to "feelings that one is a significant member of the school community, is accepted and respected in school, has a sense of inclusion in school, and includes school as part of one's self-definition." (Voelkl, 1996, p. 762). On the other hand, Valuing has been defined as students "feeling that school and school outcomes have personal importance and/or practical importance" (Voelkl, 2012, p. 198).

School identification, also referred to in the literature as affective engagement (Christenson et al., 2008; Reschly and Christenson, 2012), is strongly related to behavioral engagement (Voelkl, 2012; Korpershoek et al., 2019); the latter is associated with students' active participation and involvement in school and classroom activities, their effort, attendance, active classroom participation, paying attention and homework completion (Appleton et al., 2006; Fredricks et al., 2011). Students who identify with school tend to engage in classroom activities more than others. Research shows that students' behavioral engagement mediates the relation between school identification and students' academic trajectories (Reschly and Christenson, 2006; Voelkl, 2012). Students who develop a sense of identification with the school are more involved in classroom work, actively participating in their learning and autonomously developing new activities, improving their academic achievement (Korpershoek et al., 2019). As indicated by Voelkl (2012), "classroom participation is the most proximal outcome of identification" (p. 208). Contrarily, students who do not have a sense of belonging or value their school are more likely to disengage or withdraw, and soon drop out (Voelkl, 2012; Lovelace et al., 2014; Lovelace et al., 2017).

Teachers' Feedback, School Identification and Engagement

Although recent meta-analyses had found that feedback that contains information on task, process and self-regulation levels is more effective for cognitive outcomes, like students' achievement (Wisniewski et al., 2020), research also supports that it enhances academic engagement and motivational outcomes (Gettinger and Ball, 2007; Valente et al., 2015; Wisniewski et al., 2020). In addition, according to Wang and Zhang (2020), learning engagement had a mediating effect on the relationship between teachers' feedback and students' academic

performance. The association between teachers' feedback and students' engagement seems to exist regardless of the students liking or disliking the learning subject (Valente et al., 2015), although the utility of the feedback depends on how students perceive it (Handley et al., 2011; Kyaruzi et al., 2019; Wang and Zhang, 2020). Feedback that "draws attention away from the task and toward self-esteem can have a negative effect on attitudes and performance" (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 13). Hattie (2009) indicates that feedback directed to the self or at the self-level, even if it is positive, like praise, often directs attention away from the task, diluting the power of feedback. Negative and uninformative feedback has the most evident negative influences, because it reduces the experience of autonomy and self-efficacy and because students need to feel that they belong in learning and that there is a trusting relationship between them, their teachers and their peers (Hattie, 2009; Wisniewski et al., 2020). For example, Strambler and Weinstein (2010) observed that students who perceive teachers' feedback as negative or unsupportive respond by devaluing the importance of school, which was negatively related to students' academic achievement.

The types of interactions teachers have with their students can promote or inhibit student engagement in the classroom. If teachers offer challenging and fun learning activities, encourage students' participation and provide feedback about how to reach their goals, they are promoting students' engagement (Pianta et al., 2012). Authors like Voelkl (2012) believe that school identification has its roots in earlier school grades and becomes stronger over time due to the interactions and school experiences. Consequently, if students feel accepted by their peers and supported by teachers, it is expected that they develop an identification with school. According to this author, the development of identification is mediated by contextual factors, namely perceptions of teacher support. Supportive interactions with teachers contribute to positive self-perceptions such as identification with the school, promoting student engagement with academic activities.

High-quality or effective feedback provides students with rich information about the quality of the student answer but principally about the ways to get the right answer and be sure that students use that information to promote learning. This process implies frequent exchanges of information between the student and the teacher. Teachers' feedback to students' responses are critical in their engagement in the learning activities (Pianta et al., 2012). Therefore, supportive class environments are essential to develop and maintain students engagement. The use of high-quality feedback by the teacher over time contributes to progressively increase the sense of belongingness and the value the students attribute to school. This development of school identification can facilitate and promote students' engagement (Voelkl, 2012).

In sum, previous research suggests that students' perceptions of teachers' feedback play an important role in creating a supportive classroom environment (Price et al., 2011; Reeve, 2012; Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Furthermore, supportive classroom environments have been found to significantly impact students' engagement (Voelkl, 2012; Allen et al., 2018). Therefore, we suggest that students' shared

perceptions of teachers' use of feedback will positively influence students' engagement and school identification.

Present Study—The Contextual Effect of Teachers' Feedback

Previous research had explored the link between students' individual perceptions of teachers' feedback, students' behavioral engagement and school identification at the individual level (e.g., Conboy et al., 2015; Carvalho et al., 2020). Results confirmed that students' perceptions about teachers' use of effective feedback were associated with increased behavioral engagement via increased school identification. In the present study we started by confirming that students' individual perception of teachers' use of effective feedback was positively related to their school identification and behavioral engagement.

The second purpose of the present study was to expand previous research by analyzing the effects of teachers' use of effective feedback as an indicator of a supportive classroom environment that influences students' school identification and behavioral engagement. We considered that a classroom where students shared the perception that their teachers use effective feedback frequently was a classroom with supportive environment. We hypothesized that in a supportive classroom environment students would have greater levels of school identification and behavioral engagement, even after controlling for the effect of their individual perceptions of teachers feedback (if confirmed in our first hypothesis) and after controlling other differences at the individual and at the classroom-level. This means that if two students perceived that their teacher used little effective feedback, the student that is in a classroom with a highly supportive environment will still present higher levels of behavioral engagement and school identification than the student that is in a classroom with lower supportive environment.

Previous studies have reported that when teachers' behavior or characteristics are assessed via students' reports, they should be studied as classroom or school level constructs from a multilevel perspective (e.g. Marsh et al., 2012). As a result, we implement multilevel analyses to examine the climate effect of a supportive classroom environment created by the use of effective feedback.

Climate studies evaluate whether school, classroom, or teacher characteristics contribute to predicting students' outcomes beyond what can be explained by students' individual characteristics (Marsh et al., 2012). A climate analysis model includes the same variable at both the individual and group levels. Such analyses represent an effort to explain dependent variables (in this case, students' school identification and behavioral engagement) using a combination of individual and group level independent variables (in this case, students' perceptions about teachers' use of effective feedback) (Blalock, 1984). These models allow researchers to investigate the climate effects that teachers' feedback is presumed to have on the individual students over and above the effect of any individual-level variable that may be operating (Blalock, 1984).

TABLE 1 | Sample characteristics.

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Students level (<i>n</i> = 1,188)					
Gender	Female	626	52.7	—	—
Nationality	Portuguese	1,128	95.8	—	—
Grade retention	Retained	205	17.6	—	—
Mother's higher level of education	1st cycle	119	10.0	—	—
	2nd cycle	189	15.9	—	—
	3rd cycle	266	22.4	—	—
	Secondary	306	25.8	—	—
	Higher	237	19.9	—	—
Father's higher level of education	Don't know	71	6.0	—	—
	1st cycle	141	11.9	—	—
	2nd cycle	180	15.2	—	—
	3rd cycle	264	22.2	—	—
	Secondary	247	20.8	—	—
Grade level	Higher	170	14.3	—	—
	Don't know	186	15.7	—	—
	6th	314	26.4	—	—
	7th	346	29.1	—	—
	9th	304	25.6	—	—
Age	10th	224	18.9	—	—
	—	—	—	13.41	1.70
	Feedback ^a	—	—	-0.04	0.67
	School identification ^a	—	—	-0.01	0.66
Engagement ^a	—	—	-0.03	0.80	
Classroom level (<i>n</i> = 75)					
Number of students in grade level	—	—	—	116.94	82.11
Grade level	6th	20	26.7	—	—
	7th	23	30.6	—	—
	9th	20	26.7	—	—
	10th	12	16.0	—	—
Type of school	Classroom in priority intervention territories (TEIP) school	12	16.0	—	—

^aFactor scores.

METHODS

Participant and Procedures

Data collected for this study were part of a broader research project (Carvalho and Conboy, 2015), the main aim of which was to understand the dynamics of teacher feedback in developing students' identity and the consequences of this dynamic on students' school trajectories. This project's target population consisted of middle school and early secondary education students from Portuguese public schools. In Portugal, basic education level is divided into three cycles: first (1st to 4th grades), second (5th to 6th grades), and third cycle (7th to 9th grades). The project focuses on students attending the transitional years between study cycles (6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th grades). In these grade levels, students have several teachers, each one teaching a different subject (Eurydice, 2019).

The sample was selected through a probabilistic, multi-stage sampling procedure in continental Portugal, based on the number of students enrolled in the chosen grades by each Territorial Unit for Purposes Statistics (NUTS II—with five regions). Schools were randomly selected for each grade level. Only one or two classrooms of the same grade were collected in each school.

The final sample consisted of 1,188 students spread over 75 classrooms in 48 schools in continental Portugal. The average number of students by classroom was 16. The sample presented

similar patterns of population distribution for grade level and NUTS II region, which indicated that the sample was representative of the Portuguese population. Overall sample characteristics are illustrated in **Table 1**.

Measures

The students responded to a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that included a first section intended to measure students' school identification, a second section focused on behavioral engagement and a third section that assessed student perception of teacher feedback. The instrument also included a demographic section: gender (0 = girls; 1 = boys), age, nationality (0 = Portuguese; 1 = other nationalities), year of schooling (6th, 7th, 9th or 10th grade), and mother/stepmother's and father/stepfather's level of education (1 = 1st cycle of basic education, 2 = 2nd cycle, 3 = 3rd cycle, 4 = secondary education, 5 = higher education).

Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Use of Effective Feedback

To measure students' perceptions of their teachers' feedback practices, we used eight items from the Teachers' Feedback Scale, developed by Carvalho et al. (2015). Students reported their perceptions about teachers' use of effective feedback in a subject they like. The instruction stated, "Think of a subject that

you like”. The reason for including this instruction was to avoid negative experiences associated with a discipline that could interfere with their perceptions of the feedback. The questionnaire included items questioning the feedback at the process level (e.g., “Teachers clearly describe what is not correct and make suggestions for improvement”) or self-regulation level (e.g., “The teachers ask questions that help us reflect on the quality of our work”). Items were answered on a four-point scale (0 = never and 3 = always).

To confirm that the design on the survey did not cause raters to bias their response, we assessed the common method variance (CMV) through the Harman Single Factor technique, as described by Eichhorn (2014). The common latent factor explained less than 50% of the variance (47.22%), indicating that common method bias was not present (Eichhorn, 2014). We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to verify the measure’s structural validity in our sample, using the Weighted Least Square Mean and Variance (WLSMV) estimator. Good fit index values were adequate (χ^2 (18) = 61.30, $p < 0.001$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.992; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.987; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.045, 90% IC = [0.033, 0.058], $p = 0.716$). The measure presented adequate levels of reliability (Composite Reliability, CR = 89) (complete results are presented in the **Supplementary Material**).

Students’ perceptions of teachers’ effective feedback were aggregated at the classroom level to create a climate variable that reflects the supportive classroom environment. Climate variables are classroom aggregations of ratings by students in which each student is asked to rate a particular classroom characteristic (in this case, the frequency of effective feedback used by the teacher of the discipline they like) that is common to all students (Marsh et al., 2012). Since students like different disciplines, the aggregation of the ratings provides an indicator of the frequency of effective feedback received by students during the time they are in the school. Students’ rates of teachers’ use of effective feedback were aggregated at the classroom level using a manifest measurement–latent aggregation approach (Marsh et al., 2009). The manifest–latent approach uses multilevel models to aggregated student-level responses (the manifest observed variable) to form an unobserved latent variable as an indicator of the climate construct. This procedure permitted correct sampling errors in the aggregation of individual-level constructs to form classroom level climate variables (Marsh et al., 2009). Hence, our supportive classroom environment construct was a latent variable at the classroom level based on shared perceptions among different students with the same teachers. Differences among students within the same classroom (the variable at the student level) do not reflect the classroom environment, representing each student’s unique perceptions that are not explained by the shared perception of different students (Marsh et al., 2012). If there was no significant agreement among students from the same classroom about teachers’ use of feedback, then it could be argued that the classroom level variable did not reflect the classroom environment (Marsh et al., 2012). Consequently, we test the agreement between students in the same classroom using intraclass correlation (ICC2, Lüdtke et al., 2009) to indicate the

reliability of our classroom environment latent variable. The measure presented an ICC2 of 0.77, which falls within the acceptable threshold of 0.70 and 0.85 recommended by Lüdtke et al. (2009).

Students’ Behavioral Engagement

A nine-item scale authored by Carvalho et al. (2016) was used to assess the behavioral engagement of the students in the school. The scale assesses two dimensions: academic work, with six items (e.g., “I study the material given in class”) and class participation, with three items (e.g., “I raise my hand to answer a question”). Students answered each on a four-point Likert scale (0 = never and 3 = always). Students were asked to think of a subject they liked. We only used the global measure composed by these dimensions.

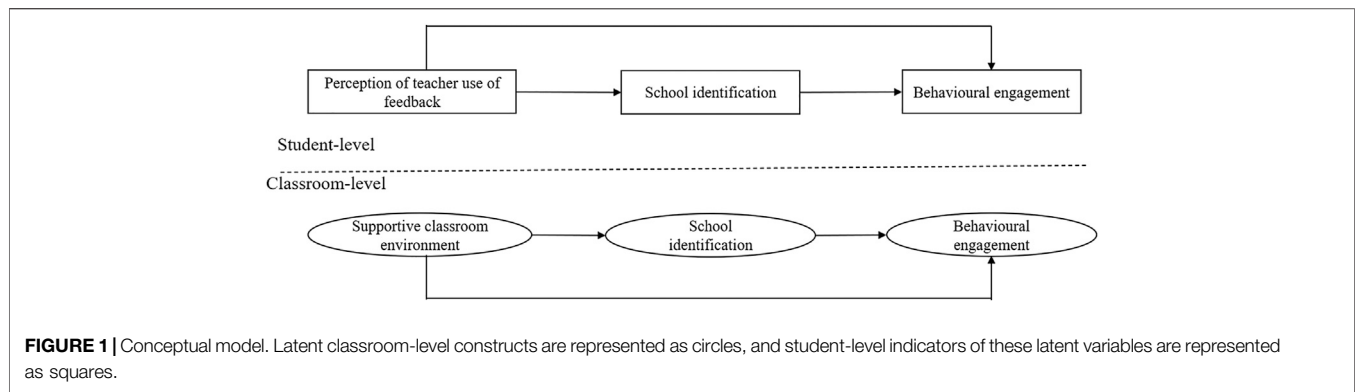
We also assessed the CMV of this scale through the Harman Single Factor technique. There was no evidence that common method bias was present (the common latent factor explained only 39.21% of the variance). To confirm the validity of the two-dimensional hierarchical structure of the measure in our sample, we conducted a CFA using the WLSMV estimator. The results indicated that there was also evidence of structure validity (χ^2 (27) = 60.38, $p = 0.002$; CFI = 0.992; TLI = 0.990; RMSEA = 0.032, 90% IC = [0.021, 0.043], $p = 0.996$). Composite reliability was also adequate for the global measure (CR = 0.88) (complete results are presented in the **Supplementary Material**).

Students’ behavioral engagement outcome variable was aggregated at the classroom level. Once again, we used the manifest–latent approach and calculated the ICC2 as an indicator of reliability (Lüdtke et al., 2009; Marsh et al., 2012). The value of ICC2 was 0.67, just below the 0.70 value recommended by Lüdtke et al. (2009).

Students’ School Identification

The School Identification Scale, authored by Carvalho et al. (2015), was used to measure students’ school identification. The scale assesses three dimensions of school identification. Three items assess students’ perceptions about their school’s practical value (e.g., “My future depends on what I do in school”). Three items question their feelings of belonging and well-being in school (e.g., “I am happy in this school”). Finally, four items assess students’ perceptions of their capacity and will (e.g., “My skills make me confident about my future”). Items were answered on a four-point Likert scale (0 = completely disagree to 3 = completely agree). In the present study, we only used the global measure composed by these dimensions to avoid multicollinearity problems.

The Harman Single Factor test indicates there was no evidence that common method bias was present in this scale either (the common latent factor explained only 32.25% of the variance). We conducted a CFA to confirm the validity of the three-dimensional hierarchical structure of the measure in our sample using the WLSMV estimator. Good fit index values were adequate (χ^2 (31) = 177.35, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.969; TLI = 0.955; RMSEA = 0.063, 90% IC = [0.054, 0.072], $p = 0.008$). The global measure presented good levels of reliability (CR = 0.84) (complete results are presented in the **Supplementary Material**).



Students' school identification outcome variable was also aggregated at the classroom level, again using the manifest-latent approach. We tested the ICC2 (Lüdtke et al., 2009) to assess the classroom-average identification level latent variable's reliability. The value of ICC2 was 0.77, indicating adequate reliability levels (Lüdtke et al., 2009).

Data Analyses

All models were estimated using Mplus 8.4. Missing data (1.6% of all data) was handled by allowing missingness to be a function of the observed covariates but not the observed outcomes, the default Mplus procedure (Muthén and Muthén, 2017). Factor scores of the measures were saved and used as observed manifest variables to make the models more parsimonious, reducing the number of variables involved (Wang and Wang, 2020).

We employ multilevel regression modeling with random intercept and fixed slopes using the robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimator. Respondents (level 1) were "nested" within the classroom (level 2) to account for classroom-level baselines in students' perceptions. We ran an intercept-only model to examine ICC2 that indicated the proportion of the total variance explained by differences between schools. Next, we estimated two models to evaluate the supportive classroom environment created by teachers' use of effective feedback. For all the models tested, the predictor variables, except the dichotomous variables, were grand-mean-centred.

In Model 1, we assess a model already tested in previous publications (Conboy et al., 2015; Carvalho et al., 2020) based on Voelkl (2012) theory. At the individual level, students' perceptions of teachers' feedback contribute to students' school identification and behavioral engagement. At the classroom level model, the supportive classroom environment contributed to students' school identification and behavioral levels. We also propose that school identification (both at the individual and classroom levels) contribute to students' behavioral engagement (see Figure 1).

In Model 2, we incorporated the control variables. It was important to consider and neutralize individual and group variables that could explain our outcome variables (students' engagement and school identification) (Creswell, 2012). This will allow us to assess more accurately the relationship between teachers' feedback and our outcomes because of a reduction in

the number of errors (Creswell, 2012). At the individual level, we control gender, mother's and father's education level, history of grade retention and nationality. These variables had previously been shown to be related to students' engagement and school identification (Allen et al., 2018; Bear et al., 2019; Cunha et al., 2019; Olivier et al., 2020). At the classroom level, we control grade level and the number of students at the grade level in the school. Previous studies indicated that the odds of a student having low levels of engagement and school identification increased in classrooms in schools with a large number of students (Finn and Voelkl, 1993; Willms, 2003; Weiss et al., 2010). Moreover, students in the lower grades tend to perceive that their teachers use more effective feedback (Carvalho et al., 2020) and present higher engagement levels (Eccles et al., 1993; Mahatmya et al., 2012). We also control for classrooms in schools that were part of the Portuguese TEIP Program for priority intervention educational areas, whose aim was to promote educational inclusion in schools located in socially and economically disadvantaged areas (European Commission, 2013).

Model fit was assessed using the indices and cut-off points suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999): non-significant values of chi-square (χ^2) or less than three times the degrees of freedom; values higher than 0.95 of CFI and TLI; and values lower than 0.08 of RMSEA and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

The unconditional "null" model showed that the ICC2 was between 0.111 and 0.179; in other words, between approximately 11.1 and 17.9% of the total variance in the target variables was associated with classroom characteristics (see Table 2). Still, the largest proportion of the variance was associated with individual characteristics. Considering that the average cluster size was 16 students, the design effects were between 2.66 and 3.68. Muthén and Satorra (1995) indicated that design effects higher than 2.00 suggest systematic variation between groups that deviate from simple random sampling. Therefore, we confirm that multilevel modeling was necessary (Heck and Thomas, 2015). In Table 2, we also present the correlation between variables at the student and classroom levels.

TABLE 2 | Classroom Level Intraclass Correlations (ICC) and intercorrelations at students and classroom level.

Variable	ICC	Design effect	Student level		Classroom level	
			1	2	1	2
1. Teachers' feedback	0.179	3.68	—	—	—	—
2. School identification	0.173	3.59	0.354***	—	0.631***	—
3. Behavioral engagement	0.111	2.66	0.514***	0.466***	0.806***	0.502***

Notes: ***p < 0.001.

TABLE 3 | Coefficients of the multilevel models tested.

Effect	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	b*	SE	b	b*	SE
Intercept						
Feedback	—	—	—	0.128	0.275	0.061
School identification	-0.018	-0.066	-0.030	-0.010	-0.038	0.037
Engagement	-0.021	-0.078	0.027	0.020	0.082	0.037
Students level model						
Feedback → school identification	0.206***	0.354***	0.016	0.200***	0.342***	0.018
Feedback → engagement	0.293***	0.399***	0.020	0.293***	0.398***	0.020
School identification → engagement	0.409***	0.324***	0.036	0.399***	0.316***	0.037
Gender → grade retention	—	—	—	0.070*	0.183*	0.033
Gender → feedback	—	—	—	-0.122 ⁺	-0.119 ⁺	-0.064
Gender → school identification	—	—	—	0.073*	0.121*	0.036
Gender → engagement	—	—	—	-0.095**	-0.126**	0.037
Mother's EL → grade retention	—	—	—	-0.039**	-0.130**	0.011
Mother's EL → school identification	—	—	—	0.047**	0.100**	0.016
Mother's EL → engagement	—	—	—	0.051**	0.086**	0.016
Father's EL → grade retention	—	—	—	-0.026*	-0.086*	0.011
Father's EL → school identification	—	—	—	0.053**	0.114**	0.017
Grade retention → feedback	—	—	—	-0.218**	-0.081**	0.082
Grade retention → school identification	—	—	—	-0.230***	-0.146***	0.048
Classroom level model						
Feedback → school identification	0.359***	0.631***	0.056	0.250**	0.437**	0.084
Feedback → engagement	0.452***	0.815***	0.085	0.455***	0.855***	0.053
Grade-level → feedback	—	—	—	-0.220***	-0.701***	0.034
Grade-level → school identification	—	—	—	-0.060*	-0.334*	0.027
Number of students → school identification	—	—	—	0.001*	0.162*	<0.001
Number of students → engagement	—	—	—	0.001*	0.160*	<0.001

Notes: ⁺ p < 0.060; *p < 0.050; **p < 0.010; ***p < 0.001.

Teachers' Feedback Effects on School Identification and Behavioral Engagement

The multilevel analysis results indicate that students' individual perceptions about teachers' use of effective feedback were positively related to both students' school identification and behavioral engagement (see Model 1 in Table 3). Students who perceived that their teachers used more effective feedback presented a higher level of school identification and behavioral engagement. More importantly, the results indicated that, after controlling the individual effect, the supportive classroom environment had a significant effect on school identification and behavioral engagement levels. These results indicated that students in classrooms where teachers used more effective feedback, thus creating a supportive classroom environment, had higher levels of school identification and behavioral engagement, regardless of their individual perceptions of teachers' use of effective feedback.

Students' school identification also predicted students' behavioral engagement, but only at the individual level. We

observed that students in classrooms with more students with higher school identification levels did not present higher engagement levels as expected. Indeed, individual levels of school identification were more relevant in explaining students' behavioral engagement.

In model 2, we added the control variables at the individual level (gender, nationality, mother's education level and history of grade retention) and classroom level (grade-level, number of students in the grade-level, TEIP school). To make the model parsimonious, we removed all non-significant paths that did not affect the fit or the predictive power of the model. The final model results are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2.

At the individual level, besides students' perceptions of teachers' feedback, mother's education level also contributed to students' school identification and behavioral engagement. The fathers' educational level only contributed to students' school identification but not to their behavioral engagement. Gender explained students' behavioral engagement and school

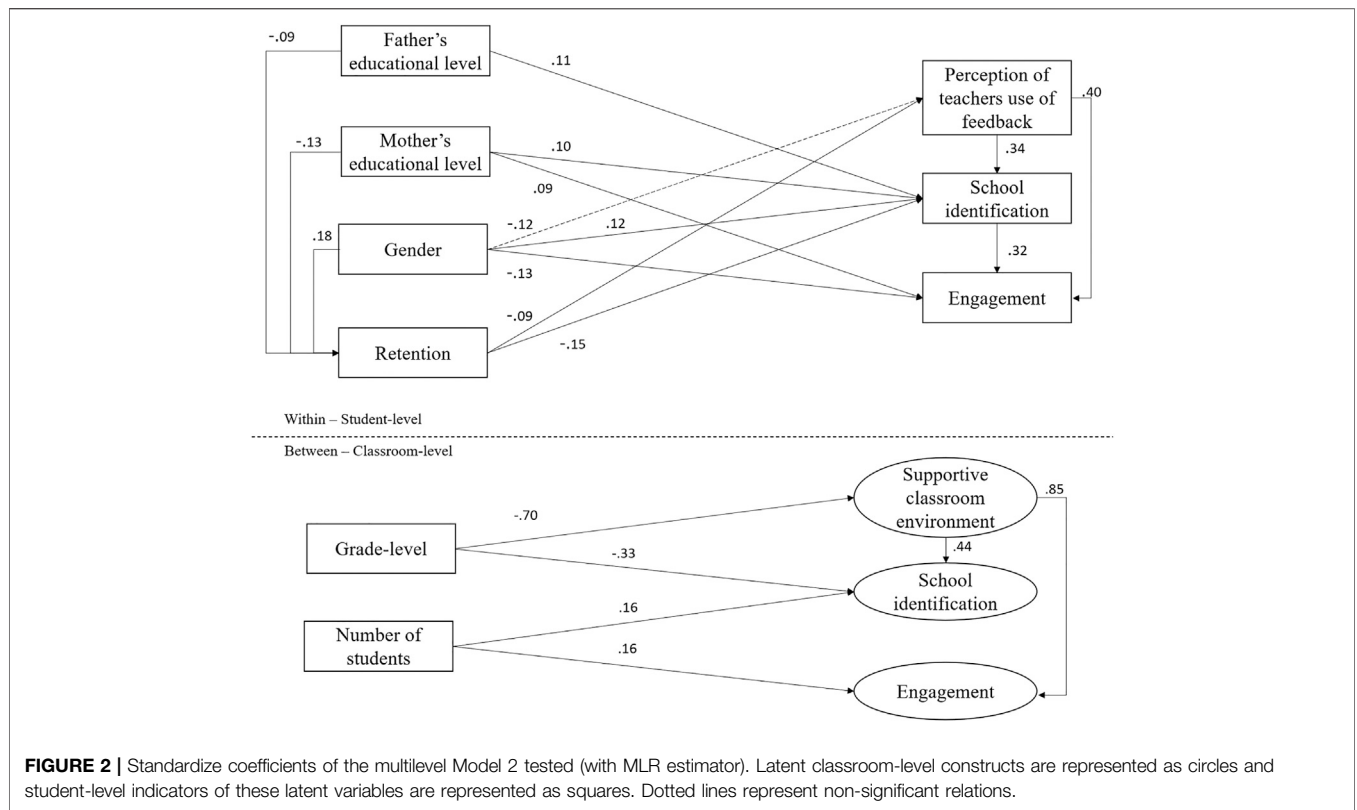


FIGURE 2 | Standardize coefficients of the multilevel Model 2 tested (with MLR estimator). Latent classroom-level constructs are represented as circles and student-level indicators of these latent variables are represented as squares. Dotted lines represent non-significant relations.

identification, while grade retention explained only school identification. Male students, non-retained students, students whose mother and father had a higher level of education and students who perceived that their teachers used more effective feedback presented higher school identification levels. Female students, students whose mother had a higher level of education, students with a higher level of school identification and students who perceived that their teachers used more effective feedback had higher behavioral engagement levels. Students' nationality was not related to any variable under study.

Results also indicated that students' perception of teachers' feedback was related to students' history of grade retention. Retained students perceived that their teachers used less effective feedback than non-retained students. Despite this, the relation was very weak.

At the classroom level, we observed that the classroom environment effect on school identification and behavioral engagement levels remained significant, with considerable size effects. Students in classrooms with higher levels of supportive environments (i.e., where teachers used more effective feedback) had higher school identification and behavioral engagement levels. Additionally, students in classrooms from schools with fewer students also had higher school identification and behavioral engagement levels. The number of students was not related to the supportive classroom environment.

Table 3 shows that students in classes from lower grade levels presented higher levels of school identification and indicated a more supportive environment where teachers used more effective feedback. There was a less supportive environment in classrooms

from higher grade levels. Belonging to a TEIP school was not related to the supportive classroom environment, school identification or behavioral engagement levels.

The final model presented very good indicators of model fit: $\chi^2(8) = 6.53, p = 0.588; CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.004; RMSEA < 0.001; SRMR = 0.009$ (within), 0.029 (between). The model clearly explained the variance, both at the individual and classroom levels, in students' behavioral engagement (37.3 and 75.0%, respectively) and school identification (19.6 and 52.8%, respectively). Teachers' feedback variance is only distinctly explained by the variables at the classroom level (1.1 and 49.2%, respectively).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we aimed to understand if a supportive learning environment generated by teachers' use of effective feedback can boost students' school identification and behavioral engagement. We used teachers' feedback as an indicator of a supportive classroom environment. Our results confirm previous studies that indicated that students' perceptions about teacher feedback are positively related with their school identification and behavioral engagement (e.g., Koka and Hein, 2005; Koka and Hein, 2006; Leh et al., 2014; Conboy et al., 2015; Vattøy and Smith, 2019; Carvalho et al., 2020; Wang and Zhang, 2020). The feedback directly experienced by students enhance their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy by offering information about where they are going, how they are going there and how to reach their goals (Hattie, 2009; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Therefore, by

offering effective feedback, the teacher is communicating to the student (and, by extension, to all students in the classroom) that learning is essential and relevant to students' personal goals (where they are going), that they can succeed and are valued by the teacher (by caring about how they are going) and informing them about the behaviors they need to exhibit to better meet expectations in the future (where to next). In other words, effective feedback reinforces the value of school for the students, their feelings of belongingness and their behavioral engagement in school activities, avoiding dropout and social exclusion.

Our results also indicated that other individual variables like mother's and father's educational level, gender and grade retention were related to students' school identification and behavioral engagement, all of which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Allen et al., 2018; Bear et al., 2019; Cunha et al., 2019; Olivier et al., 2020). We found that mothers' educational level was positively related to students' school identification and behavioral engagement levels, while the fathers' educational level was only positively related to students' school identification. Parents' educational attitudes and beliefs are considered to be significant influences on their children's educational attitudes. Mothers with higher education levels are more intellectually involved in school activities, providing intellectual resources and helping with schoolwork, thus creating a positive environment in which students develop their school identification and behavioral engagement (Bempechat and Shernoff, 2012). According to Vieira (2013), recent research on families and family dynamics in Portugal confirm that mainly mothers are the ones that help children with schoolwork, take them to school, and talk with them about school and their studies. Therefore, behavioral engagement seems to be more affected by the mothers' level of education than for the fathers' level of education.

Previous studies have also indicated that female students score higher in all engagement dimensions, especially in the behavioral engagement (e.g., Lietaert et al., 2015). Still, our results were not completely consistent with previous studies. In the present study, girls presented higher levels of behavioral engagement, as expected, while males presented higher levels of school identification. It is possible that our results differ from previous research because of the dimensions that were assessed by the school identification measure. Research indicates that males have higher levels of academic self-efficacy (e.g., Huang, 2013). In the present study, the school identification measure included a dimension that assesses students' perceptions of their capacity and will, which contribute greatly to the school identification latent factor (see **Supplementary Figure S2** in the Supplementary Material). Therefore, males' higher levels of school identification might be related to a higher sense of self-efficacy.

Researchers suggest that girls scored higher in their behavioral engagement because activities are focused on language and verbal learning, competences stereotypically related to girls (Lietaert et al., 2015). Still, Lietaert et al. (2015) observed in their study that teachers offered less support to male students, which was related to their lower engagement compared to girls. Authors suggest that teachers offer more support to girls because they are less

tolerant of negative behaviors from boys. In contrast, they associated more positive behaviors (more compliance, better organization skills, etc.) to girls. Portuguese teachers also described boys as being disconnected and irresponsible and girls as more focused and responsible (Wall et al., 2017). Although we only find a marginally significant effect of gender on students' perception of teachers' feedback, our results seem to correspond to Lietaert et al. (2015) findings: boys perceive that teachers used less effective feedback than girls. Nevertheless, given that the gender bias in feedback observed in this study was small, it could be argued that these students believe that their teachers do not make much difference between genders in the use of effective feedback. Additionally, Lietaert et al. (2015) indicated that it is possible that these lower levels of engagement from boys could explain why teachers are less supportive. Consequently, future research may need to consider the reciprocal effect between teacher support through effective feedback and engagement to better understand this classroom dynamic.

Regarding the effect of grade retention, previous studies indicated that retention seems to leave a significant mark on students that lead them to develop a more negative attitude toward school, associating school with negative experiences (e.g., Martin, 2011, Santos et al., submitted). A highly interesting finding from our study was that retained students also perceived that their teachers used less effective feedback. Although the effect was small, it could indicate that teachers had lower expectations about retained students (e.g., OECD, 2012), using less effective feedback with students with lower achievements. For example, Gentrup et al. (2020) observed that teachers communicate their expectations through different feedback practices, giving less positive feedback and more negative feedback to students for whom they have low expectations. Furthermore, Monteiro et al. (2019) observed that teachers gave less feedback at the process and self-regulation levels to students with low achievement. In Santana's study (Santana, 2019), a number of Portuguese school directors admitted that teachers tend to ignore retained students.

However, the central question of the present study is whether the aggregated classroom characteristic of teachers' feedback, as a measure of a supportive classroom environment, affects students' school identification and behavioral engagement after controlling for other inter-individual differences at the individual level. The answer was positive: Our findings demonstrated that the supportive environment created by teachers' feedback varies across schools and that students in classrooms where, on average, teachers used more effective feedback and created a supportive classroom environment, had higher levels of school identification and behavioral engagement than students in classrooms without this supportive environment. This was true regardless of students' individual perceptions about teachers' feedback.

These findings represent a significant contribution to the theoretical discussion about perceived feedback. Even if a student perceived that his/her teachers used little effective feedback, if s/he was in a classroom with a highly supportive environment, the student would have higher levels of school identification and behavioral engagement than if s/he was in a classroom with a less supportive environment. These results

suggest that feedback interactions may affect the learning and engagement of other students in the classroom because they are exposed to both their peers' behavior and performance and teachers' feedback to their peers, as observed by Conroy et al. (2009). By contrast, if teachers display differential feedback for some students based on their individual characteristics (gender, nationality or achievement levels), creating an unsupportive classroom environment, students' trust for or receptivity to the teacher as a source of support and feeling of belonging will be reduced (Voelkl, 2012). Therefore, similarly to what Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Wisniewski et al. (2020) have said, the feedback has huge power. The use (or not) of effective feedback can have an overall impact on the classroom environment and climate, increasing (or decreasing) students' engagement and school identification. This conclusion deserves to be studied more deeply in future research because students were asked to think about a discipline they liked. In a discipline where students have negative experiences, this impact can have other effects on their behavioral engagement and identification.

More importantly, the quality of the supportive classroom environment was not related to the number of students in the school, suggesting that teachers in schools with both large and small numbers of students were able to create a supportive environment using effective feedback. Nevertheless, our results indicated that students in classrooms from schools with fewer students had higher levels of school identification and behavioral engagement, which is coherent with previous studies (Finn and Voelkl, 1993; Willms, 2003; Weiss et al., 2010). However, the size effect of the number of students in the school is smaller than the effect of the supportive classroom environment. As a result, our findings indicated that the classroom environment is more critical than the number of students in the school to predict students' engagement. As mentioned by Weiss et al. (2010), the reduction of the number of students in a class does not guarantee that students will experience the same benefits as students in smaller schools, especially if their feedback environment is not adequate to prompt students' engagement.

At the classroom level, the results indicated that students in classes from lower grade levels presented higher school identification levels. This was expected since the literature indicates that affective engagement tends to decrease upon the transition to adolescence (Eccles et al., 1993; Mahatmya et al., 2012). Eccles et al. (1993) suggested that the mismatch between the needs of developing adolescences and the opportunities afforded by their social environments could decrease their school identification. Our results are consistent with this theory since we observed a less supportive classroom environment in classrooms from higher grade levels. Therefore, students in higher grades perceive that their teachers offer less feedback than what they feel they need. It could be that students in lower grade levels perceive a more supportive environment because in 6th and 7th grades teachers focused more on mastery than on performance (Guo, 2020). Teachers' primary goal in the middle school years is to help students master certain knowledge and skills to prepare for secondary school. Consequently, they may provide more feedback at the process and self-regulation levels to enhance learning habits and abilities (Guo, 2020). On the contrary, in

the higher grade levels, teachers may focus most on providing correct answers or solutions to students because teachers are more focused on performance to help students prepare for their upcoming examinations (Guo, 2020). Future studies could test this hypothesis by assessing both the supportive classroom environment and teachers' goals and beliefs about feedback in several grade levels.

Although the present investigation contributes to the theory about feedback and students' engagement by accounting for both individual and classroom factors that may impact students' schooling experience, it has some important limitations to consider for future research. For the assessment of the supportive classroom environment, we relied on the perception that students have of their teachers' feedback practices. Although classroom-level aggregated measures of students' perceptions are reliable indicators of a learning environment (Marsh et al., 2012), using classroom observations, interviews, and teacher reports would have provided a complementary evaluation of teachers' feedback practices. Additionally, we used a manifest-latent approach to aggregate the classroom level variable. Although it controlled sampling errors at the classroom level, we did not control measurement errors at the individual level. A doubly latent approach was necessary to control both types of errors (Marsh et al., 2009). Unfortunately, double latent models required a larger sample than used in the present study (Marsh et al., 2009). Future studies should replicate this research using a larger size sample, with a higher number of classrooms. Another limitation of this research was the use of a single research method. To produce in-depth and richer information in order to better understand the relations between the variables of the problem being studied, it would be better to have leaned toward a mixed methods approach to get potentialities that together give a more precise view of the role of feedback on school identification and student engagement (Hughes, 2016).

Despite these limitations, in the present study we found evidence that indicated that students' perceptions of teachers' feedback and the classroom environment created by the effective feedback were more critical for explaining students' school identification and behavioral engagement than their individual characteristics (like mother's level of education, gender and grade retention) or the size of the school. Therefore, improving teachers' use of effective feedback, especially in the upper grade levels, could impact students' engagement levels. It is essential to provide teachers with training that focuses on giving effective and high-quality feedback. This training should enable teachers to provide a supportive environment to all their students, independent of their gender or what achievements they expect from their students, based on their school trajectory.

Being competent as a teacher to develop a supportive environment in a classroom also means being alert to the expectations constructed around the students. If teachers hold different expectations based on achievement levels or gender, this can influence students' trust to see teachers as a source of support or as a person that allows her or him to develop feelings of school belonging (Voelkl, 2012).

The evidence suggests that teachers can improve school identification and behavioral engagement by using effective feedback. If there is a supportive environment developed by

teachers in the classroom through the use of effective feedback, students will learn better and achieve their psychological and social goals. A supportive environment will motivate the students to communicate with their teachers and peers, to engage in different activities and forms of learning environments and to increase their sense of school identification.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this study is subject to the following licenses/restrictions: The datasets generated for this study are available on request. Requests to access these datasets should be directed to Carolina Carvalho, cfcarvalho@ie.ulisboa.pt.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Comissão de Ética (CdE) of the Instituto de Educação (IE) da Universidade de Lisboa. Written informed

consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.661736/full#supplementary-material>

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Book Review: East Asian Perspectives on Silence in English Language Education

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A Book Review on

East Asian Perspectives on Silence in English Language Education

Jim King and Seiko Harumi (Bristol: Multilingual Matters), 2020, v+ 200 pages, ISBN: 978-1-7889-2675-1

Learner silence in EFL/ESL classrooms is an interactional and interpersonal resource, intentionally or subconsciously drawn on to indicate the psychological or linguistic difficulties learners face. Besides, it can be construed as a signal of the socio-cultural viewpoints that can function as frameworks for language learning. “Silence is a pedagogical issue that touches all who teach.” (p. 3). Therefore, it is documented that learner silence is an intricate and multidimensional phenomenon that can emerge from a wide range of sources and thus can challenge clear generalizations. Nonetheless, its instrumental role in language classrooms has not been fully investigated. To address this complexity, *East Asian Perspectives on Silence in English Language Education*, edited by Jim King and Seiko Harumi, deepens our nascent awareness and understanding of the silent episodes that take place within East Asian language classrooms. I consider this compendium an opportune collection that is in line with the scope of the Research Topic, entitled *The Role of Teacher Interpersonal Variables in Students’ Academic Engagement, Success, and Motivation*, co-guest-edited by Ali Derakhshan, Reza Pishghadam, and Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak. The main impetus for collecting such an unprecedented volume is to unravel the hidden dimensions of learner silence and challenge the stereotype of the reticent, passive East Asian learners by providing contextually rich data.

Following the foreword by *Peter MacIntyre*, the book comprises nine chapters. The editors commence the volume by justifying the fairly underrepresented issue of silence in EFL/ESL classes, enumerate the main objectives of the book, sketch the historical background of silence-related studies since the 1980s, illuminate a wide range of conceptualizations, foreground some fundamental questions by accentuating the crucial role of contextual factors, and problematize the methodological challenges to collect data for issues surrounding silence. Utilizing phenomenological case studies through the lens of interpretive discourse analysis, in Chapter 2, *Dat Bao* probes into task complexity, task orientation, modes of learning, and learner silence. The author collected data through semi-structured interviews from 10 postgraduate students coming from different East Asian backgrounds to an Australian university. This study enlightens us by unpacking the interactive nature of learners’ speech dynamics, task modes, learners’ choice of verbal responses, and silence, reflected through the metacognitive process of self-revelation.

The main focus of *Seiko Harumi’s* chapter is to investigate the role of silence as an interactional repertoire through involvement in didactic turn-taking interactions and L2 output that occur among Japanese EFL students. Her study uses open-ended questionnaires to find out how teachers react to instances of silence. Her findings illustrated that some teachers felt discomfort during the

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episodes of silence. Besides, this chapter reports on the 8 h of classroom interaction to delve deeply into student silence, teacher talk, and wait time, resulting in some pedagogical strategies employed by Japanese students.

Observing learner reticence longitudinally from a psychological and complexity vantage point, *Jim King, Tomoko Yashima, Simon Humphries, Scott Aubrey, and Maiko Ikeda* scrutinized the role of silence among Japanese universities in English as a medium of instruction by focusing on the learners' anxiety coping strategies, interpersonal dynamics, and social cooperation. Their findings revealed that fundamental elements that instigate learner silence pertain to learners' anxiety in the use of English, topic choice, task demands, and their social inhibition.

Like Chapter 4, in Chapter 5 *Kate Maher* examines the role of silence and anxiety in the Japanese context based on the postulations that emerged from cognitive-behavioral theory (CBT). Focusing on one single participant, the author aims to sensitize the learner's awareness of how aversive emotions and thoughts can make her reticent in the class. The author concludes that confidence to attend oral participation can be enhanced if students are cognizant of their negative cycles and strategically set goals. In Chapter 6, *Michael Karas and Farahnaz Faez* explore the effect of silence in the communicative language teaching (CLT) class from the viewpoints of Chinese teachers in Canada, by taking into account cognitive, interactive, and sociocultural vantage points. The teachers' highly positive attitudes toward the utilization of silence and its role in L2 learning highlight that different strategies can be used to help reticent students in CLT classrooms.

Unlike Chapter 6 that focuses on the role of silence based on teachers' perceptions, Chapter 7, written by *Simon Humphries, Nobuhiko Akamatsu, Takako Tanaka, and Anne Burns*, concentrates on students' perceptions. They scrutinize how Japanese students construe their ability to speak English during different classroom activities. The authors conclude that confidence, motivation, anxiety, and classroom support play vital in oral participation. Utilizing psychological orientation, in Chapter 8, *Jian-E. Peng* reveals the intricate interplay between levels of oral participation, willingness to communicate, situated classroom communication, and silence within Chinese EFL classrooms. The final chapter, by *Amy B. M. Tsui and Rintaro Imafuku*, recapitulates the findings of the previous chapters,

highlighting the complexity and dynamicity of L2 student and teacher reticence and calls for more longitudinal studies on the dynamic interrelationship of factors that enhance oral participation in educational settings.

I enjoy reading this compendium with great enthusiasm. This provocative volume offers many merits, some of which are as follows. First, this volume takes advantage of cognitive, cultural, interactional, and psychological, and sociocultural viewpoints by incorporating empirical studies that have been informed by a wide range of innovative theoretical conceptualizations and methodological approaches such as interpretive case study, conversational analysis, longitudinal intervention study, cognition study, etc. Second, at the end of each chapter, there are some "self-reflection/discussion questions" and "recommended readings" which pique the interest of those who are willing to deepen their understanding of the complex role of silence. However, had the editors included studies from other East Asian countries, we would have had a better understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of silence in other EFL/ESL contexts. Taken together, I strongly suggest this timely volume to teachers, researchers, and practitioners who believe that silence plays an essential role in students' engagement in L2 learning.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Does Teacher Immediacy Affect Students? A Systematic Review of the Association Between Teacher Verbal and Non-verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation

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In instructional-learning contexts, the relationship between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation has gained increasing attention. However, no systematic research has been done to review the empirical studies conducted on the impact of teacher immediacy on students' motivation. Hence, the aim of the present study was to systematically review the available literature on different types of teacher immediacy and student motivation. Some common databases were searched and 30 eligible manuscripts were identified. With regard to the key features of the included studies, the review's findings were categorized into different sections, namely "the measures of teacher immediacy employed," "the measures of student motivation employed," "designs," and "educational contexts". The main findings of the studies were also discussed. The reviewed studies pointed to positive associations between teacher immediacy and student motivation. Finally, limitations of the included studies are discussed and some practical directions for further research are offered, accordingly.

Keywords: verbal immediacy, non-verbal immediacy, students, motivation, systematic review, teachers

INTRODUCTION

During the past four decades, no construct has gained more attention than teacher immediacy in the field of instructional communication (Madigan and Kim, 2021). Immediacy was first introduced by Mehrabian (1969), who defined this concept as "communication behaviors that enhance closeness to and non-verbal interaction with another" (p. 202). In light of "approach-avoidance theory", Mehrabian proposed that "people are likely to move toward those they like and away from those they dislike" (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 22). He also distinguished between verbal and non-verbal activities that minimize the perceived physical/psychological intimacy between communicators (Allen et al., 2006). Concerning the significance of immediacy in educational settings, Witt et al. (2004) expounded that verbal and non-verbal behaviors that instructors employ in interactions with their pupils can be deemed as rewarding. These rewarding behaviors can inspire students to become more motivated, attentive, and engaged during a whole session. Richmond et al. (2008) also reported that teachers can minimize students' anxiety, stress, and negative reactions through exhibiting verbal and non-verbal immediate actions.

Besides the aforementioned remarks illustrating the importance of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy in general, several scholars (e.g., Yu, 2011; Roberts and Friedman, 2013; Sutiyatno, 2018; Violanti et al., 2018; Sheybani, 2019; Lee, 2020) have pointed to the pivotal role of teachers' immediate behaviors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Violanti et al. (2018), for instance, explicated that language teachers' immediate behaviors play a crucial role in the EFL/ESL classrooms because these actions are capable of leading students toward more desirable outcomes. Sheybani (2019) further expounded that teacher immediacy attributes can dramatically enhance EFL/ESL students' willingness to attend classes, which in turn improves their academic achievements. It is mainly due to the fact that "students who attend class regularly have a much greater chance of making high grades" (Moore et al., 2003, p. 325).

Given the importance of teacher immediacy in any educational context (i.e., English language classes and general education courses), numerous studies have sought to examine the association between this interpersonal behavior—immediacy—and student-related factors such as academic engagement, involvement, willingness to attend classes, cognitive learning, affective learning, course retention, satisfaction, and state/trait motivation (e.g., Park et al., 2009; Habash, 2010; Roberts and Friedman, 2013; Faranda, 2015; Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh, 2018; Kalat et al., 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2020; Derakhshan, 2021). Among different student-related factors, motivation as a prominent factor has received remarkable attention in the field of general education; many studies have investigated the probable correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation (e.g., Comadena et al., 2007; Velez and Cano, 2008, 2012; Kalish, 2009; Baker, 2010; Littlejohn, 2012; Estep and Roberts, 2015; Furlich, 2016; Tanriverdi Canbaz and Yavuz, 2016; Barahona Guerrero, 2017; Wijaya, 2017; Stilwell, 2018; Hussain et al., 2021). However, the association between these two variables has remained elusive in English language education (Hsu, 2010; Fallah, 2014).

To deepen our understanding of the depth and breadth of the available literature on teacher immediacy and student motivation, a systematic study is needed to review the empirical studies conducted on this topic. Accordingly, in the present study, the previous research is extended by providing the first systematic review of teacher immediacy and student motivation. It is hoped that this review will contribute to a better understanding of how to enhance students' motivation in instructional-learning contexts, notably EFL, and ESL classrooms.

Teacher Immediacy

The concept of immediacy, coined by a social psychologist Mehrabian (1969), is defined as "a set of communication behaviors which enhance closeness to and non-verbal interaction with another" (p. 202). Mehrabian worked on non-verbal immediacy at first, but later established a taxonomy of verbal components as well (Averbeck et al., 2006). In terms of his principles of immediacy, Mehrabian submitted "that individuals are attracted to those they like and they ignore or step away from those they dislike" (Allen et al., 2006, p. 24). Immediacy has

been attributed to the motivational characteristic of approach-avoidance theory, which states that people approach what they like and avoid what they do not like (Myers et al., 2002; Rocca, 2007).

In 1979, Andersen introduced the application of immediacy to educational environments. She characterized immediacy as a notion that teachers, through the use of certain cues, can reduce the perceived gap between themselves and their students. In this regard, theoretical models posit that teacher immediacy, an interpersonal behavior perceived by students, leads to greater student academic engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm (Hsu, 2010; Marx et al., 2016). Teacher immediacy behaviors (e.g., close proxemics, direct body orientation, smiling, and vocal varieties) are all found to be highly effective teaching behaviors (Pogue and AhYun, 2006; York, 2013). Early studies in the field of education named these behaviors as "teacher enthusiasm" or "teacher expressiveness", while communication scholars referred to them as "immediacy behaviors" (Rocca, 2007). These immediacy behaviors, according to Mehrabian's immediacy taxonomy, can be categorized as verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

Verbal Immediacy

Verbal immediacy applies to communication behaviors such as "calling students by names", "asking for students' feedback about the lessons", "referring to the class as we and our", and "engaging in conversations with students before and after class" (Seifu and Gebru, 2012, p. 80). Andersen's (1979) inquiry on the teacher immediacy included behaviors such as discussing outside-of-class experiences, interacting with students before and after classes, inspiring students to actively participate, praising students' work, and offering immediate feedback (Andersen and Andersen, 2005).

Non-verbal Immediacy

Non-verbal immediacy is characterized as "communication behaviors that reduce physical and/or psychological distance between teachers and students" (Andersen, 1979, p. 543). These communication behaviors include employing physical gestures, making eye contact, having a relaxed body position, directing body position toward students, and smiling (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001; Hsu, 2010). Such non-verbal cues enhance the sensory stimulation of interlocutors, resulting in more intense and effective interactions (York, 2013).

Student Motivation

Pintrich and Schunk (2002) characterized motivation as "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (p. 5). Motivation as a communicative mechanism resembles "approach and avoidance motivation". According to Elliot (1999), approach motivation behavior is prompted by positive consequences, whereas avoidance motivation is instigated by negative results. For instructors, this involves "attempting to give students a reason to be motivated toward a subject by making that subject a desirable event" (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008, p. 57). As put forward by Katt and Condly (2009), student motivation to learn can be classified into two main categories of "trait motivation" and "state motivation".

Trait motivation is a “general inclination toward learning”, while state motivation is “an attitude toward a particular course” (Trad et al., 2014, p. 138). Although students’ trait motivation tends to be relatively constant, their state motivation can be affected by their perceptions of teachers and directly by teachers’ actual behaviors (Allen et al., 2006; Katt and Condly, 2009; Dörnyei, 2020; Hiver and Al-Hoorie, 2020). Accordingly, teachers can be active agents within the instructional-learning settings and, therefore, capable of promoting the development of student motivation toward learning.

Teacher Immediacy and Student Motivation

The most crucial norm in student academic motivation that should be emphasized is the interpersonal behavior of the teacher (Witt and Schrodt, 2006; Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2017; Henry and Thorsen, 2018). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) also articulated that teachers are the most important predictors of students’ learning motivation. Different theoretical models designed to explain how teacher interpersonal behaviors can influence students propose that teacher immediacy will affect the motivation of students. Of these theories, the Keller’s (1987) ARCS model is probably the most relevant theoretical model, describing teacher immediacy as a mediating variable on student motivation. Keller (1987) characterized motivation as requiring four conditions, including “attention”, “relevance”, “confidence”, and “satisfaction”. Among them, getting students’ attention is the most crucial factor in motivating students to learn. It is due to the fact that if students do not pay attention, they will not be engaged and will not make effort to learn.

Keller (1987) stated that immediate teachers can enhance their students’ motivation because they can address at least three conditions of motivation by employing verbal and non-verbal immediate actions. Initially, immediate teachers gain their students’ attention by moving around the class, making eye contact, using vocal variety, and calling students by name. The use of immediate actions can also help teachers to build positive expectancies or confidence in their students. An immediate teacher also seems to generate a positive feeling among students, creating an atmosphere where success appears more likely. Such an atmosphere will in turn make positive expectancies or confidence in students. In regards to satisfaction, Keller (1987) proposed that students who have an immediate teacher are more likely to be pleased with their learning experience than those who have a low immediacy teacher.

METHOD

Databases and Search Keywords

Over the period of 7–14 May, 2021, a thorough electronic bibliographic search was performed using some common databases, namely Google Scholar, ERIC, LLBA, ProQuest, Web of Science, PSYCINFO, MEDLINE, and SCOPUS. To locate the related studies, the keywords of “teacher”, “immediacy”, “verbal immediacy”, “non-verbal immediacy”, “student”, and “motivation” were used. The initial search returned 1,030 manuscripts. Following the removal of duplicates and the

checking abstracts, 46 manuscripts remained. These manuscripts were evaluated further employing the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned hereunder.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

Manuscripts were included in the present review if they met the following criteria:

- Studies measured teacher immediacy (verbal, non-verbal, both);
- Studies measured student motivation (state, trait, both);
- Studies were reported or published from inception up to May 2021;
- Studies were written in English

Manuscripts were excluded if they;

- Did not assess teacher immediacy
- Did not assess student motivation

The aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria culminated in the inclusion of 30 eligible studies (**Figure 1**).

Data Extraction

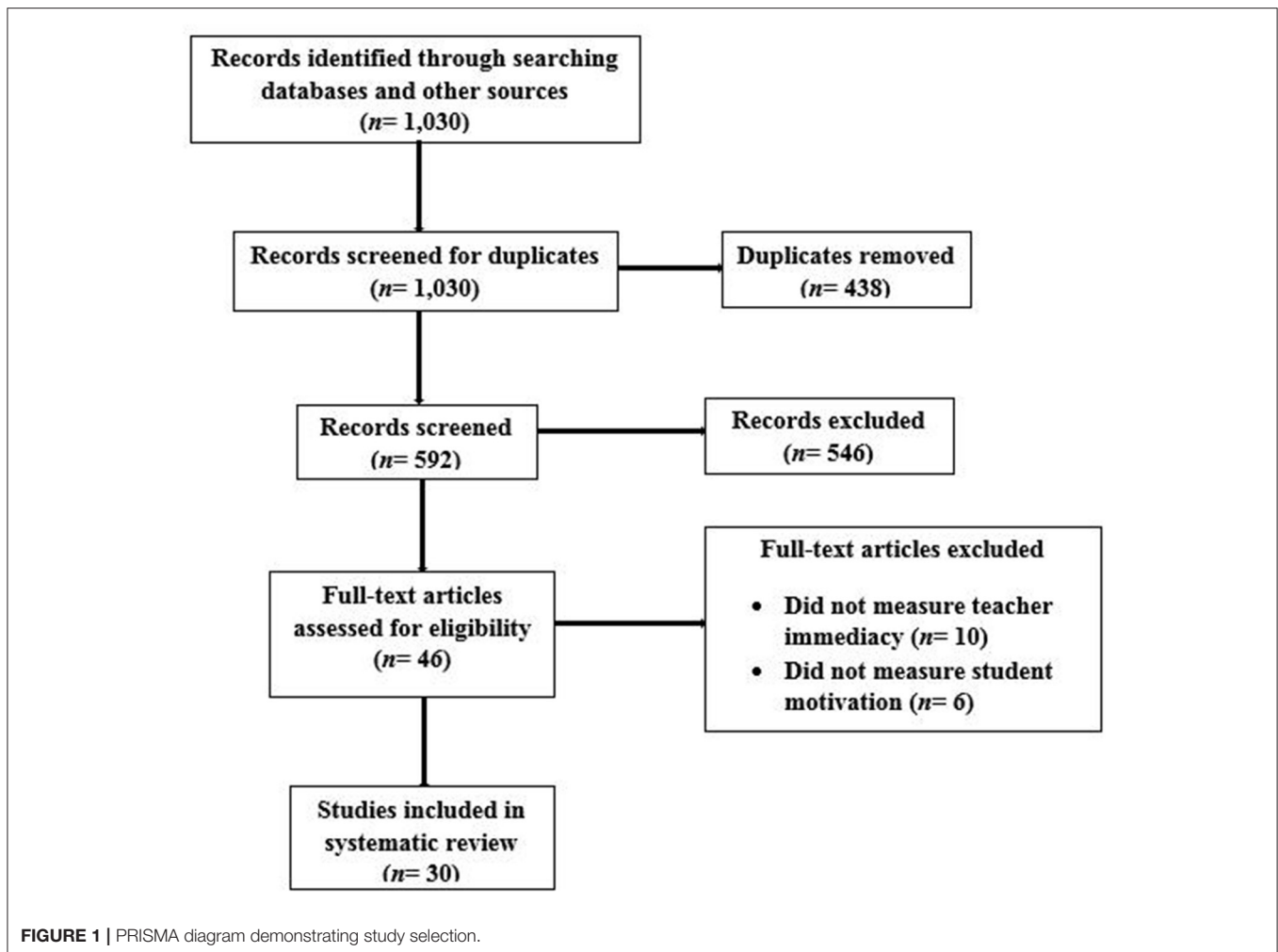
The included manuscripts were thoroughly reviewed by two researchers. The following information was extracted to summarize the identified studies: (a) publication information, (b) participants demographic information, (c) measure of teacher immediacy, (d) measure of student motivation, (e) Context, (f) main statistical analyses employed, (g) design, and (h) main findings. The derived information is presented in **Table 1**. Employing Cohen’s Kappa, inter-rater reliability was estimated as 0.95 indicated a high degree of consensus between the researchers. The few disagreements were fixed through a consensus between researchers referring to the source data.

RESULTS

The review’s findings were listed according to the key features of the included manuscripts, including “the measures of teacher immediacy employed”, “the measures of student motivation employed”, “designs”, and “educational contexts”. Afterwards, the main findings of the manuscripts were discussed based on different types of teacher immediacy: (1) Verbal immediacy, (2) Non-verbal immediacy, and (3) Both verbal and non-verbal immediacy.

Measures of Teacher Immediacy

As shown in **Table 1**, most of the included studies (60%) utilized “Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988) and/or “Non-verbal Immediacy Scale” (Richmond et al., 1987) to measure teacher immediacy. The rest (40%) assessed teacher immediacy through observation, group interview, and other reliable scales such as “Generalized Immediacy Scale” (Andersen, 1979), “Immediacy Behavior Scale” (Christophel, 1990), “Revised Non-verbal Immediacy Measure” (McCroskey et al., 1996),



and “Non-verbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report” (Richmond et al., 2003).

Measures of Student Motivation

Table 1 delineates that the majority of studies (53%) used “Motivation Scale” (Christophel, 1990) to measure student motivation. The remaining studies (47%) evaluated student motivation via observation, interview, and other scales such as “Student Motivation Scale” (Rubin et al., 1994), “Motivation Scale” (Richmond, 1990), “Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire” (Pintrich et al., 1991), “Motivation Scale” (Gardner et al., 1985), and “Student Motivational State Questionnaire” (Guilloteaux, 2007).

Educational Contexts (General Education and English Language Education)

Of 30 included studies, only 5 empirical studies (17%) were carried out in EFL/ESL classes, the rest (83%) examined the interplay of teacher immediacy and students’ motivation in general educational contexts such as science classes, engineering classes, communication courses, business courses, agricultural courses. That is, the consequences of English teachers’ immediate

behaviors for EFL/ESL students’ academic motivation received scant attention (Figure 2).

Study Designs

As shown in Figure 3, several studies (74%) in the current systematic review utilized correlational designs (non-experimental). The rest used experimental (20%), qualitative (3%), and mixed-methods research (3%) in studying teacher immediacy and student motivation.

Teacher Immediacy and Student Motivation Teacher Verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation

Among the included studies, only one study (Baker, 2010) investigated the relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation. In doing so, 699 graduate and undergraduate students voluntarily completed two questionnaires, namely “Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988) and “State Motivation Scale” (Christophel, 1990). Analyzing students’ perceptions, Baker (2010) found that students perceive teachers’ immediacy behaviors as an important motivational factor in instructional-learning environments.

TABLE 1 | Studies examining teacher immediacy and student motivation.

References	Sample (N)	Context	Immediacy measure	Motivation measure	Statistical analysis	Design	Main findings
Christophel (1990)	Students, teaching assistants, and faculty members	Arts and Sciences classes	"The Immediacy Behavior Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	"Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Simple and multiple correlations and regression	Correlational Research	"Positive correlation between verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation/Positive relationship between immediacy and learning"
Frymier (1993)	178 undergraduate students (87 were female, 87 were male, and 4 did not indicate their sex)	Communication courses	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Motivation Scale" (Richmond, 1990)	ANOVA with repeated measures, Pearson correlations, Multiple regression, Factorial analysis of variance	Experimental Research (pretest-posttest)	"Student motivation showed positive association with teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediacy"
Christophel and Gorham (1995)	319 students (190 female and 129 male)	Different contexts	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Trait/State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Pearson correlation	Test-retest analysis	"A causal relationship between teacher immediacy and student motivation"
Christensen and Menzel (1998)	115 undergraduate students	Not specified!	"Generalized Immediacy Scale" (Andersen, 1979)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	One-way ANOVAs	Correlational Research	"Positive relationship between both types of teacher immediacy (verbal and non-verbal) and student motivation/A positive, linear relationships between teacher non-verbal and verbal immediacy and perceived cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning"
Jaasma and Koper (1999)	274 students (172 were female, 100 were male, and 2 did not indicate their sex) Range = 18–60 years ($M = 23.6$)	Not specified!	"Revised Non-verbal Immediacy Measure" (McCroskey et al., 1996), "Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988)	"Student Motivation Scale" (Rubin et al., 1994)	Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients	Correlational Research	"Positive correlation between verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation"
Cox and Todd (2001)	1,196 students, 12 instructors	Self-contained and Mass-Lecture courses	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Student Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, ANOVA	Correlational Research	"Positive correlation between verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation in both self-contained and mass-lecture formats of the basic communication courses"
Pribyl et al. (2004)	259 students (179 female, 80 male)	Lecture classes	"Non-verbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Student Motivation Scale" (Rubin et al., 1994)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research	"Positive correlation between students' perceptions of teacher non-verbal immediacy, their motivation and cognitive learning"

(Continued)

TABLE 1 | Continued

References	Sample (N)	Context	Immediacy measure	Motivation measure	Statistical analysis	Design	Main findings
Jung (2006)	167 students	Business classes	"Non-verbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report" (Richmond et al., 2003)	"Motivation Scale" (Richmond, 1990)	Pearson's coefficient of correlation	Correlational Research	"Positive and significant association between perceived non-verbal immediacy and perceived course motivation"
Pogue and AhYun (2006)	586 college students (350 were female, 234 were male, and 2 did not report their sex). Mean age= 21.75	General education classes	"Generalized Immediacy Scale" (Andersen, 1979)	"Student State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	ANOVA	Experimental Research (factorial design)	"Students experience more motivation with highly immediate teachers/increased achievement is a function of teachers' immediate behaviors"
Comadena et al. (2007)	233 undergraduate students (136 females & 97 males). Range= 18–25 years (M = 18.82)	Communication skills course	"Generalized Immediacy Scale" (Andersen, 1979)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	ANOVA	Experimental Research (factorial design)	"Teacher immediacy plays an important role in enhancing student motivation and a complimentary role in improving student learning outcomes"
Furlich (2007)	240 undergraduate students	Communication skills course	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	ANCOVA	Correlational Research (descriptive)	"Positive correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation to learn"
Furlich and Dwyer (2007)	103 undergraduate students	Mathematics classes	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Multiple linear regression	Correlational Research	"Teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors are positively associated with student motivation"
Zhang and Sapp (2008)	172 college students (114 females & 58 males).	English, business, and communication classes	"Non-verbal Immediacy Measure" (McCroskey et al., 1996)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	MANOVA	Experimental Research (factorial design)	"Teachers' non-verbal immediacy behaviors are positively associated with student state motivation and affective learning"
Velez and Cano (2008)	41 undergraduate students	Agriculture course	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Approach-Avoidance Motivation Instrument" (Midgley et al., 1998)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research (descriptive)	"Teacher immediacy has a strong and positive association with students' motivation"
Kalish (2009)	240 undergraduate students (143 were female, 92 were male, and 5 did not report their sex)	General education courses	"Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Factorial analysis of variance	Correlational Research	"Teacher non-verbal immediacy has a positive effect on student levels of state motivation"

(Continued)

TABLE 1 | Continued

References	Sample (N)	Context	Immediacy measure	Motivation measure	Statistical analysis	Design	Main findings
Baker (2010)	377 undergraduate and graduate students (265 females & 112 males)	Not specified!	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Multiple regression analysis	Correlational Research	"A statistically significant positive relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation/ A positive association between teacher verbal immediacy and student affective learning"
Hsu (2010)	303 students (259 females & 44 males)	English courses	"Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Thomas et al., 1994)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research	"Teacher non-verbal immediacy has a positive association with students' motivation to learn English"
Littlejohn (2012)	500 high school science students, 32 science teachers	Science courses	"Teacher Communication Behavior Questionnaires" (She and Fisher, 2002)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	Pearson correlation, ANOVA	Correlational Research	"Teacher immediacy behaviors lead to increased student motivation"
Keressen-Griep and Witt (2012)	265 students (144 were female, 121 were male, and 4 did not report their sex) Range= 18–55 years ($M = 20.04$)	Communication courses	"Theoretical taxonomy of TNI" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"State Motivation Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	MANOVA	Experimental Research	"Teachers' non-verbal behaviors play a significant role in increasing student motivation"
Seifu and Gebru (2012)	123 grade 8 students and grade 8 English teachers	English classes	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Thomas et al., 1994)	"Student Motivational State Questionnaire" (Guilloteaux, 2007)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research (descriptive)	"Positive correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation to learn English"
Velez and Cano (2012)	208 students (36% were female and 64% were male)	Agricultural and Environmental sciences courses	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire" (Pintrich et al., 1991)	Pearson product-moment correlations	Correlational Research (descriptive)	"Verbal immediacy has a high correlation with student motivation to do the tasks"
Fallah (2014)	252 Iranian EFL learners (151 were female and 101 were male) Range= 18-43 years ($M = 20.71$)	English classes	"Verbal Immediacy Scale" (Gorham, 1988), "Non-verbal Immediacy Scale" (Richmond et al., 1987)	"Motivation Scale" (Gardner et al., 1985)	Structural equation model (SEM)	Correlational Research	"Teacher immediacy has a significant positive effect on the learners' motivation"
Estopp and Roberts (2015)	306 undergraduate students (63.7% were female and 36.3% were male)	Agricultural and Life sciences courses	"Immediacy Behavior Scale" (Christophel, 1990)	"Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire" (Pintrich et al., 1991)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research (descriptive)	"Positive correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation"

(Continued)

TABLE 1 | Continued

References	Sample (N)	Context	Immediacy measure	Motivation measure	Statistical analysis	Design	Main findings
Furlich (2016)	77 undergraduate students	Communication courses	“Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988), “Non-verbal Immediacy Scale” (Richmond et al., 1987)	“State Motivation Scale” (Christophel, 1990)	Independent linear regression	Correlational Research	“A significant linear regression relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation”
Tanriverdi Canbaz and Yavuz (2016)	221 students Range= 17-25 years	Schools	“Teacher Immediacy Behaviors Questionnaire” (Tanriverdi Canbaz and Yavuz, 2016)	“Student Motivation Questionnaire” (Tanriverdi Canbaz and Yavuz, 2016)	ANOVA	Correlational Research	“A considerable difference between the motivation scores of the students with the lower immediacy perception and those of the students with the higher immediacy perception scores”
Barahona Guerrero (2017)	139 undergraduate students (23.7% female, 76.3% male) Range= 18–39 years, <i>M</i> = 20.9	Engineering classes	“Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988), “Non-verbal Immediacy Scale” (Richmond et al., 1987)	“State Motivation Scale” (Christophel, 1990)	A multiple linear regression	Correlational Research	“Teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy predict student motivation”
Wijaya (2017)	60 students	X IIS 2/XI MIA 4	Questionnaire, Group Interview, Observation	Questionnaire, Group Interview, Observation	Simple descriptive statistic, Interactive model of data analysis	Mixed Method Research	“Teacher non-verbal immediacy enhances students’ motivation to learn English”
Stilwell (2018)	530 students	Schools	“Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988), “Non-verbal Immediacy Scale Observer Reports” (Richmond et al., 2003)	“Teacher Rating of Academic Achievement Motivation” (Stinnett et al., 1991)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research	“Positive relationship among teacher immediacy, student motivation, and cognitive learning”
Megawati and Hartono (2020)	EFL teachers and students	English classes	Interview, Observation	Interview, Observation	Simple descriptive statistic, Interactive model of data analysis	Qualitative research	“Students’ motivation are affected by both teachers’ verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors, notably questions, and facial expressions”
Hussain et al. (2021)	726 students	General education courses	“Verbal Immediacy Scale” (Gorham, 1988), “Revised Non-verbal Immediacy Measures” (McCroskey et al., 1996)	“Students Motivation Scale” (Rubin et al., 1994)	Pearson correlation	Correlational Research (descriptive)	“A strong correlation between verbal and non-verbal teacher immediacy and student motivation”

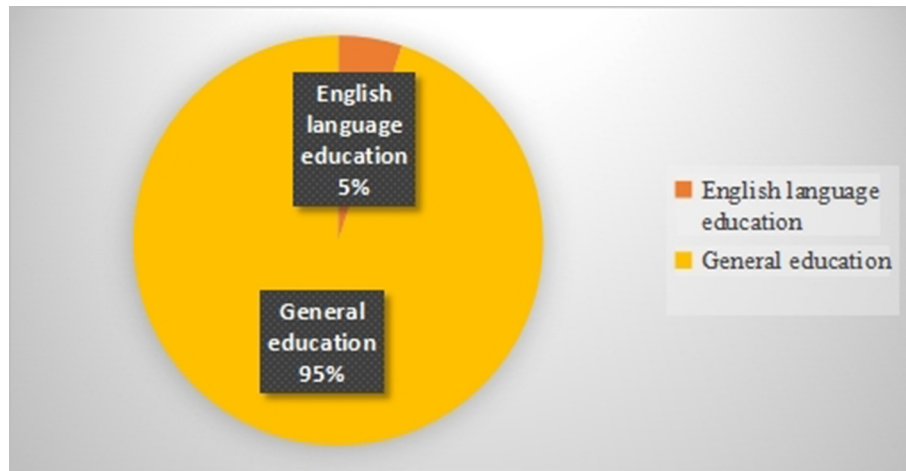


FIGURE 2 | Educational contexts.

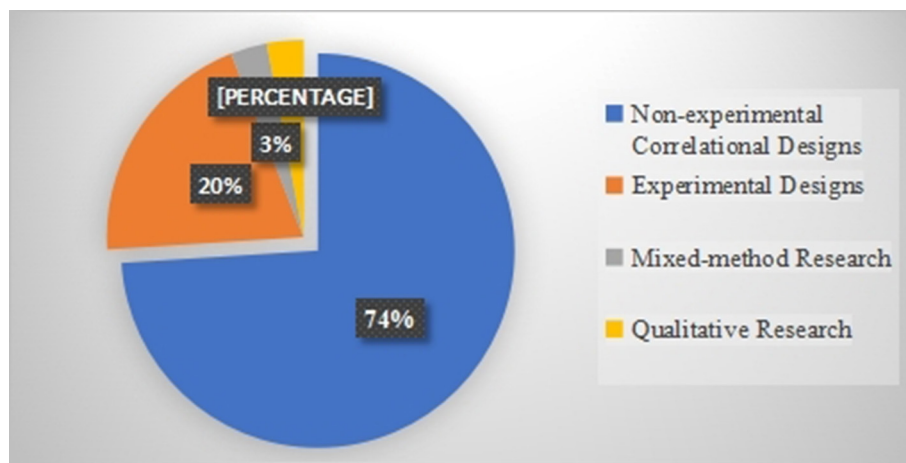


FIGURE 3 | Designs of the included studies.

Teacher Non-verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation

Of 30 studies included in this review, seven studies (Pribyl et al., 2004; Jung, 2006; Zhang and Sapp, 2008; Kalish, 2009; Hsu, 2010; Kerssen-Griep and Witt, 2012; Wijaya, 2017) examined the role of teacher non-verbal immediacy in students' motivation. The findings indicated that teachers' non-verbal behaviors play a significant role in enhancing student motivation. To put differently, the results of these studies revealed that teacher non-verbal immediacy is a strong predictor of student motivation.

Teacher Verbal and Non-verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation

The majority of reviewed studies ($n = 22$) probed the association between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation to learn. Of these studies, 20 studies found a positive relationship between both verbal and non-verbal immediacy

and student motivation. In other words, they reported that students' level of motivation can be remarkably enhanced by their teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediacy. On the other hand, two studies (Velez and Cano, 2012; Furlich, 2016) found that only teacher verbal immediacy can lead to increased student motivation.

DISCUSSION

The current study sought to offer the first systematic review on teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation. By reviewing, summarizing, and analyzing the relevant studies on this topic, it is hoped to shed more light on the significance of teacher immediacy for students, on the one hand, and to develop a broader picture of the current state of the art, on the other hand. This section discusses the main findings and crucial points. In light of these key findings, the limitations of the

included studies are highlighted, and some practical directions for future research are delineated.

Main Findings

While research has substantiated that teacher immediacy has numerous positive effects on teachers (e.g., Teven and Hanson, 2004; Santilli et al., 2011; Kelly and Westerman, 2014; Lybarger et al., 2017; Kalat et al., 2018; Frymier et al., 2019; Nayernia et al., 2020), the results indicate that the effects may also apply to their students. One of the most outstanding results is that there was some indication that teacher immediacy is tied with increased student motivation. Students being instructed by a teacher using verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors are more motivated than those instructed by teachers not employing immediacy actions. This finding may be explained by the fact that getting students' attention is the most crucial factor in motivating students. Moving around the class, making eye contact, and calling students by name enable teachers to do so (Keller, 1987). Another possible explanation for this is that those teachers tend to enhance their students' state motivation may strengthen their interaction with them (Allen et al., 2006; Myers et al., 2014).

Furthermore, we noticed some indications that immediacy behaviors will influence students beyond their motivation and probably interact with their learning outcomes—with moderate correlations identified with higher students' achievements. A probable explanation for this might be that the immediacy behaviors that teachers exhibit in interactions with students can inspire students to become more attentive, which in turn improves students' achievements (Mazer, 2013; York, 2013; Ai and Giang, 2018).

Limitations of the Included Studies

A number of limitations need to be noted regarding the included studies. First, it was found that all studies merely employed observer-report questionnaires to measure teacher immediacy; hence, the voices/perceptions of teachers regarding their immediacy are not heard. Second, all but one study (Wijaya, 2017) relied solely on questionnaires to measure teacher immediacy and student motivation. Third, most studies (74%) utilized non-experimental correlational designs; the experimental designs received scant attention. Forth, a scant number of studies have examined the role of teacher immediacy in school students' motivation. To put it differently, most of the included studies were conducted in universities. Fifth, the majority of studies (95%) focused on the impact of teacher immediacy on general education courses. That is, a limited number of studies probed the consequences of teacher immediacy in EFL/ESL classes. Finally, the studies included in this review scarcely examined the mediating effects of situational variables (e.g., age, gender, academic degree, etc.) on the relationship between teacher immediacy and student motivation.

Directions for Future Research

In light of the critical evaluation of the studies presented in this review, some suggestions for future research are provided

to deepen the current understanding of the topic. Given the importance of the topic, first and foremost, more empirical studies examining the associations between teacher immediacy and student motivation are needed. While the included studies provide some indications for the aforementioned associations, more extensive research in terms of design, samples, and findings is required. Moreover, given the scarcity of studies investigating the consequences of language teacher immediacy for EFL/ESL students' motivation, future research needs to be carried out to establish whether present findings will be generalized to English language classes.

A further practical direction for future work pertains to the measurement of teacher immediacy. As the voices of teachers regarding their immediacy are not heard, it would be interesting to provide different perspectives on this phenomenon beyond observer-report scales. Additionally, more research is needed to consider the role of situational variables. Future studies are highly recommended to determine whether different situational variables (e.g., age, gender, academic degree, etc.) might moderate the effects of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy on student motivation. Personality traits should also be taken into consideration in future research.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the present review can be informative and beneficial for teachers in all instructional-learning contexts (i.e., English language classes and general education courses). Employing verbal and non-verbal actions, teachers can increase the psychological intimacy between themselves and their students, which contributes to increased student motivation (Averbeck et al., 2006; Richmond et al., 2008). A higher degree of students' motivation can increase their learning outcomes, which is the ultimate goal of any educational system (Allen et al., 2006; Ai and Giang, 2018; Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh, 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Derakhshan, 2021). Furthermore, the review's outputs may also be informative for teacher educators. They should highlight the significance of teachers' interpersonal variables, especially verbal non-verbal immediacy to assist both pre- and in-service teachers in enhancing the amount of students' trait and state motivation. Being aware of the significance of verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors, teachers can also provide more efficient and appealing instruction. Hence, in teacher training courses, both pre- and in-service teachers should be equipped with the knowledge of appropriate immediacy behaviors (e.g., close proxemics, smiling, vocal varieties, etc.) to take advantage of these actions in their classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the current systematic review has shed more light on the association between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation, raising several concerns that have not been addressed in this area. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic review focusing on the relationship between teacher immediacy and student

motivation in instructional-learning contexts. The findings indicate that immediate teachers are capable of enhancing students' motivation. Based on the key features of the included studies, it is concluded that further research adopting more robust designs, employing self-report questionnaires, and examining the mediating effects of situational variables are required. Moreover, with regard to the number of studies conducted on the influence of immediate behaviors on EFL and ESL students' academic motivation, it is reasonable to infer that this area is still in its infancy and needs much more attention.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Book Review: New Perspectives on Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language

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Keywords: book review, second language, education, WTC, cultural differences

A Book Review on

New Perspectives on Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language

Nourollah Zarrinabadi and Mirosław Pawlak (Eds.) (Cham: Springer), 2021, 274 pages, ISBN: 978-3030676339

Willingness to communicate (WTC) in second (L2) or foreign language education has received considerable attention within the field of second language acquisition and applied linguistics. Some scholars have scrutinized the conceptual and empirical cornerstones of the dynamic nature of the WTC model posited by MacIntyre et al. (1998). It is stipulated that WTC has an undeniable impact on the learners' level of L2 motivation, success, and engagement; therefore, *New Perspectives on Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language*, edited adeptly by Nourollah Zarrinabadi and Mirosław Pawlak, is an opportune volume that successfully and innovatively looks at WTC in L2 from diverse theoretical perspectives and rigorous methodological studies to unearth the antecedents and predictors, facilitating, or debilitating learners' WTC in L2.

This collection encompasses 13 chapters. In the introductory chapter, the editors succinctly justify the role of WTC in L2 and outline the structure of the book. Embarking on the complex dynamic system, Chapter 2 conceptualizes WTC and argues that WTC is a multifaceted concept that needs to be scrutinized from different perspectives. Chapter 3, drawing on the developmental and qualitative study investigating the role of WTC among Iranian migrants in their past English classes and their new experiences in their present classes in New Zealand, concludes that such factors as "family influence, type of school, and teacher expertise" (p. 25) affected their WTC in the Iranian context while in New Zealand "their relationships with their classmates, opportunities to speak in and out of class, and the effect of different types of curriculum" (p. 25) affect their WTC.

The focus of Chapter 4 is to report the German EFL expatriates' WTC in how they experience their sojourn abroad, and how cultural differences can affect their intercultural communication, which affect their foreign language learning. The findings substantiate that utilizing English as a lingua franca has a decisive role in expatriates' communication and boosts their WTC. One of the merits of this chapter is the triangulation of the data, shedding more light on the ecologically-dependent and dynamic nature of WTC. One of the genuinely engaging chapters is Chapter 5 that aims to explore how cultural differences can mediate between self-assessment of language skills and WTC among Italian and Polish learners. The chapter elucidates that "the Italian participants not only assessed their level of English subskills significantly higher than the Polish students, but also that they were more willing to communicate in both settings" (p. 85). Although investigating the role of cross-cultural factors is a worthwhile contribution, if the author had collected qualitative data, the findings would have enlightened the readers more.

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Chapter 6 aims to unravel what learners' WTC and reticence signify to their English language teachers and explore the antecedents and causes of WTC and reticence. Findings demonstrated that "all the teacher participants held a negative view of the reticent students. They attributed reticence to more student internal causes within the student's control and willingness to communicate to more external, teacher controllable causes" (p. 119). I am impressed by how the author meticulously takes into account such factors as credibility, member checking, trustworthiness, etc., but it could have been more robust if the author had reported the inter-coder agreement index. Chapter 7 discusses the predictive role of extroversion, as a personality trait, on the Polish students' readiness to communicate in L2. The chapter concludes that such factors as "self-perceived levels of foreign language skills and language anxiety" (p. 135) can have a bearing on WTC in L2.

Investigating the role of flipped classroom strategy (FCS) among Iranian EFL learners' WTC is the focus of Chapter 8. The results of this mixed-methods study reveal that FCS affected learners' WTC by "making language learning enjoyable, increasing motivation, and decreasing language anxiety" (p. 155). Drawing on the experience sampling method, Chapter 9 reports on the dynamic interplay between WTC, foreign language anxiety (FLA), and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) among Iranian EFL students. The chapter concludes that a significant amount of variability is observed over time and that "the correlations between WTC and enjoyment were remarkably consistent, strong, and positive" (p. 169). In a conceptually-driven contribution, Chapter 10 foregrounds the pivotal role of a social network approach in L2 WTC. The authors elaborate on the key principles of the social network theory (SNT) and argue

how these tenets can be viably employed to investigate WTC in L2.

Chapter 11 represents how Iranian EFL teacher immediacy, self-disclosure, and technology policy can predict students' L2 WTC. The chapter concludes that reducing the distance between the teacher and the students can play an important role in students' WTC in the classroom. If the authors had added more qualitative data, the findings could have benefited the readers more. The penultimate chapter elucidates how vocabulary size can have a bearing on L2 WTC in a Turkish EFL context. The author concludes that "vocabulary level of the participants significantly predicted their WTC inside the classroom" (p. 250). The closing chapter provides some directions for future research. The author calls for more studies to be undertaken on "different language skills, linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, and technological issues" (p. 261) that can dynamically interact with or impact students' WTC.

As an applied linguist, I believe that this compendium offers a lot of food for thought for language teachers, pre-service and in-service teachers, teacher educators, and syllabus designers who are interested to scrutinize the multifaceted nature of WTC in L2. However, had the editors included studies from other Asian countries, it would have been more insightful. It is hoped that more theoretically-driven and pedagogically-oriented studies are undertaken to shed more light on how students' WTC can show its hidden dimensions.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Book Review: A Handbook for Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theory Into Practice

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Keywords: student engagement, higher education, theory into practice, learning, teaching

A Book Review on

A Handbook for Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theory Into Practice

Tom Lowe and Yassein El Hakim (New York, NY: Routledge), 2020, xix+303 pages, ISBN: 978-0-367-08543-8

Student engagement has been a buzzword for many years in education and has been uncritically regarded as an academic orthodoxy. However, reconciling theory and practice in student engagement in higher education is a long-felt gap, which is perspicaciously filled by *A Handbook for Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theory into Practice*, eloquently edited by Tom Lowe and Yassein El Hakim. Student engagement plays a significant role in students' success and motivation, highly affected by teacher-student interpersonal variables. which is affected.

This voluminous handbook comprises 23 chapters, thematically organized into four parts. Part I, containing six chapters, thoroughly introduces engagement in educational developments (SEEDs), looking at it from different perspectives. The editors open up this compendium by presenting a panoramic overview of the germane issues in SEEDs, sketching the historical change, and calling for a more critical perspective. The authors, in Chapter 2, argue that roles, position, and power of students need to be taken into account to build and sustain relationships with students, professors, and staff for SEEDs. The essence of Chapter 3 is "How do we ensure that non-traditional students are considered when planning student engagement strategy?" (p. 47); the author cogently argues "we need to ask them, work with them and be inspired by them to facilitate positive engagement for all." (p. 47). Chapter 4 recapitulates the theories and principles underlying SEEDs, accentuating that to ascertain that learner involvement initiatives are prosperous, "participants in them need to perceive them as if they are *authentically inclusive, transparent, trusting and empowering*" (Italics are original. p. 61). Chapter 5 highlights the changing nature and significance of learner manifestation by focusing on individual and collective student engagement. Chapter 6 critically looks at SEEDs from an assessment perspective, endorsing the opportunities for learners to assess their learning and teaching.

Part II consists of five chapters. Conceptualizing a fruitful model for SEEDs, Chapter 7 encourages us to focus on student involvement via classroom-oriented pedagogical partnership. Informed by the 4M (Micro, Meso, Macro, and Mega) framework, Chapter 8 examines how these four levels are instantiated in evaluating student-staff partnership as well as institutional changes and educational advancements. Chapter 9 presents the outcome of implementing a pilot work-integrated learning program, motivating learners to utilize their present non-science work as an impetus for their reflection. Chapter 10 elaborates on the features of Meaningful Student Involvement (MSI), problematizes its challenges, and concludes that "Rather than alienating students from the process of educational transformation, we should seek to do nothing less than

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enliven any level of interest students may have in the first place” (p. 146). Chapter 11 contends that learner involvement as a heuristic is truly problematic “on issues of both student identity (who?) and activity (doing what?)” (p. 149), advocating that learners are eventually the agents of discussions of involvement.

Part III, encompassing eight chapters, pertains to the practical models of student engagement. Prioritizing championing learners’ voices, learners as partners, and learners as collaborators, Chapter 12 supports the view that working individually is cumbersome, and we are advised to work in collaboration with other responsible bodies in HE. Like Chapter 12, Chapter 13 scrutinizes how student voices can transform their learning experiences and can culminate in more student engagement. Chapter 14 discusses that student engagement can be maximized “by supporting and normalizing grassroots partnership, where there are mechanisms in place to support students and staff who want to work in partnership in their own contexts and not necessarily be attached to an initiative” (p. 183). The other chapters in this section aim to unpack how students can be digitally empowered in technology-enhanced learning (Chapter 15) and how they can be empowered to boost their education (Chapter 16) through partnership initiatives. Enlightened Peer-Assisted Student Success initiatives, Chapter 17 reports the findings of a qualitative study, aiming to find out how these individuals become Success Coaches, how they become engaged in learning, and how they can promote agency. Besides, Chapter 18 represents that learner partnership schemes that can act as digital change agents are effective in student engagement. Similarly, Chapter 19 argues that scholarship can be an effective impetus to boost student engagement.

Part IV, comprising four chapters, is concerned with the future of learner engagement. Taking a personal stance, the author

in Chapter 20 argues that the future of learner involvement needs to realize the multidimensional nature of student success. Chapter 21 cogently recommends “the need to find space to be critically reflective; not to forget the distinction between *students engaging* and *engaging students*; to actively oppose appropriation of student engagement” (p. 263). The penultimate chapter suggests that issues such as cooperative partnerships, technology-enhanced initiatives, and student representativeness should be emphasized. Chapter 23 highlights the role of leadership, collaboration, equity, and empowerment in student engagement.

The editors of this handbook need to be commended for this meritorious compendium on different grounds. First, the handbook encompasses diverse theoretically-driven and empirically-grounded investigations which pave the way for future research on student engagement. Secondly, the handbook highlights the role of different student engagement initiatives which can act as springboards for teachers and researchers. Foregrounding the role of students’ voices in their engagement in different chapters is another merit of this collection. However, what remains untouched in this volume is the role of student engagement in language classes (Hiver et al., 2021). Besides, more can be added about the other dimensions of student engagement, namely academic, affective, behavioral, cognitive, and social.

Taken it together, this contemporary handbook on student engagement is a treasure trove for teachers, students, teacher educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and HE staff who are willing to maximize student engagement.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BZ was in charge of writing. Both authors make contribution to the research design.

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A Functional Review of Research on Clarity, Immediacy, and Credibility of Teachers and Their Impacts on Motivation and Engagement of Students

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The interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers have been substantiated to affect motivation, engagement, and success of students in the academic arena. Aiming to provide a systematic review of some teacher-related constructs in this domain, the present article was a bid to explain the crucial pillars of clarity, credibility, and immediacy of teachers in juxtaposition with theories and models of motivation and engagement of students. More particularly, this article presents some theoretical underpinnings to justify its claims using the ideas of positive psychology, the broaden-and-build theory, the rhetorical/relational goal theory, social cognitive theory, the attachment theory, some popular motivational theories, and the engagement theory. These theories signify the importance of clarity, credibility, and immediacy of teachers in the classroom and depict their association and impact on motivation and engagement of students. Later, the arguments are defended through a quick glance at the available empirical studies on each of the constructs. Afterward, the findings and implications of this review article are discussed. Finally, research gaps and future directions are presented for avid researchers to make new explorations.

Keywords: teacher's interpersonal communication, positive psychology, teacher's clarity, teacher's credibility, teacher's immediacy, motivation, engagement

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, teachers are one of the most important stakeholders in all educational milieus who can vastly determine the rate and quality of achievement and communication ability of students, especially in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context, in which students largely rely on their teachers for their learning and development (Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021). Hence, the classroom decisions that teachers make put a huge impact on the achievement and perception of students (Danielson, 2002). Along with the decisions and actions of teachers, their behavioral, psychological, and instructional features are prominent in academia and L2 education (Burroughs et al., 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2020). Obviously, in order to make learning occur and to help students experience wellbeing, teachers must take emotions of their learners into account (MacIntyre et al., 2019). This conceptualization emanated from positive psychology (PP), which explores how

people thrive and flourish *via* the strengths and virtues that make life good (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 2011). PP is said to be a rebirth for the humanistic psychology, which has a short history yet a long past (Macintyre and Mercer, 2014). It differs from humanistic psychology in that PP gives more weight to empirical research (Macintyre and Mercer, 2014). This theory rests on three pillars, namely, *positive emotions*, *positive character traits*, and *positive institutions* (Seligman, 2011). Along the same line, in his seminal work on PP and wellbeing, Seligman (2011) proposed a model which was built of five elements, namely, positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). These studies, rightly, signify the importance of emotions and psychological factors of learners in the processes of learning and teaching.

Moreover, as pinpointed by Habash (2010), to improve the teaching quality, teachers should employ effective strategies to capture the interests of learners and engage them in interactive activities in the classroom. One of the venues for reflecting care of teachers for comprehension and gain in learners is having clarity in the class. Teacher clarity is of significant value in interactive contexts, in which the teacher and the learner mutually affect the learning and teaching processes. By definition, teacher clarity refers to the strategies and approaches that teachers employ to make sure that students have mastered the course content and processes (Bolkan, 2017). Having positioned itself in the body of knowledge in this area, teacher clarity has been in the limelight over the past decade through a proliferation of research. The results of numerous studies certify that it significantly improves cognitive learning, has a strong impact on affective learning, promotes student success, and prompts positive emotional responses that direct students to higher levels of engagement and motivation (Titsworth et al., 2015; Bolkan, 2017). Similarly, in their recent investigation, Roksa et al. (2017) maintained that student motivation, engagement, and faculty interest account for two-thirds of the correlation between teacher clarity and academic success. These studies substantiate that, in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), which is now interaction-oriented in many countries with the rise of the communicative language trend, both teachers and learners dynamically shape and reshape the process of learning *via* an iterative and negotiated instruction (Bolkan, 2017; Roksa et al., 2017). As a result, teachers must have clarity in order to bring about the final outcome, which is student learning. This clarity can represent itself in the organization, explanation, examples and practices, and assessment of teachers.

One of the most critical offshoots of teacher clarity is classroom immediacy as high clarity leads to high comprehension and achievement and this, in turn, establishes a positive and friendly rapport between the teacher and his/her students. Teacher immediacy is defined as a set of verbal and nonverbal behaviors and strategies that teachers use to create a sense of closeness with students (Cakir, 2015). The term was first proposed by Mehrabian (1969) in his landmark study on communication behaviors to denote the degree of closeness and rapport between people (Finn and Schrod, 2012). As put by McCroskey and Richmond (1992), immediacy can manifest itself *via* verbal and non-verbal cues expressed by both

students and teachers in the classroom in an attempt to build psychological and physical proximity between them (Wilson and Ryan, 2013; Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Furthermore, research suggests that teacher clarity and immediacy are two interrelated constructs, yet they function independently (Comadena et al., 2007; Titsworth et al., 2015). They are at variance in that teacher clarity arouses cognitive interest, but teacher immediacy arouses emotional interest (Mazer, 2013). Nevertheless, they both buttress student learning and achievement, as suggested by the *additivity hypothesis*, which puts forward that the two constructs join to form an ideal learning context for the learners (Titsworth et al., 2015). Like other strands of research, teacher immediacy has been scrutinized by different scholars in different educational contexts. The summation of the results of such studies point to the power of teacher immediacy to improve student empowerment and engagement (Cakir, 2015), reduce anxiety (Kelly et al., 2015), sustain student attention (Bolkan et al., 2017), and affect students in online learning contexts (Brooks and Young, 2015).

Besides its multiple benefits mentioned, teacher immediacy has a robust and positive relationship with teacher credibility, which is believed to be one of the most significant teacher-related variables in education (Teven and Hanson, 2004; Santilli et al., 2011). By essence, the notion of teacher credibility refers to the attitude of a learner toward his/her teacher, considering the competence, caring, and trustworthiness of the teacher (McCroskey and Young, 1981). Credibility has a significant role in determining the existing rapport in the classroom as learners hardly admit information from an incredible source. Moreover, the process of transmitting knowledge to students is not solely contingent upon the message and its presentation but partly on the degree of credibility in the source of the message (Teven, 2007). In addition to that, scientific findings indicate that teacher credibility improves student motivation and different aspects of learning (Johnson and Miller, 2002; Teven, 2007). Similarly, credibility has been identified to encourage students to learn affectively and cognitively (Pogue and AhYun, 2006). Perusing the available literature on these important variables (i.e., teacher clarity, immediacy, and credibility), one can find numerous research studies, each focusing on a specific aspect. However, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher, the conduction of a systematic review study on such factors in L2 education and their juxtaposition with one another have been largely ignored. Urged by this backdrop, the present study made an effort to systematically review the history, definitions, models, areas of research, gaps, and future directions concerning clarity, immediacy, and credibility of teachers and their impacts on motivation and classroom engagement of students.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Positive Psychology

For a long time, applied linguistics has been ruled by cognitive perspectives, and this has ended in an underestimation of the crucial role that emotions play in foreign language learning and teaching (Dewaele et al., 2019). Nevertheless, in the past couple of decades, the false idea that exploring the emotions of an

individual is in some way unscientific has been superseded by a drastic shift branded as “emotionology” after a groundbreaking study conducted by Mackenzie and Alba-Juez (2019). Such a trend grew like a snowdrift by the passage of time, and emotional aspects of language learning and teaching boomed unprecedentedly among scholars (Prior, 2019). Now, “pigs can fly” and the centrality of affect and emotion has witnessed a bulk of research after the emergence of a new field called “positive psychology.” PP focuses on the exploration of how people thrive and flourish (Macintyre and Mercer, 2014) and capitalizes more on the positive side of life as opposed to the exclusive focus of general psychology on problems and abnormalities (Seligman, 2006). The central aim of this school of psychology is to assist people to live a better life and to create instruments to constitute positive emotions, to upsurge engagement, and to make life meaningful (Seligman, 2006).

Positive psychology takes a giant step and goes beyond the investigation of “anxiety, motivation, and attitude.” Instead, it focuses on the role of constructs and attributes such as courage, perseverance, wellbeing, flow, optimism, hope, resilience, creativity, and happiness. As for its components, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) contended that PP is set up on three core pillars, namely, “positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions” (p. 6). Positive subjective experience concerns internal experiences, such as emotions; positive individual traits refer to traits associated with living well; and positive institutions are the institutional contexts that allow people to develop (Macintyre and Mercer, 2014). Spreading the seeds on PP on the ground of applied linguistics, scholars carried out numerous investigations on the role of emotions and attitudes of stakeholders in incurring learning in different educational settings. This development blossomed with the burgeoning body of research on emotions, affective factors, and positive affects in L2 education (Dewaele, 2015). However, this focus on emotional dimensions in applied linguistics has been biased toward negative emotions, and PP is still in the shadow of cognitive-oriented outlooks (Dewaele et al., 2019).

Although PP and its tenets bring about many benefits for L2 learners and teachers, such as improving their resiliency and hardiness to cope with future negative events, taking into account their affect, and moderating the influence of negative emotions (Gregersen, 2013; Dewaele et al., 2019), this science has also been criticized for its exhaustive employment of cross-sectional designs, simplistic treatment of positive and negative emotions, ignorance of individual and group differences, and, finally, weak measurement of emotions (Lazarus, 2003). Yet, researching the unexplored avenues of this scholarly domain and resolving its problems is a tough nut to crack in many educational contexts, and the present review aims to propose some directions in this regard.

The Broaden-And-Build Theory

As one of the offshoots of PP, the broaden-and-build theory proposed by Fredrickson (2001) pays special attention to positive emotions in flourishing and continued actions of humans. It makes a distinction between positive and negative emotions. Based on this theory, positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, and

love) have five core functions: (1) they broaden thought-action repertoires, (2) undo the enduring impacts of negative emotions, (3) improve psychological resiliency, (4) build personal resources, and (5) produce psychological and physical wellbeing. On the other hand, negative emotions, such as anxiety, tension, and fear, have detrimental effects on people as they narrow thought-action repertoires of an individual and limit his/her level of performance (Macintyre and Mercer, 2014).

The logic behind this theory is the conception that positive emotions can cause ideal short-term and long-term functioning. Consequently, these emotions are of paramount importance, which need to be cultivated in individuals not only as an end but also as a means to promote psychological and physical wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2004). In the context of L2 education, positive emotions are significant as a learning structure that cares for influential factors, inspires student perseverance and pursuits of thoughts and actions, and facilitates the ground for optimal motivation, learner engagement, and learning (Rahimi and Bigdeli, 2014). Another benefit of positive emotions is that they help teachers to eradicate and regulate negative emotions, such as stress, anxiety, and fear, and even alter them to positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004). Hence, L2 teachers and material developers are expected to utilize techniques, strategies, and tasks that reflect their care for augmenting positive emotions and preventing negative emotions in an attempt to establish a learning atmosphere in which students can flourish and become tough and resilient metals which “bend but not break.”

The Rhetorical/Relational Goal Theory

The rhetorical/relational goal theory (RRGT) is a theory in the realm of instructional communication, which was proposed by Mottet et al. (2006) to see how the process of instructional communication operates. Based on this theory, both teachers and students have rhetorical and relational goals in the classroom that they wish to attain (Mottet et al., 2006). Therefore, each classroom centers around the needs/goals of learners and instructors who have relational needs (e.g., to be liked and admitted) and rhetorical needs (e.g., to accomplish a task and to gain a specific grade). The crucial responsibility is put upon shoulders of teachers as they are expected to manage both relational and rhetorical needs at the same time through their behavioral choices to fulfill the classroom needs; and once these goals are obtained and student needs are satisfied, then the optimal learning can take place (Frymier, 2007). It is worth noting that the rhetorical and relational behaviors of teachers serve different purposes. For instance, teachers employ rhetorical instructional communication behaviors (e.g., clarity) to promote effective teaching and affect beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of learners in the class *via* shaping their designed instructional messages (Beebe and Mottet, 2009). On the other hand, teachers use relational instructional communication behaviors (e.g., nonverbal immediacy) to stir the formation of a mutually shaped professional relationship and rapport with their students (Myers, 2008).

As in other areas of education, teachers and students have different ways of forming rhetorical and relational goals. They both have academic and relational needs, which need to be

attended to in academia in order to provide a friendly learning context that fosters motivation and optimum achievement among students. In sum, as research shows, in any learning context, teachers must use a blend of rhetorical and relational behaviors in order to bring about favorable outcomes (Myers et al., 2018). Such instructional behaviors of teachers may be affected by other related factors, such as the teaching context, personality of teachers, perceptions of students, and credibility, clarity, and homophily of teachers (Dunleavy, 2006; Beebe and Mottet, 2009).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) is a learning theory, proposed by Bandura (1986), which asserts that learning happens in a social environment with a dynamic and mutual interaction among the individual, context, and behavior (also known as *reciprocal determinism*). SCT highlights the crucial role of social influence and external/internal social support as its core features. SCT considers cognitive aspects of behavior and learning, in which the person obtains and preserves behavior and at the same time confirms the power of social setting wherein people carry out the behavior. As pinpointed by Bandura (2008), SCT posits that, when individuals observe behavior of another individual (a model) and its consequences, they recall this sequence in their subsequent behaviors. In other words, SCT underscores the prominence of behavioral observation, modeling, and imitation and the effect of attitudes and emotional reactions of others in behavior and learning of an individual (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, SCT deals with how environmental and cognitive factors interact to impact the learning and behavior of people. This theory has long been associated with a set of important constructs of learning and development, namely, reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, observational learning, reinforcement, expectations, and self-efficacy.

Despite its benefits and potentials, SCT has been criticized for its overestimation of the role of the environment in determining behavior of an individual, weak organization and basis, the unclear idea of the amount of power among each of the factors (person, context, and behavior), negligence of maturation and biological-hormonal tendencies that can affect behaviors of an individual, overemphasis on emotion and motivation in relation to past experiences, and difficult application (see Schunk, 2012).

The Attachment Theory

The attachment theory (AT) was proposed by Bowlby (1969) to describe relational patterns among people. It has been regarded as one of the cornerstones of developmental psychology and child maturation, which posits that attachment of a child to a caregiver generates a type of behavior that can later become autonomous. Although this theory has been mostly associated with the development of a child and romantic relationships of adults, it has also been applied in the context of language education by some scholars, such as Geddes (2006) and Fleming (2008). Attachment is an emotional tie among individuals that can affect their relationships, experiences, and engagement in activities. In the context of L2 education, it can be claimed that students develop emotional attachments with their teachers and

peers. Such attachments can be secure or insecure. According to AT, those students who form an attachment with their teacher are relaxed to make explorations, and such emotional attachments can become the foundation of their socialization (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). Another benefit of student-teacher attachments is creating risk-taking learners who are not afraid of failure and are highly motivated and engaged in classroom activities (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). In such a stress-free and friendly environment, the immediacy and rapport of teachers with their students is high, and in case a learner does not know a concept, he/she is not flushed and stressed out. In sum, teachers must establish secure attachments with their students in order to provide them with a ground for their progress and success. Correspondingly, the rapport and immediacy of teachers will increase in such an environment.

Motivation and Engagement of Students: Theories and Models

The construct of motivation has long been regarded as the core of success and achievement of humans in both personal and academic life (Gopalan et al., 2017). It is the spirit behind any action that a person takes without which nothing is possible. In educational domains, motivation has been numerously investigated from different angles and perspectives, which unanimously affirmed the impact of this construct on the achievement and learning of learners (see Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011; Al-Hoorie, 2017). In a period of around 64 years of motivation research, different theories and models have been proposed by different scholars and leading figures of this strand of research, which is still developing. Among those models, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), The ARCS Model, SCT (explained earlier), and Expectancy Theory have been the most widely cited and employed ones in the pertinent literature. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Theory considers motivation to be driven by internal and external forces. When a person does an activity only for self-satisfaction and enjoyment, his/her motivation is said to be intrinsically formed. On the other hand, when the motivation and drive of an individual to complete a task is to gain an external reward or appraisal, he/she is believed to be extrinsically motivated (Brown and Lee, 2015). According to this theory, both types of motivations have positive and negative points. Yet, intrinsic motivation is more effective in the complex process of language learning as it inspires the interaction, effort, and long-run performance in the learner (Pinder, 2011).

Another popular theory in this domain is that of SDT established by Ryan and Deci (2000). It is a macro theory of personality and motivation whose fundamental focus is on inner motives of a human for development and change, together with their psychological needs. Additionally, SDT postulates that human beings can become self-determined in case three core needs of *competence*, *relatedness*, and *autonomy* are satisfied in them. The concept of self-determination means that one is able to control and manage his/her behavior and action. Given this, once a student considers him/herself as capable of controlling and managing a task, he/she would invest more time and energy in

accomplishing the task properly. The key to the three core needs of this theory is the “sociocultural context” in which one carries out a task (Legault, 2017). The next seminal model in motivation research is the attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) model proposed by Keller (1983). It is a synthetic approach to motivation, which pinpoints four key components of learning that motivate the students and maintain their spirit: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The model comprises different categories and subcategories of motivational attributes with the purpose of identifying motivational features of students and developing suitable remedial techniques and strategies to form and maintain their motivation. The final theory of motivation to be explained here is the Expectancy Theory, which was first introduced by Vroom (1964) and later developed by Van Eerde and Thierry (1996). The theory is based on the idea that an individual makes more attempts if he/she expects the outcome of the action to be valuable and rewarding. Like other theories, there are essential components in this theory as well. It has three core elements: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (VIE). Valence is the importance that one places on something, instrumentality refers to the dependency of reward on the performance of an individual, and, finally, expectancy denotes the expectation of an outcome through increased effort (Vroom, 1964).

As for the last variable of concern in this review study (i.e., student engagement), there is a popular theory known as the Engagement Theory which capitalizes on the meaningful involvement of the students in their learning by means of interactive tasks (Miliszewska and Horwood, 2006). The theory was originally proposed by Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) and has three main principles: “*Relate*,” or learning via communication and collaboration; “*Create*,” or learning through creative and project-based activity; and “*Donate*,” or learning through having an outside focus. This theory improves team learning, collaboration, and large community involvement (Kearsley and Shneiderman, 1998). This theory is related to motivation, in that an engaged student in the classroom will exert more effort when he/she finds the tasks meaningful and transferable to real life. In simple words, engaged students acquire and keep motivation more easily as opposed to demotivated students.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES: A CURSORY GLANCE

A bulk of research studies in the available literature has indicated that the positive emotions and interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers affect the learning process of students (Gabryś-Barker, 2016). The reason behind this mutual impact in the teaching profession is that positive student–teacher rapport is the basis of many successful classroom practices (Mercer and Gkonou, 2020; Strachan, 2020). Teaching is said to be a relational and negotiated job in which success is a function of many factors and stakeholders, not just the teacher. It is a myth to claim that students have narrow impacts on professional career of their teachers. Instead, even the identity of a teacher

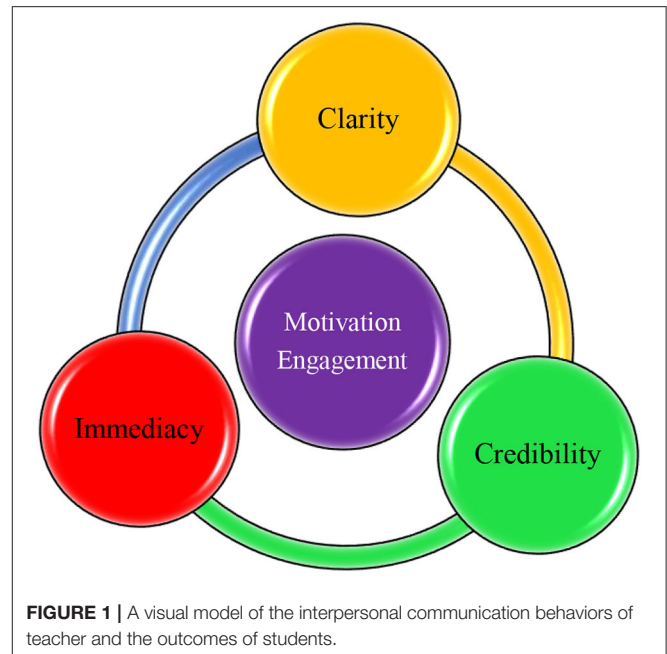


FIGURE 1 | A visual model of the interpersonal communication behaviors of teacher and the outcomes of students.

is co-constructed by the interactions that he/she has with his/her pupils and colleagues let alone other aspects (Beijaard et al., 2004). Many studies provided evidence for this mutual relationship and pinpointed that engagement, achievement, wellbeing, motivation, success, hope, and so forth of students are correlated with the interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers (Frymier et al., 2019; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021).

One of the most important teacher-related constructs in this domain is teacher clarity (**Figure 1**), which has been defined as the strategies and approaches that teachers employ to make sure that students have mastered the course content and processes (Bolkan, 2017). It is a rhetorical behavior that signifies a process in which a teacher takes advantage of different verbal and nonverbal cues to effectively convey the meaning of course content to students (Myers et al., 2014). Existing literature on this variable affords a robust testimony for its positive impacts and associations with the cognitive learning of students (Bolkan, 2017), affect and affective learning (Mazer, 2013; Bolkan et al., 2016), motivation (Roksa et al., 2017), process, retrieval, and subsumption of information (Bolkan et al., 2016), deep learning (Blaich et al., 2016), academic success (Roksa et al., 2017), critical thinking (Wang et al., 2015), empowerment (Finn and Schrodt, 2012), and engagement (Roksa et al., 2017).

Another variable that was reviewed is teacher immediacy, which has been defined as verbal and nonverbal behaviors of teachers that decrease physical and psychological distance among individuals and constitute a sort of closeness (Mehrabian, 1967; Cakir, 2015). Such behaviors in the class are said to enlighten the classroom atmosphere and make students passionate and admitted by others (Li, 2003). Immediacy and liking are intertwined as they have a positive correlation with each other. When a teacher shows high immediacy, he/she is probably more

liked by the students. Conversely, when the students like their teachers, this liking inspires the teacher to demonstrate more immediacy in the classroom (Mehrabian, 1971). This affiliation is a natural reaction in that we are prone toward people and things that we like and evade from those we dislike (LeFebvre and Allen, 2014). This emotional bond is of paramount significance in educational contexts as teachers are influential in the lives of students, and failure in this area will affect the ability of teachers to make an impact on the minds (almost impossible) of learners (Whitaker, 2006). The rich literature on teacher immediacy shows that it is a positive predictor of student learning (Violanti et al., 2018), reduced anxiety (Ballester, 2015), motivation (Frymier et al., 2019), sustained student attention (Bolkan et al., 2017), class attendance (Rocca, 2004), and engagement (Dixson et al., 2017; Derakhshan, 2021).

As pinpointed by Gray et al. (2011), a classroom is a persuasive context wherein the teacher as the authority of the class is in charge of convincing the students when facing opposition. This raises the importance of another interpersonal communication behavior (teacher credibility), which refers to the degree of competence, trustworthiness, and believability of a teacher from the perspective of the students (Teven and McCroskey, 1997). Based on this definition, in contrast with immediacy, teacher credibility is way beyond “liking” and concerns trust of students in the capability of the teacher to teach them something. In the classroom in which mostly teacher is the “influencer” and students are “influencee,” credibility is the basis of an effective influence as everything is contingent upon the credibility of the influencer (Hackman and Johnson, 2000). This line of research has been examined by different scholars from different parts of the world. Research indicates that this construct affects the motivation and learning of students (Johnson and Miller, 2002; Teven, 2007; Gray et al., 2011), affective and cognitive learning (Pogue and AhYun, 2006), class attendance (Pishghadam et al., 2021), and engagement (Derakhshan, 2021). Concerning the motivation and engagement of students, numerous studies have been conducted to explore and define the terms and propose comprehensive models (Dörnyei, 2009; Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). However, due to space constraints and previously referred to studies throughout this review, the author avoids going through further studies and reinventing the wheel. The point is that both motivation and engagement have mostly been examined in relation to interpersonal communication behavior (e.g., credibility, care, immediacy) of a teacher in the pertinent literature rather than several behaviors, and this justifies the conduction of this theoretical review.

DISCUSSION

In this functional review, the author went through the definition and significance of positive emotions and interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers, making references to the theoretical foundations of this strand of research (i.e., positive psychology, the broaden-and-build theory, the rhetorical/relational goal theory, SCT, the attachment theory, motivational theories, and the engagement theory). Additionally,

out of numerous communication behaviors, three constructs of teacher clarity, immediacy, and credibility were examined for their definitions, empirical studies, and their abundant effects on learning motivation and engagement of students. Besides, other areas of education, which are predicted by those three constructs, have been touched upon through presenting empirical studies. Based on this review, this research domain, which revolves around the positive emotions and rapport of teacher with students established by interpersonal communication behaviors, has many pedagogical implications for different parties in EFL contexts including students, teachers, teacher trainers, materials developers, supervisors, and researchers.

As for students, this strand of research can be of value in that it raises their awareness and knowledge of the fact that the teaching–learning process is a co-constructed phenomenon whose success and occurrence are not exclusively the duty of teachers. Students are equally influential in providing a fertile ground for their learning to occur. They should make attempts to establish a friendly relationship with their instructors, and this immediacy adds trust to the whole process of education thereby students flourish. When students are cognizant of their active role in (re)constructing professional identity of their teacher, they will show more motivation and engagement in their practices. In other words, the process of teaching–learning is like a nested system in which teachers and students have equal impact on one another. Teachers are the second group that can benefit from the ideas presented in this review article, in that they can get to know the importance of their interpersonal communication behaviors, especially their instructional clarity, immediacy, and credibility and their impacts on various aspects of education of students. Moreover, they can use this line of research to make reflections on their practices, identify the most appropriate strategies to establish a strong tie with their students, and facilitate the ground for their learning to occur. They can also develop their professional practice by working on their interpersonal/relational behaviors with students and meet their academic needs. Additionally, teachers can establish an approachable classroom rapport that stimulates academic success, alters behavior of students, and provides a conducive learning environment.

The next stakeholders to benefit from this study are teacher trainers, in the sense that they can cultivate in novice teachers the knowledge and application of interpersonal communication behaviors, in general, and teacher clarity, immediacy, and credibility, in particular. They can offer workshops, seminars, webinars, and other training courses in which pedagogical, psychological, relational, and affective aspects of teaching are equally taught. More specifically, teacher educators can afford teachers an opportunity to know the significance and use of interpersonal communication behaviors in the success of their profession. The propositions of this article are beneficial for material developers, in that they can design materials and textbooks in which, besides pedagogical concerns, interpersonal communication behaviors are also developed. They can write materials in such a way that teachers can work on their clarity, rapport with students, and credibility as teaching without believability works in vain. Similarly, supervisors can

take advantage of this article to shift their attention in their supervisory practices from solely monitoring the pedagogical performance and practices of teachers to their interpersonal communication behaviors, without which their teaching is blind. The last group who can use the findings of this study consists of researchers who can conduct similar studies on other constructs of this line of research, such as teacher stroke, teacher care, rapport, confirmation, and humor using different instruments and designs in EFL, English as a second language (ESL), English for academic purposes (EAP), and English for specific purposes (ESP) settings.

In summary, the review of related literature on this strand of research shows a number of shortcomings that need to be resolved. First, despite the fact that interpersonal communication behaviors are equally important in the academic arena, only teacher immediacy has been sufficiently scrutinized (Dixson et al., 2017; Derakhshan, 2021), and other variables such as teacher care, confirmation, and stroke have been kept at the margins (Hsu, 2012; Pishghadam et al., 2021). This provides a good impetus for running analogous studies on the less researched variables of this area in relation to the demographic variables (age, gender, proficiency, etc.) to see if they still lead to academic success or not. Furthermore, future studies can examine teacher interpersonal communication behaviors from the perspective of the students to spot their perceptions, preferences, needs, and wants. Similar studies can also be conducted through online learning environments to explore if virtual communication mode makes a change in the mentioned constructs. Future scholars are recommended to investigate the sociocommunicative style of the teacher, and its effects on how interpersonal communication behaviors operate.

Tracing back the related literature on teacher clarity, immediacy, and credibility, one can easily notice that these important teacher-related variables have mostly been gauged *via* questionnaires and inventories (Finn and Schrodt, 2016; Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Hall, 2019), and only in rare cases have qualitative measures like interview and case study been used (Barclay, 2012; Bondie and Zusho, 2017). The same story has happened in exploring the motivation and engagement of students (e.g., Appleton et al., 2006; Martin, 2008). All in all, what is missing in this scholarly territory is the use of qualitative-based tools to measure clarity, credibility, and immediacy of teachers, such as observation, portfolios, diaries, interventions, longitudinal studies, case studies, and interview panels with experts, all of which have many potentials to add to our interpretations of these constructs.

Future studies can be done on the process and development of these variables *via* longitudinal and case studies to identify the

changes that teachers may undergo in the course of developing such communication behaviors. Similarly, portfolios, reflective journals, and think-aloud protocols can be used to see the mental processes that teachers and students experience in this regard. Treatments or experimental studies are also suggested to see if the instruction of such variables (e.g., clarity and credibility) is meaningfully different from those teachers who do not receive training. Another backdrop in this area of research is that culture, which has a considerable impact on all aspects of the life of an individual, has been scarcely investigated, and this is the Anglophone culture that has dominated this domain so far. Hence, intercultural and cross-cultural studies are recommended to examine the disparities that may exist between teachers of various cultural milieus despite the fact that some attempts have recently been made (e.g., Santilli et al., 2011; Derakhshan, 2021).

Moreover, the interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers, to date, have been mostly explored from the lens of the students, and the perspectives of other stakeholders have been overlooked. Future studies can work on the perceptions of supervisors, teacher trainers, and the teachers themselves. Narrowing their focus, avid researchers are suggested to investigate the impact of experience level, academic qualifications, age, and gender of teachers on their communication behaviors. Another problem of this scholarly domain is that it has mostly been scrutinized in the context of general education and hard sciences, and EFL/ESL environments with their specific interpersonal relations and dialogic nature (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) have captured insufficient attention among scholars. All these gaps signify that the research on this domain is still fresh with many unexplored territories for interested researchers. Therefore, scholars are universally invited to stand on the shoulders of the leading figures of this territory and run similar studies and ultimately add fresh insights to the body of knowledge in this area.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Book Review: Teacher Wellbeing

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Keywords: positive teacher, teacher well-being, accomplishment, habits of thinking, positive psychology

A Book Review on

Teacher Wellbeing

Sarah Mercer and Tammy Gregersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2020, 168 pages, ISBN: 978-0-19-440560-7

Rooted in positive psychology, positive teacher well-being has recently gained enormous momentum in teacher education. Research has also substantiated that although language teaching is rewarding, it is also anxiety-inducing, and teachers need to bear many negative emotions and pressures in their professional careers. Besides, it is postulated that teacher well-being is inextricably linked to students' outcomes, achievement, motivation, and engagement. Consequently, it is immensely essential to give full attention to language teacher well-being. Nonetheless, research in this area remains scanty. The present monograph, entitled *Teacher Wellbeing*, eloquently written by Sarah Mercer and Tammy Gregersen, is an opportune addition to the literature on teacher education since it views teachers' professional development and well-being through the prism of strengths-driven, opportunity-focused, and internally driven processes.

Structurally, this trailblazing monograph encompasses eight chapters that are thematically interconnected. In Chapter 1, conceptualizing the concept of well-being, the authors elucidate that some frameworks shed light on our understanding of well-being throughout the book. The first framework, known as PERMA, which stands for Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment was conceptualized by Seligman (2011). The second underlying rationale behind various approaches of well-being in this volume is the eudemonic view of well-being, which accentuates a sense of meaning, purpose, fulfillment of one's potential, and connection in the real world. The third underlying framework fleshes out that individuals have four different types of well-being: physical, emotional, mental or intellectual, and spiritual.

Pinpointing the indispensable role of institutions and what they can offer to boost the well-being of their staff, facilitate job satisfaction, as well as diminish the amount of burnout is the focus of Chapter 2. The authors highlight that institutions need to appreciate the benefits for their organization, their staff, and their students, to foster teacher well-being. The chapter presents different characteristics of positive organizations which render them rewarding places to work, discusses how job fulfillment can be enormously impacted by the "person-organization fit," and stresses the significance of teacher autonomy in their work-related practices.

Chapter 3 concentrates on habits of thinking and how to avoid counter-productive thoughts to give rise to conducive support. The authors also discuss diverse identities involved in being a language teacher, introduce the notion of mindsets, as ways of thinking about personality traits, and demonstrate the reasons individuals give for their successes. Considering the sources of motivation for language teachers and how teachers can maintain and protect motivation in a professional career is the prime objective of Chapter 4. The authors elaborate on how flow motivation boosts their spirit momentarily and builds psychological capital over time. The authors cogently argue that dips in motivation are prevalent, so finding moments of flow, job crafting, and reflecting on

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personal strengths, can provide some remedies to nurture our well-being as a language teacher.

One of the cornerstones of teacher well-being is to nurture and nourish positive social relationships in the workplace. Chapter 5 scrutinizes the quintessential elements which lead to positive relationships, emerging primarily from socio-emotional competencies. This chapter is particularly fascinating because it gives more information about how to build and broaden rapport with learners, from the interpersonal and intercultural dimensions of relationships. The chapter also investigates ways of enhancing positive group dynamics and the value of collaborative activities.

Foregrounding the pivotal role of experiencing and realizing a wide array of emotional dimensions in language teaching is the focus of Chapter 6. The authors aptly caution against an undue emphasis on negative emotions and suggest how to embark on positive dimensions. What I found particularly intriguing in this chapter was the concept of emotional labor, defined as a kind of emotion regulation where an individual terminates an emotion and performs another emotion. The penultimate chapter not only deals with the concept of stress but also examines what an optimal level of stress can be for each individual, regarding different personalities, life commitments, and cultural time perceptions. The chapter also critically discusses the concept of work-life balance, pinpointing the importance of physical well-being for mental well-being. It discusses the lessons to be learned about how to consciously manage our mental and physical well-being through practices of mindfulness.

In the closing chapter, the authors look ahead at how to nurture a sense of balance in well-being in the long run. Short-term interventions and setting goals can help us keep abreast of our manifold range of individual priorities without losing sight of our overall well-being. Discussing what language teachers can do to nurture their well-being in a long-lasting way for the rest

of their professional careers and its benefits of being a language teacher is the other objective of this chapter. The authors provide a set of “questions for action” that reiterate crucial themes of all chapters.

The merits of this unique volume are manifold. First, it offers language teachers viable support in nurturing their well-being by highlighting the value of our emotional, physical, psychological, social, personal, and professional selves through a “whole-person” perspective regarding contextual factors. Secondly, judiciously embedded throughout the volume are some inspirational quotes that capture the essence of fundamental points about well-being. Thirdly, what seems applicable is the activities at the end of each chapter which can help language teachers to reflect on their personal growth and well-being. Finally, recommending three books at the end of each chapter provides a treasure trove of information for those enthusiasts to upgrade and deepen their understanding of the pertinent literature on well-being. However, had the authors added more empirical first-hand research on well-being, the readers would have benefited enormously.

All in all, I feel confident to suggest this thought-provocative volume to in-service and pre-service teachers, school principals, teacher educators, policymakers, and syllabus designers who are interested in nurturing and sustaining language teacher well-being. I suppose more studies can be done on the role of well-being and other factors such as resilience, immunity, job satisfaction, etc.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JF contributed to conception and design of the study, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, then wrote sections of the manuscript and approved the submitted version.

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Validation of a Short Scale for Student Evaluation of Teaching Ratings in a Polytechnic Higher Education Institution

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The general purpose of this work is 2-fold, to validate scales and to present the methodological procedure to reduce these scales to validate a rating scale for the student evaluation of teaching in the context of a Polytechnic Higher Education Institution. We explored the relationship between the long and short versions of the scale; examine their invariance in relation to relevant variables such as gender. Data were obtained from a sample of 6,110 students enrolled in a polytechnic higher education institution, most of whom were male. Data analysis included descriptive analysis, intraclass correlation, exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM), confirmatory factorial analysis, correlations between the short and long form corrected for the shared error variance, gender measurement invariance, reliability using congeneric correlated factors, and correlations with academic achievement for the class as unit with an analysis following a multisection design. Results showed four highly correlated factors that do not exclude a general factor, with an excellent fit to data; configural, metric, and scalar gender measurement invariance; high reliability for both the long and short scale and subscales; high short and long-form scale correlations; and moderate but significant correlations between the long and short versions of the scales with academic performance, with individual and aggregate data collected from classes or sections. To conclude, this work shows the possibility of developing student evaluation of teaching scales with a short form scale, which maintains the same high reliability and validity indexes as the longer scale.

Keywords: criterion validity, reliability, scale validation, short scale development, structure validity, student evaluation of teaching

INTRODUCTION

The academic failure and dropout rates in higher education in Ecuador, especially in Engineering studies, are very high. Sandoval-Palis et al. (2020) find a dropout rate in the 1st year of university studies at the National Polytechnic School of around 70%. Braxton et al. (2000) and Kuh (2002) point out the quality of teaching as one of the determining aspects of academic failure and dropout. Likewise, instructional factors are one of the key factors in explaining academic success and dropout. Schneider and Preckel (2017) highlights the effect on academic readiness of the teacher-student interaction, the type of communication, the preparation, organization, and presentation of

content by the teacher, the teacher's planning, and the feedback provided to the student, are some of the aspects.

Student evaluation of teaching (SET) ratings is a generalized procedure in the institutions of higher education (Richardson, 2005; Zabaleta, 2007; Huybers, 2014). SET is a useful tool for formative aims, such as feedback for the improvement of instruction, and for administrative decision-making about recruitment, career progress or economic incentives (Linse, 2017). A systematic review on the subject shows that there are very few publications on the validation of student evaluation of university teaching scales -SET- in South America, collected in the most important databases such as Scopus and WoS -Web of Science- (Pimienta, 2014; Andrade-Abarca et al., 2018), and some more when the scope of the search is expanded (Fernández and Coppola, 2008; Montoya et al., 2014).

In the Ecuadorian context, there are the works of Aguilar and Bautista (2015) and Andrade-Abarca et al. (2018), who validate questionnaires in the field of an Ecuadorian polytechnic university. While in the review by Loor et al. (2018) on the evaluation of university teaching staff, the need to improve the quality of the evaluation process is concluded.

Student Evaluation of Teaching Ratings Scales

The instruments normally used to measure students' evaluation of their teachers, programs, and students' satisfaction with their instruction are known as standard rating scales. However, research on student evaluation of teaching ratings has not yet provided clear answers to some questions about their validity (Marsh, 2007a,b; Spooen et al., 2013; Hornstein, 2017; Uttl et al., 2017).

Many evaluation instruments have been constructed and validated within the home institution itself, and the results of such validation have not always been published, and in some instances they have not even been tested for psychometric quality (Richardson, 2005). In addition, there is a lack of consensus on the number and type of dimensions (Spooen et al., 2013), due to conceptual problems related to the lack of a theoretical framework about what effective teaching is, and methodological problems concerning the measurement of these dimensions as a data-driven process (in which different *post-hoc* analytic techniques are used). It seems necessary to use the most common dimensions, which are associated with greater teaching effectiveness.

A question concerning construct validity that arises in relation to student evaluation of teaching rating scales is whether it has a one-dimensional (Abrami et al., 1997; Cheung, 2000) or multidimensional structure. Marsh et al. (2009) defended the application of exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM) methods integrating confirmatory (CFA) and exploratory factor analyses (EFA) to analyse issues related to multidimensional student evaluations of university teaching (SETs), on the basis of the measures that can be obtained both of the specific dimensions and a general factor of the quality of teaching.

An open and controversial question related to the criterion validity is the relationship of SET scores to student academic

achievement. To answer this question, a series of revision and meta-analytical studies have been carried out (Cohen, 1981; Feldman, 1989; Clayson, 2009; Uttl et al., 2017). Taken together, the results regarding the relation between SET and academic performance, when multiple sections are included and the previous academic achievement is controlled, show that SET is moderately related to academic achievement; however, the effect of SET on academic performance is smaller than that found in some previous meta-analytic studies (Cohen, 1981; Feldman, 1989), at around only 10%.

Another methodological question concerns evaluation systematic-bias. This problem is present when a confirmed characteristic of students habitually influences their evaluations of teachers (e.g., gender; Centra and Gaubatz, 2000; Badri et al., 2006; Basow et al., 2006; Darby, 2006; Boring, 2015). A possible source of bias is the discipline. If the evaluation of teaching is situational and is affected by academic disciplines, being higher in studies in the field of education and the liberal arts and less in other areas such as business and engineering (Clayson, 2009), it seems necessary to carry out new studies in areas different from the previous ones, such as the technical areas where there are fewer studies on the subject.

The present study was carried out in a different context to most previous studies (Clayson, 2009), the student evaluations of teaching in a higher education institution, the National Polytechnic School of a South American country, Ecuador, where students study technical subjects, such as engineering, architecture, and biotechnology. Unfortunately, in South America there is a shortage of reliable and valid SET scales in polytechnic higher education institution, although it is a widespread procedure in these institutions since the early 1980's (Pareja, 1986).

The Council of Ecuadorian Higher Education establishes the obligatory nature of the evaluation of the teaching staff of higher education institutions, both for their entry and for their promotion, in the Career and Ladder Regulations of the Professor and Researcher of the Higher Education System, and they may even be dismissed from teaching in case of performance evaluations of <60% twice consecutively, or four comprehensive evaluations of performance <60% during their career (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2017).

The evaluation of the quality of teaching in the National Polytechnic School of Ecuador uses different procedures, including self-assessment, evaluation by peers and managers, and evaluation by students through evaluation questionnaires. The elaboration of this questionnaire is based on the criteria proposed by the institution itself and the guidelines suggested by the Higher Education Council (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2017).

The instrument of student evaluation of teaching used in the National Polytechnic School is the "Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Enseñanza del Profesor de la Escuela Politécnica Nacional del Ecuador" (Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire of the National Polytechnic School). The elaboration of the questionnaire was based on previous SET literature (Toland and De Ayala, 2005; Marsh, 2007a; Mortelmans and Spooen, 2009) and consists in the proposal of several effective teaching criteria. Next, a teaching committee, part of the management team of the National

Polytechnic School, developed a set of items. This committee consisted of 5 main tenured professors with extensive experience in teaching quality, and a representative from the administrative sector and a student. The aspects to be evaluated and the specific items that make up the questionnaire are approved each academic year by the management team of the National Polytechnic School. The items are grouped theoretically into the following four factors. 1. Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the subject matter (i.e., The teacher conveniently expresses the class objectives and contents, indicating their relationship with the student's training). 2. Methodology and resources (i.e., The teacher prepared teaching material apart from the textbook and made it known). 3. Teacher-student relationship (i.e., The teacher created a climate of trust and productivity in class). 4. Evaluation (i.e., The evaluation events are related to the teaching given). Although the number and dimensions of effective teaching remains an open question (Spooren et al., 2013), these four dimensions are present in the most of SET literature (Feldman, 1989; Richardson, 2005; Huybers, 2014).

Thus, face and content validity are taken into account during the process of developing an instrument. Face validity indicates whether an instrument seems appropriate, that is, face validity does not analyze what the instrument measures but what it appears to measure; i.e., the extent to which the items of a SET instrument appear relevant to a respondent (Spooren et al., 2013; Rispin et al., 2019). Content validity refers to whether the content of an instrument has been included in an exhaustive and representative way, that is, if the content has been included in an appropriate way. Content validity is obtained from the consensus based on informed opinion of experts; it is recommended to include at least five experts for the evaluation of content validity (Yaghmale, 2009). However, the empirical validation is minimal and is limited to a descriptive analysis of the items individually considered. It lacks a complete process of construct and criterion validity, as well as an estimation of the reliability of the scale and/or the subscales that make up these questionnaires.

Although many studies have been developed on the subject of the validation of student evaluation of teaching scales in higher education, few have done so in the specific scope of polytechnic institutions and SEM studies; there are also very few examples of rigorous development of short teacher assessment scales. For this reason, our work tries to contribute to filling this gap.

Scale Reduction

Currently, a line of work has been developed to reduce the length of scales already used or elaborate scales with a reduced number of items. The lack of time for the application of scales, fatigue, and possible stereotyped responses in scales that are too long or that are part of a set of scales that are applied within the same study, etc., has led to proposals of short scales (Gogol et al., 2014; Lafontaine et al., 2016). These scales have to be small enough to allow for a rapid assessment of purposed constructs, but large enough to ensure appropriate reliability, validity, and accurate parameter estimation.

Short scales are considered to present psychometric inconveniences in comparison to long scales with regard to

both reliability and validity, as they can be more affected by random measurement errors (Lord and Novick, 1968; Credé et al., 2012).

In the short-form scales, the number of items per factor proposed varies from one to four items. Thus, several authors propose scales and subscales in which each factor should include four items (Marsh et al., 1998, 2009, 2010; Poitras et al., 2012). Moreover, other authors, such as Credé et al. (2012), point out the loss of psychometric qualities when the scales have between one and three items. On the other hand, Kline (2016) points out that construct validation procedures, such as confirmatory factor analysis and other modeling methods, require at least three indicators per factor for a model to be identified. From a point of view that combines theoretical demands with practical interest, the PISA study of 2000 and the German PISA study of 2003 use short scales with three items (Brunner et al., 2010).

Another group of studies propose the use of short scales based on the finding that reliability and validity of short measures is similar to those of the corresponding longer scales measures, and have high correlation with long scales (Nagy, 2002; Christophersen and Konradt, 2011; Gogol et al., 2014). Gogol et al. (2014) compared the reliability and validity of three-item and single-item measures to those of the corresponding longer scales, finding satisfactory reliability and validity indices in all short forms and a high correlation with long scales; however, single-item measures showed the lowest reliability indices and correlations with the longer scales. Based on these results, the authors defended the use of short scales.

In sum, there are empirically founded reasons to propose short scales of three or four items. Although three items seem sufficient to guarantee the reliability and validity of the measure, in some cases, such as when additional assumptions are made about the psychometric properties of the items and factors (variables error variances, factor variances, etc.) or the hierarchical nature of the data is taken into account in multilevel analysis, four items per factor are recommended for accurate parameter estimation (Marsh et al., 1998).

Research Objectives

Hence, in this work, the following objectives are established:

1. Validate a Student Evaluation of Teaching Rating Scale and a short version of the corresponding long scale, including four items for each measured dimension, in a large sample of higher education students enrolled in a polytechnic higher education institution.
2. Test alternative structures of the dimensions of the Student Evaluation of Teaching Rating Scale.
3. Find the relationship between the long and short forms of the scale and academic achievement.
4. Examine whether the scores are invariant with respect to relevant variables such as the gender of the students in the context of scientific-technological studies.
5. Considering the hierarchical nature of the data, determine the ratings of the teaching of individual students located in different groups, classes, or sections, as well as where each group evaluates a different teacher.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The sample comprised 6,110 students of the National Polytechnic School of Ecuador who rated the teaching of their teachers. These students were enrolled in eight different faculties in 28 different degree programs and attended 358 different classes. 68.3% of the students were male and 31.7% female. The higher percentage of male students is representative of the population of students of polytechnic studies. The average age was 22.6 years old ($SD = 3.2$). These students rated the teaching of their teachers during the 2016–17 academic year.

The sample of teachers was composed of 310 teachers, most of which were males (62.8%), aged between 26 and 57 years (mean = 43.7), belonging to all professional categories, from assistant professor to principal, with a majority (42%) of full professors, and extensive teaching experience (mean = 18.6 years).

This sample of participants corresponds to the students enrolled in the aforementioned studies, who took part in the evaluation process of the teaching staff of their institution, the EPN, at the end of a semester.

Measures

Students' evaluations of teaching ratings were obtained from the "Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Enseñanza del Profesor de la Escuela Politécnica Nacional del Ecuador" [Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire of the National Polytechnic School], approved by the teaching staff for the 2016–17 academic year. This scale comprises 32 items grouped theoretically into the following four factors. 1. Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the subject matter (items 1–9). 2. Methodology and resources (items 10–15). 3. Evaluation (items 16–23). 4. Teacher–student relationship (items 24–32). Response scale ranges from 1 to 5; 1: do not agree at all; 2: little agreement; 3: moderately agree; 4: strongly agree; and 5: totally agree. The full and reduced scales with the items grouped into the four theoretical dimensions are included in the **Appendix A**.

The measures of student academic performance were obtained for a subsample of 1538 students. This subsample consisted of those students for whom data on their academic performance were available in the university's administrative computerized records. There is no known evidence that this subsample is biased with respect to the total sample used in this study. This measure of academic performance at the end of the semester was operationalized by the grade awarded by the teacher, based on a final exam: a written examination, both theoretical and practical. These final exams were the same across sections in some cases and were different for different sections in others. Different sections follow the same program and have the same assessment criteria that are specified in the study program of each course. Therefore, the exams, although different, can be considered quite equivalent. There are also common general rules for all exams in the National Polytechnic School of Ecuador. The scores of final grades ranged from 0 to 40 for all courses.

Students' age and gender, as well as teachers' age, gender, and experience, were collected from administrative records.

Procedure

The data were collected from the existing computer records in the administration of the Polytechnic School, and permission for access to them was granted to the academic staff of the Institution. The data provided by the institution were anonymous, with only one identification code for each student.

The application of the evaluation of teaching scale by the students was carried out toward the end of the semester, before they knew their final grades. All the teachers were evaluated by the students in a similar period of time. All the students had to evaluate the teachers to be able to access their final grades. The student evaluation of teaching was conducted through an electronic platform on which the data were recorded.

The impact that faculty procedures of student evaluations of teaching have on response rates has been analyzed by several authors in special electronic evaluations. Thus, Young et al. (2019) found that evaluations made by students were considerably higher when faculty gave in-class time to students to complete student evaluation of teaching, compared to an electronic form issued by the administration. However, other studies of this issue did not find differences between the evaluations made with electronic questionnaires and paper and pencil questionnaires, or when a more representative sample responded instead of a smaller, more biased sample (Nowell et al., 2014).

As response rates to electronic administration are lower than to paper-and-pencil questionnaires, the procedure followed in this work consisted in requiring all the students to answer the evaluation survey in order to access their final grades. This procedure has proved useful and valid in some higher education institutions (Leung and Kember, 2005; Nair and Adams, 2009).

Data Analysis

Preliminary Analyses

We explored means, standard deviations, skewness, and intraclass correlations (ICCs) for all items. Skewness indicates the asymmetry of the distribution, while ICC gives information about the non-independence of data, that is, the similarity of students' responses in the same class.

Construct Validity

To gather evidence of the scale's construct validity, we followed the recommendations of Schmitt et al. (2018). There are different methods to retain the "best" factor structure; for instance, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), or exploratory structural equation model (ESEM). EFA has the disadvantage of the difficulty to replicate results with different samples, while CFA leads to biased loadings and correlations between factors because it requires that cross-loadings be 0 in the non-target factors (Garn et al., 2018). ESEM combines EFA and CFA, provides goodness of fit indices, and allows testing for multiple-group measurement invariance (Xiao et al., 2019). Schmitt et al. (2018) recommend using EFA when there is no a priori theory, using CFA when there is a strong theory and evidence of the scale structure, and using ESEM when the a priori theory is sparse. Howard et al. (2018) add that ESEM

should be retained over CFA when correlations are different between factors are different in these two methods.

Another interesting issue in factor analysis, specifically in multidimensional structures, is bi-factor models (Morin et al., 2016). Bi-factor models are used to divide covariance between a global factor (i.e., teachers' style) and specific factors (i.e., Methodology and resources or Teacher-student relationship).

Therefore, in view of the above information and our data, we can test the following models: one-factor *via* CFA, four-factor *via* CFA, four-factor *via* ESEM, and four- and bi-factor *via* ESEM (see **Figure 1**). To select the factor structure, we relied on the adjusted χ^2 -difference tests and changes in CFI and RMSEA. The estimation method was Robust Maximum Likelihood because the data were non-normal; moreover, as responses were not independent, we corrected χ^2 and standard errors using a sandwich estimator (Muthén and Satorra, 1995; Muthén and Muthén, 2020). All analyses were conducted with Mplus 8.4 (Muthén and Muthén, 2020).

Short Version

To choose items for a short version, we account for factor loadings, corrected for item-test correlations, reliability, and the item theoretical significance (Marsh et al., 2010). To test the agreement of both versions, we relied on the Levy correction of the short vs. long form correlation. This correction accounts for the shared error variance between both forms due to the subset of items (Levy, 1967; Barrett, 2015). Moreover, because correlation only considers the monotonicity between both forms, we also relied on the Gower index (Gower, 1971; Barrett, 2012), whose values range between 0 and 1, where values close to 1 indicate agreement.

Gender Measurement Invariance

To test whether male and female students interpret the scale similarly, we performed a measurement invariance test (Vandenberg and Lance, 2000). Specifically, we compared three models: configural, metric, and scalar (Muthén and Muthén, 2020). The configural model has factor loadings, intercepts, and residual variances free across groups and factor means fixed at zero in all groups. In the metric model, factor loadings are held equal across groups, while intercepts and residual variances are free across groups, and factor means are fixed at zero in all groups. Finally, in the scalar model, factor loadings and intercepts are equal across groups, while residual variances are free across groups, and factor means are constrained to zero in one group and free in the other group. For model comparisons, we used the adjusted χ^2 -difference tests and changes in CFI and RMSEA.

Reliability

Finally, to test the reliability of the short and long form, we did not use Cronbach's alpha because there is increasing evidence of its lack of accuracy and the difficulty of meeting its assumptions: the parallelism and tau-equivalence of the items (Zhang and Yuan, 2016; McNeish, 2018). Cho (2016) proposes different formulas to estimate reliability whenever items lack parallelism, tau-equivalence, or both, not only for unidimensional structures but also for multidimensional structures.

Criterion Validity: Relation With Academic Achievement

To analyse the relationships between student ratings of teaching and academic performance, the data were taken individually and grouped into sections. Initially, the validity of students' ratings might be evidenced by the correlation between SET and academic achievement. Nevertheless, students' grades cannot be supposed to constitute a simple measure of teaching effectiveness because each group could have different evaluations (Richardson, 2005). The key evidence cited in support of student evaluations of teaching as a measure of a teacher's instructional effectiveness is multisection studies, in which different professors teach the same subject following the same outline, and at the end of the semester, all the sections have the same exam or equivalent ones (Cohen, 1981; Uttl et al., 2017). To find the correlation between scale scores and academic performance, the data were taken individually and treated as a typical multisection study in which the average class was used as the unit of analysis.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Means varied between 3.85 for Item 15 and 4.07 for Item 9, while standard deviations ranged from 1.02 for Item 2 to 1.16 for Item 11. Skewness varied from -0.840 for Item 15 to -1.120 for Item 1. More information can be found in **Appendix B**.

Construct Validity

We compared the four proposed models. We observed that the probability that a four-factor CFA had the same fit as a one-factor CFA was $p < 0.001$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 10217.93$, $df = 8$). Similarly, the probability that a four-factor ESEM had the same fit as a four-factor CFA was $p < 0.001$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1272.977$, $df = 84$). Finally, the probability that a four-factor ESEM had the same fit as a bi-factor four-factor ESEM was $p < 0.001$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1143.317$, $df = 28$).

The structure with the best fit was the bi-factor four-factor ESEM (see **Table 1**). However, to retain this structure, moderate-high factor loadings were required in the global factor (Howard et al., 2018), and in this case, the factor loading absolute values were between 0.024 and 0.228, with an average value of 0.093. Therefore, we discarded the bi-factor four-factor ESEM and proceeded to explore the four-factor ESEM structure. This structure provided moderate to high loadings and low cross-loadings (see **Appendix A**). Specifically, for Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the subject matter (Factor 1), the loadings ranged between 0.508 and 0.857, for Methodology and resources (Factor 2) between 0.601 and 0.856, for Evaluation (Factor 3) between 0.385 and 0.885, and for Teacher-student relationship (Factor 4) between 0.629 and 0.958. Thus, we decided to retain this structure.

Short Version

Construct Validity

Following Marsh et al.'s recommendations (2010), we selected four items of each subscale. Next, we proceeded to test the selected structure *via* ESEM. The chi square test result and fit indices were: $\chi^2(6110, 62) = 509.115$ ($p < 0.001$), CFI = 0.992,

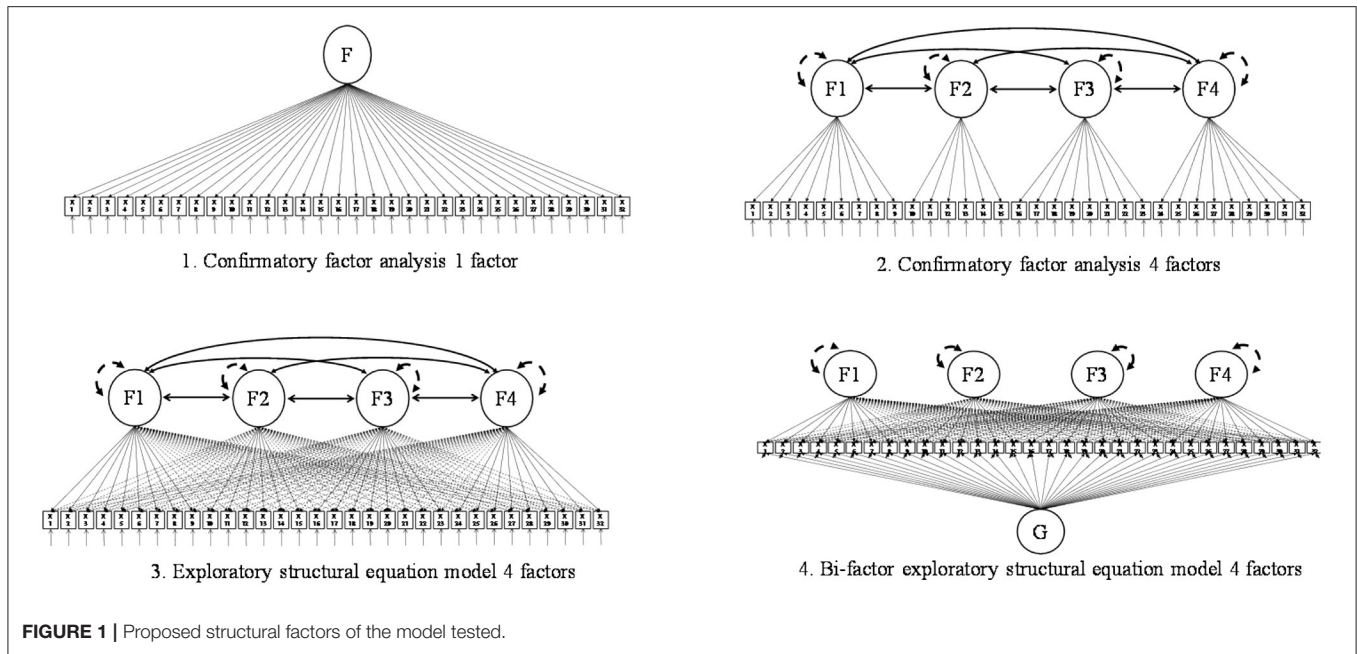


FIGURE 1 | Proposed structural factors of the model tested.

TABLE 1 | χ^2 -test and fit indices for different structures.

Model	χ^2		RMSEA	CFI
	Value	DF		
CFA 1F	16679.456	464	0.076	0.873
CFA 4F	6461.526	458	0.046	0.953
ESEM 4F	5188.549	374	0.046	0.962
Bi-ESEM 4F	4045.232	346	0.042	0.970

TABLE 2 | Agreement between the long and short forms.

Factor	Levy's correlation	Gower index
Planning, mastery, and clarity	0.893	0.963
Methodology and resources	0.901	0.974
Evaluation	0.919	0.972
Teacher-student relationship	0.918	0.969

RMSEA = 0.034 (90% C. I. = 0.032, 0.037). For Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the subject matter, the loadings ranged between 0.676 and 0.898, for Methodology and resources between 0.572 and 0.916, for Evaluation between 0.672 and 0.864, and for Teacher-student relationship between 0.675 and 0.946 (see Appendix C).

Agreement Between Both Versions

As shown in Table 2, Levy's corrected correlation and the Gower index revealed a high concurrence between both forms, ranging from $r = 0.893$ to $r = 0.974$.

TABLE 3 | χ^2 -test and fit indices for invariance testing.

Model	χ^2		RMSEA	CFI
	Value	DF		
Configural	2301	748	0.051	0.959
Metric	2321	860	0.046	0.961
Scalar	2374	888	0.046	0.960

Gender Measurement Invariance 32-Item Scale

Multiple-group analyses to examine potential gender differences in the model results showed that the probability of the same fit between the configural and the metric model was $p < 0.902$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 93.127$, $df = 112$). Similarly, the comparison between the metric and the scalar model yielded $p < 0.902$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 126.335$, $df = 140$). Thus, we found no gender differences in loadings, thresholds, or factor means in the long form scale (see Table 3).

16-Item Scale

The comparison between the configural and the metric models revealed that the probability that the model fits would be the same was $p < 0.847$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 38.043$, $df = 48$). Similarly, the comparison between the metric and the scalar model yielded $p < 0.629$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 55.838$, $df = 60$). Thus, we did not find gender differences in loadings, thresholds, or factor means in the short form either (see Table 4).

Reliability

32-Item Scale

The reliability of the scale was assessed using the Congeneric Correlated Factors formula. Reliability for the whole scale was 0.980, for Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the

TABLE 4 | χ^2 -test and fit indices for invariance testing (short form).

Model	χ^2		RMSEA	CFI
	Value	DF		
Configural	274.8	124	0.039	0.980
Metric	305.6	172	0.031	0.991
Scalar	327.8	184	0.032	0.990

TABLE 5 | Correlations between the long and short versions of the scale of evaluation of teaching with academic performance, taking individual, and aggregate data in sections.

Subscales	Individual data		Aggregate data in sections	
	Long	Short	Long	Short
1. Planning, explanation, and presentation of subject	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.23
2. Method and materials	0.23	0.22	0.26	0.26
3. Evaluation	0.23	0.22	0.24	0.23
4. Teacher-student relationship	0.21	0.20	0.26	0.23
Total scale	0.23	0.23	0.25	0.26

All correlations showed a $p < 0.01$.

subject matter 0.949, for Methodology and resources 0.901, for Evaluation 0.948, and for Teacher-student relationship 0.947.

16-Item Scale

The reliability for the whole scale was 0.972, for Planning, mastery, and clarity in the explanation of the subject matter 0.904, for Methodology and resources 0.901, for Evaluation 0.920, and for Teacher-student relationship 0.919.

Correlation With Academic Achievement

Table 5 shows the correlations between the long and short versions of the scale of evaluation of teaching with academic performance, taking individual and aggregate data in sections. As we can see, all the correlations were statistically significant with moderate-low values. Both the subscales and the total scale showed significant correlations with academic performance. The values of the correlations of the reduced scale were very similar to those of the long scale. In addition, the correlations in the aggregated data in classes or sections were slightly higher than in the individual data.

DISCUSSION

The results clearly show the structural validity of the student evaluation of teaching ratings elaborated in the National Polytechnic School of Ecuador. Given that the main objective of this study is to propose a short scale that shows reliability and validity, AFC and Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling were used.

Results showed a multidimensional model with four highly correlated factors that do not exclude a general factor, with an excellent fit to data, both in the long scale and in the short version of the scale. The structure with the best fit was the bi-factor four-factor ESEM; however, the factor loadings on the global factor were low (Howard et al., 2018) and, thus, the four-factor ESEM structure was retained.

Based on a sample of 26,746 students who took the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 2012, Scherer et al. (2016), found that bi-factor exploratory structural equation modeling outperformed alternative approaches with respect to model fit.

The researchers are divided on the basis of the existence of a second-order general factor (Abrami et al., 1997; Cheung, 2000) or different first-order correlated factors (Marsh, 1991b, 2007a). As for the practical implications of this issue, perhaps the most accurate conclusion is the one provided as early as 1991 by Marsh (1991a) himself: "I have chosen a middle ground recommending the use of both specific dimensions and global ratings" (p. 419).

The use of academic performance measures as an external criterion validity of the student evaluation of teaching (SET) rating scales is very common in validation works, which has been called a strong test for criterion validity. However, the meta-analyses (Cohen, 1981; Feldman, 1989; Marsh, 2007a; Clayson, 2009; Uttl et al., 2017) shows the existence of moderate (0.50–0.20) to small (0.20–0.00) positive correlations between SET scores and student achievement. Although these results provide relative evidence of the convergent validity of SET scales; due to the variety of views concerning good teaching, and due to the variety in the measurement and predictors of student achievement (Spooren et al., 2013; Schneider and Preckel, 2017), academic achievement should not be the only indicator of SET scales criterion validity.

Student Evaluation of Teaching rating scales are multidimensional, many researchers defend the use of single, global scores (Apodaca and Grad, 2005). For this reason, even when recognizing the multidimensional and hierarchical structure of the dimensions evaluated in the scales on student evaluation of teaching, many works studying this issue use global scores; meanwhile, the feedback provided to teachers for the improvement of teaching practice includes a profile of the scores in the different dimensions, which show the strengths and weaknesses of each teacher's methods.

Given the existence of student gender bias in student evaluation of teaching, configural, metric, and scalar gender measurement invariance were tested. Previous research has shown that female subjects are likely to score higher in SET ratings (e.g., Badri et al., 2006; Darby, 2006). Bonitz (2011) found that gender variations in SET scores could be due to gender variations in traits such as agreeableness that correlate with the SET scores. However, the results of this study showed configural, metric, and scalar gender measurement invariance in the context of scientific-technological studies.

Although the literature on gender bias in SET shows that male students express a bias in favor of male professors (Centra and Gaubatz, 2000; Boring, 2017; Mitchell and Martin, 2018; American Sociological Association, 2019), the extensive review by Kreitzer and Sweet-Cushman (2021), shows that the effect of

gender is conditional upon other factors. Other works show that the gender bias against perceived female instructors disappears (Uttl and Violo, 2021). The results of Rivera and Tilcsik (2019) even show that these gender differences can disappear in scales with six points or less, like those of our scale.

The results of this work also show the concurrent validity of the reduced scale of 16 items, which showed a high correlation with the full scale of 32 items. Levy's corrected correlation and the Gower index revealed high concurrence between both forms, with values above 0.90. These results are slightly higher than those obtained in other studies that also showed a high degree of agreement between long and short forms of such scales (Gogol et al., 2014; Lafontaine et al., 2016).

The high values of the reliability coefficients, estimated according to the assumptions of the SEM model used, are also striking for both the long and short whole scales and subscales. These values were higher than 0.90 and reached values of 0.98 and 0.97 for the whole scales. The Congeneric Correlated Factors procedure (Cho, 2016) was applied in consideration of there being different factor loadings to obtain the values of multidimensional reliability coefficients apart from Cronbach's alpha, which supposes that all factor loadings are equal (i.e., tau-equivalents), and thus underestimates the reliability.

On the other hand, the results also showed moderate, significant correlations between both the long and short versions of the scale with academic performance, taking individual and aggregate data in classes or sections.

The evidence in support of student evaluations of teaching as a measure of teachers' instruction effectiveness comes from studies showing correlations between measures of student evaluation and student achievement, a strong test for criterion validity.

The results obtained with aggregate data, taking the section as the unit of analysis, showed a moderate and statistically significant correlation (0.26) between student ratings and final performance. This result is expected from studies of instructors' teaching effectiveness, in which it is considered that multisection studies are more appropriate for apprehending the true relationship between student evaluations of teaching and academic performance (Cohen, 1981; Uttl et al., 2017).

However, the relationship of the students' evaluation of teaching with their academic performance is lower than that found in some previous meta-analytic studies (Cohen, 1981), but higher than that found in the meta-analysis of Uttl et al. (2017) of the studies published to that date, when small study size effects and prior academic achievement were considered. Taken together, the results demonstrated the good psychometric qualities of the Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire of the National Polytechnic School and its construct and criterion validity, as well as its high reliability. In addition, the psychometric indices of the short version of this scale suggest the possibility of developing short scales of three or four items that are equally reliable and valid.

In addition, the relationships obtained between the long and short versions of the new instrument with academic performance have practical implications for teacher teaching. This instrument may help teachers to adapt their teaching to student needs and preferences in the context of specific characteristics of polytechnic studies.

However, we must not lose sight of the open controversy between students' perceptions of the quality of the teaching, or perceptions of learning, and their actual learning. In the context of STEM -Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics— instruction Deslauriers et al. (2019) find that students in active classrooms learned more, but their perception of learning was lower than that of their peers in passive instruction.

Regarding the limitations of this study and possible future studies, given that the long and short forms were administered as part of the full scale, and despite the correction of Levy and Gower for the calculation of the correlation between the two version, it would be necessary to administer the long and short scales to the same sample independently. In addition, it would be convenient to examine the factorial structure of the short scale in an independent representative sample of students. In this study, we analyzed the relationship with academic achievement, it might be of interested to explore the relationship with higher education engagement (Vizoso et al., 2018) or general pedagogical knowledge (Klemenz et al., 2019). Finally, obtaining longitudinal data in the same and different samples of the National Polytechnic School could serve to deepen the validity of the scale developed in this work.

It should also be taken into account that these results have been obtained in a single institution, which limits the generality of the results; however, it is the largest institution of polytechnic studies (science, biotechnology, engineering, architecture, etc.), the largest in Ecuador that collects students from all over the country.

In sum, this work provides evidence of the validity of a teaching evaluation scale in the setting of a polytechnic institution of higher education, as well as a rigorous methodological procedure for the validation of short versions of teaching evaluation scales.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

TS: project administration and data curation. JL: methodology and writing review and editing. RG-C: conceptualization and resources. J-LC: supervision and writing original draft. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635543/full#supplementary-material>

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Book Review: The Role of Context in Language Teachers' Self Development and Motivation: Perspectives From Multilingual Settings

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Keywords: diverse sociopolitical contexts, individual differences, self-development, reflexive positioning, interactive positioning

A Book Review on

The Role of Context in Language Teachers' Self Development and Motivation: Perspectives From Multilingual Settings

Amy S. Thompson (Bristol: Multilingual Matters), 2021, xiii+163 pages, ISBN: 978-1-80041-117-3

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It has been argued that research on teacher motivation and identity (re)construction requires the expansion of its traditionally psychological boundaries and embarks on the sociolinguistic and critical viewpoints borrowed from language learning, language teaching, and language teachers' lives in bilingual/multilingual environments. To cross these boundaries, Amy S. Thompson's monograph, entitled *The Role of Context in Language Teachers' Self Development and Motivation: Perspectives from Multilingual Settings*, is the result of 10 years of diligent work of collecting and analyzing the narrative data from English as foreign language (EFL) teachers in seven diverse sociopolitical contexts. The focus of the book is on individual differences, specifically motivation and the development of self, in bilingual/multilingual contexts.

This monograph includes a warm-in-tone forward, a preface, and nine chapters. Chapter 1 problematizes the complexities of integrating context, self-development, and motivation, by providing their germane theoretical underpinnings and a comprehensive overview of the pertinent issues such as non-native speaker status quo, formation of the idealized teacher identity and self, as well as context-specific teacher trajectories. Synthesizing the studies conducted on the interplay of context and self which were published in 17 journals from 2009 to 2020, the author cogently argues that there has been a dearth of empirical studies in some contexts which is the focus of this book. The chapter also reviews the empirical studies conducted in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East/Turkey, and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the chapter elucidates the data analysis procedures, presentation of the narratives of NNS English language teachers in a variety of underrepresented contexts, as well as the methodology of collecting the narrative data from English as foreign language (EFL) instructors. Serving as a mentor, the author stated that the data were collected from a group of EFL teachers who attended an exchange program at the University of South Florida in the spring of 2010. The participants of this monograph were EFL teachers from different contexts, including Senegal, Egypt, Argentina Ukraine, Estonia, Vietnam, and Turkey.

Set in Senegal, in Chapter 2, Thompson reports that her EFL teacher conceptualizes the ideal English teacher self as someone who “believes that sharing a first language (L1) with students leads to an understanding of what they need, has a positive attitude toward English and speaks it whenever he can, and expresses that English is needed to succeed in various aspects of life, such as jobs, diplomacy, and exams” (p. 40). Chapter 3 focuses on the EFL teacher from Vietnam who opines that “the younger generation has more opportunities to learn English well and loves English after first conceptualizing it as a tool” (p. 51). To this EFL teacher, making an interpersonal relationship with students plays an important role and language learning is a “passport” to a brighter future, which culminates in a happier life.

Chapter 4 delineates the cognitions and perceptions that make the identity of an EFL teacher in the Egyptian context. This EFL teacher cogitates that “a person’s education is often judged by their English level and that English is necessary in the globalized world” and “people do not ‘learn’ a language but ‘live’ a language” (p. 65). In Chapter 5, an EFL teacher from Argentina strongly believes that learning English “makes them empathetic to their students’ processes” (p. 78) and that teachers need to feel accountable to foster teacher-student interpersonal relationships by creating positive attitudes and encouraging students. The context of Chapter 6 is Turkey where the two informant EFL teachers reflect that “English is a tool but can also create emotional attachments” (p. 90), and they believe that native English speaker is an advantage in hiring practices. The author recapitulates the attitudes of these two EFL teachers by stating that “Even though some people are opposed to the widespread use of English, most realize that it is currently a necessity for economic development on an international scale” (p. 102). In Chapter 7, two Ukrainian EFL instructors state that teacher-student interpersonal factors are vital to creating a positive and cheerful classroom atmosphere and that “English will open doors and is a mechanism for understanding people” (p. 103).

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Set in Estonia, the penultimate chapter explores how two EFL teachers feel about the role of motivation, context, and identity formation. They express positive attitudes toward English and argue that “sharing a first language (L1) with the students helps them know the specific difficulties that might arise” (p. 115). The closing chapter summarizes the sociopolitical, context-specific experiences of these EFL teachers from seven countries, argues that context is not a monolithic phenomenon, and elucidates how the construction of interpersonal relationships cannot be segregated from contexts. This chapter presents how the EFL teachers’ images and visions of their professional and ideal selves have evolved in their sociopolitical contexts. The author concludes that “multilingual identity should be at the forefront of pedagogical discussions” (p. 135) and she believes that “emphasis should be placed on understanding the complex and dynamic relationships among language systems, as well as attitudes toward the different languages in a multilingual speaker’s and/or teacher’s repertoire” (p. 135).

I believe that this monograph is thought-provoking in that it delves deeply into the professional and academic trajectories of EFL teachers who come from diverse sociopolitical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral backgrounds. Furthermore, the qualitative data were collected from teachers from seven countries which were underappreciated in the literature, so the findings can be novel and insightful. If the author had taken into account reflexive positioning—individuals’ positioning of themselves—and interactive positioning—individuals’ positioning of others into account (Kayi-Aydar, 2018), the findings would have been more insightful. All in all, I believe that this book is an appealing read for teachers, students, teacher educators, and policymakers in EFL contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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The Role of Emotional Intelligence, the Teacher-Student Relationship, and Flourishing on Academic Performance in Adolescents: A Moderated Mediation Study

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Educational context has an important influence on adolescents' development and well-being, which also affects their academic performance. Previous empirical studies highlight the importance of levels of emotional intelligence for students' academic performance. Despite several studies having analyzed the association and underlying mechanisms linking emotional intelligence and academic performance, further research, including both personal and contextual dimensions, is necessary to better understand this relation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to deepen the understanding of the effect of emotional intelligence has on academic performance, examining the possible mediating role of flourishing and the moderating role of the teacher-student relationship. A convenience sample of 283 adolescents (49.8% female), aged 12–18 years ($M = 14.42$, $SD = 1.12$), participated in a cross-sectional study by completing self-report questionnaires measuring emotional intelligence (Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale), flourishing (Flourishing Scale), and teacher-student relationship (Inventory of Teacher-Student Relationships) and reported their grades of the previous term on four mandatory subjects in the Spanish education curriculum. Results indicated that flourishing completely mediated the path from emotional intelligence to academic performance and that teacher-student relationship was a significant moderator in this model. Thus, in adolescents with worse teacher-student relationship, the association of emotional intelligence and flourishing was stronger than in adolescents with better teacher-student relationship. In turn, flourishing was positively associated with academic performance. These results suggest that it is crucial to foster better teacher-student relationship, especially in adolescents with low emotional intelligence, and to positively impact their well-being and their academic performance.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, flourishing, academic performance, teacher-student relationship, adolescence

INTRODUCTION

During adolescence, development and well-being are influenced by changes in the social, biological, and personal spheres (e.g., familial, educational, or cultural). The educational context is one of the most influential, in which adolescents spend a great amount of time learning new skills and establishing social relationships (Alford, 2017). In this context, the academic performance of students is one of the most essential criteria in evaluating them. Prior research has analyzed how academic performance is predicted by a number of personal and other environmental dimensions (Deighton et al., 2018; Carmona-Halty et al., 2019; Hayat et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). Research shows that emotional intelligence, flourishing, and teacher-student relationships are among the positive resources that promote well-being, psychological adjustment, and academic performance (e.g., Datu, 2018; Lan and Moscardino, 2019; Rey et al., 2019; MacCann et al., 2020).

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

In the current study, emotional intelligence is conceptualized from the ability model developed by Mayer et al. (2016) and is defined as a mental ability for perceiving, understanding, using, and regulating one's own and other people's emotions. Research literature suggests that emotionally intelligent people report better psychological adjustment (e.g., self-esteem, happiness, optimism, social support, and less depression; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019; Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020) as well as higher levels of life satisfaction, well-being, and flourishing (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016; Callea et al., 2019; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019; Salavera et al., 2020). In educational context, previous findings suggest that developing emotional competences may be a useful resource to increase the levels of flourishing and improve psychological adjustment and interpersonal relationships in adolescent population (Rey et al., 2019; Trigueros et al., 2019; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2020). Furthermore, evidence shows that emotional intelligence is moderately associated with students' academic performance (MacCann et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020). A plausible explanation for this significant link is that emotional intelligent people are better able to manage emotions associated with educational settings (e.g., stress, frustration, or exam anxiety), and this set of abilities also helps by improving the relationships with peers and teachers (MacCann et al., 2020). Thus, recent studies have explored various underlying mechanisms, such as positive emotions, emotional management, or self-directed learning (e.g., Zhoc et al., 2018; Trigueros et al., 2019; MacCann et al., 2020), that might also explain the link between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Moreover, MacCann et al. (2020) have suggested that some key noncognitive qualities, such as emotional intelligence, might impact on academic performance due to the current changes in education (e.g., an increased in group activities or teamwork), which require learning to manage possible peer conflicts, making decisions, or solving problems

in a group. Nonetheless, further studies are necessary to deepen the understanding of emotional intelligence-academic performance linkage. In this study, we propose analyzing the possible mediating role of flourishing and the moderating role of teacher-student relationship in the relation between emotional intelligence and academic performance.

Flourishing as Mediator

Flourishing can be defined as a way "to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience" (Fredrickson and Losada, 2005, p. 678). Moreover, it has been proposed as an indicator of well-being encompassing the experience of feeling joy, contentment, or happiness in life (i.e., hedonic well-being) as well as having an effective psychological functioning (i.e., eudaemonic well-being; Huppert and So, 2013). In fact, flourishing is related to less burnout and higher levels of health, life satisfaction, and work engagement (Garzón-Umerenkova et al., 2018; Younes and Alzahrani, 2018; Freire et al., 2020; Imran et al., 2020). Although this variable has not been extensively studied in adolescents (Witten et al., 2019), and even less in relation to academic performance, some studies suggest that higher levels of flourishing may contribute to a better academic performance and a greater likelihood of prioritizing academic chores (Datu, 2018; Datu et al., 2020). Moreover, this variable has been proposed as a significant mediator in the relation between several personal resources such as emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment indicators (e.g., suicide risk; Rey et al., 2019). In line with the aforementioned empirical studies and prior research linking emotional intelligence and academic performance (e.g., Datu, 2018; Callea et al., 2019; Rey et al., 2019; Datu et al., 2020), in the present study, we aimed to examine the potential role of flourishing as mediator in the emotional intelligence-academic performance link.

Teacher-Student Relationship as Moderator

The quality of the teacher-student relationship constitutes an important aspect in adolescents' development and mental health (Lippard et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018, 2020). Previous studies have found that a positive and close teacher-student relationship may increase enjoyment in learning and social adjustment, leading to higher satisfaction of psychological needs and increased peer relationships at school, as well perhaps decreasing academic stress and school burnout in students (Bakadorova and Raufelder, 2018; Lan and Moscardino, 2019; Clem et al., 2020; Luo et al., 2020; Romano et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2021). Furthermore, some studies have shown the benefits of positive teacher-student relationship in promoting the development of adolescents' emotional intelligence (Wang et al., 2020) and buffering negative consequences of stressful situation (e.g., victimization) on psychological security (Jia et al., 2018). Hence, one might tentatively assume that teacher-student relationship might have an interaction effect with emotional intelligence on subjective and psychological well-being (i.e., flourishing).

The Current Study

Based on these findings and some gaps in the literature about the relation among emotional intelligence, academic performance, flourishing, and teacher-student relationship, the main objective of this study was to examine the underlying mechanisms in the linkage between emotional intelligence and academic performance, analyzing the roles of flourishing and teacher-student relationship by a moderated mediation model. For this, the following hypotheses were proposed: (1) flourishing will mediate the positive effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance and (2) teacher-student relationship will moderate the relation between emotional intelligence and flourishing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

A non-random convenience sample was composed of 283 adolescents (50.2% males and 49.8% females), aged 12–18 years ($M = 14.42$, $SD = 1.12$), from two public secondary schools in the Andalusia region (Spain). The majority of the sample (93.2%) was Spanish. With regard to grade level: 31.1% were in the 2nd year, 37.5% in the 3rd year, and 31.4% in the 4th year of compulsory secondary education.

Measures

Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong and Law, 2002). The WLEIS is a self-report questionnaire containing 16 items that measure four dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-emotion appraisal (e.g., “I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time”), other-emotion appraisal (e.g., “I always know my friends’ emotions from their behavior”), use of emotions (e.g., “I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them”), and regulation of emotions (e.g., “I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally”). A global score can be calculated based on these dimensions. Items are answered on a scale from 1 (“totally disagree”) to 7 (“totally agree”) and higher scores indicate higher levels of emotional intelligence. In this study, we used the Spanish version, which has shown adequate validity and reliability (Extremera et al., 2019). As shown in **Table 1**, our sample’s reliability indexes were excellent ($\alpha = 0.91$; $\omega = 0.92$).

Flourishing was assessed using the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010). The FS is a one-dimension self-report questionnaire, which measures several aspects of positive human functioning such as personal competence, positive relationships, and purpose in life. The scale comprised eight items (e.g., “People respect me”) that are answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”), so higher scores indicate higher levels of well-being. We used the Spanish validated version, which shows good validity and reliability (Checa et al., 2018). The internal consistency in this study was good ($\alpha = 0.81$; $\omega = 0.81$).

Teacher-student relationship quality was measured using the Inventory of Teacher-Student Relationships (ITSR;

Murray and Zvoch, 2011). The ITSR is a student-report measure of three dimensions of teacher-student relationships: trust (e.g., “I trust my teacher”), communication (e.g., “My teacher understands me”), and alienation (e.g., “I get upset easily at school,” reverse scored). The inventory has 17 items measured on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 4 (“always”). A mean score of all the items was calculated, so higher scores suggest a better teacher-student relationship. The questionnaire was adapted into Spanish following international guidelines for adapting tests (International Test Commission, 2017). First, two researchers independently translated the original English version into Spanish. Second, a third bilingual translator performed the back-translation. In this process, great care was taken to preserve the content expression of the items. Discrepancies were discussed until agreement on the final version was reached. Following data collection, the reliability of the complete scale was analyzed. Results showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.86$; $\omega = 0.87$).

Finally, academic performance was assessed using the grades of the previous term (September to December 2020) reported by the students. An average score was calculated based on four mandatory subjects in the Spanish education curriculum: mathematics, geography and history, Spanish language and literature, and foreign language. Global grades were ranged from 1 (“poor”) to 10 (“excellent”) so higher scores indicate better academic performance. The internal consistency of this measure was good ($\alpha = 0.86$; $\omega = 0.87$).

Procedure

The University of Malaga’s Ethical Committee assessed and approved the research protocol of this study (reference number: 62-2016-H). First, two public schools’ administrations were contacted by phone, they were informed of the study’s objectives and procedure, and they were invited to participate in the cross-sectional study. Upon agreement, they signed an informed consent and notified the students’ parents or legal guardians. Following each school’s policy, parents and legal guardians gave their consent on behalf of the students, either in written form or by not expressing dissent. Data were collected at the schools during a routine class session in the presence of a teacher and a research assistant. During this session, students were informed of the objectives of the study and were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Following, instructions to complete the questionnaires were given and all questions were answered. Students voluntarily completed the paper-based questionnaires for approximately 25 min. Data collection was in accordance with current ethical standards (World Medical Association, 2013).

Data Analysis

Analyses were carried out using JASP 0.13.0.0 and SPSS 23. Cronbach’s alpha and McDonald’s omega indexes were calculated to assess the reliability of the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were estimated. As self-report questionnaires were used to measure all variables, common-method bias was assessed using Harman’s single-factor test

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics, reliability indexes, and correlations for the study variables.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>K</i>	α	ω	1	2	3	4
1.	Emotional intelligence	4.899	1.144	-0.463	-0.068	0.91	0.92	-			
2.	Flourishing	43.561	7.492	-0.877	0.560	0.81	0.81	0.640**	-		
3.	Teacher-student relationship	2.648	0.567	0.106	-0.549	0.86	0.87	0.409**	0.453**	-	
4.	Academic performance	5.640	1.742	0.278	-0.479	0.86	0.87	0.155*	0.224**	0.177**	-

N = 282; *M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation; *S*, skewness; *K*, kurtosis; α , Cronbach's alpha; ω , McDonald's omega.* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

(Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) was used to estimate the mediating effect of flourishing on the emotional intelligence-academic performance association (model 4). Moreover, model 7 of the same macro was used to test the moderating effect of the quality of teacher-student relationship in the tested mediation model. The assumptions of independence, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were tested prior to conducting the analyses (Field, 2013). For the mediation and moderated mediation analyses a bootstrapping method was used to obtain bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) with 5,000 re-samples. An effect was considered as significant if the 95% CI did not contain zero.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, reliability indexes (coefficients Alpha and Omega), and Pearson correlation analyses for the study variables. As shown, the internal consistency of all the questionnaires was satisfactory and all the variables were significantly and positively correlated. Moreover, Harman's test indicated that there were nine factors with eigenvalues higher than 1 and the first factor accounted for 24.75% of the variance, so common-method bias was not an issue in this study. Lastly, statistical indexes (i.e., Durbin-Watson = 1.506; VIF values < 10) and plot analyses indicated that all regression assumptions were met.

Mediating Effect of Flourishing

Table 2 presents the results of the mediation analysis. As shown, emotional intelligence was positively associated with flourishing ($p < 0.001$), which was positively related to academic performance ($p < 0.05$). The total effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance ($b = 0.184$, $SE = 0.090$, $p = 0.041$) was statistically significant. Moreover, the 95% bootstrap CI for the indirect effect ($b = 0.178$, $SE = 0.080$, 95% CI = 0.035–0.349) did not contain zero, indicating a statistically significant effect. As the direct effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance ($b = 0.006$, $SE = 0.116$, $p = 0.958$) was not statistically significant, the results suggest that flourishing completely mediated the positive association between emotional intelligence and academic performance. The model accounted for 11.4% of the variance in academic performance.

Moderating Effect of Teacher-Student Relationship

Model 7 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) was used to test if the quality of teacher-student relationship moderated the previous mediation model. As shown in **Table 3**, despite emotional intelligence and teacher-student relationship being positively associated with flourishing ($p < 0.001$), their interaction was negatively related to this outcome variable. **Figure 1** illustrates this effect at two levels of the moderator: low ($M - SD$) and high ($M + SD$) teacher-student relationship. As presented, in adolescents with low teacher-student relationship, the association between emotional intelligence and flourishing is stronger, suggesting that the quality of teacher-student relationship is particularly important in adolescents with low levels of emotional intelligence to predict their flourishing. Furthermore, the conditional indirect effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance through flourishing was obtained at these two levels of teacher-student relationship. The lower part of **Table 3** shows 95% bootstrap CI and the index of moderated mediation, which indicate that this effect was significantly different from zero. Thus, teacher-student relationship moderated the association between emotional intelligence and flourishing, which mediated and positively predicted academic performance, confirming hypotheses 1 and 2.

DISCUSSION

The present study used a moderated mediation to investigate whether flourishing would mediate the link between emotional intelligence and academic performance, and whether teacher-student relationship would moderate the association between emotional intelligence and academic performance in a sample of adolescents. Our results are in accordance with previous studies underlying the key role of emotional abilities on some educational outcomes such as academic performance (e.g., MacCann et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

Regarding our first hypothesis, the results corroborated the mediator role of flourishing in the relation between emotional intelligence and academic performance. In line with previous research (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016; Rey et al., 2019; Trigueros et al., 2019), these findings suggest that emotionally intelligent adolescents report higher levels of well-being and psychological functioning (i.e., flourishing). In addition, these higher levels of flourishing seem to be linked to higher reported academic performance (Datu, 2018; Datu et al., 2020). Thus, our

TABLE 2 | Mediating effect of flourishing on the association of emotional intelligence and academic performance.

Predictors	On flourishing				On academic performance			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	27.214	4.966	5.479	<0.001	10.024	1.508	6.647	<0.001
Gender (cov)	1.085	0.703	1.543	0.123	0.193	0.203	0.952	0.341
Age (cov)	-0.407	0.313	-1.302	0.193	-0.453	0.090	-5.024	<0.001
Emotional intelligence	4.225	0.310	13.603	<0.001	0.006	0.116	0.052	0.958
Flourishing					0.042	0.017	2.385	0.017
<i>F</i> ²	0.423		<0.001		0.133			<0.001
<i>F</i>	64.315				10.066			

N = 267; *B*, unstandardized coefficient; *SE*, standard error; *cov*, covariate; *EI*, emotional intelligence. Gender was dummy coded (1 = male, 2 = female).

TABLE 3 | The indirect effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance through flourishing conditioned by teacher-student relationship quality.

Predictors	On flourishing				On academic performance			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	42.889	4.331	9.902	<0.001	10.054	1.558	6.452	<0.001
Gender (cov)	1.507	0.661	2.279	0.023	0.193	0.203	0.952	0.341
Age (cov)	-0.064	0.297	-0.216	0.828	-0.453	0.090	-5.024	<0.001
Emotional intelligence	3.608	0.315	11.428	<0.001	0.006	0.116	0.052	0.958
Teacher-student relationship	3.689	0.653	5.649	<0.001				
EI × TSR	-1.688	0.512	-3.294	0.001				
Flourishing					0.042	0.017	2.385	0.017
<i>F</i> ²	0.499				0.133			
<i>F</i>	52.125			<0.001	10.066			<0.001
Conditional indirect effect of EI on AP through flourishing at levels of TSR								
	Boot Indirect effect		Boot SE		Boot LLCI		Boot ULCI	
<i>M</i> - <i>SD</i>	0.192		0.082		0.042		0.359	
<i>M</i> + <i>SD</i>	0.112		0.059		0.022		0.257	
	Index of moderated mediation		Boot SE		Boot LLCI		Boot ULCI	
	-0.071		0.037		-0.152		-0.009	

N = 267; *B*, unstandardized coefficient; *SE*, standard error; *cov*, covariate; *EI*, emotional intelligence; *TSR*, teacher-student relationship. Gender was dummy coded (1 = male, 2 = female). *LL*, lower limit; *UL*, upper limit; *CI*, confidence interval.

contribution shows the relevance of promoting students' flourishing as a key mechanism, which allows them to perform better in school.

With respect to our second hypothesis, the results of the moderated mediation model suggest that, despite emotional intelligence and teacher-student relationship being positively related to flourishing, their interaction seems to counterbalance their independent effects on this personal well-being indicator. Thus, developing emotional intelligence skills are a crucial factor in fostering flourishing in adolescents, especially if they have a poor relationship with their teachers. Previous studies have found that positive teacher-student relationship contributes greatly to adolescents' adjustment and well-being (e.g., Bakadorova and Raufelder, 2018; Lan and Moscardino, 2019; Borraccino et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2021). Our results expand on these findings by suggesting that, when the quality of the relationship with teachers is low, the association between emotional intelligence and flourishing become stronger.

The present study is not without limitations. Firstly, we used cross-sectional data, which does not allow draw any causal

inferences. Future studies should use longitudinal designs to clarify causal directionality among personal (i.e., emotional intelligence) and social resources (i.e., teacher-student relationship) on flourishing and academic performance. Therefore, it would be important in further research to investigate the extent to which levels of emotional intelligence, flourishing, and teacher-student relationship predict changes in academic performance in adolescents across time. Another limitation of the study is that it relied on self-reported measures of academic achievement, which could be subject to social desirability bias or memory issues. Although this measurement was taken to guarantee anonymity and was tend to be a reliable indicator (Kuncel et al., 2005), ideally future research should examine the effect of actual grade point average. Thirdly, when assessing teacher-student relationship, we only measured students' perspective, so future studies should evaluate teachers' point of view to ensure a more comprehensive approach of this variable.

Despite these limitations, our study is the first to analyze flourishing as an underlying mechanism that explaining the association between emotional intelligence and academic

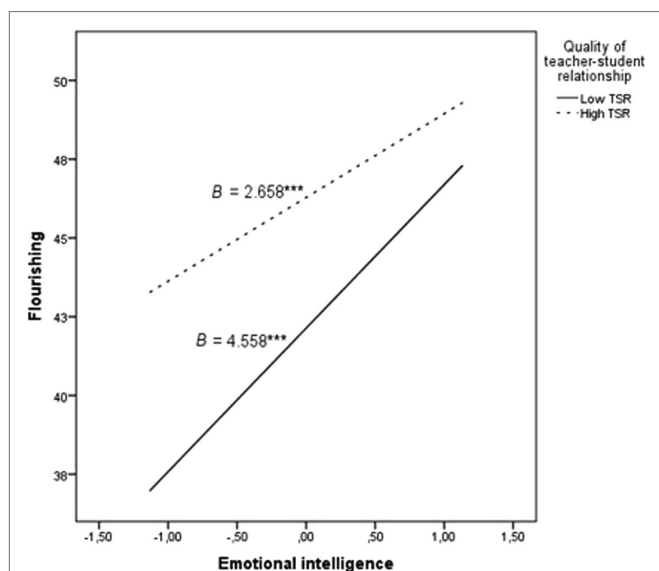


FIGURE 1 | Flourishing as a function of emotional intelligence at low ($M - SD$) and high ($M + SD$) levels of teacher-student relationship quality. B = unstandardized coefficients; $***p < 0.001$.

performance in adolescents and teacher-student relationship as a moderator in this relationship. These findings have important practical implications. Positive psychology's goal is to build human flourishing, which results from the experience of positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011). Our results support the notion that interventions aiming at promoting the different dimensions of flourishing may not only have an impact on adolescents' general well-being but also specifically on their academic performance (e.g., Van Zyl and Stander, 2019). Moreover, several reviews and meta-analyses provide evidence to consider emotional intelligence as a trainable ability in adults (Hodzic et al., 2018; Kotsou et al., 2019; Mattingly and Kraiger, 2019). Nonetheless, some intervention programs also have found that emotional intelligence can be trained in adolescents (e.g., Motamedi et al., 2017; Viguer et al., 2017; Cantero et al., 2020). In line with our findings, researchers and practitioners should foster the development of students' emotional intelligence, particularly among those who have low-quality relationships with their teachers. Lastly, our results also imply

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that for adolescents with a good teacher-student relationship, emotional intelligence positively predicts flourishing to a lesser degree, so positive teacher-student relationship should also be fostered as a personal resource to improve adolescents' flourishing and academic performance.

In sum, our study provides some empirical evidence to support the importance of developing personal and social resources (i.e., emotional intelligence and teacher-student relationship) to foster adolescents' well-being and improve their academic performance.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of University of Málaga. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, read, and approved it for publication.

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Influence of Teacher-Student Relationships and Special Educational Needs on Student Engagement and Disengagement: A Correlational study

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Contemporary educational research has found that student engagement and disengagement have a relevant influence on learning outcomes. However, research on the influence of teacher–student relationships in the engagement of students with special educational needs (SEN) is scarce. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, family support for learning, opportunities to participate at school, and SEN on engagement and disengagement of students using a sample of secondary students with SEN and typical development (TD). Through a non-experimental, correlational, and cross-sectional design, we evaluated 1,020 high school students (340 with SEN and 680 with TD) in the 9th grade (13–19 years old, $M = 14.8$; $SD = 0.89$). Teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, and family support for learning were assessed *via* subscales from the Student Engagement Inventory (SEI), opportunities to participate at school were measured with a subscale of the School Participation Questionnaire (SP), whereas engagement and disengagement were measured using the Multidimensional Scale of School Engagement (MSSE). Results show significant statistical differences between SEN and TD students in both student engagement and disengagement indicators. Engagement of SEN students is higher in the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions than that of TD students. However, they also have higher disengagement in the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Furthermore, SEN students rate their relationships with teachers more highly and perceive more opportunities for school participation than their peers. Further analyses show that teacher–student relationships are positively associated with all dimensions of student engagement and inversely with behavioral and cognitive disengagement. Although correlational, the findings suggest teacher–student relationships and school

participation opportunities could be important variables for diminishing disengagement and its negative consequences for both SEN and TD students, while improving student engagement. We discuss these results considering possible implications for educational policies, practices, and research.

Keywords: student engagement, student disengagement, special educational needs, teacher-student relationships, school participation

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is the quality of involvement of students with school activities (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012) including their participation in learning activities and interactions with teachers and peers. As a theoretical construct, student engagement is a multidimensional concept that involves distinctive and interrelated dimensions, such as student behaviors, emotions, and cognitive beliefs about school and learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement involves attendance and participation in academic and extracurricular activities. Emotional engagement involves positive and negative reactions to school, teachers, and peers (Finn, 1989; Voelkl, 1997), and cognitive engagement refers to the effort invested in learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). Recently, social engagement has been added as a dimension and refers to the quality of social interactions of students in the context of classroom tasks and the broader school context (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016).

There is a vast literature on student engagement and its relationship with academic achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Chang et al., 2016): higher attendance rates, lower dropout rates, and fewer antisocial behaviors among pre-school, primary, and secondary students (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wigfield et al., 2006; Wang and Holcombe, 2010; Shin and Ryan, 2012).

Student engagement is understood as part of a broader motivational process with the learning context feeding back the conceptualization of individuals of themselves (Fredricks et al., 2019). As the self-system model states (Connell and Wellborn, 1991), individual and contextual factors influence student engagement based on how the school context helps to satisfy three relevant needs for the individual: relatedness, autonomy, and competence. The need for relatedness refers to the way in which the individual feels safe, connected, and valued by others. Autonomy is related to the need to experience agency over own behavior of an individual, both in its initiation and regulation and in the maintenance of the activity. Competence is related to the degree to which the individual knows how to obtain certain positive results and avoid negative ones. When psychological needs are met, engagement occurs, which manifests in emotion, cognition, and behavior. However, when these psychological needs are not satisfied, disaffection with the school will arise (Connell and Wellborn, 1991).

School disengagement relates to maladaptive behaviors and attitudes toward schools and learning, and it reflects the ways in which students begin to withdraw and become disaffected with school (Skinner et al., 2008). It has been associated

with negative outcomes, including low achievement, disruptive and risky behaviors, and psychological problems (Morrison et al., 2002; Wang and Fredricks, 2014). Disengagement is a multidimensional construct that involves the behavioral, emotional, cognitive (Skinner et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2017), and social dimensions (Wang et al., 2017). Wang et al. (2017) specify that behavioral disengagement includes getting in trouble at school, not paying attention in class or goofing off, and finding ways to be late for school or getting out of classes. Cognitive disengagement involves giving up quickly and speeding through homework rather than trying to understand or benefit from it. Emotional disengagement is feeling worried, overwhelmed, and frustrated in school. Finally, social disengagement implies a student feels invisible at school and does not consider interaction with others an important aspect of his school life.

Initially, researchers treated engagement and disengagement as opposite poles of the same continuum. However, this approach disregards the fact that disengagement is more than the absence of engagement, but the presence of maladaptive processes (Skinner et al., 2009). Engagement and disengagement are not fixed states, and student levels of both constructs vary over time (Jang et al., 2016; Burns et al., 2019). In the secondary school years, engagement tends to decrease (Burns et al., 2018; Engels et al., 2021) and disengagement increases (Burns et al., 2019; Engels et al., 2021). Hence, although engagement and disengagement are related constructs, measuring them separately can potentially provide more nuanced information regarding the phenomena, as disengagement captures aspects that engagement cannot (Jang et al., 2016; Bergdahl et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, most studies on the engagement and disengagement of students have focused on students with typical development (TD) (O'Donnell and Reschly, 2020). Consequently, little is known about the engagement or disengagement of students with special educational needs (SEN), especially those enrolled at mainstream schools (Schindler, 2018). This is, however, starting to change because of the importance of engagement and disengagement in academic achievement (Moreira et al., 2015). Studying the student engagement of SEN students is important since these students face significant challenges in school, and there is building evidence on the academic, social, and psychological consequences of their school struggles (Douglas et al., 2012; Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014; Moreira et al., 2015). However, as Moreira et al. (2015) reported, studies providing this evidence are not conclusive and present mixed results. Some found lower levels of engagement for SEN students compared with their TD peers, whereas others showed no differences in engagement between the two groups.

Comparisons of engagement between SEN and TD students in the context of inclusive settings have also yielded inconclusive results. Employing an eco-behavioral observation tool with adolescents in inclusive classrooms, Wallace et al. (2002) found no differences in academic and behavioral engagement. Both groups showed high levels of academic engagement and low levels of inappropriate behaviors. Furthermore, using large-scale survey data ($N = 10,000$) of 5–9th-grade pupils, Schindler (2018) obtained lower scores in all dimensions of engagement for SEN students (motivation and effort, belonging/well-being at school, participation in learning activities, and participation in social activities). The raw difference was larger for motivation and effort: SEN students scored a.7 SD lower than TD students. According to Schindler (2018), the differences in engagement between SEN and TD students in her research cannot be explained by differences in backgrounds of students or at the school level. Yang et al. (2020), in a research project with 118 secondary school students with special needs integrated into mainstream schools, reported intermediate levels of student engagement ($M = 3.10$; $SD = 0.85$) on the five-point Likert School Engagement Scale of Fredricks et al. (2005).

The inconclusive results on the student engagement of SEN students can be attributed to conceptual and methodological reasons. First, different studies conceptualize student engagement in different ways (unidimensional/multidimensional), the definition of engagement dimensions differ (e.g., including social or academic dimensions besides cognitive/behavioral/emotional-affective or measuring only one of them) (Moreira et al., 2015; O'Donnell and Reschly, 2020), and variation in terms of whether engagement is measured on a single continuum (low or high) or there is a separate measurement of engagement and disengagement (O'Donnell and Reschly, 2020). Douglas et al. (2012) state that most studies on the engagement of SEN students use either behavioral (e.g., attendance, dropouts, and participation in school activities) or cognitive indicators of engagement (e.g., achievement in specific subjects, such as math or literacy), and disregard the emotional and social aspects thereof. These elements highlight the need for more research in this field considering all dimensions involved in student engagement.

Age could also be an important variable when studying these concepts. For example, Janosz et al. (2008) found different types of engagement trajectories for 12–16-year-old students. One of these pathways (2% of the overall sample) contained around one-third of the SEN students (the most common for those students). It characterized a decreasing pattern of engagement. That is, these adolescents reported very high levels of school engagement at age 12, which rapidly decreased to the lowest levels in the study by age 16. Although not all students in the “decreasing pattern of engagement” trajectory had SEN, researchers should keep this finding in mind when comparing engagement of SEN and TD students because the results could be age dependent.

Regarding the variables involved in student engagement, Fredricks et al. (2004) describe three main groups: school-level factors (e.g., school size and opportunities for participating), classroom context (e.g., teacher–student relationships, peer

acceptance, and classroom structure), and individual needs (e.g., relatedness, autonomy, and competence). Among these factors, the quality of teacher–student relationships has been identified as a key element in engagement and disengagement, including cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components for TD students (e.g., Roorda et al., 2011, 2017; Quin, 2017). Research showed that positive teacher–student relationships in high school contribute to adaptive behaviors and improve intentions to graduate (Burns et al., 2019; Burns, 2020). Furthermore, the perception of students of high levels of emotional and instructional support from teachers has been positively associated with emotional and behavioral engagement (Skinner et al., 2008; Havik and Westergård, 2020). Martin and Collie (2019) found that positive relationships of high school students with their teachers predict greater school engagement, and importantly, engagement is higher as the number of positive relationships outnumbered negative ones.

The association between engagement and teacher–student relationships has been studied through several paradigms: From the *self-system model perspective*, the quality of interacting with teachers provides information to adolescents that they are competent to succeed at school, related to others in these settings, and are autonomous learners (e.g., Roorda et al., 2011; Wang and Eccles, 2013; Krane et al., 2016). *Attachment theory* states that teachers who create warm, safe, and supportive relationships with their students can serve as important non-parental attachment figures and role models (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). Thus, students could use teachers as a safe base from which to explore the environment and engage in learning activities knowing they have support even in stressful situations (Verschuere and Koomen, 2012). Affective teacher–student relationships have been found to contribute to the engagement and academic outcomes of students (Engels et al., 2021). *Relational/rhetorical goal theory* explains that each student and teacher brings to the classroom their own expectations and experiences, and to have a successful learning process, instructors must meet the goals of students for being in the class: rhetorical or relational. Rhetorical goals focus on learning or task outcomes, and relational goals include perceived supportiveness, caring, and connectedness with others (Mottet et al., 2006). This theory explains that although rhetorical and relational goals could be considered independent, they are interrelated phenomena, as failing to achieve one goal could lead to failing to achieve the other goal. Recent studies provide evidence for this theory (Kaufmann and Frisby, 2017; Frisby et al., 2020). Finally, the *working alliance theory* conceptualizes teacher–student relationships as a collaborative working alliance. In this frame, the concept of working alliance in psychotherapy is applied to the classroom setting, emphasizing that the emotional bond between teacher and student and their collaboration in achieving the goals and tasks of their work together influence achievement (Toste et al., 2015). Noble et al. (2020) found that the ratings of the working alliance of students predicted their reports of risk of dropout mediated by school engagement.

Despite differences regarding the mechanisms for the effect of teacher–student relationships on engagement and achievement in the above-mentioned theories, important and consistent research findings stress the importance of teacher–student

relationships in the experiences of high school students (Roorda et al., 2011, 2017; Quin, 2017).

However, again, the focus of most research about teacher–student relationships has been on students with TD, with less and inconclusive evidence about the effect of these relationships in SEN students (see Roorda et al., 2011). Thus, specific research in this regard is needed (Sabol and Pianta, 2012; Ewe, 2019), especially in inclusive settings (Pennington and Courtade, 2015) and considering their emotional, social, and/or learning difficulties (Murray and Greenberg, 2001; Murray and Pianta, 2007).

The research conducted on this topic indicates that SEN students have poorer teacher–student relationships than their typical developed peers (Murray and Greenberg, 2001; Al-Yagon and Mikulincer, 2004; Freire et al., 2020), and according to Henricsson and Rydell (2004), these relationships tend to be stable over time in elementary school for SEN students. In addition, most research on the teacher–student relationships of students with SEN is limited to the upper years of primary schools (for an exception, see Freire et al., 2020); thus, studying these relationships as the high school level is even more important.

This study analyzes the impact of teacher–student relationships and SEN on engagement and disengagement of students in a sample of SEN and TD secondary students in mainstream schools. Trying to fill the gaps in the literature on the engagement of SEN students, we used three widely agreed dimensions of engagement in this study: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Fredricks et al., 2004), with the addition of social engagement (Wang et al., 2017). Finally, we measure engagement and disengagement as separate continua.

METHOD

Design and Participants

This study used a non-experimental, correlational, and cross-sectional design to evaluate student engagement among adolescents with SEN and their TD peers. The inclusion criteria for the SEN group were (a) being enrolled in the 9th grade, (b) being in the inclusion program at a mainstream school, and (c) having a SEN diagnosis. For the TD group, the criteria were (a) being enrolled in the 9th grade, and (b) not having being diagnosed with SEN. The exclusion participation criterion for both groups was having autism ($n = 16$). Schools provided information regarding diagnoses to verify compliance with the inclusion criteria.

Participants were 9th-grade students recruited from 38 public mainstream schools from the Biobio Region in Chile. All schools were in urban areas and all enrolled SEN students as mandated by Chilean legislation. There were 340 students with SEN (306 with learning disabilities, 90% of the SEN group; 21 with attention deficit disorder, 6%; six with motor disability, 2%; four with a mild hearing impairment, 1%; and three with a mild visual impairment, 1%). Furthermore, 640 TD students participated in the study. The overall group included 575 female students (56%) and 445 male students (44%), with the gender breakdown being similar between groups [$\chi^2_{(1)} = 2.040$; $p = 0.153$]. Note there was a slight age difference [$t_{(946)} = 3.146$; $p = 0.002$]. The mean age in the SEN group was 15.01 years ($SD = 0.94$) and 14.82 ($SD = 0.86$)

for the TD group, that is, SEN students were on average 3 months older than TD students. Regarding economic status, 82.5% of the TD and 87.7% of the SEN sample had a family income below 690 USD, which corresponds to a low socioeconomic status.

Instruments and Variables

(a) Special educational needs: The inclusion program for students with SEN to attend mainstream schools in Chile—called the school integration program—requires that students have a medical and psychological evaluation to identify their special need(s) prior to enrolment. The relevant Decree 170 (2009) states that SEN students enrolled in public mainstream schools to receive academic support from a special needs teacher along with attending regular classes. This is done in both the classroom and in a special resource room, allowing for more individualized assistance.

(b) The engagement measures of teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, and family support for learning were assessed with the subscales *teacher–student relationship* (nine items: “My teachers are there for me when I need them”), *peer support at school* (six items: “Other students at school care about me”), and *family support for learning* (four items: “My family/guardian(s) want me to keep trying when things are tough at school”) of the Student Engagement Inventory (SEI; Appleton et al., 2006). Although this instrument is called “student engagement,” the nature of its items better captures factors that influence engagement than indicators of student engagement *per se* (Veiga et al., 2014). Each item was answered on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree) as in the original instrument (Appleton et al., 2006). The omission of the midpoint in a Likert scale to measure attitude is debated. However, we decided not to change the number of options because that could alter the psychometric properties of the instrument. Furthermore, omitting a neutral option could in some circumstances be beneficial in terms of forcing the respondent to choose an answer in areas with high social desirability pressures (Chyung et al., 2017), which could be the case in this study.

Reliability indices in the Chilean validation process were between $\omega = 0.76$ and $\omega = 0.88$ for all scales. The reliability indices in the present sample were $\omega = 0.875$, $\omega = 0.785$, and $\omega = 0.700$ for teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, and family support for learning subscales, respectively. In the validation sample, the SEI showed a good fit for the proposed six-factor model (Appleton et al., 2006), and its factorial invariance has been demonstrated in various countries (Virtanen et al., 2017) including Chile (Espinoza et al., 2018).

(c) The perception of school participation was measured with the subscale *positive perception of school participation* (six items: “At my school, all students have the chance to participate”) from the School Participation Scale developed by John-Akinola and Nic-Gabhainn (2014). This subscale measures if students perceive that school participation is real or symbolic in their educational institution. Each item is answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). This study used the Spanish version, which has been validated in a sample of 1,428 students in secondary schools in central-southern Chile

($M = 15.59$; $SD = 1.52$) (Pérez-Salas et al., 2019). Reliability in the Chilean validation process was $\omega = 0.877$ for this subscale (Pérez-Salas et al., 2019), and in the present sample, it was $\alpha = 0.857$ ($\omega = 0.868$).

(d) Engagement and disengagement were measured with the Multidimensional Scale of School Engagement (MSSE; Wang et al., 2017). It consists of 37 items that assess engagement and disengagement on a five-point Likert scale. The engagement factor contains 19 items: (a) *behavioral engagement* (four items: "I ask questions when I don't understand"), (b) *cognitive engagement* (five items: "I look over my schoolwork and make sure it is done well"), (c) *emotional engagement* (five items: "I am happy at school"), and (d) *social engagement* (five items: "I enjoy working with peers at school"). The disengagement factor contains 18 items: (a) *behavioral disengagement* (eight items: "I don't follow school rules"), (b) *cognitive disengagement* (two items: "Finishing my homework fast is more important to me than doing it well"), (c) *emotional disengagement* (four items: "I feel overwhelmed by my schoolwork"), and (d) *social disengagement* (four items: "I don't care about the people at my school"). This instrument was validated by the Pérez-Salas (2021) among Chilean students. The reliability indices in the present sample for the engagement factor were $\alpha = 0.902$ ($\omega = 0.902$) and $\alpha = 0.869$ ($\omega = 0.869$) for the disengagement factor. These indices were similar to those found in the validation process in Chile (Pérez-Salas, 2021).

Procedure

This study is part of ongoing longitudinal research on engagement trajectories of high school students. The data for this particular study is from the first wave of data collection, and the experiment was conducted during the second semester of the school year (August/December 2018). The ethical committee of the Universidad de Concepción of the First Author approved this research, and both the school boards of each city and the school gave their authorization. After this, eligible participants were determined according to the study inclusion criteria for both samples (students with SEN or students who were TD).

An invitation to participate in the study was sent to the parents of eligible participants. After explaining the rights and the purpose of the study of students and obtaining active informed consent from the parents and student informed assent, trained psychologists gave the instruments to TD students for self-administration, and individually assessed SEN students using a reading aloud application format. We decided to use different methods because difficulties in applying self-administration questionnaires in SEN students have been identified (Finlay and Lyons, 2001; Goegan et al., 2018), suggesting that accommodations should be made (Goegan et al., 2018). However, to ensure there was not a skew from the application format, we conducted a quasi-experimental study with another sample that showed that the application format (self-administered vs. read aloud) had no effect, confirming similar reliability indexes for both samples¹.

¹Pérez-Salas, C. P., Parra, V., Sáez, F., Ramírez, P., and Zañartu, I. (2021). Self-administered versus read aloud questionnaires: Quasi-experimental study in students with and without learning disabilities.

The evaluations were conducted in schools of participants and lasted approximately 45 min. Participants received a movie ticket for their collaboration.

Data Analysis

The percentage of missing data was evaluated by item and participants, and then missing values were replaced with the Expectation-Maximization imputation method to enable analysis with all cases.

As the SEN participants had different conditions (learning, sensorial, and motor disabilities), we analyzed if there were differences in their engagement and disengagement before conducting the main analysis. Furthermore, before the analysis, we tested compliance with the assumptions of the parametric technique: normal distribution with asymmetry and kurtosis, and the homogeneity of variances with a Box's M test and Levene's test. Heteroscedasticity corrections were made when needed. Finally, to evaluate possible differences between groups (SEN vs. TD), we performed a multivariate analysis of variance with engagement and disengagement dimensions. We employed SPSS, version 25 (IBM, 2017) for all the analyses.

RESULTS

The total missing values per item in the sample were <1% across cases. We had full data for 80.8% of the participants (81 items) and only four individuals (0.4% of the sample) had omitted 6–18 items (7–22%) in their protocols. As mentioned, missing data were replaced with the Expectation-Maximization imputation method to enable the analysis with all available data ($N = 1,020$). A multivariate ANOVA did not indicate differences between participants with different SEN conditions when it came to student engagement [$F_{(16, 1340)} = 0.909$; $p = 0.558$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$] or disengagement [$F_{(16, 1340)} = 0.645$; $p = 0.849$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.008$]. Thus, we decided to treat all SEN participants as one group. Asymmetry and kurtosis values were lower than I2I in all dependent variables in both samples, supporting compliance of the assumption of the normal distribution of the variables.

Table 1 shows the mean, SD, *t*-tests, and effect sizes for teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, family support for learning, and perception of school participation for students with SEN and TD. Results indicate good levels of teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, and family support for learning, and very positive perceptions of school participation in both TD and SEN students. Mean comparisons revealed that SEN students report having better teacher–student relationships and an even more positive perception of school participation than do TD students. No group differences were found in peer support at school or in family support for learning.

The multivariate ANOVA showed a significant statistical difference between SEN and TD students for the student engagement indicators (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social) [$F_{(4, 1015)} = 12.484$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.047$], although both had good levels (**Table 1**). The intersubjects effect test showed that cognitive, emotional, and social engagement were higher in SEN students than TD students ($p < 0.01$) (**Table 1**). This means that students with SEN reported working harder at school, having

TABLE 1 | Mean, SD, *t*-tests, and effect sizes for teacher–student relationship, peer support at school, family support for learning and perception of school participation in students with SEN and TD.

Variable	Students with SEN (<i>n</i> = 340)		Students with TD (<i>n</i> = 680)		Group comparisons	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> _(<i>df</i>)	η_p^2
Teacher–student relationships	3.097	0.534	2.792	0.585	<i>t</i> _(735.23) = 8.323**	0.06
Peer support at school	3.100	0.540	3.043	0.551	<i>t</i> ₍₁₀₁₈₎ = 1.556	
Family support for learning	3.461	0.600	3.433	0.560	<i>t</i> ₍₁₀₁₈₎ = 0.724	
Perception of school participation	4.107	0.786	3.771	0.855	<i>t</i> ₍₁₀₁₈₎ = 6.068**	0.035
Student engagement						
Behavioral engagement	3.511	0.809	3.487	0.816	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 0.199	
Cognitive engagement	3.728	0.800	3.568	0.864	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 8.145**	0.008
Emotional engagement	4.064	0.751	3.744	0.832	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 35.628**	0.034
Social engagement	3.996	0.754	3.751	0.845	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 20.480**	0.020
Student disengagement						
Behavioral disengagement	2.504	0.871	2.270	0.793	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 18.383**	0.018
Cognitive disengagement	2.551	1.084	2.243	1.018	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 19.945**	0.19
Emotional disengagement	2.555	0.955	2.580	0.956	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 0.160	
Social disengagement	1.959	0.913	2.026	0.927	<i>F</i> _(1, 1018) = 1.183	

SEN, special educational needs; TD, typical development.

***p* < 0.01.

more fun at school, and enjoying spending time with their peers at school more than those with TD.

Regarding the student disengagement dimension, a significant statistical difference was found between SEN and TD students in the indicators (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social) [*F*_(4, 1015) = 10.173; *p* < 0.001; η_p^2 = 0.039]. In general, SEN and TD students had low levels of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional disengagement, but both groups reported some degree of social disengagement. The intersubjects effect test showed that cognitive and behavioral disengagement were higher in SEN students than TD students (*p* < 0.01) (Table 1). This means that students with SEN reported more maladaptive behaviors at school and more disaffection with learning than their peers with TD (*p* < 0.01). No differences were found between samples in emotional disengagement or social disengagement.

Next, using the stepwise method, linear regressions were analyzed to predict the scores in each engagement and disengagement dimension for teacher–student relationships, peer support at school, family support for learning, and perception of school participation.

For behavioral engagement, the regression model included perceptions of school participation, peer support at school, teacher–student relationships, and group (SEN vs. TD) was statistically significant [R_{adj}^2 = 0.232, *F*_(4, 1015) = 77.991, *p* < 0.001]. Of the predictive variables, the most important was the positive perception of school participation, followed by peer support at school, teacher–student relationships, and group (TD). That is, the better the perceptions of (a) school participation opportunities, (b) peer support, and (c) teacher–student relationships, along with (d) being TD, the higher the scores for behavioral engagement, in that order (Table 2).

For cognitive engagement, the regression model included teacher–student relationships, family support for learning, and

perception of school participation [R_{adj}^2 = 0.190, *F*_(3, 1016) = 80.656; *p* < 0.001]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was again positive perception of school participation, followed by teacher–student relationships and family support for learning (Table 2). This model implies that the better is (a) perception of school participation opportunities, (b) teacher–student relationships, and (c) family support for learning, the higher are the scores for cognitive engagement.

For emotional engagement, the regression model was statistically significant and included perception of school participation, teacher–student relationships, and peer support at school [R_{adj}^2 = 0.477, *F*_(3, 1016) = 311.276, *p* < 0.001]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was positive perception of school participation, followed by teacher–student relationships and peer support at school (Table 2). This model implies that the better is (a) perception of school participation opportunities, (b) teacher–student relationships, and (c) peer support at school, the higher are the scores for emotional engagement.

For social engagement, the regression model that included perception of school participation, peer support at school, and teacher–student relationships was statistically significant [R_{adj}^2 = 0.415, *F*_(3, 1016) = 242.155; *p* < 0.001]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was again positive perception of school participation, followed by peer support at school and teacher–student relationships (Table 2). This model implies that the better is (a) perception of school participation opportunities, (b) peer support at school, and (c) teacher–student relationships, the higher are the scores for social engagement.

For behavioral disengagement, the regression model that included all predictive variables was statistically significant [R_{adj}^2 = 0.076, *F*_(5, 1014) = 17.728; *p* < 0.001]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was group (SEN = 1), followed

TABLE 2 | Linear regression models for behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social engagement dimensions.

Dependent variable	Model	B	SE	β	t
Behavioral engagement	(Constant)	1.195	0.144		8.304***
	Perception of school participation	0.053	0.005	0.334	9.872***
	Peer support at school	0.029	0.008	0.119	3.723***
	Teacher–student relationships	0.022	0.006	0.141	3.897***
	Group (SEN/TD)	−0.153	0.049	−0.089	−3.117**
Cognitive engagement	(Constant)	1.382	0.163		8.466***
	Perception of school participation	0.046	0.006	0.275	8.047***
	Teacher–student relationships	0.026	0.006	0.160	4.303***
	Family support for learning	0.036	0.012	0.099	3.074**
Emotional engagement	(Constant)	0.537	0.119		4.496
	Perception of school participation	0.070	0.004	0.436	15.666***
	Teacher–student relationships	0.038	0.005	0.245	8.359***
	Peer support at school	0.037	0.007	0.150	5.716***
Social engagement	(Constant)	0.550	0.127		4.328***
	Perception of school participation	0.062	0.005	0.381	12.959***
	Peer support at school	0.083	0.007	0.332	11.985***
	Teacher–student relationships	0.012	0.005	0.077	2.483**

SEN, special educational needs; TD, typical development.

** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

by teacher–student relationships (−), peer support at school (+), perception of school participation (−), and family support for learning (−) (**Table 3**). This model means that (a) having SEN, (b) having poorer teacher–student relationships, (c) higher peer support at school, (d) perception of scarce opportunities to participate at school, and (e) lower support from families for learning leads to higher scores for behavioral disengagement.

For cognitive disengagement, the regression model including the positive perception of school participation, having SEN, and family support for learning was statistically significant [$R^2_{adj} = 0.065$, $F_{(3, 1016)} = 26.67$, $p < 0.001$]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was the perception of school participation (−), followed by group (SEN = 1) and family support for learning (−) (**Table 3**). This model implies that (a) having SEN and (b) a poorer perception of both school participation opportunities, and (c) family support for learning will lead to lower scores for cognitive disengagement.

For emotional disengagement, the regression model including the positive perception of school participation, teacher–student relationships, and the group was statistically significant [$R^2_{adj} = 0.103$, $F_{(3, 1016)} = 39.943$, $p < 0.001$]. Among the predictive variables, the most important was the perception of school participation (−), followed by teacher–student relationships (−) and group (SEN = 1) (**Table 3**). This model suggests that (a) having SEN and (b) a poorer perception of school participation opportunities, and (c) a negative perception of teacher–student relationships will lead to lower scores for emotional disengagement.

Finally, for social disengagement, the regression model including peer support at school and perception of school participation was statistically significant [$R^2_{adj} = 0.159$, $F_{(2, 1017)} = 97.48$, $p < 0.001$]. Among the predictive variables, the most

important was peer support at school (−), followed by the perception of school participation (−) (**Table 3**). This model means that (a) the poorer the perception of peer support at school and (b) a negative perception of school participation opportunities leads to lower scores for social disengagement.

DISCUSSION

Few studies have measured the engagement and disengagement of students with SEN, and even fewer have examined the impact of factors such as teacher–student relationships on their engagement and disengagement in school. This cross-sectional study extended prior research investigating student engagement in a sample of SEN and TD students measuring this construct in a multidimensional manner (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social), while considering engagement and disengagement as separate but related phenomena.

Inconsistent with previous research, we found engagement of SEN students was higher than that of TD students for the cognitive, emotional, and social indicators. We also found no differences between both groups for the behavioral indicator. Much of the literature in this field suggests that SEN students could be conceptualized as at risk for low engagement due to their struggles at school (Douglas et al., 2012; Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014; Moreira et al., 2015). In addition, previous research reported lower levels of engagement in this population than in TD students (Lovelace et al., 2014; Schindler, 2018).

Scant research has directly examined the construct of cognitive engagement for students with SEN (O'Donnell and Reschly, 2020). However, O'Donnell and Reschly (2020) highlight that academic difficulties experienced by students with SEN may reflect a lack of self-regulation strategies and thus could

TABLE 3 | Linear regression models for behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social disengagement dimensions.

Dependent variable	Model	B	SE	β	t
Behavioral disengagement	(Constant)	3.251	0.180		18.044***
	Teacher–student relationships	−0.023	0.007	−0.150	−3.575***
	Group (SEN/TD)	0.330	0.055	0.188	5.994***
	Perception of school participation	−0.019	0.006	−0.117	−3.160**
	Peer support at school	0.032	0.009	0.128	3.533***
	Family support and learning	−0.040	0.013	−0.111	−3.093**
Cognitive disengagement	(Constant)	3.667	0.215		17.030***
	Perception of school participation	−0.036	0.007	−0.176	−5.456***
	Group (SEN/TD)	0.387	0.069	0.174	5.629***
	Family support and learning	−0.044	0.015	−0.096	−3.017**
Emotional disengagement	(Constant)	4.243	0.156		27.117***
	Perception of school participation	−0.036	0.007	−0.191	−5.300***
	Teacher–student relationships	−0.034	0.007	−0.187	−5.115***
	Group (SEN/TD)	0.140	0.062	0.069	2.252*
Social disengagement	(Constant)	4.288	0.166		25.837***
	Peer support at school	−0.077	0.009	−0.275	−8.833***
	Perception of school participation	−0.037	0.006	−0.205	−6.578***

SEN, special educational needs; TD, typical development.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

impact engagement. Our results contradict this, showing that SEN students present higher scores in cognitive engagement. According to the conceptualization of cognitive engagement in the MSSE used in this study, this finding means that the SEN students in our sample reported “higher metacognitive strategies (...) to productively coordinate their energy and behavior in school” (Wang et al., 2017, p. 12). This contradictory finding is explainable because multiple studies have shown that students with SEN can successfully learn metacognitive skills [for more detail, see the meta-analysis of de Boer et al. (2018) and Donker et al. (2014)]; thus, the work of special needs teachers with SEN students at schools could be reflecting the positive results thereof in their higher scores for cognitive engagement in our study.

Our findings also contradict previous research reporting that emotional engagement in students with SEN is lower than that in TD students. This could be attributed to the different conceptualization of emotional engagement in various studies. In the MSSE, Wang et al. (2017, p. 3) state that emotional engagement represents “the external manifestations of students’ feelings regarding school” (having fun at school, being happy at school, being proud of their school, and being interested in what they are learning at school) and do not include facilitators of engagement (contextual predictors). Our results also show higher social engagement scores for SEN students than for the TD group, reflecting the very good quality of this involvement of adolescents in social interactions (enjoy working with peers at school, enjoy spending time with peers at school, and openness to working with peers and making friends at school). These results are encouraging for SEN education, since the importance of positive emotions for development and well-being has been emphasized by positive psychology (Norrish and Vella-Brodrick, 2009; McKeering et al., 2021).

Aligned with the self-system model theory (Connell and Wellborn, 1991) and our hypothesis, our findings show that close relationships with teachers positively contribute to all dimensions of student engagement in our sample, an effect consistently reported in research in this field with TD students (Roorda et al., 2011, 2017; Quin, 2017). We also found that the higher was the perception of opportunities to participate at school, the higher were all indicators of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social), reflecting the relevance of school-level and classroom-level variables in student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

However, the better teacher–student relationships and more opportunities to participate at school reported by SEN students compared to their TD peers were unexpected findings of our study. Previous research mostly reported poorer relationships between SEN students and their teachers (Murray and Greenberg, 2001; Al-Yagon and Mikulincer, 2004; Murray et al., 2006; Freire et al., 2020) and fewer opportunities to participate at school than TD students (Coster et al., 2013). Our results show the opposite, as Schwab and Rossmann (2020) similarly showed in a recent study that found SEN students rated their teacher–student relationships more positively than TD students.

O’Donnell and Reschly (2020) state that the inconsistency in school connectedness or teacher–student relationships in the literature on SEN students could be attributable to the availability of resource rooms and close relationships with special education teachers in each context. Similarly, Schwab and Rossmann (2020) explain their results by arguing that in the Austrian school system, SEN students are often supported by two teachers in regular classrooms, one of whom is a special needs teacher who spends much time with the students, providing opportunities to develop a closer relationship with them. We think the same

hypothesis could explain our positive results for teacher–student relationships and the better perception of participation of the SEN students in our sample, as such students attending public mainstream schools in Chile receive academic support by special needs teachers in regular classrooms and additional support in small groups in a special resource room. This reflects the increased time special needs teachers spend with these students and that these teachers may be more sensitive to their needs.

The positive effect of special needs teachers for Chilean students is also supported by a qualitative study that we conducted with a sample of adolescents with learning disabilities². Based on the perceptions of students, that study concluded that special needs teachers are crucial for their engagement, as their pedagogical practices are oriented to satisfy the needs of students for competence and relatedness, aspects that have been shown as key in adjusting to school (Connell and Wellborn, 1991).

Exposure to more positive relationships with special needs teachers could also explain the better teacher–student relationships reported by SEN students and their higher emotional and social engagement scores. This is aligned with the study of Martin and Collie (2019) that predicted greater engagement of high school students as to when the number of positive relationships outnumbered negative relationships with their teachers.

Finally, we found significant statistical differences between SEN and TD students for some disengagement indicators. On the one hand, engagement of SEN students was higher in the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions; however, on the other hand, they also had higher scores for cognitive and behavioral disengagement. These results emphasize that engagement and disengagement are two distinctive phenomena (Skinner et al., 2009). Thus, although students with SEN report working harder at school, enjoying being at school and studying, and have positive interactions with others at school, they also perceive higher “disaffection” with learning (Skinner et al., 2008) than their TD peers. This should alert educators, as it could lead SEN students to gradually withdraw from the social environment in response to negative experiences (Finn, 1989).

A possible explanation for this apparent contra-intuitive result for SEN students (high cognitive and behavioral disengagement alongside high cognitive and emotional engagement) might be because according to a meta-analysis, the relationship between academic achievement and engagement is not always conclusive (Lei et al., 2018). Therefore, although extensive empirical research on the relationship between academic achievement and engagement exists, some scholars have found non-significant associations between these variables (Lei et al., 2018). Possibly, this is because students who achieve good grades better master the abilities needed for easier learning than low achievement students, and so apply less effort and strategies when studying (Lei et al., 2018). We think this hypothesis could be applicable

to our results, meaning the better cognitive engagement of SEN students may reflect their extra educational effort compared to their classmates. Furthermore, despite that they seem to enjoy being at school, being with peers, and learning, they may be starting to experience a higher level of cognitive and behavioral disengagement, perhaps because they feel some frustration when learning.

Implications for Policies and Educational Practice

The current study provides evidence of the need for continuing research on students with SEN to unpack the conditions that provide support or hinder their participation and achievement in schools. Overall, this research suggests that teachers have a relevant influence in all dimensions of engagement of students and on emotional and behavioral disengagement for TD and SEN students. At the same time, the positive relationship between teachers and students was inversely associated with the disengagement of students. These findings are particularly relevant for students with SEN who often experience more struggles in school and higher dropout rates.

These results have implications for policy and practice. We hope this study will inform policymakers and authorities when drafting policies regarding students with SEN, especially when it comes to the relevance of teacher–student relationships in the achievement and well-being of students. In addition, this study highlights the relevance of including students with SEN in research. Authorities must consider this when evaluating topics impacting the trajectories of students.

Regarding implications for practice, it would benefit school systems to structure student interactions in ways to strengthen opportunities to provide academic and emotional support. School districts and administrators have an important role in providing professional development to improve the abilities of teachers to create strong teacher–student relationships. In the case of inclusive education, students with SEN have the additional support of special education teachers, which could impact their perceptions of teacher–student relationships, as the additional support could provide further opportunities to enhance these relationships. Schools should also make efforts to ensure that both TD and SEN students feel like there are plenty of opportunities to engage in school participation, since that was also a key factor.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the strengths of this study, some limitations must be considered when interpreting its results. First, this is a correlational and cross-sectional study; thus, no cause–effect conclusions should be derived from our results. Second, all our measures rely on self-reporting of students. It would have been informative to have impressions of teachers on teacher–student relationships and more direct measures of school participation opportunities to disentangle in terms of whether the level of opportunities, belief that there

²Lara, G., González, N., Lara, F., Lagos, L., Parra, V., and Pérez-Salas, C. P. (2021). Relación docente-estudiante y compromiso escolar: percepción de jóvenes con necesidades educativas especiales (Manuscript submitted for publication). Departamento de Psicología, Universidad de Concepción.

are many opportunities or a combination of both have an impact.

Future quantitative work should examine practices of teachers to help determine what creates good teacher–student relationships, and what other impacts teachers may have on engagement and disengagement dimensions of students (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social). Furthermore, qualitative work (e.g., interviews with teachers, and TD and SEN students) should be considered to provide detailed insight into how such relationships are created and if specific factors have a greater influence on the performance and well-being of students. In this regard, mixed research methods could be a productive approach to collect comprehensive data to better understand the experiences of students, particularly those who face barriers to participating in schools.

Despite our limitations, this study adds to a fairly limited field of research. It includes a relatively large sample of students with SEN studying in mainstream settings, whom it compared with their TD peers. Simply focusing on the engagement and disengagement of students with SEN is a contribution to this field considering the lack of information on both constructs for this more vulnerable population. It also suggests clear future paths for additional research and potential school-level improvements.

Finally, we hope this article draws attention to the challenges faced by SEN students and the relevance of teacher–student relationships in contributing to both engagement and disengagement depending on the quality of these relationships. These findings suggest clear future paths for additional research and potential school-level interventions to strengthen student engagement and avoid the negative consequences of disengagement.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Comité de Ética, Bioética y Bioseguridad de la Vicerrectoría de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to this manuscript by doing secondary research, conceptualizing the methodology, and drafting and revising the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Psychological Wellbeing, Mindfulness, and Immunity of Teachers in Second or Foreign Language Education: A Theoretical Review

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The emotions and affective factors of teachers play quintessential roles in academic contexts as they influence almost all aspects of their profession. To provide a theoretical review of some psychology constructs of teachers in this area, this study examines the psychological wellbeing, mindfulness, and immunity of teachers as three novel variables. More specifically, this study presents the definitions, dimensions, theories, and frameworks related to this domain drawing on positive psychology, complexity/dynamic systems theory, self-organization process, reflexive self-consciousness theory, integrative awareness theories, and mindfulness framework. These theoretical underpinnings explain the constructs and the way they function in second language education. Then, to provide evidence and justify the findings and propositions, empirical studies on each of the variables are reviewed. Finally, implications, research gaps, and suggestions for future inquiries are offered to interested researchers.

Keywords: L2 education, positive psychology, psychological well-being, mindfulness, teacher immunity

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching has long been endorsed to be one of the most demanding and stressful jobs with high levels of tension, burnout, attrition, and low professional wellbeing (Benevene et al., 2020; Mercer, 2020). In the context of second/foreign language education, the story gets more complicated in the sense that teachers should, additionally, grapple with linguistic, intercultural, and pedagogical difficulties of their job (Gkonou and Miller, 2017; King and Ng, 2018; Nayernia and Babayan, 2019). That is why teachers are regarded as the most valuable, costly, and “critical pillars” of academia (Khani and Mirzaee, 2015; Pishghadam et al., 2021), whose emotions and needs must be put at the top of research and educational agendas (Maslach and Leiter, 1999; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Mercer, 2020). With the advent of this shifting trend toward “the psychology of teachers,” the myriads of research studies have been conducted on different aspects of language teaching and their impacts on the achievement of learners. However, a great majority of such teacher-related investigations have capitalized on the negative factors, such as stress, exhaustion, and fatigue, all leading to non-functionality in teachers (Fleming et al., 2013; Benevene et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2020). Research

on these stressors pinpointed that the health, job satisfaction, identity, self-efficacy, efficiency, motivation, and professional performance of teachers are all reliant on the degree of care that educational institutions pay to their frontline soldiers (Derakhshan et al., 2019, 2020).

Nevertheless, with the emergence of positive psychology (PP) as a new school of psychology that was the offshoot of humanism, scholars turned their attention from negative to positive sides of teaching and explored the emotions, care, wellbeing, and credibility of teachers (Jin et al., 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2021). Simply, PP is an approach that examines how people thrive and try to lead happier lives (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019; MacIntyre, 2021). It highlights the roles that courage, optimism, resilience, hope, happiness, flow, creativity, interpersonal communication skills, credibility, clarity, wellbeing, and others play in academia (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

As a construct that is best observable in PP, the psychological wellbeing (PWB) of teachers is described as the judgment and satisfaction of an individual with his/her happiness, physical and mental health, and profession (Huppert, 2009). The wellbeing of teachers goes beyond the simple absence of setbacks and stressors at work and concerns healthy and functional teachers. In simple terms, wellbeing refers to the capability of teachers to strike a positive and dynamic balance between their resources and professional challenges (Benevene et al., 2020). It brings about different positive outcomes in the academic arena such as forming a positive rapport among teachers and students, promoting the didactic performance of teachers, raising job satisfaction level, and increasing the achievement level of students (Roffey, 2012; Kidger et al., 2016; Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019). In foreign language contexts in which teachers have to fight in two arenas (i.e., transferring knowledge and removing barriers), there is an urgent need to take into consideration the PWB of teachers in institutions whose structure and climate determine the level of PWB (Tang et al., 2013). At present, the emotions and psychological attributes of teachers play a significant role in teaching creatively and effectively (Roffey, 2012). They perform best in an environment in which their affective, professional, and social needs are fulfilled. Similar to other aspects, research shows that the PWB and academic performance of students are largely dependent on the PWB of teachers (Briner and Dewberry, 2007; Bentea, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to pay special attention to the PWB of teachers if they wish to have high-quality teaching and ultimately improved student learning.

As a concept highly related to the PWB of teachers, which reflects the complexities of the teaching profession, mindfulness has been derived from Buddhism to describe living with awareness, which needs effort and training (Siegel, 2007; Hassed and Chambers, 2015). It is also considered as an intrinsic process that stresses his/her awareness of both internal and external experiences as they happen (Brown and Ryan, 2003). As stated by Rix and Bernay (2014), mindfulness is the full attention of an individual on what is occurring inside and nearby him/her both physically and mentally. The concept is important in the second/foreign language education context in which teachers in

this job are pressurized from different angles such as emotional-affective sides and environmental-professional sides. This is a daunting task in the second language (L2) education as teachers in this setting have to deal with many issues at the same time. All such attentional stimuli place stress, self-doubt, and tension on teachers which mostly end in burnout and job-leaving (Waldman and Carmel, 2019; Li et al., 2021). The construct of mindfulness has been identified to promote and correlate positively with different variables in education such as wellbeing (Hue and Lau, 2015), academic performance (Rosenstreich and Margalit, 2015), task engagement (Kee and Liu, 2011), emotion regulation (Kerr et al., 2017), and teaching effectiveness (Flook et al., 2013). Moreover, the mindfulness of teachers has been claimed to reduce their degree of weariness, stress, and anxiety (Regehr et al., 2013; Harnett et al., 2016).

Another novel construct that mirrors the complications of L2 education is teacher immunity, proposed by Hiver and Dörnyei (2017). It is meaningful in language education in that teachers have to deal with numerous challenges in the class aside from pedagogical issues. As a result, these days, teachers as “architects of society” are no longer judged, recruited, and studied only based on their teaching abilities but their psychology and emotion (Hiver and Dörnyei, 2017; Haseli Songhori et al., 2018). They convey their beliefs, feelings, attitudes, value systems, and behaviors to students indirectly, which signify the importance of the psychology of teachers (Haseli Songhori et al., 2018). In such a tense and strained context, L2 teachers usually seek protections against stressors such as low income, limited facilities, poor institutions, and other challenges that lead to attrition and burnout. The quest for overcoming these barriers brought into educational jargon a fresh concept known as “teacher immunity” that refers to the defense mechanisms of teachers that are utilized to minimize the disturbances and damages posed on their motivation, identity, and practice (Hiver, 2017). Immunity is so strong that can influence almost everything that teachers do in their profession (Maghsoudi, 2021). This armoring system (i.e., immunity) is useful for offering deeper insights into the cognition, experiences, and professional identity of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers (Hiver and Dörnyei, 2017). However, due to its recency, teacher immunity research is still in its embryonic stages and seeks further developments and explorations. At present, most of the studies conducted in this line of research have focused on unpacking different triggers and coping strategies of EFL teachers when facing difficulties. Nevertheless, investigating the reasons and processes behind teacher immunity requires further research. Consequently, in this review article, the researchers made an effort to demystify this novel construct which is highly associated with the emotions, positive affect, wellbeing, and mindfulness of teachers.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a movement in psychology and education introduced by Seligman (2006) as a paradigm shift against student-centered pedagogy. It has its roots in humanistic

psychology and aims to examine how people flourish through their emotions and feelings that increase the quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 2011; MacIntyre et al., 2019). Moreover, PP is a reaction against the dominance of cognitivist perspectives in second-language acquisition (SLA) that had blurred the role of emotions in L2 learning. In this theory, life is not seen only from abnormalities and adversities but instead from positive sides (Seligman, 2006) to help people live a happier life. In other words, while its focus is on wellbeing, it does not disregard barriers and setbacks. Instead, it tackles them from the angle of human strengths in place of weaknesses (Oxford, 2016). In PP, the role of courage, wellbeing, perseverance, flow, hope, resilience, optimism, creativity, happiness, and the like are deeply explored. As pinpointed by Seligman (2011), this approach has three core pillars of positive emotions (i.e., positive, internal, and subjective experiences), positive character traits (i.e., features related to wellbeing), and positive institutions (i.e., workplaces that help an individual flourish). This shift of attention toward emotions and affective factors in education continued to gain popularity also in SLA. As a result, many studies were conducted on different constructs associated with this strand of research whose results pointed to the potentials of PP in improving the resilience, efficacy, immunity, credibility, clarity, motivation, engagement, creativity, and initiative of EFL teachers and students, and moderating the impact of negative emotions (Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele et al., 2019). However, as suggested by Li (2020), despite the significance of positive emotions in SLA, a majority of studies are still conducted around the globe to examine negative attributes, such as stress, anxiety, burnout, attrition, and self-doubt, and many other positive constructs in PP are left unexplored.

Psychological Wellbeing

Conceptualization of Psychological Wellbeing

The notion of PWB is conceptualized as a process that entails many intertwined constructs and dimensions (Weiss et al., 2016). It has been drawn from PP and concerns his/her positive functioning, happiness, personal growth, flourishing the self, and so forth (Zaki, 2018). In their seminal attempt to make the concept more vivid, Ryan and Deci (2001) proposed two approaches to wellbeing, namely, “hedonic” and “eudemonic.” Hedonic approaches are only concerned with happiness and life satisfaction and describe wellbeing as obtaining pleasure and circumventing pain. The main purpose of hedonic approaches is to raise happiness forming what came to be known as “subjective wellbeing.” In contrast, eudemonic approaches to wellbeing highlight meaning and self-actualization and concern the living of human life and the realization of his/her potential. This approach provides the basis for PWB and capitalizes on his/her ability to use personal resources and strengths in such a way that he/she can give meaning to life (Mercer, 2020). It is noteworthy that the concept of PWB is not an on-and-off process to be justified either by hedonic or by eudemonic approaches. In many cases, the construct should be interpreted through a mixture of both approaches together with a consideration of his/her positive affect and emotions (Jayawickreme et al., 2012).

Additionally, it is unwise to conceptualize PWB as an individual-subjective variable but a multifaceted variable that can be both subjective and objective. It is a social and context-sensitive construct dynamically shaped through an interplay between conditions, environments, actions, mental resources, and interpersonal relations (La Placa et al., 2013). This perspective stresses the active role of the person in constructing and designing his/her wellbeing. However, it does not reject the influence of sociocultural contexts and policies in this area. PWB has been substantiated to affect many aspects of the life and profession of individuals due to its tight connection with emotions and mentality. Due to this, successful educational systems are now offering their teachers mediation programs to make teachers aware of wellbeing and its effects on their practice, efficacy, motivation, identity, and the wellbeing of students.

Factors Influencing the Wellbeing of Teacher

Due to the inherent complexities in L2 education, the wellbeing of EFL teachers (i.e., physical and mental) is largely influenced by numerous factors whose consideration can help in assisting stakeholders to thrive and have better experiences in academic settings. Among numerous possible factors aside from demographic factors, research indicates that the wellbeing of teachers is strongly affected by linguistic and intercultural demands of the second/foreign language, linguistic capital of language educators, institutional contexts, the emotional connections of teachers with students, the emotional labor of the second/foreign language, classroom encounters, practical supports, working conditions, the prospects of promotion and development of teachers, job security, vocational motives, and prosocial attitudes (Target, 2003; Borg, 2006; Wickham, 2015; Gkonou and Miller, 2017; King and Ng, 2018; Nayernia and Babayan, 2019; Skinner et al., 2019; Greenier et al., 2021). Additionally, it is crucial to mention that the wellbeing of teachers is a broad construct, which is likely to be affected by factors other than the abovementioned depending on educational contexts.

Dimensions of the Psychological Wellbeing of Teacher

As stated earlier, with the advent of PP, scholars and practitioners shifted their attention toward positive emotions and affective factors in academia to provide an opportunity for teachers and students to have positive functioning (Zaki, 2018). This led to the emergence of PWB as a multidimensional construct in PP. According to the study of Ryff (1989), PWB is comprised of six dimensions, namely, *self-acceptance*, *positive relations with others*, *autonomy*, *personal growth*, *environmental mastery*, and *purpose in life* (Figure 1).

Mindfulness

The Definition of Mindfulness

Over the past decades, different descriptions and interpretations have been provided by scholars of this domain for the concept of mindfulness. It has been regarded as a dynamic process internal to a human being, which focuses on his/her awareness of events and experiences as they occur (Brown and Ryan, 2003). It permits the brain to think, experience, and reflect

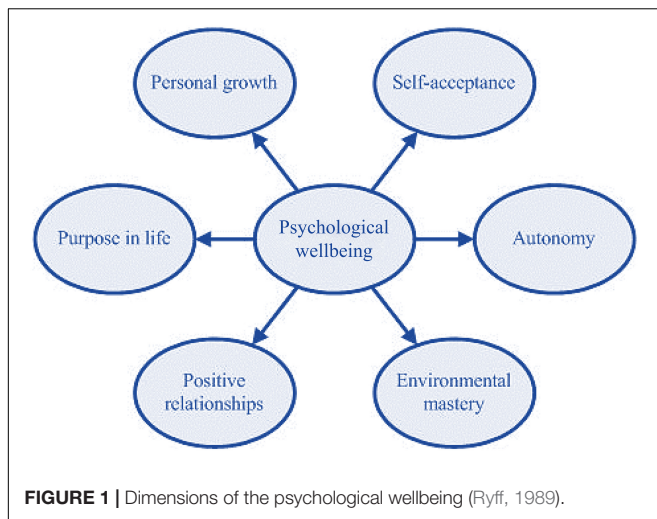


FIGURE 1 | Dimensions of the psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989).

on the current-moment experience and thoughts (Hölzel et al., 2011). Mindfulness is not a fixed variable but dynamic and changeable that can be (re)constructed in one through mediation and training (Roeser, 2016). Similarly, Roeser (2013) described mindfulness as a non-judgmental awareness of people regarding the present-time events that are interconnected with his/her tranquility and kindness. The concept has been used in clinical and educational contexts conveying a similar message. In clinical mediation contexts, mindfulness is a method to promote the awareness and ability of the patient to react appropriately to deficient behaviors such as anxiety and depression (Bishop et al., 2004). In educational settings, it refers to the process of training attention and regulating emotions in a way that an individual focuses only on the present moment without any regret and worry about past or future events (Ramasubramanian, 2017).

Theories and Frameworks of Mindfulness

Similar to its definitions, the “paraconceptual” construct of mindfulness has multiple theoretical frameworks (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Primarily, it belongs to the postpositivist tradition and constructivist paradigm, and its application in academia needs a harmony of different methodological perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, this novel construct has been inspired by and is in close association with different theories of attention and awareness. They include the *reflexive self-consciousness theory* that focuses on the person and his/her experiences as the object of attention (Duval and Wicklund, 1972), *integrative awareness theories* growing out of psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive behavioral, and motivational orientations, which are interested in what is happening both internally and externally to the individual who increases his/her functioning (Ryan, 1995), and the *seminal theoretical framework* of Shapiro et al. (2006), which focuses on the dimensions of mindfulness through three main axioms, namely, *intention*, *attention*, and *attitude*. The first axiom refers to the intrinsic rationale behind practicing or desiring mindfulness. The second axiom concerns the attention paid to his/her moment-to-moment operations and experiences. The

third axiom that directly affects the second axiom refers to how individuals perceive and approach the mindfulness practice (Shapiro et al., 2006). There are also other theories that lie under the mentioned theories such as Gestalt psychology, self-efficacy theory, self-regulation theory, flow theory, and self-determination theory whose presentation is beyond the space budget of this study.

Immunity of Teacher: Definitions and Related Concepts

The notion of teacher immunity is derived from medicine referring to a line of defense or protective mechanisms that human uses to stand the challenges and adversities in his/her life or profession (Hiver, 2015; Rahmati et al., 2019). The term has been proposed by Hiver (2015) and Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) in their groundbreaking studies on existing gaps in the motivation and professional identity of teachers. Similar to the immune system of a human being, which fights against external germs and pathogens, the immune system of a teacher functions as an armoring mechanism to cope with setbacks and stressors in language teaching contexts that are full of adversities and complications (Hiver, 2017). In the academic arena, it provides a framework for explaining the processes through which language teachers find and use a defense system to remove or alleviate the impact of adversities on their motivation and professional identity (Hiver and Dörnyei, 2017).

Teacher immunity is recognized by some features such as *specificity*, *memory*, *adaptability*, and *durability*. Specificity means that teachers use specific strategies to deal with specific challenges/adversities. Memory refers to the use of past experiences of coping with tensions. Adaptability is his/her adjustability to change. Finally, durability denotes the permanency of protection until it becomes a part of his/her identity (Rahmati et al., 2019). Similar to medicines that cure and survive an organ but sometimes create allergies and incur damages to others, teacher immunity can also bring about negative outcomes. More specifically, teacher immunity can take two forms, namely, productive (i.e., positive) or maladaptive (i.e., negative). Teachers with productive immunity are not typically vulnerable to stress and failure and easily ignore conflicts and challenges, and therefore, they usually have high job satisfaction, self-confidence, and ultimately promote in their career. In contrast, teachers with maladaptive immunity have low confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and self-efficacy. As a result, they are extremely conservative in their instruction and resistant to any change (Hiver and Dörnyei, 2017).

Along with these conceptualizations, many cognate terms have also been proposed parallel to immunity such as *coping* (i.e., strategies employed to inhibit or get rid of stressors), *hardiness* (i.e., a personality trait that mitigates the psychological impacts of stress on his/her performance), *resilience* (i.e., the ability to recover from traumatic experiences or adversities), *adaptability* (i.e., the ability to adjust oneself to changing situations), and *buoyancy* (i.e., the self-perception of an individual of his/her ability to effectively manage encountered tensions, stressors, and challenging tasks) (Parker and Martin, 2009).

The Theory Behind Teacher Immunity

The novel construct of teacher immunity is based on the complexity/dynamic systems theory (CDST) and the self-organization process as one of its core principles. CDST is regarded as a theory of change, evolution, and adaptation, which examines survival by a blend of cooperation and competition (Morrison, 2002). Based on this theory, there is always a dynamic and cyclical association between an organism and its surroundings, which often change each other (Battram, 1999). Moreover, the organism and its identity are subjected to modifications due to its networks and relationships in the context. The entire milieu and its parts work together dynamically and yield new realities and associations (Morrison, 2006). Teacher immunity is also explained through the self-organization process, which is the spontaneous pattern formation and change in CDST (Hiver, 2018). More specifically, the self-organization process is an adaptive process wherein the internal structure and function of a system vary in reaction to external surroundings to assure survival. This process has four developmental stages of *triggering*, *coupling*, *realignment*, and *stabilization* (Hiver, 2016). In the triggering stage, adversity takes place and the system loses its balance and becomes more susceptible than normal (Hiver and Dörnyei, 2017). In the coupling stage, through positive feedback loops, organisms interact with one another and the system and develop coping techniques to fight against adversities (Rahmati et al., 2019).

In realignment, the organism begins to restructure him/herself to gain stability (Thelen and Bates, 2003). Moreover, the system recaptures its productivity, and new behavioral patterns appear in the system. Finally, in the stabilization stage, as stability is reached, the organism shuns from susceptibility by defending itself against future conflicts. The new behavioral pattern is said to become a part of the behavior of the system and stabilizes in it (Rahmati et al., 2019). It is at this stage that teachers take productive or maladaptive forms of immunity.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Research suggests that teachers are the builders of prosperous and successful societies, and to make learning possible, their emotions, needs, and psychological health must be assured in the academic contexts (Zaki, 2018). Due to the complexities and adversities involved in L2 education, language teachers are usually pressurized from many angles, this exerts tensions on them, and their instruction may lose effectiveness (Benevene et al., 2020). Becoming aware of the criticality of the emotions and affective factors of teachers, a movement emerged in psychology and education called PP whose aim is to explore positive emotions and interpersonal communication behaviors of teachers. In the past couple of decades, many studies have been conducted on different psychological factors of teachers such as teacher immediacy, care, clarity, credibility, motivation, engagement, and confirmation. This signifies a change of approach from negative factors such as the stress and anxiety of teachers to positive variables in this line of investigation.

As one of the most significant variables related to the psychology of teachers, the concept of PWB has recently witnessed a growing body of explorations in different contexts due to the rise in the job-leaving rate among teachers (Benevene et al., 2020). It has also been found that PWB helps in establishing a positive rapport between teachers and students (Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019), maximizing the academic performance of teachers (Fathi et al., 2020), increasing job satisfaction (Kidger et al., 2016), and increasing the achievement level of students (Bentea, 2015). Moreover, in contexts in which teachers enjoy a high level of PWB, the degree of stress, anxiety, and burnout is claimed to be kept at a minimum level (McCullough, 2015; Fathi and Saeedian, 2020). Similarly, in her recent study, Mercer (2020) took an ecological perspective to examine the wellbeing of English language teachers in Malta through the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach and identified that the wellbeing of teachers is affected by the business model character, working conditions, and the status of teaching English as a job. Similarly, Zaki (2018) conducted a study on ways to promote the PWB of teachers in India and proposed that by increasing this construct, education and learning boost considerably. Furthermore, in Iran, Fathi et al. (2020) carried out a study on the association between PWB, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy using structural equation modeling (SEM) and found that both types of efficacy had a significant impact on the PWB of teachers with self-efficacy being slightly stronger. Research also shows that the PWB of teachers is highly influenced by negative factors, stressors, and burnout factors such as stress, tension, demotivation, depersonalization, and exhaustion (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007). Hence, to help these constructs thrive, educational systems and institutions should eradicate these stressors and at the same time reinforce positive emotions in teachers.

As for mindfulness, Wang and Liu (2016) conducted a case study on 24 EFL students in China using surveys, observations, and journals and concluded that cultivating this variable leads students to become the agents of their learning process. Similarly, Chiesa et al. (2011) argued that through mindfulness practices and programs, the psychological potentials and regulation strategies of teachers increase substantially. It has also been found that the mindfulness of teachers expands their social relationship (Condon et al., 2013), self-care, and reflectivity beside the betterment of socio-academic circumstances for students to flourish (Shapiro et al., 2016). The correlational studies also pinpointed that mindfulness has close ties with the PWB of teachers (Jennings, 2015), the academic performance of teachers and students (Rosenstreich and Margalit, 2015), task engagement (Kee and Liu, 2011), emotional regulation (Kerr et al., 2017), and teaching effectiveness (Flook et al., 2013). Moreover, it has been found that mindfulness had a negative correlation with stress and anxiety (Harnett et al., 2016). Moreover, Waldman and Carmel (2019) took a practical approach and explored the effect of mindfulness on the self-efficacy of teachers to teach L2 writing in Israel. Using an experimental research design, they found that mindfulness practice for EFL teachers significantly increases their self-efficacy for teaching writing.

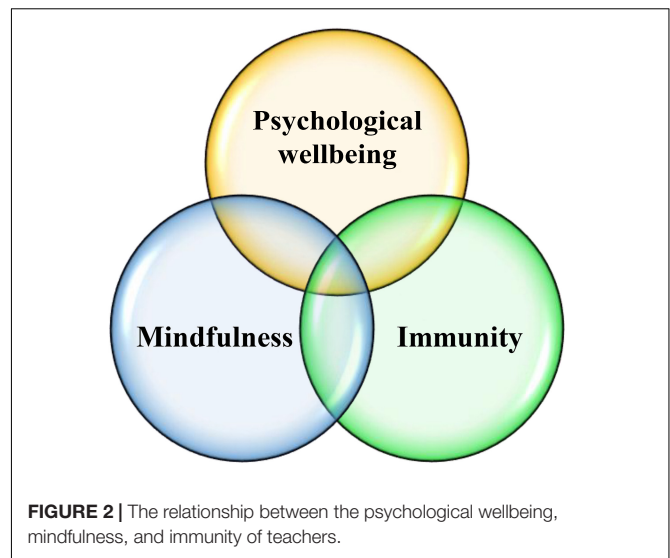
Concerning the last variable (i.e., immunity), which is affected by both teacher PWB and mindfulness, there is only a handful of research on it due to its novelty. As a case in point, in a landmark study, Hiver (2017) carried out a qualitative study in Korea to provide a universal classification for teacher immunity comprising as follows:

- Productively immunized teachers.
- Partially immunized teachers.
- Maladaptively immunized teachers.
- Partially maladaptively immunized teachers.
- Immune-compromised teachers (i.e., lack of immunity of teachers).

Moreover, in their influential study, Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) maintained that teacher immunity is strongly correlated with professional survival, pedagogical practice, motivation, and different identity types of L2 teachers. Similarly, Saydam (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study on the immunity of 187 Turkish EFL teachers and found that most of the participants were productively and maladaptively immunized and their overall immunity level was high. In the EFL context of Iran, Haseli Songhori et al. (2018) employed a mixed-methods design to unpack the dominant immunity type of Iranian teachers. They handed a questionnaire to 230 EFL teachers followed by an interview with 13 experienced teachers. The results of their study demonstrated that maladaptive immunity was the dominant form of immunity among the participants. Similarly, Maghsoudi (2021) conducted a study to identify the dominant type of teacher immunity in Arak, Iran, and utilized a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to gather the required data. Finally, the results of MAXQDA (ERBI Software, Berlin, Germany), ANOVA, and *t*-test indicated that productive (i.e., positive) immunity type was dominant among the prospective EFL teachers. It was also concluded that teacher immunity is a dynamic construct that can influence almost everything that the teachers do in their profession. In sum, the review of empirical studies on the three variables of concern in this study signifies that they still need more complementing studies in different contexts. Most of the empirical studies in this domain have taken advantage of quantitative research designs, examined only the views of teachers, and conducted them in one cultural context. These yawning gaps provided the motive for running this review article on the PWB, mindfulness, and immunity of teachers, which are interconnected constructs (Figure 2).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE INQUIRIES

In light of this review article, it was certified that emotions, affect, and psychology of teachers play a crucial role in education as they are the frontline practitioners whose performance depends on many internal and external factors. Hence, the achievement, motivation, and learning of students all depend on the psychological states of their teachers. Teaching is known as a stressful and demanding profession that places tensions and accountability pressures on teachers. So, to cope with such impositions, teachers must be psychologically prepared and



trained. In this theoretical review, we presented the theoretical underpinnings of the psychology and emotion of teachers. More specifically, drawing on PP, three novel constructs related to the psychology of teachers, namely, PWB, mindfulness, and immunity were comprehensively explained referring to their definitions, conceptualizations, dimensions, underlying theories [e.g., the CDST, self-organization, the reflexive self-consciousness theory, integrative awareness theories, and the mindfulness framework of Shapiro et al. (2006)], empirical studies, and their multiple impacts on teachers and students. Based on this review, this strand of research has precious implications for different stakeholders in academic settings such as students, teachers, teacher educators, material developers, policymakers, and researchers.

Considering the EFL students, this line of research is beneficial in that it maximizes the awareness of learners regarding the co-constructed nature of language teaching and their active role in shaping the identity and instructional efficacy of teachers. When they are cognizant that the responsibility of incurring learning is not the exclusive duty of their teacher, they try to help in minimizing and even removing classroom tensions and stressors so that their teacher feels relaxed and does his/her best when teaching a subject. Similarly, the motivation, interest, and engagement of students improve in a context in which they are regarded as the owners of the learning process. As for teachers, the results would be of help in that they get familiar with the fact that language teaching is a demanding profession that is full of adversities, tensions, and traumatic experiences (Derakhshan, 2021). Correspondingly, they can provide insights about ways to cope with such adversities and disturbances through suitable strategies and provide a comfortable environment for students to learn English with pleasure. They can also offer mediation practices to students and create a mindfulness learning experience in which the motivation and interest of students upsurge.

Moreover, teacher educators can use the information provided in this review to design professional development courses for

both pre- and in-service EFL teachers in which the complexities and challenges involved in the teaching profession are unraveled and appropriate protective techniques are taught. They can also devote some time and effort to develop the positive emotions of teachers along with the pedagogical aspects of teaching. Teacher trainers can improve knowledge and also application of mind and attention-related strategies of teachers. Furthermore, material developers can write materials in which the emotions of teachers are reflected and the lessons and activities help teachers in reducing their stress and pressure of the job, enjoying their moment, and cultivating a defensive mechanism in them to stand against adversities and traumatic events of teaching a foreign language. Similarly, policymakers can revisit their decisions and plans in educational contexts and provide an opportunity for teachers to feel comfortable, cared for, valued, and immunized. Teachers should not be seen only as tools to inject knowledge to learners without considering their emotions and affective needs. Finally, researchers can benefit from this study in that they can conduct more studies on similar constructs related to this research territory.

Although this line of research has yielded useful insights about the psychology of teachers and language education, it suffers from some flaws that should be solved. One of the limitations of this area is that it has mainly been explored using one-shot designs and quantitative measures although, in some studies, interviews and case studies have also been used. PWB, mindfulness, and immunity of teachers are the psychological traits that are usually formed and developed by the passage of time in dynamic processes. Nevertheless, few (if any) longitudinal and extensive explorations have been conducted on these variables which are highly recommended to future scholars. Another gap is that qualitative-oriented research studies focusing on how these constructs operate in EFL, English for specific purposes (ESP), and English for Academic purposes (EAP) contexts are non-existent. Future studies can be carried out using diary, portfolio, observation, and reflective journals to unpack the ways through which such variables affect teachers and students. Furthermore, most of the studies in this domain have employed the non-random sampling techniques that limit the generalizability scope of their conclusions (Bornstein et al., 2013). As a result, future researchers can use random sampling in experimental studies to see the effect of training these constructs on the pedagogy of teachers.

Similarly, the role of culture and context in developing and reshaping these variables has been limitedly explored.

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Educational contexts in secular and socialist cultures are not the same; hence, running cross-cultural studies is a fresh idea for research in this domain (Özü et al., 2017). The findings of many studies approved that the three constructs examined in this review affect almost all aspects of the career of a teacher. However, their contributions and impacts on the classroom teaching practices of teachers regarding different language skills have not been sufficiently investigated. Similarly, this line of research has mainly focused on the perspectives and operations of teachers, regarding the three variables and the viewpoints of other parties have been excluded. Therefore, future researchers can carry out analogous studies integrating the perceptions of different stakeholders in this regard. Additionally, it should be noted that among the variables of concern in this review, the wellbeing of teachers has been more explored in comparison with the mindfulness and immunity of teachers. So, avid researchers are recommended to work on these two recent constructs in relation to other variables such as self-efficacy, academic buoyancy, optimism, happiness, and interpersonal communication behaviors (e.g., clarity, credibility, and immediacy). Finally, perusing the related studies in this research territory, we can easily observe that the explorations of PWB, mindfulness, and immunity of teachers have been mostly made without taking demographic factors of the participants into consideration. Consequently, future studies are suggested to examine the mediating role of age, gender, experience, major, and academic degree on the level and development of such constructs. All these shortcomings are indicative of the fact that this line of research is still in its beginning stages and calls for more investigations.

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A Conceptual Review of Positive Teacher Interpersonal Communication Behaviors in the Instructional Context

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Following the recent special issue in Frontiers in Psychology, entitled “*The Role of Teacher Interpersonal Variables in Students’ Academic Engagement, Success, and Motivation*,” calling educational researchers worldwide to examine different teacher interpersonal communication behaviors that contribute to student-related academic outcomes, this conceptual review article is written to familiarize educational researchers, teachers, and students with main concepts in instructional communication and their role as the main pillar of successful teaching and learning processes. To this aim, by drawing on the positive psychology movement and the rhetorical and relational goal theory in instructional communication, we argue that positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors are facilitators of a wide range of desirable student-related academic outcomes. Then, to support our argument, we provide empirical evidence. In doing so, we introduce and define seven instances of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, namely teacher care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, and confirmation, and expound how they positively predict academic outcomes such as motivation, learning, engagement, involvement, class attendance, willingness to communicate, performance, and success in students. Subsequently, we highlight the critical role of teacher interpersonal variables in the foreign/second language classroom context. Next, we suggest some pedagogical implications with the potential to enlighten the practice of key educational stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, teacher educators, materials developers, administrators, and teacher recruiters). At the end, the limitations in this line of research are identified, and avenues for future research on teacher interpersonal communication in both general education and language education domains are put forward for interested researchers.

Keywords: conceptual review, teacher interpersonal communication, positive psychology, instructional communication, positive teacher–student relationships, student-related academic outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The recent special issue in Frontiers in Psychology, entitled “*The Role of Teacher Interpersonal Variables in Students’ Academic Engagement, Success, and Motivation*” clearly indicates its Editors’ concern with highlighting the importance of attending to teacher interpersonal communication behaviors and the immediate need to promote research in this line of inquiry. As a response

to this call, the present conceptual review article endeavors to introduce what positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors are, which theories underpin them, what significance they have for students' academic practices, how crucial they are in both general education and language education, how this line of research can enlighten the practice of key stakeholders in the educational context, and finally, which aspects of instructional communication research require more empirical evidence.

Since the time of Plato and Socrates, teacher–student connection and the outcomes associated with that connection have been the focus of much research (Violanti et al., 2018), and it has been rather unanimously found that positive teacher–student interpersonal relationships are strong facilitators of a wide range of desirable student-related outcomes including engagement, learning, achievement, well-being, motivation, success, and hope, among others (Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Frymier et al., 2019; Havik and Westergård, 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021; Derakhshan, 2021). This is because teaching is essentially a relational profession. McIntyre et al. (2020) confirm that “teachers make great impact . . . in every moment of classroom learning” and “teachers' moment-to-moment behaviors create an ever-evolving picture of who the teacher is” (p. 1).

The relationship between students and teachers is important because both are equally in charge of the successful realization of the instructional and learning processes (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Hence, they must work together to build desirable learning conditions. Instructors stimulate the establishment of such conditions through employing relational behaviors that are associated with students' positive experiences (Bolkan et al., 2015). It can be stated that learning involves more than just mere exposure to information; rather, it encompasses social, psychological, and emotional interactions. Therefore, effective instruction is usually actualized within the positive teacher–student relationship context (Strachan, 2020). Despite the fact that teacher–student relationships are integral aspects of any learning environment, the process of creating and maintaining a positive interpersonal relationship is a demanding task even for many experienced teachers (Strachan, 2020). Therefore, understanding the processes underlying effective teacher–student relationships is of utmost significance.

A positive instructor–student relationship is identified with empathy, caring, involvement, trust, and respect. It is theorized that, in relational terms, for enhancing students' deep engagement with teachers, teachers should be approachable, believe in all their students, be empathetic, be responsive to students' individuality, support students' autonomy, and be passionate about their profession (Frisby, 2019; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). For these things to happen, teachers can take different actions such as taking care of their talk, being careful about feedback to students, listening to learners, employing questions to engage students, and rethinking classroom management as managing relationships (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Claus et al. (2012) proclaim that when an intimate, positive teacher–student relationship is present, students and instructors initiate “meeting each other, learning about one

another, developing expectations, and focusing on achieving goals” (p. 167).

Positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors can be either verbal or non-verbal. Teacher care, stroke, immediacy, credibility, immediacy, clarity, confirmation, relational closeness to students, humor, and praise are all instances of teacher positive communication behaviors studied so far by researchers (Frisby, 2019). All these behaviors promote effective teacher–student communication, result in classroom vitality, and satisfy learners' needs for emotional and interpersonal support (Goldman et al., 2017). Put it simply, these behaviors fulfill students' relational, rhetorical, and emotional needs and wants (Frymier, 2016).

Positive teacher communication can be explained in light of positive psychology which has attracted much attention during the two last decades (Seligman, 2018), encompassing three main pillars: (1) positive experiences, (2) positive individual traits, and (3) positive institutions. It is assumed that when productive interactions exist between students and instructors, and a friendly and desirable classroom climate is present, students are more likely to experience positive emotions which are at the heart of successful teaching and learning (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychologists have endeavored to uncover how individuals can prosper in more positive and favorable conditions. Consequently, it can be stated that positive psychology has brought about a major shift in the focus of psychology, from the obsession with only negative and undesirable events and behaviors in life toward more positive qualities (Seligman, 2011).

Teacher positive interpersonal communication can be also grounded in the rhetorical and relational goal theory (Mottet et al., 2006). The relational perspective toward instruction accentuates the quality of teacher–student relationships and the necessary skills to create and keep a good relationship in the instructional context (Rudick and Golsan, 2014). This theory is based on six assumptions; first, learners have both relational and academic wants; second, teachers have both rhetorical and relational goals; third, successful teaching is the result of specifying appropriate rhetorical and relational goals and utilizing suitable communication behaviors to accomplish those goals; fourth, learners who feel more content in the classroom and whose relational and academic needs are fulfilled, feel more motivated to learn, less disengaged, and more accomplishment; fifth, what goals instructors have and how they accomplish those goals is different across grade levels and contexts; and sixth, students at different stages of development have different relational and academic wants and the fulfillment of these wants and needs differ across stages of development and contexts (Houser and Hosek, 2018). Based on this theory, it can be concluded that when instructors utilize efficient interpersonal communication cues to meet learners' relational and rhetorical wants, learners are more likely to experience a wide range of desirable outcomes including learning, interest, engagement, empowerment, motivation, and achievement (Houser and Hosek, 2018).

Research evidence has corroborated that teachers who provide more emotionally supportive classroom interactions are normally perceived by their students to be more just and caring

(Gasser et al., 2018). The importance of teacher positive interpersonal treatment of students is also reflected in the concept of Loving Pedagogy. It is believed that “pedagogical love is oriented toward students’ needs,” the satisfaction of which demands teachers to be respectful, caring, understanding, and sensitive toward students (Yin et al., 2019). Therefore, one of the main pillars of a loving pedagogy is a loving teacher who is competent at nourishing students’ emotional, interpersonal, affective, and academic potentials (Yin et al., 2019).

Due to space constraints, in what follows, we succinctly touch upon seven key positive teacher communication behaviors, provide concise definitions for them, and report student-related outcomes empirically proved to be predicted by these communication behaviors.

Teacher Care

Noddings (1984) first introduced the concept of care, reflected in senses of compassion, openness to the needs of others, closeness, and empathy toward others in interactions, relations, and encounters of a caregiver with a person being the receiver of the care (Meyers et al., 2019). In the instructional context, teacher care toward students represents a significant aspect of teacher–student relationships (Gasser et al., 2018). Teacher care pertains to teachers’ provision of genuine support to students, displaying interest in students’ learning, and being empathetic toward them (Gabrys-Barker, 2016). Teacher care refers to teachers’ behaviors to satisfy learners’ psychological and emotional needs by providing a respectful, positive, supportive, and nourishing environment (Laletas and Reupert, 2016). Research has consistently indicated that teacher emotional support for students improves the student–teacher relationship quality (Gasser et al., 2018). Similarly, from a theoretical vantage point (Noddings, 2006), teacher care is conceptualized as a crucial component of establishing and sustaining quality teacher–student relationships. Laletas and Reupert (2016) consider teacher care as so essential that they maintain care is an integral lynchpin of both discipline strategy and pedagogy. It is assumed that when students are aware of and feel teachers’ caring toward themselves, they feel secure and experience its positive consequences (Noddings, 2006). Teacher care stimulates student-related experiences like engagement, self-esteem, well-being, feeling respected, engagement, and performance (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Havik and Westergård, 2019).

Teacher Clarity

Clarity is conceived as a process whereby the instructor and students communicate and negotiate meaning to make information more understandable (Myers et al., 2014). Within this process, teacher clarity behaviors refer to the instructor’s use of (non)verbal messages and cues such as underscoring main ideas, rewording main ideas, providing examples, illustrations, and visuals, and repeating main points to ease students’ comprehension, understanding, and final attainment (Violanti et al., 2018). At its operationalized level, teacher clarity is defined as a high-inference variable involving students’ perceptions regarding their instructors’ use of clarity behaviors to teach more transparently. The concept of teacher clarity

is grounded in the theories of information processing and adaptive instruction. According to information processing, students are regarded as information processors and instructors are considered information dispensers (Segabutla and Evans, 2019). Students transfer the input they receive to the short-term memory, where some mental operations are applied to the information to be prepared for transference to the long-term memory (Bolkan, 2017). Clarity behaviors that teachers employ better help learners to go through the stages of processing, storing, and retrieving information (Titsworth et al., 2015). Regarding adaptive instruction, it is assumed that instructors are required to adapt their clarity behaviors to learners by means of communication. This clarity happens in the classroom when learners and instructors negotiate meaning during classroom communications. In this process, instructors prepare and present information, learners respond, give comments, and ask questions, and instructors respond when necessary to improve understanding (Bolkan, 2017). Teacher clarity is a rhetorical instructional behavior that positively influences learners’ outcomes, including learning (Titsworth et al., 2015; Violanti et al., 2018), affect for the course and teacher, motivation (Bolkan et al., 2015), understanding, empowerment (Finn and Schrodt, 2012), and engagement (BrckaLorenz et al., 2012).

Teacher Confirmation

Interpersonal communication is conceived as a two-edged sword as it can confirm and build us up, or disconfirm or tear us down. Disconfirming and confirming responses enable us to establish a communication atmosphere, creating the emotional tie of interlocutors (Goldman et al., 2014). Through confirming communication, individuals feel endorsed, acknowledged, and recognized (Ellis, 2000). Thus, teacher confirmation pertains to teachers’ communicative attempts to convey to students that they are valuable (Burns et al., 2017). To achieve this goal, teachers typically avoid disconfirming students, answer students’ questions and provide them with feedback, show enthusiasm in students’ learning, and engage in an interactive teaching style (Ellis, 2000; Goldman et al., 2014). When teachers show confirmation of their students, they are involved in creating enjoyable instructional and learning environments (Edwards et al., 2011). Students need to be confirmed by their teachers, and teachers can do so by attending to what students say, think, or feel, indicating their recognition of students’ presence, and accepting the credibility of students’ thoughts and feelings; as a result, students feel more significant (Buber, 1957). Research has approved that when teachers are confirming students, students’ learning and motivation are promoted, their effort and interest are enhanced (Campbell et al., 2009), students feel more satisfaction (Goodboy et al., 2009), show more willingness to talk, feel to be better prepared and more involved (Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010), and perceive the course as valuable (Horan et al., 2011). Teacher confirmation can also predict students’ emotional outcomes (Goldman et al., 2014), success, engagement, understanding, learning (Hsu, 2012), and communicative behaviors (Johnson and LaBelle, 2020). Compared to other

teacher interpersonal behaviors, teacher confirmation has been the focus of less research.

Teacher Credibility

Aristotle categorized modes of persuasion into Logos (the rationale employed to substantiate a claim), Pathos (the motivational and affective appeal), and Ethos (credibility of the speaker), all assumed to be influential in affecting the receiver of a message. The Ethos; that is the speaker's being credible, is found to increase the effectiveness of communication (Pishghadam et al., 2017). More particularly, in the domain of education, classroom is conceived as a persuasive context, and the instructor is the one to persuade the learners (Gray et al., 2011). In this respect, teacher credibility pertains to students' perceptions of the extent that their teacher is trustworthy, credible, or believable. Teven and McCroskey (1997) argued that teacher credibility involves three dimensions of goodwill, competence, and trustworthiness. Empirical studies in the domain of general education, language education, and communication education have approved the predictive role of teacher credibility for a wide range of student-related outcomes such as willingness to attend classes (Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021), foreign language achievement (Pishghadam et al., 2017), motivation, learning (Gray et al., 2011), and engagement (Derakhshan, 2021).

Teacher Immediacy

As a crucial component of effective communication (Finn and Schrod, 2012), immediacy was introduced by Mehrabian (1967) as behaviors communicating interpersonal closeness and approachability. Within the instructional context, teacher immediacy is defined as verbal and non-verbal cues decreasing teacher–student physical or/and psychological distance (Estep and Roberts, 2015). Teacher immediacy facilitates students' needs satisfaction (Frymier, 2016). Verbal immediacy behaviors include engaging in friendly conversation with students, asking about students' opinions, and using humor, while non-verbal immediacy cues include having a relaxed posture, leaning forward, having appropriate eye-contact, and smiling to students (Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Derakhshan, 2021). Such immediacy cues promote positive feelings and greatly facilitate effective instruction (Hampton, 2018). Compared to other teacher communication behaviors, immediacy is a more investigated concept. Immediacy was found to be a positive predictor of a wide range of student experiences including online engagement (Dixon et al., 2017), learning (Violanti et al., 2018), reduced foreign language anxiety (Ballester, 2015), motivation (Frymier et al., 2019), and academic engagement (Estep and Roberts, 2015; Derakhshan, 2021).

Teacher Stroke

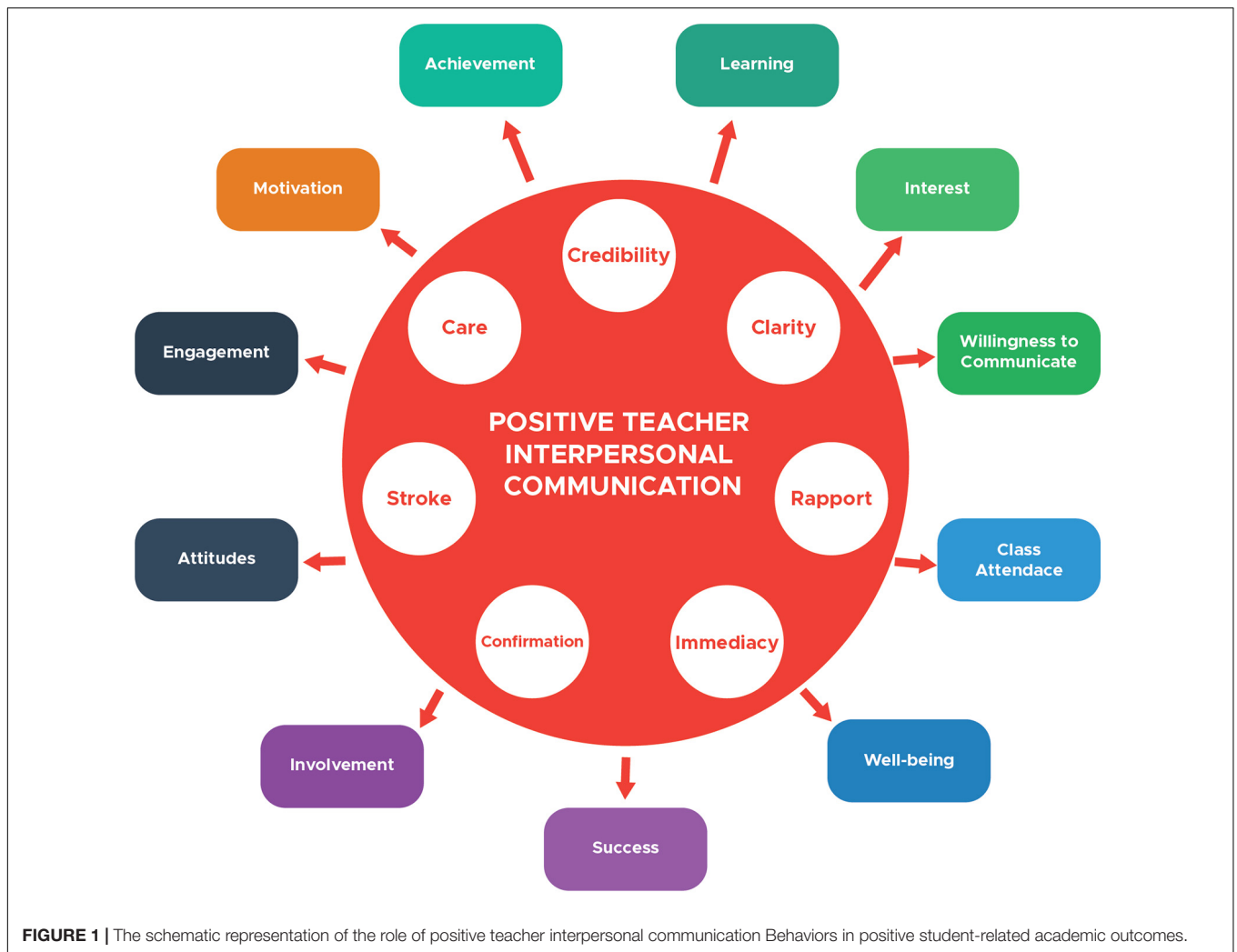
Berne's Transactional Analysis theory is a theory of systematic therapy and personality, explaining individuals' personal change and growth and with fruitful implications for developing positive instructor–student relationships (Berne, 1988). Stroke is one of the elements of the transactional analysis theory, defined

as one's attempts to display attention to others' hunger for recognition (Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014). In the educational context, the teacher is the stroker (i.e., the person who gives stroke), and the student is the strokee (i.e., the one receiving stroke). Strokes can be positive (e.g., you look beautiful) or negative (e.g., I hate you); verbal (e.g., saying goodbye) or non-verbal (e.g., smiling, nodding); and conditional (e.g., you are a good student) or unconditional (e.g., I love you). In essence, people seek stroke and are strokable; therefore, when stroke is not present, individuals perceive being deprived. It is believed that even providing negative stroke is better than not providing any stroke (Derakhshan et al., 2019). Compared to other teacher positive interpersonal communication variables, teacher stroke is an under-researched topic. Previous studies have shown that teacher stroke is positively associated with teacher factors such as teacher credibility, success (Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021), care, conceptions of intelligence (Derakhshan et al., 2019) as well as student factors such as motivation (Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014), willingness to attend classes (Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021), and foreign language achievement (Rajabnejad et al., 2017).

Teacher–Student Rapport

Rapport refers to a harmonious teacher–student relationship (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020), identified with enjoyment, connection, respect, and mutual trust (Frisby and Housley Gaffney, 2015). Rapport is an interpersonal bond during the teaching process which is greatly relationship-based (Frisby and Martin, 2010). Compared to other instructional communication variables, rapport is less investigated (Frisby et al., 2016). Yet, it is one of the most crucial elements of instructional communication as student learning initiates from rapport (Wilson et al., 2010), and rapport is an inseparable aspect of education. Teachers can establish rapport in the classroom through promoting free expression, respecting students' attitudes, giving appropriate feedback, using humor, showing enthusiasm in students' learning, and being gentle and optimistic (Weimer, 2010). Rapport also brings about positive experiences for students, including greater classroom participation, motivation (Estep and Roberts, 2015; Frisby et al., 2016), peer-to-peer connectedness, learning (Frisby and Martin, 2010; Frisby, 2019), grades (Wilson and Ryan, 2013), engagement (Culpeper and Kan, 2020), as well as autonomy and achievement (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020).

All in all, the empirical evidence on the role of all the mentioned positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in promoting student-related positive outcomes is well justified by the rhetorical and relational goal theory in the instructional communication research (Mottet et al., 2006). Accordingly, when teachers specify rhetorical and relational goals and use proper verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors to simultaneously accomplish their own goals and satisfy learners' needs, negative academic outcomes mitigate while positive outcomes are promoted (Houser and Hosek, 2018). **Figure 1** portrays the schematic representation of what has been argued so far regarding the relationships of positive



teacher interpersonal communication behaviors and student-related outcomes.

POSITIVE TEACHER INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Four decades of research in SLA has mainly focused on teacher and students' negative emotions and outcomes by studying factors like anxiety, disengagement, burnout, depression, resistance, and stress (e.g., Gkonou et al., 2017; Seifalian and Derakhshan, 2018; Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019). However, with their recent advent of positive psychology and the call for its application in SLA by leading scholars (e.g., Mercer and MacIntyre, 2014; Mercer et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Budzińska and Majchrzak, 2021), SLA researchers have shifted their attention to the more bright side of the issue by initiating the study of positive language teachers and students' emotions, behaviors, and outcomes (Dewaele et al., 2019; Bielak

and Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Fathi et al., 2020; Greenier et al., 2021). Benesch (2017) maintained that L2 classes are filled with both negative and positive emotions; the former impeding successful teaching and learning and the latter fostering them. Furthermore, since language instruction and learning are inherently interactional, they require the integration of personally meaningful content and identities which are facilitated through teachers' interpersonal and emotional understandings of learners.

In his book, entitled "*Positive Psychology Perspectives on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*," Gabryś-Barker (2016) stated that positive emotions, students' personality traits, and learning environments, are the three main elements of L2 learners' academic performance. It is believed that when a close interpersonal bond exists between the teacher and students and a relationship of trust is formed between them, a more favorable language learning classroom environment is created, and students' foreign language enjoyment is facilitated. It is found that when students experience higher levels of enjoyment, their foreign language proficiency, performance, achievement, and willingness to communicate (Oxford, 2016;

Dewaele et al., 2017; Mahmoodzadeh and Khajavy, 2019; Wei et al., 2019) are boosted. Khajavy et al. (2018) approve this argument by stating that the existence of a positive classroom environment and positive emotions in language classes concurrently mitigate L2 learners' anxiety and increase their enjoyment and willingness to communicate.

The quality of teacher–student relationship is quite important in the L2 context (Mercer and Gkonou, 2020) because language learning is an inherently social process, much more than other academic subjects. The knowledge of language is typically learned and employed effectively through different modes of communication (Frymier et al., 2019). Thus, the requirement for interactions with fellow interlocutors (i.e., the teacher or peers), is highly felt. How well teachers and students get on with each other can make or break their teaching and learning experiences, respectively. The key relationship in education for both instructors and students is that between students and instructors, which highlights the important role of language teachers in preparing the floor for such relationships (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

As rightly posited by Dewaele et al. (2017), the role of the L2 teacher is not just constrained to the transmission of linguistic and content knowledge to L2 learners. But more importantly, L2 teachers are held responsible for providing a positive environment, managing the emotional atmosphere of the classroom, establishing a good rapport with learners, and ideally, instructing with passion and joy. Therefore, L2 teachers' positive attitudes, recognition and appreciation of students, and support for them are all instances of teacher interpersonal communication cues that might be perceived as lynchpins to L2 students' desirable academic outcomes and experiences (Li et al., 2018).

In the same vein, it is argued that classroom interactions greatly influence foreign language enjoyment. Positive classroom interactions happen through supportive and friendly peer relationships as well as positive and encouraging behaviors of teachers toward students (Pavelescu and Petric, 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2021). It seems that two factors play influential parts in foreign language enjoyment; one is the classroom atmosphere (e.g., positive engagement, positive atmosphere, and peer interaction), and the other is the teacher (e.g., teacher understanding, care, recognition, attention, and positive attitude) (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) greatly highlighting the role of teacher interpersonal treatment of students in the language classroom (Li et al., 2018). When effective teacher–student relationships are formed, desirable student-related outcomes such as L2 motivation (Henry and Thorsen, 2018), L2 learning gains (Sánchez et al., 2013), and L2 engagement (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) are around the corner.

DISCUSSION

So far, we described: (1) what positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors are, (2) which theories (i.e., positive psychology and the rhetorical and relational goal theory) underpin them, (3) seven instances of positive teacher

interpersonal communication behaviors (i.e., teacher care, immediacy, stroke, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, and confirmation) and their contributions to desirable student-related outcomes like motivation, engagement, success, and learning, and (4) the significance of positive teacher communication behaviors in the foreign/second language classroom. Based on what was conceptually reviewed, it seems that this area of research pedagogically contributes to the field by informing the practice of key educational stakeholders like school principals, educational supervisors, teacher recruiting committees, materials developers, teacher educators, pre- and in-service teachers, and students.

For instance, those authorities in charge of recruiting effective instructors should become aware that the responsibilities of teachers are not limited to the transmission of content and pedagogical knowledge. Rather, teachers are held responsible for making effective interpersonal relationships, creating bonds of trust between themselves and students, and building an enjoyable learning environment. Accordingly, these stakeholders must revisit and expand standards for qualifying effective teachers by considering teachers' relational and affective treatment of students as a required criterion for teachers to enter the education system. Similarly, school managers and supervisors who are in charge of constantly evaluating the effectiveness of teachers who have entered the education system can benefit from research evidence in the domain of instructional communication through engaging in such activities as observing teachers' actual interpersonal practices in the classroom or interviewing their teachers to gauge their knowledge of teacher interpersonal communication and its significance for students' academic performance.

This area of research can also be redound to the benefit of teacher educators and trainers responsible for holding workshops, teacher education programs, and teacher training courses for pre- and in-service teachers. Unfortunately, these interventional programs are obsessed with building teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge to the disregard of other neglected but equally important aspects of being an effective teacher including teachers' ability to have effective interpersonal communication with students (Derakhshan et al., 2020a). This teacher characteristic can be built through such behaviors as caring for students, respecting students' attitudes, providing appropriate feedback regarding their performance, confirming students' presence and importance, and building a relationship of trust between themselves and their students. Therefore, teacher educators can reduce the gap between theory and practice in instructional communication by directly teaching teacher attendees regarding teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, the theories behind them, their contribution to students' practices, and the ways they can enact relational goals in the classroom. Such training workshops and programs can be divided into two parts; the first being conceptual, being concerned with familiarizing teachers with the main concepts in instructional communication, and the second being related to teachers' actual practice of what they have learned in the first part of the program.

Moreover, materials developers can benefit from this line of research by taking them into account when designing teacher books, student textbooks, workbooks, and supplementary books. In this regard, materials developers are expected to consider successful teacher–student interpersonal relationships as a main element of learning and teaching when designing reading texts, tasks, activities, questions, and exercises. For instance, when designing tasks in textbooks, materials developers can write them in a way promoting peer and teacher–student discussions and reaching rapport to successfully accomplish a learning task. Last but not least, teachers can increase their effectiveness by continuously updating their knowledge repertoire with recent research evidence in instructional communication, reflecting on their relational practices in the classroom, engaging in constant evaluation of their interpersonal treatment of students both during and after each session of classes, engaging in discussion with students in and out of class to better discover their students' relational and academic needs and accordingly finding the most effective teaching and relational practices that best suit a group of students and fulfill their needs.

All in all, the review of the literature on the role of positive teacher interpersonal variables in student-related outcomes revealed some limitations in the studies done in this area. To start with, it should be stated that different teacher interpersonal variables have not been equally researched; for instance, compared to other interpersonal instances, teacher immediacy has been the focus of much research (e.g., Dixon et al., 2017; Violanti et al., 2018; Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Derakhshan, 2021), while other interpersonal variables like teacher confirmation and stroke have been less investigated (e.g., Campbell et al., 2009; Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Hsu, 2012; Pishghadam et al., 2019, 2021). As it is argued that all instances of teacher interpersonal communication behaviors contribute to successful teacher–student relationships and promote desirable student outcomes (Houser and Hosek, 2018), it is necessary that all of them be studied across different contexts, grade levels, and learners' stages of development to see how they converge or diverge with regard to their effects on students' outcomes. Some future studies can also simultaneously examine two or more teacher interpersonal variables in relation to a specific student outcome in a single study to unravel the inter-relationships of the studied interpersonal variables and uncover the extent to which each of them can predict student desirable experiences.

Next, the majority of the studies have been quantitative, engaging in one-shot study of their variables mostly in survey studies (e.g., Estep and Roberts, 2015; Finn and Schrodt, 2016; Frymier et al., 2019; Havik and Westergård, 2019). Thus, future researchers are recommended to shift their attention to more qualitative or mixed-methods research approaches which can potentially engage in more detailed and deeper understanding of an issue under investigation. In this regard, researchers are recommended to do more longitudinal studies which can show how an issue changes over time. Researchers can also conduct case studies by focusing on perceptions, attitudes, or experiences of a few selected cases and reaching rich data about them. Furthermore, the main instrument used in the studies has been a

questionnaire. In this regard, future researchers can also use other instruments like interviews, observation schemes, diary writing, journal, field note, and documentation.

Research evidence (e.g., McCroskey and McCroskey, 2006) evinces that the majority of the studies have been conducted in the United States with a mainly Anglo-European culture. To address this notion, McCroskey and McCroskey (2006) called researchers to engage in culture-centered instructional communication research. Some researchers answered this call by studying teacher interpersonal communication in cultures like Japan (e.g., Zhang et al., 2007), Brazil (Santilli et al., 2011), Turkey (Frisby et al., 2016), Iran, Iraq (e.g., Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021), South Korea (Mansson and Lee, 2014), and Germany (Zhang et al., 2007). However, instructional communication issues of other cultures are still under-researched. The paucity of research in this area demands utmost attention by researchers to make cross-cultural comparisons and replicate accepted lines of research in diverse cultures and as a result, logically extend established theories.

As students and teachers' mindset is shaped by their cultural backgrounds, there is a need to understand the extent to which teacher interpersonal communication behaviors are perceived, acted out, and experienced similarly or dissimilarly across cultures. This argument can also be supported by the fifth and sixth tenets of the rhetorical and relational goal theory which posits that teachers' rhetorical and relational goals and students' academic and relational needs vary across contexts and age levels, and how those needs and goals are fulfilled and achieved also vary across contexts (Houser and Hosek, 2018) which pinpoint the significance of studying these issues in different geographical locations and cultural contexts.

Another lacuna in this area is that while teacher–students interpersonal relationships have been much investigated in general education, they are rather unattended to in the L2 context (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). Therefore, due to the inherent interpersonal nature of language education (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) and following the recent emergence and burgeoning of positive psychology in SLA accentuating that positive emotions, students' personality traits, and learning environments are the three main elements of L2 learners' performance (Gabrys-Barker, 2016), it is hoped that more attention be paid to positive personal, psychological, emotional, or interpersonal aspects of L2 teaching and learning.

Additionally, the majority of the studies have focused on students' perceptions and experiences of teacher interpersonal behaviors and their own educational outcomes to the neglect of teachers' perceptions and experiences. Besides, as teachers and students are both playing a crucial role in successful learning and teaching and both contribute to the effectiveness of teacher–student relationships, the mere exploration of students' perceptions do not provide us with a clear picture of what happens during the relational, learning, and instructional processes (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Thus, future studies in this domain can investigate teachers' perspectives. More importantly, as recommended by Derakhshan et al. (2020b), some researchers can concurrently study a teacher's interpersonal communication

issue from the perspective of both teachers and students to see how similar or dissimilar students and teachers might perceive or experience emotions, behaviors, and feelings in the same instructional context.

In the same vein, there is a shortage of studies on how pre- and in-service teachers' interpersonal communication practices can be enhanced. To address this gap, future researchers can do experimental studies by providing a group of teachers with intervention on a particular aspect of interpersonal communication and check how receiving instruction can promote teachers' interpersonal treatment of students. What all these research lacunas evince is that teacher interpersonal communication is a vast avenue for research, and there is still a large way to go to study all dimensions of this line of research. Thus, as a fertile area of research, instructional communication welcomes researchers worldwide to add to the body of literature in this area by studying its less-investigated aspects in the near future.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

By drawing on the positive psychology movement and the rhetorical and relational goal theory in instructional communication, we argue that positive teacher interpersonal

communication behaviors are facilitators of a wide range of desirable student-related academic outcomes. Then, to support our argument, we provide empirical evidence. In doing so, we introduce and define seven instances of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, namely teacher care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, and confirmation, and expound how they positively predict academic outcomes such as motivation, learning, engagement, involvement, class attendance, willingness to communicate, performance, and success in students. Subsequently, we highlight the critical role of teacher interpersonal variables in the foreign/second language classroom context. Next, we suggest some pedagogical implications with the potential to enlighten the practice of key educational stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, teacher educators, materials developers, administrators, and teacher recruiters).

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Toward the Role of Language Teacher Confirmation and Stroke in EFL/ESL Students' Motivation and Academic Engagement: A Theoretical Review

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Following the recent special issue in the journal of Frontiers in Psychology, named “*The Role of Teacher Interpersonal Variables in Students' Academic Engagement, Success, and Motivation*,” this review is carried out to describe two prime instances of teacher interpersonal behaviors, namely teacher confirmation and stroke, their underlying frameworks, and contributions to desirable student-related outcomes. In light of rhetorical-relational goal theory and the school of positive psychology, it is stipulated that language teacher confirmation and stroke are facilitators of EFL/ESL students' level of motivation and academic engagement. Providing empirical evidence, the argument regarding the pivotal role of language teacher confirmation and stroke in EFL/ESL contexts was proved. Reviewing the available literature on the aforementioned variables, some pedagogical implications were suggested for teacher trainers, educational supervisors, and pre- and in-service language teachers. Finally, the limitations and drawbacks of the reviewed studies were identified and some avenues for further research were recommended, accordingly.

Keywords: theoretical review, confirmation, stroke, language teacher, motivation, academic engagement, EFL/ESL students

INTRODUCTION

The impact of teacher interpersonal variables on students' academic engagement, success, and motivation is the focus of a recent special issue in the journal of “*Frontiers in Psychology*.” In an effort to respond to this call, the present theoretical review aims to delineate two important interpersonal behaviors of teachers, namely teacher confirmation and stroke, their underlying theoretical frameworks, as well as their capability in predicting EFL/ESL students' motivation and academic engagement in instructional-learning environments. As put forward by Pekrun and Schutz (2007), desirable student-related outcomes can be attained in an educational atmosphere where in students enjoy their learning experiences. Among different factors providing pleasant learning experiences for students in educational contexts, positive teacher-student interpersonal relationship is of great significance (Gałajda et al., 2016; Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Sun et al., 2019). To put it simply, the teacher-student relationship is one of the fundamental building blocks for an effective instructional-learning environment. This is mainly due to the fact that both

teachers and students are equally responsible for the effective implementation of the learning and teaching processes; hence, they have to collaborate to create a favorable learning condition (Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda, 2016). Given the importance of teacher-student interpersonal relationship, an increasing attention has been paid to its essence and quality (e.g., Yu and Zhu, 2011; Zhang, 2011; Zhang and Sapp, 2013; Zhu, 2013; Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014; Wei et al., 2015; Henry and Thorsen, 2018; Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Nayernia et al., 2020; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021).

In any interaction, teachers and students may affect each other either negatively or positively (Zhong, 2013; Brinkworth et al., 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2020). While a negative teacher-student relationship may result in several adverse consequences (e.g., anxiety, burnout, depression, etc.), a positive teacher-student connection can have a desirable impact on students' motivation and academic engagement (Roorda et al., 2011; Van Uden et al., 2014; Martin and Collie, 2019; Derakhshan, 2021). Employing appropriate interpersonal behaviors, teachers can develop such a positive relationship with their students. Interpersonal behaviors are verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal in nature (Babonea and Munteanu, 2012; Dobrescu and Lupu, 2015; Tranca and Neagoe, 2018). Verbal interpersonal communication refers to "a two-way exchange that involves both talking and listening" (Babonea and Munteanu, 2012, p. 2). Such interpersonal communication is crucial in forming bonds and developing relationships between teachers and their students. Verbal interpersonal behaviors enable teachers to draw students' attention during their instruction. In the case of para-verbal interpersonal communication, "the message is not transmitted through words, but could not get to the listeners without speaking" (Babonea and Munteanu, 2012, p. 2). As put forward by Tranca and Neagoe (2018), Para-verbal interpersonal communication is directly related to the "intonation," "the volume of voice," "the intensity of voice," "the tone of voice," and "the speech rate." Finally, non-verbal interpersonal communication "uses as tools physical appearance, facial expression, and gesture, which give nuances to the message" (Babonea and Munteanu, 2012, p. 3). Non-verbal interpersonal communication behaviors are tied with "posture," "hand gestures," "body movements," "facial expressions," and "eye contact" (Tranca and Neagoe, 2018).

Teacher care, credibility, clarity, confirmation, stroke, humor, immediacy, and praise are examples of verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal interpersonal behaviors. Among them, this review mainly focuses on confirmation and stroke as the prime instances of teacher positive interpersonal behaviors. The following sections explain these two interpersonal behaviors, their underpinning frameworks, as well as two student-related variables, namely motivation and academic engagement, empirically proved to be predicted by the aforementioned interpersonal behaviors.

Teacher Confirmation

For more than four decades, the term "confirmation" has emerged in theological, philosophical, and communication literature. Several scholars have highlighted the pivotal role of

confirmation in teacher-student interpersonal relationships (e.g., Goodboy and Myers, 2008; Schrodt and Finn, 2011; Goldman et al., 2014; Goldman and Goodboy, 2014; Hsu and Huang, 2017; Geier, 2020). Ellis (2000) referred to teacher confirmation as "the transactional process by which teachers talk and interact with students that make them feel they are valuable and significant individuals" (p. 265). The concept of teacher confirmation dates back to the "Broaden-and-Build Theory" (Fredrickson, 2001) and "Emotional Response Theory" (Mottet and Beebe, 2006).

Emotional Response Theory was designed to describe the intricacies of the interaction between "teacher communication behaviors" and "students' behavioral and emotional responses" (Mottet et al., 2006, p. 259). As put forward by Mottet et al. (2006), relationally-oriented teaching behaviors such as confirmation have an enormous effect on students' feelings of arousal, enjoyment, and dominance, which in turn encourages students to participate in approach behaviors toward learning. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory also suggests that students' cognitive abilities can be dramatically enhanced by experiencing positive feelings. However, the degree of teacher confirmation appears to have a significant impact on this association (Schrodt and Finn, 2011). To put it differently, students' conduct and attitudes toward instruction and instructional-learning context can be improved by receiving confirmation from others, illustrating the considerable association between teacher confirmation behaviors and student-related outcomes (Goldman et al., 2018).

Ellis (2000) characterized teacher confirmation around four major dimensions, namely "responding to students' questions and/or comments," "demonstrating interest in the student's learning process," "employing an interactive teaching style in the classroom," and "absence of general disconfirmation" (p. 266). The first dimension relates to how much time teachers devote to answering students' questions effectively, and to what extent teachers take time to listen to students' questions carefully. The second dimension is concerned with teachers' interests in students' learning process, or whether teachers are sufficiently enthusiastic about their students' study process. The third dimension refers to what extent teachers employ interactive teaching methods to assist students in understanding course content. Employing an interactive teaching style, teachers can modify their teaching practices based on their students' needs and interests. Finally, the fourth dimension of teacher confirmation is tied with not exhibiting any disconfirming actions toward students, which can be deemed as a kind of confirmation (Ellis, 2004). Previous research has revealed that teacher confirmation behavior is associated with EFL/ESL student-related variables such as increased achievement (Goodboy and Myers, 2008; Hsu, 2012; Goldman et al., 2014; Santana, 2017), motivation (Ellis, 2004; Shen and Croucher, 2018; Croucher et al., 2021), and academic engagement (Campbell et al., 2009; LaBelle and Johnson, 2020).

Teacher Stroke

The notion of stroke is conceptualized as a unit of human recognition that may be used to meet an individual's desire

for recognition (Berne, 1988). It may be traced back to Berne's (1988) transactional analysis (TA). As put forward by Stewart and Joines (1987), TA is "a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change" (p. 4). Newell and Jeffery (2002) categorized TA into six components of "strokes," "time structures," "ego states," "life positions," "life scenario," and "transactions." Regarding the significance of stroke, the first component of TA, Berne et al. (2011) stated that stroke is a crucial element in improving our life quality. Individuals employ a variety of strategies to give and accept a stroke. In this regard, Stewart and Joines (1987) have divided stroke into three dichotomous categories: verbal/non-verbal, positive/negative, and conditional/unconditional. Verbal strokes include the exchange of speech, ranging from saying a single word to maintaining a lengthy conversation. Non-verbal strokes, on the other hand, cover a wide range of non-verbal actions such as smiling and nodding. Negative strokes cause dissatisfaction, whereas positive strokes result in happiness, enjoyment, and satisfaction. In terms of conditional and unconditional strokes, Berne (1988) expounded that "unconditional strokes are related to what you are, while conditional strokes are about what you do" (Pishghadam et al., 2019, p. 286).

The concept of stroke is commonly used in educational psychology to refer to "teacher feedback" and "teacher praise" (Amini et al., 2019). In Instructional-learning contexts, instructors can stroke students in a number of ways, including "calling students by their names," "allowing them to express themselves," and "offering adequate feedbacks" (Amini et al., 2019, p. 28). According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), a stroke-rich instructional setting motivates EFL/ESL students to perform better. Similarly, Rajabnejad et al. (2017) hold that teachers' stroke increases students' tendency to repeat desirable behaviors that are essential for their academic success. Previous research proved that teacher strokes enable them to promote EFL/ESL students' willingness to attend classes (Pishghadam et al., 2021), intelligence, care, and feedback (Derakhshan et al., 2019), motivation (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014), as well as academic engagement (Van Uden et al., 2014).

Student Motivation

In a broad sense, motivation deals with individuals' motive "to make certain decisions," "to participate in the activity," and "to persist in pursuing it" (Ushioda, 2008). With regard to language learning, Gardner (1985) defined motivation as the degree of effort a person expends to learn language. Dörnyei (2005) also referred to language motivation as the primary impetus for initiating language learning as well as the reason for continuing the prolonged and tedious process of learning.

Katt and Condly (2009) classified student motivation to learn a language into two main categories of "trait motivation" and "state motivation." Trait motivation is "a general tendency toward learning," whereas state motivation is "an attitude toward a particular course" (Katt and Condly, 2009, p. 217). While students' trait motivation inclines to be stable, their state motivation can be directly or indirectly influenced by their teachers' interpersonal behaviors (Fallah, 2014). Hence,

in interaction with students, teachers should employ positive interpersonal behaviors such as confirmation (Ellis, 2004; Shen and Croucher, 2018; Croucher et al., 2021) and stroke (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014) to enhance EFL/ESL student motivation to learn language.

Student Academic Engagement

The definition and scope of student engagement vary considerably. That is, almost all scholars conceptualized this concept differently. Lamborn et al. (1992), for instance, defined student engagement as "students' psychological effort and investment toward learning, understanding, or mastering the skills, crafts, or knowledge that the coursework is intended to promote" (p. 13). Later, Skinner et al. (2009) referred to this concept as "the quality of students' participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, people, goals, and place that comprise it" (p. 495). Despite the fact that the scope and conceptualization of student engagement are extremely different, scholars have agreed upon the multidimensionality of this concept. They believe that student academic engagement covers a number of factors that work together to display students' positive feelings toward the learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004; Christenson et al., 2008; Reeve and Tseng, 2011; Carter et al., 2012; Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro, 2013; Phan, 2014; Lei et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2020, 2021).

As shown in **Table 1**, similar to the definition and scope of student engagement, there is debate over the types and number of its components (Appleton et al., 2008; Li and Lerner, 2011). For instance, Schaufeli et al. (2002) divided student engagement into three components of "Vigor," "Absorption," and "Dedication," as opposed to Appleton et al. (2006) who categorized this concept across four dimensions of "Academic," "Behavioral," "Psychological," and "Cognitive."

As put forward by many scholars (e.g., Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro, 2013; Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya, 2014; Alrashidi et al., 2016; Hiver et al., 2021), among different models of student engagement, the models of Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Fredricks et al. (2004) have received more attention in realizing and explaining the complex nature of the student engagement construct.

Previous empirical studies have examined the construct of student academic engagement from various angles, namely as a means of improving learning outcomes (Parsons et al., 2014; Wonglorsaichon et al., 2014; Virtanen et al., 2015), a way of minimizing school dropout (Janosz et al., 2008), and an indicator of student academic motivation (Akpan and Umobong, 2013; Wu, 2019; Ghanizadeh et al., 2020; Ghelichli et al., 2020; Muñoz-Restrepo et al., 2020).

The Role of Teacher Confirmation and Stroke in EFL/ESL Students' Motivation and Academic Engagement

Compared to other positive interpersonal behaviors of language teachers, confirmation and stroke have been the focus of less empirical research. However, the

available literature on language teacher confirmation and stroke reported valuable findings regarding the impact of these interpersonal behaviors on EFL/ESL student-related variables, notably student motivation and academic engagement.

With regard to EFL/ESL student motivation, Ellis (2009) found that language teacher confirmation directly affects student motivation to learn the language. Similarly, Goodboy and Myers (2008) reported a positive association between language teachers' confirmation behaviors and students' state and trait motivation. As far as teacher stroke is concerned, Amini et al. (2019) found a statistically significant relationship between teacher stroke and EFL students' increased motivation. By the same token, Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) uncovered that teacher stroke can remarkably predict EFL students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn the language. In the same vein, Croucher et al. (2021) demonstrated that ESL students' level of academic motivation can be dramatically enhanced by teacher confirmation behaviors.

Concerning EFL/ESL student academic engagement, Campbell et al. (2009) showed that language teacher confirmation can lead to higher student motivation in EFL/ESL classes. Similarly, Waldbuesser (2019) found that a positive relationship exists between language teacher confirmation and student academic engagement. When it comes to teacher stroke, Van Uden et al. (2014) reported that language teacher stroke is directly associated with students' higher engagement. In this regard, Baños et al.

(2019) also demonstrated that language teachers can increase students' academic engagement in a stroke-rich instructional context.

The empirical evidence on the role of teacher confirmation and stroke in enhancing EFL/ESL students' motivation and academic engagement can be justified by the "rhetorical-relational goal theory" (Mottet et al., 2006). This theory is grounded on the following key premises (Myers et al., 2018, p. 2):

- Teachers have some relational and rhetorical goals.
- Students have some relational and academic needs and wants.
- Effective teaching is the consequence of defining proper rhetorical and relational goals and employing effective interpersonal behaviors to obtain those goals.
- Students who feel more satisfied in the instructional-learning environment and whose relational and academic expectations, needs, and wants are addressed, are more inclined to engage in the learning process.
- Grade levels and instructional contexts influence teachers' relational and rhetorical goals.
- Students' relational and academic needs and desires differ across different phases of development.

According to the aforementioned assumptions of rhetorical-relational goal theory, it can be reasonably inferred that teachers can fulfill students' academic needs and wants through employing positive interpersonal behaviors, which in turn result

TABLE 1 | Variations in categorizing the components of student engagement.

Authors	Components of student engagement
Audas and Willms (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral: "Engaging in class activities" • Psychological: Encompasses aspects such as "sense of belonging, relationships with teachers and peers, and valuing school outcomes"
Appleton et al. (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic: Reflected by indicators such as "time on task, "homework completion, and credit earned toward graduation" • Behavioral: "Attendance, classroom participation, suspensions, and participation in extracurricular activities" • Psychological: "Having sense of belonging or identification," and "relationships with peers and teachers" • Cognitive: "Self-regulated learning, valuing of learning, autonomy, and personal aims"
Finn (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation: "Engaging in classrooms activities/tasks" • Identification: "Feeling of belonging in school and valuing learning-related outcomes"
Fredricks et al. (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral: "Students' participation in academic and extracurricular activities" • Emotional: "Students' positive and negative reaction to peers, teachers, and schools" • Cognitive: "Students' thoughtfulness and willingness to master difficult skills"
Jimerson et al. (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective: Feelings about "the educational institutions, teachers, and peers" • Behavioral: Includes students' "observable performance and action" • Cognitive: Encompasses students' "beliefs and perceptions related to self, academic institutions, teachers, and peers"
Reeve and Tseng (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral: "Students' engagement in learning activities such as effort, persistence, and attention" • Emotional: "Students' presence of enthusiasm and interest, lack of anger, boredom, and anxiety" • Cognitive: "Student's use of active self-regulation and sophisticated learning strategies" • Agentic: "Students' constructive contribution toward the flow of the instruction he receives"
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigor: "Persistence, resilience, and effort in the face of difficulties" • Absorption: "Engrossment in tasks and activities of learning" • Dedication: "Inspiration, pride, and enthusiasm in academic learning"
Willms (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral: "Engaging in academic and non-academic school-related activities" • Psychological: "Sense of attachment or belonging to school, and valuing school outcomes"

in some favorable consequences such as increased motivation and academic engagement (Houser and Hosek, 2018).

The predictability of EFL/ESL students' motivation and academic engagement through teacher confirmation and stroke have also something to do with "positive psychology" (Seligman, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Li and Xu, 2019). Positive psychology is founded on three core elements, including "positive experiences," "positive individual traits," and "positive institutions" (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 9). This school of thought posits that positive interaction between teachers and students provides an appropriate instructional-learning environment in which students enjoy their learning experiences (MacIntyre et al., 2016; Budzińska and Majchrzak, 2021). As put forward by Seligman (2011), enjoying the learning process is a key factor in promoting student-related outcomes such as academic engagement and motivation.

DISCUSSION

In this theoretical review, two prime instances of positive interpersonal behaviors (i.e., confirmation and stroke), their underlying frameworks (i.e., broaden-and-build theory, emotional response theory, and transactional analysis), and their associations with two favorable student-related outcomes (i.e., motivation and academic engagement) were explained. Furthermore, two critical theoretical frameworks (i.e., rhetorical-relational goal theory and positive psychology) that support the connections among the aforementioned variables were fully described.

According to what was theoretically reviewed, it appears that this research area has some pedagogical implications for teacher trainers, educational supervisors, and pre- and in-service language teachers. For instance, teacher trainers should alter teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward their educational responsibilities. To put it simply, they should make teachers aware that their responsibilities in instructional-learning environments are beyond the transmission of content and pedagogical knowledge. That is, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge that the interpersonal behaviors they employ in interaction with their students (e.g., confirmation and stroke) are as important as their knowledge and instructional skills.

Moreover, educational supervisors who are responsible for observing teachers and evaluating their academic effectiveness can take some advantage of research evidence in the area of the positive teacher-student relationships. Given the pivotal role of teachers' interpersonal behaviors in the adequacy of instruction and learning, besides teacher competence and instructional skills, supervisors should also take interpersonal behaviors into account as other essential dimensions of teacher success. Last but by no means the least, both pre- and in-service language teachers should enhance their effectiveness by pursuing recent studies on effective interpersonal behaviors of teachers, attending different

related conferences and workshops, and evaluating their own interpersonal behaviors. In light of new information, language teachers should make necessary changes in the interpersonal behaviors they employ in interactions with their EFL/ESL students.

Finally, a number of important limitations need to be noted regarding the available literature on teacher confirmation and stroke. To start with, compared to other positive interpersonal behaviors, teacher confirmation and stroke have received less attention (e.g., Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Hsu, 2012); hence, more empirical studies should be conducted on these two interpersonal behaviors. Next, previous research proved that teacher confirmation and stroke play a pivotal role in improving student motivation and academic engagement (Van Uden et al., 2014; LaBelle and Johnson, 2020; Croucher et al., 2021); it would be interesting to examine whether other student-related variables (e.g., learning achievement, willingness to communicate, satisfaction, etc.) can be positively predicted by teacher confirmation and stroke.

Moreover, almost all previous studies employed a quantitative method to examine the interplay of language teacher confirmation and stroke with respect to student motivation and academic engagement. What is now needed is to examine the inter-relationships of these variables through qualitative and mixed-method approaches that offer a more detailed understanding of the subject under inquiry (Patton, 2015; Ary et al., 2018). Furthermore, the questionnaire was the sole instrument employed in these studies. For the sake of triangulation, future studies can employ other data collection instruments such as interviews, observation schemes, and diary writing. Additionally, the majority of the existing literature has been carried out in EFL contexts. As such, future research needs to be conducted to uncover the extent to which the association among the aforementioned variables is present in ESL instructional-learning contexts.

A further limitation of the available literature deals with the measurement of teacher interpersonal variables. That is, the majority of studies merely used observer-report scales to measure teacher stroke and confirmation. Hence, the attitudes and perceptions of teachers toward their interpersonal behaviors were neglected. To fill this gap, further empirical studies are advised to use both observer-report scales and self-report scales to measure these two interpersonal behaviors of teachers. Last but not least, the moderating effects of situational variables such as gender (Campbell et al., 2009) and culture (Shen and Croucher, 2018; Croucher et al., 2021) have been the focus of less research. In this regard, more empirical research is highly required to examine the impact of different situational variables.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Examining the Role of Teachers' Stroking Behaviors in EFL Learners' Active/Passive Motivation and Teacher Success

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Due to the important role that teachers' professional success plays in the effectiveness of their students and the education system in which they are involved, the present study investigated whether teacher stroke can predict teacher success through the mediation of students' active and passive motivation. For this aim, a group of 437 Iranian university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students were targeted to respond to the teacher success, teacher stroke, and student motivation questionnaires. The main results of the study, obtained through running correlation and structural equation modeling (SEM), were first, while positive stroke showed a positive correlation with teacher success, it did not directly predict success; yet mediated by active motivation, it was a positive predictor of success; second, while teacher success had no significant relationship with total motivation, it was positively correlated with active and passive motivation, separately; third, in terms of gender differences, for the female participants, stroke, mediated by active motivation, was a better predictor of teacher success; fourth, high scores in positive, verbal, and conditional stroke were in association with high scores in active motivation, which significantly predicted teacher success. Based on the results, it can be concluded that teacher stroke, as an instance of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, increases students' active motivation for foreign language learning, which in turn results in their higher perceptions of English teachers' professional success.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, active motivation, passive motivation, teacher stroke, teacher success

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly believed that the teachers are the most important actors on the education scene (Pishghadam et al., 2021), and their professional success determines to a large degree the ultimate success of both students and the education system as a whole (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). This argument is well-captured in the title of Coombe's (2020) recent article on the qualities of successful TESOL teachers, entitled as "Quality Education Begins with Teachers: What Are the Qualities That Make a TESOL Teacher Great?" Teacher success is in effect more prominent in the English as

a Foreign Language (EFL) context where students' opportunity to receive the target language input is largely limited to the confines of the classroom as English is not normally spoken in the Iranian community for daily and routine interactions (Pishghadam et al., 2019a). Within EFL classrooms, teachers play a key part, providing input to students, monitoring students' progress, coordinating communication among students, providing feedback regarding students' language production, and assessing students' short- and long-term English language achievement. How successfully English language teachers engage in such undertakings depends on their level of professional effectiveness (Coombe, 2014).

Researchers in both domains of general education and language education have recognized the significance of teacher success since the early 1920s and have attempted to define, conceptualize, and put forward various frameworks and models on the characteristics of successful teachers (e.g., Demmon-Berger, 1986; Stronge, 2007; Elizabeth et al., 2008). It is argued that understanding what students perceive of their teachers' success and exploring the teacher- or student-related factors contributing to this understanding are worthy areas of inquiry (Soodmand Afshar and Doosti, 2013). One of the student factors hypothesized to be influencing students' perceptions of teacher success is learners' level of perceived motivation. More particularly pertained to the context of the present study, which is the Iranian EFL context, Pishghadam et al. (2019b) have recently conceptualized English learning motivation to be comprised of two main elements of learner involvement and engagement, rooted in the four prominent theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, humanism, and social constructivism. A large body of research evidence strongly evinces that positive teacher verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors in the classroom greatly influence learners' perceptions of their own level of motivation and their teachers' professional performance (Frymier et al., 2019).

One of such positive teacher interpersonal communication variables is the newly introduced concept of teacher stroke. Rooted in the Transactional Analysis (TA) Theory of Eric Berne, teacher stroke is conceptualized as any action taken by the teacher to display his/her understanding of students' presence and importance and to quench students' always-present hunger for recognition on the part of the teacher (Shirai, 2006; Pishghadam and Farkhondehfal, 2017), which can be actualized through verbal, non-verbal, positive, or negative stroking cues (Pishghadam et al., 2019a). More specifically, perceived teacher stroke was found to be positively influencing a wide range of teacher- or student-related variables such as students' perceptions of teacher credibility, teacher success, students' willingness to attend classes, motivation, and foreign language learning (Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014; Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Rajabnejad et al., 2017; Pishghadam et al., 2021). Based on what was presented so far, thus, it would be plausible to hypothesize that first, there are associations among the three positive educational factors of teacher success, teacher stroke, and learner motivation, and second, teacher stroke, which is an instance of teacher

positive communication behaviors toward students, can predict perceived teacher success through the mediation of learner motivation in the Iranian EFL context. The present study is conducted with the aim of empirically testing these research hypotheses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Stroke

Positive relationship between the teacher and students may be closely connected with the emotions (especially the positive emotions highlighted in Positive Psychology) that students may experience during the process of second language acquisition (SLA) within language classes (Frenzel et al., 2009; McIntyre and Mercer, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2019; McIntyre et al., 2019). These emotions can bring about several changes, such as better students' learning, enhanced motivation, and enriched interpersonal skills (Pierson, 2003; Peng and Woodrow, 2010; Khajavy, 2012). The bilateral teacher-student relationship can be evaluated through TA theory that was first introduced by Berne (1988) and was defined as a systematic theory of personal growth (Stewart and Joines, 1987). It can examine the interpersonal teacher-student relationships and enable students and the teacher to have productive communication resulting in a more attractive educational process (Stewart and Joines, 1987; Stuart and Alger, 2011; Barrow and Newton, 2015; Pishghadam et al., 2019a).

It is noteworthy to mention that the TA approach consists of six components: ego states, life positions, life scenario, transactions, time structures, and strokes (Berne, 1988). Stroke, one of the components of TA (Pishghadam et al., 2015, 2019a), is defined as indicating the awareness of the presence and values of others (Shirai, 2006), and the requirement for being admitted and noticed by others (Berne, 1988). Stroke is divided into verbal (ranging from a single word to a long conversation)/ non-verbal (activities like nodding or smiling), positive (using expressions such as *I love you*)/ negative (using expressions such as *I don't want to see you again*), and conditional (what people do, e.g., *I enjoyed the music you played; you are not a good cook*)/ unconditional types (what people are, e.g., *I love you; I hate you*) (Stewart and Joines, 1987; Irajzad et al., 2017; Pishghadam et al., 2020).

Although it seems that stroking behaviors can be important in language classes, there is still a dearth of evidence on it. However, there have been some studies that could shed some light on its role in language classes (e.g., Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014; Yazdanpour, 2015; Irajzad et al., 2017; Rajabnejad et al., 2017; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2019a). For instance, Pishghadam et al. (2019a) investigated the role of teacher success, credibility, and stroke in students' willingness to attend classes (WTAC). The required scales were conducted, and the results of the analyses revealed that students' WTAC could be significantly predicted by teacher success, credibility, and stroke. As another case in point, Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) designed and validated the measure of student stroke to study the relationship

between stroke and motivation, finding a positive correlation between the two.

Active/Passive Motivation

Delving into the concept of motivation, specifically in the realm of second or foreign language (L2 or FL) teaching/learning, guides us to different theories rooted in Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Humanism, and Social Constructivism (Pishghadam et al., 2019b). Motivation is viewed as being connected with human being's behavior and the external rewards (Behaviorism) (Staddon, 2001; Pishghadam et al., 2019b), the internal drives to do things (Humanism) (Maslow, 1943), the intrinsic/extrinsic classification based on the attractiveness of the results (Cognitivism) (Vroom, 1964; Porter and Lawler, 1968), and the social processes and people's collective habits (Social Constructivism) (Bourdieu, 1986; Arnold and Walker, 2008; McCaslin, 2009; Pishghadam et al., 2019b). In addition, considering the significance of L2 motivation and taking a social-psychological approach to it, Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduced *integrative* (the tendency to become similar to the L2 group) and *instrumental* (the desire to achieve potential gains by the use of L2 proficiency) motivations (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998).

Adopting a different perspective, Pishghadam et al. (2019b) introduced *the dual continuum model of motivation*; the model consists of engagement and involvement as the two fundamental constructs. Engagement is linked to the physical, cognitive, and emotional participation of individuals while performing a task (Kahn, 1990). Involvement is rooted in *emotioncy*,

which refers to the emotions evoked by the senses employed in perceiving something; involvement is directly experiencing something or doing research on it to get more information (Pishghadam et al., 2016). Engagement is related to different degrees of sensory involvement that split "the model into two halves (i.e., active and passive) and four slices (comprising active motivation, active demotivation, passive motivation, and passive demotivation)" (Pishghadam et al., 2019b, p. 19). To further explain this model, active motivation is getting engaged in performing something; when this performance changes to a mechanical one due to the lack of mental engagement, it turns out to be active demotivation; passive motivation deals with the constant thinking about something but not performing it; and finally, passive demotivation pertains to exhibiting no cognitive or physical activity regarding a task (Pishghadam et al., 2019b) (**Figure 1**).

There is a paucity of empirical evidence on the concept of active/passive motivation, especially in language education. However, Pishghadam et al. (2019b) scrutinized the dichotomy by interviewing a group of English language teachers about the four conditions displayed in the model. In conclusion, it was revealed that the teachers' habitus makes up the reasons for their passivity. Besides, Alami (2020) probed the relationships among the Iranian EFL learners' active/passive motivation, their language learning motivation and demotivation, self-identity changes, and foreign language achievement. The analyses displayed the following results: first, significant relationships were found between active motivation and foreign language achievement and also between language learning motivation and foreign language achievement,

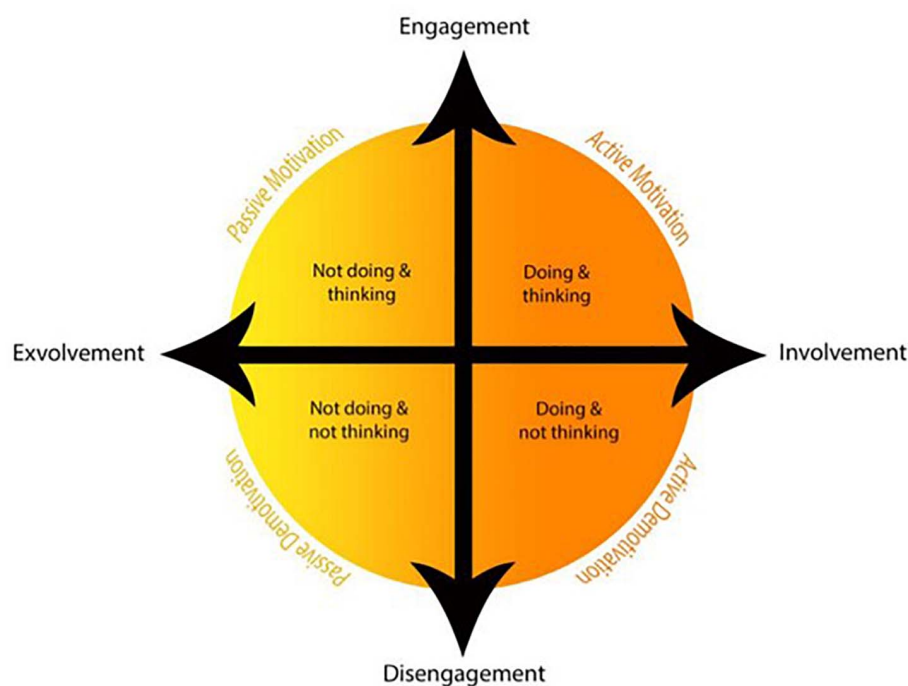


FIGURE 1 | The Dual Continuum Model of Motivation. Adapted from "Unveiling the passive aspect of motivation: insights from English language teachers' habitus," by Pishghadam et al. (2019b), Copyright 2019 by the IJSC.

and second, self-identity and language learning motivation were found to predict foreign language achievement.

Teacher Success

Given that teachers are the main pillars of any educational system (Coombe, 2020), teacher success has gained remarkable notice in the realm of pedagogical research in which foreign language learning/teaching is not an exception. Teacher success can be defined as “the sense of achievement which teachers obtain from their work” (Hung et al., 2007, p. 415). More explicitly, the achievements may include getting a promotion, acquiring skills and knowledge, and improving patterns of behavior regarding relationships with students and instructional techniques, to name a few. Additionally, teachers' attitudes, concerns, and expectations have been found to be related to their success (Hung et al., 2007).

To assess teacher success rigorously, some studies have tried to identify the constructs of teacher success via developing and validating different questionnaires (e.g., Khojastehmehr and Takrimi, 2009; Moafian and Pishghadam, 2009). Besides, another line of research focuses on the role of different variables in effective teacher performance. Essentially, research regarding the influential factors in relation to teacher success has set out the minimal explanatory adequacy of traditional benchmarks, such as certifications for identifying effective teacher performance (Duckworth et al., 2009). Hence, many studies have steered their focus toward factors such as language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge to identify personal traits pertinent to teacher success. In this regard, Derakhshan et al. (2020b) showed that EFL teachers' positive attitudes toward research and their attention to the need for continuing professional development are two influential factors for teacher success. In another study, Derakhshan et al. (2020a) indicated that teachers' professional identity and autonomy significantly and positively predict teacher success. Besides, Pishghadam et al. (2012) found a significant relationship between teacher creativity and success. Moreover, Duckworth et al. (2009) explicated that three positive characteristics of grit, optimistic explanatory style, and life satisfaction predict teacher success in terms of the academic achievements of students.

Overall, since teaching is an elaborate and challenging task, gaining success cannot be guaranteed in all situations; as a result, it is important to identify the factors facilitating or hindering teacher success (Hung et al., 2007). The evidence reviewed here suggests that little is known about the interrelationships of teacher stroke, EFL learners' active/passive motivation, and teacher success. Moreover, our study differs from the previous ones in at least three respects. First, it explores the role of EFL learners' preferred stroking patterns in the learners' active/passive motivation and teacher success with respect to the learners' gender. Second, while much of the literature on motivation pays particular attention to the active aspect of this construct, this study takes into account the passive aspect of EFL learners' motivation as well. Finally, this study sought to inspect the mediating role of active/passive motivation in the relationship of teachers' stroking behaviors

and teacher success regarding which the previous literature lacks clarity. Accordingly, the current study addresses the following questions:

1. Are there any significant relationships among teacher stroke, Iranian EFL learners' active/passive motivation, and teacher success?
2. Concerning the mediating role of Iranian EFL learners' active/passive motivation, is teacher stroke a significant predictor of teacher success?
3. Concerning the mediating role of Iranian EFL learners' active/passive motivation, is teacher stroke a significant predictor of teacher success with respect to the EFL learners' gender?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants comprised 437 EFL learners (272 females and 165 males) studying at different universities in Mashhad, a city in the northeast part of Iran. They were BA or BSc students in different majors. Their ages ranged from 18 to 39 years of age ($M = 20.33$, $SD = 2.66$), and their English proficiency level ranged from low intermediate to advanced. They were selected based on convenience sampling and their willingness to take part in the study. The participants were ensured about the confidentiality of their information [based on British Educational Research Association, 2018] and received course credits for participation in the study.

Instruments

The data for the current study were collected using three scales which were presented in Persian (i.e., the mother tongue of the participants).

Learner Stroke Quotient Scale (LSQS)

To measure the participants' stroke quotient (i.e., preferred stroking patterns), the LSQS (Sakhtkar Haddadi, 2017) was used. The scale, validated through structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), consists of 30 items, each describing an instance of a stroke type, being verbal unconditional positive (VUP, 5 items), verbal unconditional negative (VUN, 5 items), verbal conditional positive (VCP, 5 items), verbal conditional negative (VCN, 4 items), nonverbal positive (NP, 5 items), and nonverbal negative (NN, 6 items), through a Likert-type scale, ranging from -10 to +10. On the scale, -10 indicates the most negative stroke while +10 shows the most positive stroke, and zero indicates the insignificant stroke. Sakhtkar Haddadi (2017) reported the reliability coefficient of the scale to be .89. Sample items include “*When the teacher calls me by my first name*” (VUP), “*My teacher does not know my name. For example: While calling the roll, the teacher marks present or absent for others since she knows them but when it comes to my name she looks for me in the class*” (VUN), “*My teacher tries to get me involved in class*

discussion. "What do you think of this?" (VCP), "My teacher corrects me very boldly and on the spot" (VCN), "My teacher winks at me in class" (NP), and "My teacher sneers at my mistake" (NN).

Active/Passive Motivation Scale (APMS)

The APMS (Alami, 2020) was used to measure the participants' active and passive motivation. This scale was validated through SEM showing six sub-constructs of cognitive active motivation (CA, 4 items), cognitive passive motivation (CP, 4 items), socio-cultural active motivation (SoA, 4 items), socio-cultural passive motivation (SoP, 4 items), sensory active motivation (SeA, 4 items), and sensory passive motivation (SeP, 4 items). This 24-item questionnaire is a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly agree* (6) to *strongly disagree* (1). Alami (2020) reported an internal consistency of .90 for the scale. Sample items include "I enjoy reading various English texts" (CA), "I am interested in expanding my vocabulary knowledge in different disciplines" (CP), "I enjoy group work in class" (SoA), "I am interested in working in foreign companies" (SoP), "I enjoy listening to lectures in English" (SeA), and "I am interested in watching English movies in cinema" (SeP).

Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ)

Teacher success was measured employing the CSTQ (Moafian and Pishghadam, 2009), which was validated through CFA.

With a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1), this questionnaire contains 47 items encompassing 12 subscales, namely, teaching accountability (Acc, 7 items), interpersonal relationships (Int, 7 items), attention to all (Att, 5 items), examination (Ex, 3 items), commitment (Com, 3 items), learning boosters (Lea, 6 items), creating a sense of competence (Comp, 4 items), teaching boosters (Tea, 4 items), physical and emotional acceptance (Acp, 2 items), empathy (Emp, 2 items), class attendance (Atn, 2 items), and dynamism (Dyn, 2 items). Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) reported the Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of .94 for the scale. Sample items include "S/he is interested in the subject s/he is teaching" (Acc), "S/he respects different opinions" (Int), "S/he is fair in evaluating and grading" (Ex), and "S/he has the ability to motivate language learners to learn the language" (Comp).

Procedure

Prior to filling out the questionnaires through the Google forms, the participants filled out a consent form and were ensured about the confidentiality of their information and the voluntary nature of their participation in the study. To collect the required data, the participants were asked by their teachers to complete the three scales included in one form. It took the participants approximately 30 min to answer the questionnaires. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scales was calculated through the Cronbach's alpha procedure. Moreover, using AMOS (Version 24), SEM was used to estimate the possible predictability of

TABLE 1 | Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates for LSQS, APMS, and CSTQ.

	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability
LSQS							
Verbal Unconditional Positive	7.00	21.00	12.96	2.05	1.05	1.36	0.90
Verbal Unconditional Negative	1.00	21.00	6.78	4.03	1.01	0.81	0.88
Verbal Conditional Positive	3.80	21.00	12.38	2.27	0.20	1.47	0.79
Verbal Conditional Negative	1.00	21.00	9.14	3.98	0.32	-0.41	0.75
Nonverbal Positive	3.00	21.00	12.46	2.80	-0.05	0.73	0.81
Nonverbal Negative	1.83	21.00	9.22	3.35	0.63	0.51	0.82
APMS							
Cognitive/Active Motivation	4.00	24.00	18.17	4.03	-0.70	0.22	0.88
Cognitive/Passive Motivation	5.00	24.00	19.20	3.65	-0.89	0.85	0.86
Socio-Cultural/Active Motivation	7.00	24.00	19.80	3.87	-0.85	0.06	0.91
Socio-Cultural/Passive Motivation	4.00	24.00	19.84	4.09	-1.15	1.17	0.79
Sensory/Active Motivation	4.00	24.00	19.84	3.78	-1.13	1.44	0.81
Sensory/Passive Motivation	4.00	24.00	19.12	4.65	-0.91	0.09	0.85
CSTQ							
Teaching Accountability	2.43	5.00	4.61	0.48	-1.61	1.70	0.91
Interpersonal Relationships	1.71	5.00	4.57	0.49	-1.83	1.50	0.92
Attention to All	1.80	5.00	4.53	0.60	-1.69	1.24	0.89
Examination	1.67	5.00	4.25	0.75	-0.78	-0.23	0.79
Commitment	2.67	5.00	4.59	0.50	-1.19	0.85	0.88
Learning Boosters	1.67	5.00	4.38	0.63	-1.19	1.42	0.83
Creating a Sense of Competence	1.00	5.00	4.03	0.75	-0.62	0.21	0.85
Teaching Boosters	2.00	5.00	4.46	0.52	-1.18	1.76	0.88
Physical and Emotional Acceptance	3.00	5.00	4.65	0.52	-1.28	0.47	0.76
Empathy	1.00	5.00	4.68	0.57	-1.45	1.81	0.78
Class Attendance	3.00	5.00	4.79	0.44	-1.30	1.76	0.76
Dynamism	1.50	5.00	4.42	0.68	-1.17	1.05	0.77

TABLE 3 | Goodness of Fit Indices for the Models.

	χ^2/df	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1 (Figure 2)	4.47	222	0.91	0.91	0.07	0.08
Model 2 (Figure 3A)	3.15	231	0.91	0.90	0.07	0.08
Model 3 (Figure 3B)	2.56	234	0.90	0.90	0.08	0.08
Model 4 (Figure 4)	4.34	237	0.90	0.90	0.07	0.07
Model 5 (Figure 5A)	2.91	231	0.92	0.91	0.06	0.07
Model 6 (Figure 5B)	2.40	231	0.90	0.90	0.07	0.08
Model 7 (Figure 6)	4.46	224	0.91	0.90	0.07	0.07
Model 8 (Figure 7A)	3.10	224	0.92	0.91	0.07	0.07
Model 9 (Figure 7B)	2.74	224	0.90	0.90	0.08	0.8
Model 10 (Figure 8)	4.59	182	0.91	90	0.07	0.07
Model 11 (Figure 9A)	3.38	185	0.92	0.92	0.07	0.07
Model 12 (Figure 9B)	2.99	202	0.90	0.90	0.08	0.08

teachers' stroking behaviors through active/passive motivation and teacher success.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for LSQS, APMS, and CSTQ can be seen in Table 1. Given that the Skewness and Kurtosis values were within the range of -2 and +2, the normal

distribution of the data was confirmed. Reliability coefficients were further calculated.

Correlational Analysis

In order to find possible relationships among teacher success, teacher stroke, and active/passive motivation, the Pearson product-moment correlation was used. Based on Table 2, teacher success ($r = 0.11, p < 0.05$) and four of its sub-constructs, namely learning boosters ($r = 0.12, p < 0.01$), creating a sense of competence ($r = 0.11, p < 0.05$), empathy ($r = 0.10, p < 0.05$), and dynamism ($r = 0.12, p < 0.01$), have significant correlations with giving stroke. There is also positive relationships between teacher success and the negative sub-constructs of LSQS, namely VUN ($r = 0.11, p < 0.05$), VCN ($r = 0.10, p < 0.05$), and NN ($r = 0.11, p < 0.05$). While teacher success has no significant relationship with total motivation, it is positively correlated with active ($r = 0.19, p < 0.01$) and passive motivation ($r = 0.10, p < 0.01$), separately.

SEM

Structural equation modeling (SEM) models were proposed to verify the predictive power of stroke through the mediation of active/passive motivation. Goodness of fit indices showed that the models fit the data adequately (see Table 3).

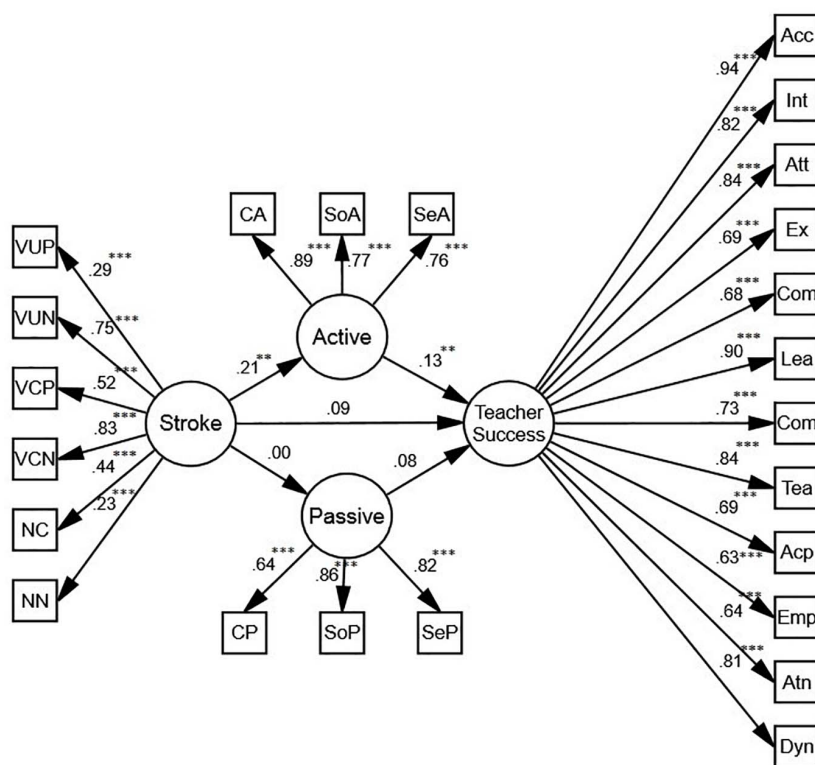


FIGURE 2 | The schematic representation of the relationships among stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$). In order to see if gender of the participants changes the reported relationships, two more SEM models were proposed.

Stroke as a Whole

The first model (Figure 2) shows that stroke does not predict teacher success directly ($\beta = 0.09, p > 0.05, R^2 = 0.03$); yet when mediated by active motivation, it is a positive predictor of teacher success ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.05$).

Based on the model for females (Figure 3A), stroke is a positive predictor of teacher success both directly ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.07$) and indirectly ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.07$). Mediated by active motivation, the predictive power is stronger than the direct one. With regards to males (Figure 3B), however, stroke may only predict teacher success when mediated by active motivation ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.05$). Comparing the

models for males and females, we conclude that for the female participants, stroke is a better predictor of teacher success. It should be noted that there exists no significant relationship between stroke, passive motivation, and teacher success for either males or females.

In order to be more specific and examine the relationships among different forms of stroke (including positive/negative, verbal/nonverbal, and conditional/unconditional), active and passive motivation, and teacher success, several SEM models were proposed. The role of gender was additionally taken into account.

Positive/Negative Stroke

Figure 4 shows that positive and negative stroke, mediated by active motivation, predict teacher success ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.05$). While the relationship between active motivation and positive stroke is positive ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.13$), the relationship between active motivation and negative stroke is negative ($\beta = -0.41, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.13$). There is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and positive stroke ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.11$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and negative stroke ($\beta = -0.34, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.11$) which do not predict teacher success. Overall, while the relationships between positive stroke and active and passive motivation are positive, the relationships between negative stroke and active and passive motivation are negative. In order to verify the role of gender, two more SEM models were proposed.

Based on the models for females and males (Figures 5A,B), positive stroke is an indirect, positive predictor of teacher success. Mediated by active motivation, the predictive power for females ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.07$) is stronger than the one for males ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.05$). In both models, there is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and positive stroke ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = 0.29, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.07$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and negative stroke ($\beta = -0.35, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = -0.20, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.07$) which do not predict teacher success.

Verbal/Nonverbal Stroke

Figure 6 shows that verbal and nonverbal stroke, mediated by active motivation, predict teacher success ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.05$). While the relationship between active motivation and verbal stroke is positive ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$), the relationship between active motivation and nonverbal stroke is negative ($\beta = -0.27, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$). There is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and verbal stroke ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and nonverbal stroke ($\beta = -0.22, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.05$) which do not predict teacher success. Overall, while the relationships between verbal stroke and active and passive motivation are positive, the relationships between nonverbal stroke and active and passive motivation are negative. In order to verify the role of gender, two more SEM models were proposed.

Based on the models for females and males (Figures 7A,B), verbal stroke is an indirect, positive predictor of teacher success.

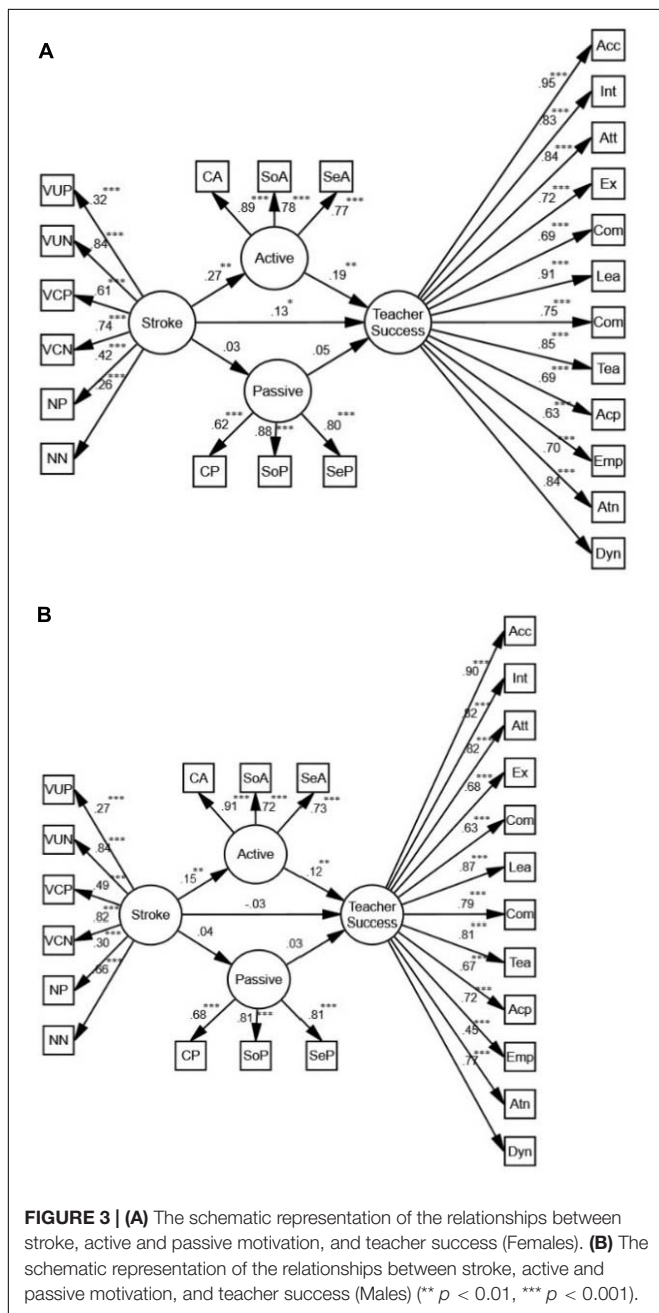


FIGURE 3 | (A) The schematic representation of the relationships between stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Females). **(B)** The schematic representation of the relationships between stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Males) (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

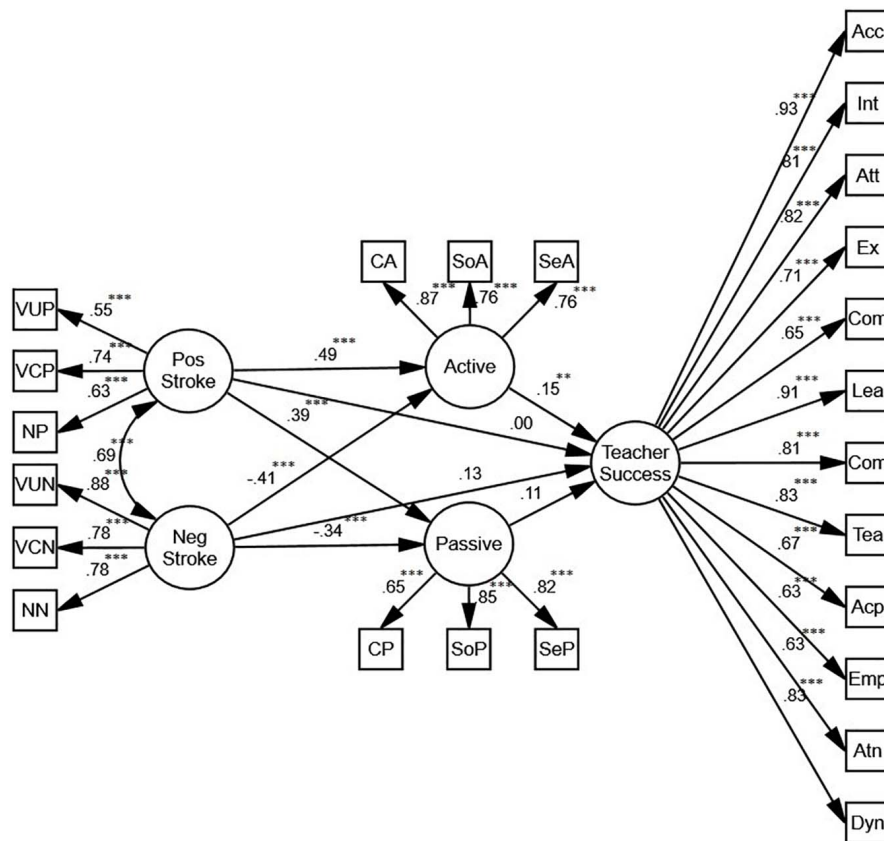


FIGURE 4 | The schematic representation of the relationships between positive (pos) and negative (neg) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

Mediated by active motivation, the predictive power for females ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.06$) is stronger than the one for males ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.05$). In both models, there is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and verbal stroke ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and nonverbal stroke ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.05$) which do not predict teacher success.

Conditional/Unconditional Stroke

Figure 8 shows that, mediated by active motivation, conditional and unconditional stroke predict teacher success ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.07$). While the relationship between active motivation and conditional stroke is positive ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.06$), the relationship between active motivation and unconditional stroke is negative ($\beta = -0.53$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.06$). There is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and conditional stroke ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and unconditional stroke ($\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$) which do not predict teacher success. Overall, while the relationships between conditional stroke and active and passive motivation are positive, the relationships between unconditional stroke and

active and passive motivation are negative. In order to verify the role of gender, two more SEM models were proposed.

Based on the models for females and males (**Figures 9A,B**), conditional stroke is an indirect, positive predictor of teacher success. Mediated by active motivation, the predictive power for females ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.06$, $R^2 = 0.11$) is stronger than the one for males ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.08$). In both models, there is also a positive correlation between passive motivation and conditional stroke ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.06$), and a negative correlation between passive motivation and unconditional stroke ($\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.05$; $\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.06$) which do not predict teacher success.

To see whether the models fit the data, goodness of fit indices were calculated using AMOS. **Table 3** shows the relative chi-square [i.e., chi-square index divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df)], Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Error (SRMR). The criterion for acceptance is different across researchers. In the present study, values for χ^2/df were within the acceptable limit of 5 or less (Hair et al., 2010), TLI and CFI were over 0.90, and RMSEA and SRMR were equal to or less than 0.08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993); thus, the models fit the data adequately.

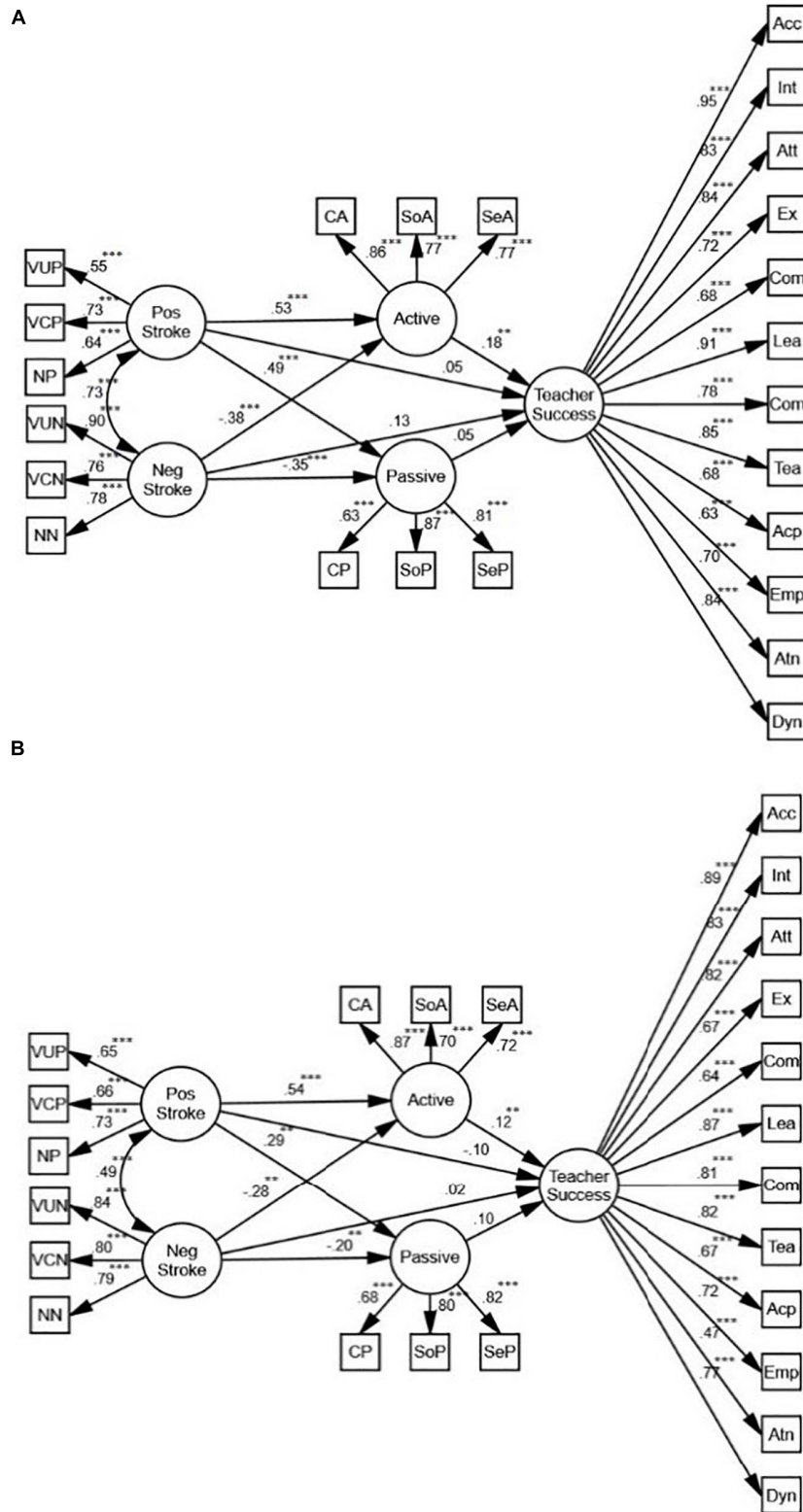


FIGURE 5 | (A) The schematic representation of the relationships between positive (pos) and negative (neg) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Females). **(B)** The schematic representation of the relationships between positive and negative stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Males) (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

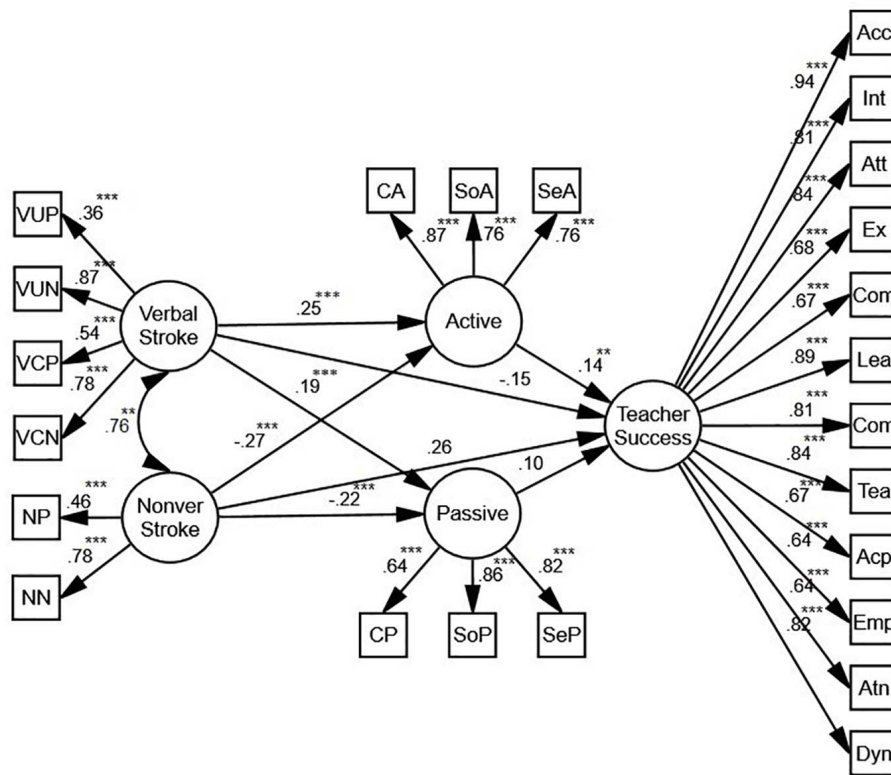


FIGURE 6 | The schematic representation of the relationships between verbal and nonverbal (nonver) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed at investigating the role of Iranian EFL learners' preferred stroking patterns in the learners' active/passive motivation and teacher success. In this regard, the objectives of this study were, first, to examine the interrelationships among the three variables; second, to determine if teacher stroke, with the mediating role of learners' active/passive motivation, is a significant predictor of teacher success; and finally, to identify the probable differences between male and female EFL learners regarding the predictability of teacher success by teacher stroke, taking into account the mediating role of active/passive motivation.

With respect to the first research question, we found that, for teachers, giving stroke had a significantly positive correlation with gaining success. This finding is consistent with those of other studies (Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Noorbakhsh et al., 2018; Amini et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2019a, 2021) where stroke positively correlated with teacher success. Moreover, it is in line with Hattie and Timperley (2007) assertion that providing verbal feedback, here as a type of stroke, is a positive indicator of successful teachers. More specifically, we found a significantly positive correlation among teacher stroke and the four teacher success components of learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, empathy, and dynamism. This is in agreement with the findings of other studies, in which

the application of stroke, as an instance of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, in educational contexts has been associated with positive changes in the learning process (Frymier and Houser, 2000; Stuart and Alger, 2011; Wubbels et al., 2016; Frymier et al., 2019; McIntyre et al., 2020), enhanced motivation and sense of competence (Pierson, 2003; Lawson and Lawson, 2013; Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014), and teacher creativity, dynamism (Pishghadam et al., 2012), care toward students, and feedback (Derakhshan et al., 2019).

On the other hand, although motivation has been a prolific area of investigation, to date, the concept of active/passive motivation has not yet been closely studied and a systematic understanding of how EFL learners' active/passive motivation contributes to teacher success is still lacking. Hence, a particularly remarkable finding of this study is related to the second research question, based on which the mediating role of active/passive motivation was investigated in the predictability of teacher success by stroke, in general, and by different forms of stroke (i.e., positive/negative, verbal/nonverbal, and conditional/unconditional), in particular.

Surprisingly, contrary to the findings of the previous studies (Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Noorbakhsh et al., 2018; Amini et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021), in this study, stroke did not predict teacher success directly, yet its positive prediction of teacher success was mediated by active motivation. On close inspection, the results of the current study showed that if teacher

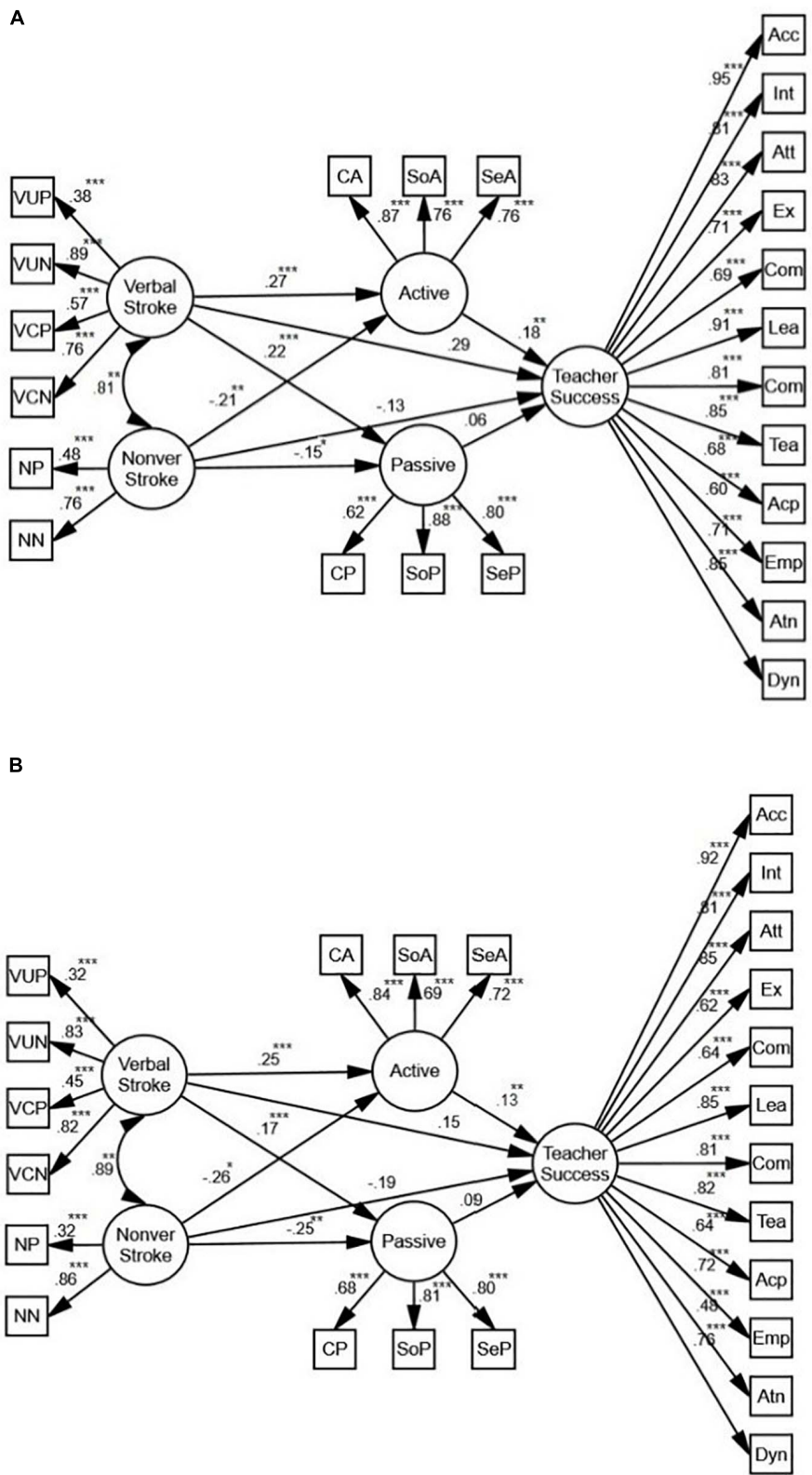


FIGURE 7 | (A) The schematic representation of the relationships between verbal and nonverbal (nonver) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Females). **(B)** The schematic representation of the relationships between verbal and nonverbal (nonver) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Males) (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

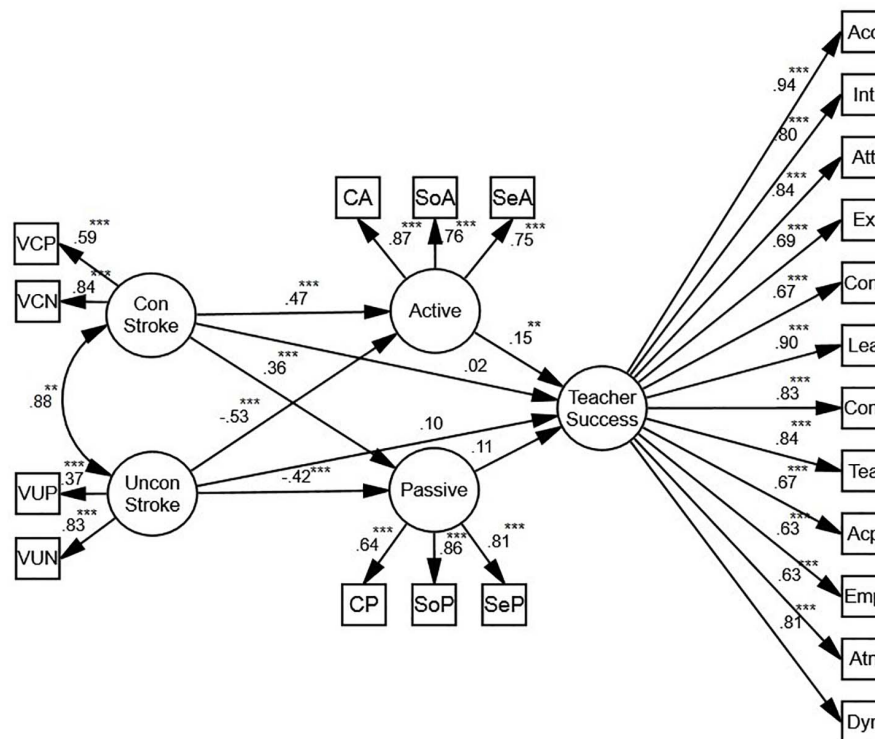


FIGURE 8 | The schematic representation of the relationships between conditional (con) and unconditional (uncon) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

stroke engenders active motivation, that is, get students involved in performing something rather than just thinking about it, then it will lead to teacher success. More explicitly, it seems that the stroke which invokes passive motivation will not lead to teacher success. This supports Stewart and Joines's (1987) argument that teacher stroking behaviors reinforce the positive behavior and performance of the person provided with stroke. Moreover, this finding is partially in line with those of previous studies (Francis and Woodcock, 1996; Pierson, 2003; Lawson and Lawson, 2013; Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014) in which teacher stroke was found to be in association with motivation; but the point is that these studies considered motivation as a unitary concept and overlooked the passive aspect of motivation.

Given the significance of cultural perceptions and experiences in the process of foreign language learning and teaching (Baumgratz-Gangl, 1990; Pishghadam et al., 2021), this intriguing finding could be attributed to the prevailing collectivist culture of the Iranians. As Asian countries tend to be cohesive regarding interpersonal relationships (Hofstede, 2007), thus, it seems that individuals may not receive adequate attention in these societies and may constantly feel ignored (Pishghadam et al., 2020). Accordingly, since collectivism is characterized by "We'-consciousness" and "languages in which the word 'I' is avoided" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11), it can be inferred that teacher stroke creates a sense of being recognized which would be desirable to students in that their learning and academic engagement is perceived to be important to the teacher (McIntyre et al., 2020),

which in turn leads to the generation of active motivation and boosts teacher success.

Additionally, to be more specific, enjoying SEM, we examined the relationships among different forms of stroke (including positive/negative, verbal/nonverbal, and conditional/unconditional), active/passive motivation, and teacher success. Regarding the positive/negative stroke, the results indicated that positive and negative stroke, mediated by active motivation, predicted teacher success. In other words, high scores in positive stroke were in association with high scores in active motivation and high scores in negative stroke were associated with low scores in active motivation, which significantly predicted teacher success. These results are likely to be related to the traces of emotionality in collectivist cultures such as the Iranian culture (Hofstede, 1980, 2007) in which people tend to be acknowledged positively by receiving positive stroke rather than receiving negative stroke. Hence, teacher positive stroke can potentially increase students' active motivation, which in turn increases their perceptions of teacher success. This finding is in line with those of Amini et al. (2019) and Cohen and Steele's (2002) studies, indicating that positive stroke is a significant predictor of teacher success; however, their findings differ from our findings as they did not take into account active motivation as the mediator variable in the relationship of teacher stroke with success.

With respect to the verbal/nonverbal stroke, we found that high scores in verbal stroke and in nonverbal stroke were in

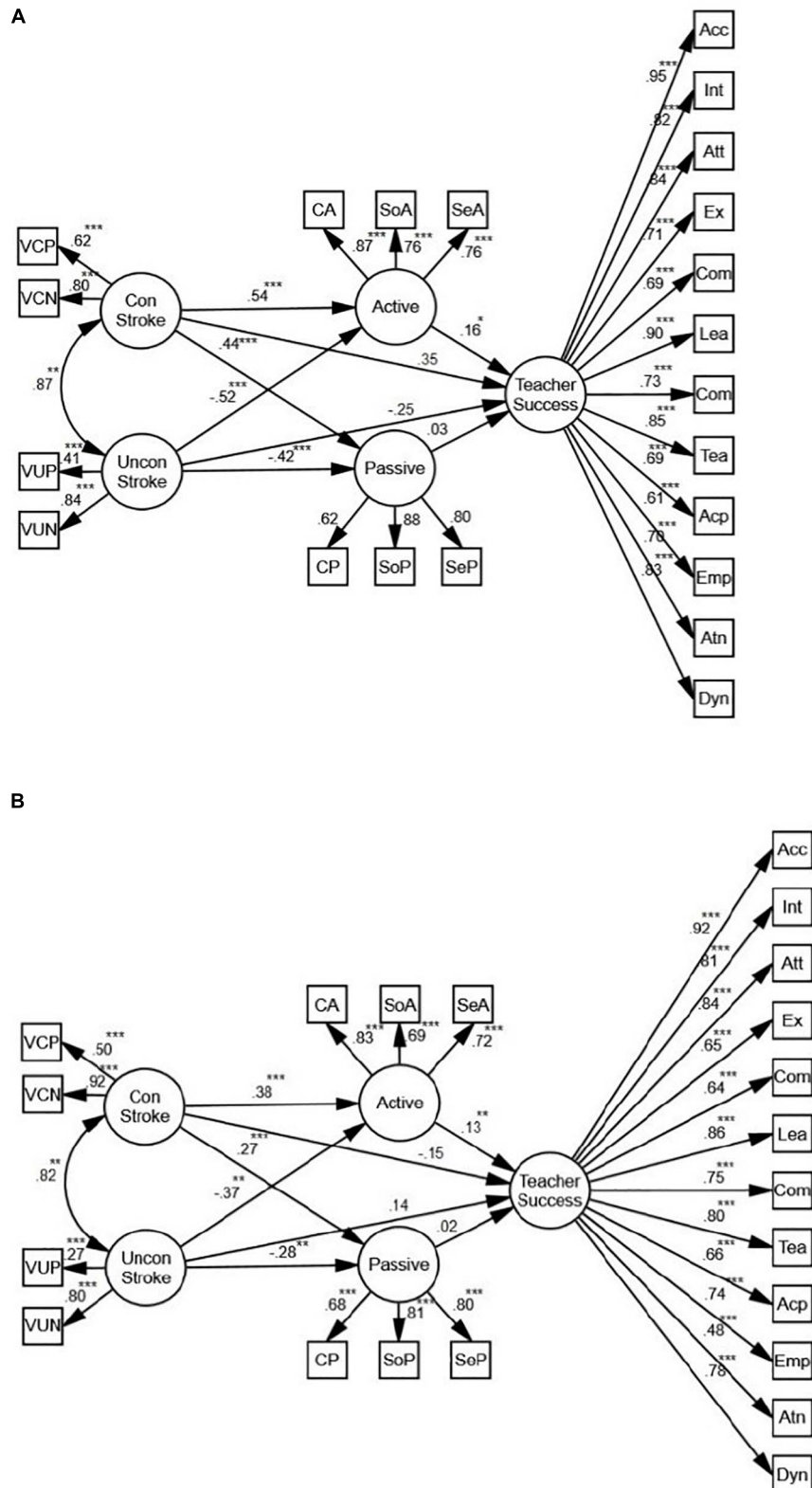


FIGURE 9 | (A) The schematic representation of the relationships between conditional (con) and unconditional (uncon) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Females). **(B)** The schematic representation of the relationships between conditional (con) and unconditional (uncon) stroke, active and passive motivation, and teacher success (Males) (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

association with high scores and low scores in active motivation, respectively, which significantly predicted teacher success. Put it simply, the results showed that when verbal stroke increases active motivation, it consequently leads to higher perceptions of teacher success. These results could be interpreted in light of an outstanding cultural theory, distinguishing high-context cultures from low-context ones (Hall, 1976). Based on Hall's context theory, ways of communication differ from one culture to another, ranging from explicit (low-context culture) to implicit (high-context culture). From this respect, the capability of comprehending messages depends on individuals' cultural background (Hall and Hall, 1990). Essentially, due to the fact that a high-context culture prevails in Iran, non-verbal language (i.e., tone of voice, facial expression, eye contact, and gestures) carry notable meanings in conversations and verbal message is indirect and implicit, meaning that context conveys more meaning than words (Hall, 1976). It is, therefore, likely that giving verbal stroke in a prevailing high-context culture engenders active motivation in students which in turn, leads to higher perceptions of teacher success. This outcome is in line with that of Pishghadam and Karami's (2017) study which revealed that from among the four forms of stroke, verbal stroke had the highest correlation with teacher success. However, it is worth mentioning that in the literature, no detailed investigation of the role of different forms of stroke, taking the mediating role of active motivation, in teacher success was found.

Regarding the conditional/unconditional dimensions of stroke, the current study found that high scores in conditional stroke and in unconditional stroke were in association with high scores and low scores in active motivation, respectively, which significantly predicted teacher success. That is, conditional stroke, in case of producing active motivation, will lead to teacher success. One possible explanation for this outcome is the collectivist culture of the Iranians. Since Asian cultures are basically relationship-based (Hofstede, 2007), providing students with unconditional stroke may result in the misunderstanding of this form of stroke in that it may seem not to be reasonable and to be based on some sort of rapport or teacher-student relationship. On the other hand, this outcome can be supported based on the principle of fairness stating that "personal and social circumstances –for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin– should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential" (Field et al., 2007, p. 11). Accordingly, unconditional stroke may seem not to be fair and to be based on, for example, the strokee's gender or socio-economic status, which gives more credit to the conditional stroke. Another possible explanation for this finding is the psychological need of individuals for receiving stroke as the result of what they have done rather than receiving it unconditionally. The results of this study underpin this idea that the statement of reasons based on which students receive stroke leads to active motivation and eventually to increased perceptions of teacher success.

The results pertaining to the third research question showed that, compared with males, for the female participants, stroke, mediated by active motivation, was a better predictor of teacher success. More specifically, mediated by active motivation, the predictive power of positive, verbal, and conditional forms of

stroke for females were stronger than the ones for males. This implies that compared with males, female students are more sensitive to teacher stroke. It is noteworthy to say that no research has been found that surveyed the strokability of males in comparison to females in educational contexts with regard to the resultant active motivation leading to teacher success. However, in line with the findings of this study, similar studies corroborate the need of individuals to be stroked (Pishghadam and Ghahari, 2012; Pishghadam et al., 2019a), and that stroking is a crucial component of teacher care (Pishghadam et al., 2015).

Overall, the strengths of this study included the in-depth quantitative analysis of the mediating role of active/passive motivation in the relationship of teacher stroke with success by focusing specifically on the sub-constructs of teacher stroke and their effects on the female and male EFL learners' perceptions of successful teachers. Additionally, the present study adds to the growing body of research that indicates the significance of learners' cultural backgrounds in shaping and reshaping their perceptions of effective teachers (Pishghadam et al., 2021). The evidence from this study recommends teachers to exert more care not only about the form of stroke they provide to their students but also about whom (male or female) they are giving stroke. On the other hand, it should be noted that the generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the participants were recruited through convenience sampling from among the Iranian university students; therefore, further work is required to establish the viability of the proposed models. Moreover, we carried out this research considering the participants' gender. Future studies on the current topic are, therefore, recommended to elucidate the interrelationships among the variables considering learners' age and socio-economic status, among other demographic information variables.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RP: conceived and designed the experiments. HJ, SS, and ST: performed the experiments. SS and HJ: analyzed the data. RP, HJ, and AD: contributed reagents, materials, and analysis tools. HJ, SS, ST, and AD: wrote the manuscript. RP and AD: reviewed and edited. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Book Review: Cultivating Teacher Resilience: International Approaches, Applications, and Impact

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Keywords: positive psychology, teacher-student interpersonal variables, stress-free environment, teacher resilience, people-centered dispositions

A Book Review on

Cultivating Teacher Resilience: International Approaches, Applications, and Impact

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Strongly rooted in the theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical implications of positive psychology, *teacher resilience* is one of the quintessential constituents of teacher-student interpersonal variables that can substantially contribute to the learners' success, motivation, and achievement. It has also been postulated that teacher effectiveness, teachers' classroom practices, and teacher-student relationships in a stress-free environment can have a tremendous impact on students' learning and engagement. Although there has been a growing body of literature on teacher resilience, "rich narratives and systematic knowledge that explicate the important role that teacher education plays in promoting resilience in early career teachers remain, surprisingly, scarce." (p. vii). Additionally, teacher resilience is significant in that teachers need to tackle such problems as shortage, turnover, and attrition which can have deleterious effects on students' engagement, motivation, and success. Reconciling theoretical conceptualizations and pedagogical implications of teacher resilience in thorough ways and elucidating how multifarious disciplinary approaches and educational milieus conceptualize teacher resilience are the foci of *Cultivating Teacher Resilience: International Approaches, Applications and Impact*, edited adeptly by Caroline F. Mansfield. Being inspired by two Australian projects: *Building Resilience in Teacher Education (BRiTE)* (Mansfield et al., 2016) and *Staying BRiTE: Promoting Resilience in Higher Education* (Mansfield, 2016), this research-informed and evidence-based compendium is definitely timely and opportune.

The book is organized into three parts, encompassing 18 chapters, written by a gamut of distinguished researchers. Part I, *Foundations*, including three chapters, lays the foundations of these two projects by presenting a comprehensive overview of the volume (Chapter 1), illuminating and appraising the different ways resilience has been conceptualized, pinpointing the merits afforded by multidimensional perspectives (Chapter 2), as well as contextualizing and exemplifying the development of BRiTE and Staying BRiTE modules (Chapter 3) to boost "pre-service teachers' development of resilience-related skills and strategies, through experiential and online learning" (p. 3).

Part II, *Implementation and Applications*, comprising eight chapters, focuses on implementing particular aspects of cultivating teacher resilience in a range of contexts. Being enlightened with *Staying BRiTE*, Chapters 4 and 5, set in the Australian context, indicate how resilience learning was implemented in teacher education with pre-service teachers and post-graduate students, highlighting that people-centered dispositions and resilience are interwoven. Moving to

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an international scale, Chapter 6 investigates the outcomes of the BRiTE modules for beginning teachers' resilience in the USA, accentuating that the topics of the modules were fruitful for pre-service teachers. Reporting the results of a professional learning program on how to nurture and nourish resilience among teachers in the Portugal context is the focus of Chapter 7. Chapter 8 seems unique in that it incorporates the role of mentors in beginning teachers' resilience, foregrounding its positive influence on confidence, stress control, and commitment. Chapter 9, set in the Netherlands, presents the potential of the BRiTE modules and the rationale for its approach and implementation. Elaborating on the specific online mindfulness practices and exploring the relationship between mindfulness and resilience is the objective of Chapter 10. Embarking on the positive psychology lens, Chapter 11 closes this section by justifying how resilience and well-being are interrelated.

Part III, *Future Directions*, containing seven chapters, signposts the potential directions for future research. Drawing on the mixed-methods longitudinal mindfulness investigation among Australian school principals, Chapter 12 reports the impact of the program on their self-compassion, self-care, and greater resilience. Interestingly, Chapter 13 delineates that early-career casual teachers' development of teacher identity and their resilience are correlated. Informed by Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, Chapter 14 provides new insights and avenues for future research by elucidating how teachers overcome adversity and demands at work. Innovatively, Chapter 15 intermingles BRiTE modules with Simlab™ (human in the loop synchronous simulation) using augmented reality experiences by inviting pre-service teachers to utilize the content from the BRiTE modules and rehearse their skills in a micro-teaching context with avatars. Proposing a conceptual framework for teacher resilience, Chapter 16 convincingly problematizes existing teacher resilience research because of overwhelming reliance on self-report measures, suggesting that future studies need to embark on more objective indicators of teacher resilience. Although the bulk of the previous chapters has concentrated on pre-service teachers, the penultimate chapter, capitalizing on the socio-ecological model, focuses on what sustains and challenges Australian teacher educators in their work. The closing chapter

of this volume draws together fundamental themes and makes recommendations for future directions.

In many ways, Mansfield and all the venerable authors in this volume should be congenially praised for such a well-rounded collection of a conceptually robust and empirically rigorous range of national and international studies in contributing to two prominent projects in teacher education in Australia: *BRiTE* and *Staying BRiTE*. Firstly, being inspired by the systematic synthesis of the research insights, the chapters have employed a diverse range of methodologies, contexts, impacts, and applications to implement teacher resilience from different perspectives. Secondly, the poem at the beginning of each part is another engaging and lively creativity that visualizes different aspects of resilience and provides an intellectual reflection on the experience of resilience and growth. Thirdly, from the socio-ecological perspective and keeping in mind that "teaching is a culturally embedded conception and practice" (p. viii), the volume sagaciously encompassed studies from diverse contexts. However, had the book included cross-cultural studies on how teacher resilience is conceptualized and manifested, we would have gained more insights into the intricate role of contexts.

We confidently recommend this comprehensive volume to whoever is enthusiastic about upgrading standards and quality in teacher education. It is hoped that this volume makes a substantial contribution by enabling teachers to become world-class teachers through fostering and cultivating their resilience.

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Book Review: Language Education and Emotions: Research Into Emotions and Language Learners, Language Teachers and Educational Processes

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Keywords: language education, emotions, language learner, language teacher, educational processes

A Book Review on

Language Education and Emotions: Research into Emotions and Language Learners, Language Teachers and Educational Processes

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Research on the interplay between language education and emotions has piqued much interest among language practitioners and researchers, culminating in tremendous growth. It has been corroborated that while positive emotions facilitate language education, negative emotions debilitate the process of language learning. The present compendium, *Language Education and Emotions: Research into Emotions and Language Learners, Language Teachers and Educational Processes*, edited by Mathea Simons and Tom F.H. Smits, foregrounds the role of both positive and negative emotions by integrating the three perspectives of language learners, language teachers, and educational processes through the reconciliation of robust theoretical underpinnings and rigorous evidence-based studies.

This compendium includes a Preface, an Introduction, three parts, encompassing 10 chapters, and a Conclusion. In the Preface, the editors argue that emotions in language education can be viewed from three perspectives, including learners, teachers, and educational processes. In the Introduction, the author cogently argues that “one of the challenges in teaching contexts today is to provide more ways to educate all aspects of the student, including greater attention to the affective aspects as well as the cognitive” (p. 14). Consequently, this chapter conceptualizes the fundamental concepts and justifies why affective factors can have a pervasive impact on successful language education.

Part I, entitled *Emotions and the Language Learner*, includes four chapters. Chapter 2 appraises the prominence of emotion-regulation strategies (ERSs) concerning the students’ learning outcomes as well as emotional and cognitive growth and enumerate different ERSs with their frequencies. Drawing on the mixed-methods research, Chapter 3 scrutinizes how 19 Chinese-as-a-foreign-language (CFL) learners’ self-regulated learning strategies can affect their self-efficacy in a flipped classroom. The author concludes that “This individualized approach to improving learners’ SRL strategies was successful in helping students find and apply effective strategies to maximize their learning” (p. 49).

Looking at foreign language anxiety (FLA), Chapter 4 aims to shed light on the nature of Spanish learners' FLA in an interactive online environment. The authors reported that the main sources of FLA are the speaking partner and the activities of the course. Besides, they found that "more anxiety-reducing sources of FLA were identified as opposed to anxiety-triggering ones" (p. 71), substantiating the idiosyncrasy and dynamicity of FLA. Chapter 5 unpacks how professional and personal recognition, appreciation, and the willingness to adopt communication patterns in the host country can influence the sensibility of Spanish migrant language learners to recognize forms of interaction of the guest culture. The author concludes that "it would seem advisable and constructive to include raising awareness of culture-specific traits in language teaching" (p. 91).

Part II, titled *Emotions and the Language Teacher*, includes three chapters that probe into the interconnectedness of emotions and the language teacher. Utilizing self-confrontation interviews, Chapter 6 scrutinizes the effects of emotions on the development of novice EFL teachers' professional identity. The author highlights that the use of logbooks can make novice teachers reflective practitioners and assist them to "draw positivity out of negative-valence emotions" (p. 107). Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments, Chapter 7 aims to unpack the extent to which non-native foreign language teachers experience anxiety, find out the role of the target language, and explore the potential antecedents of feelings of foreign language teaching anxiety on 38 pre-service and early-career in-service teachers. The results illuminate that teachers like advanced learners experience anxiety and besides those sources of anxiety that have been acknowledged in the literature, the participants' cultural background can be considered as a source of FLA, and provide some coping mechanisms. Chapter 8 scrutinizes the underlying influences of a teacher's self-disclosure (SD) on nine Iranian students' foreign language enjoyment through an ethnographic case study. Findings indicated that "the learners interpreted the teacher's SD as an attempt to be open about herself, to make a personal connection and to be supportive. They also reported that some dimensions such as being positive, human, honest and social were associated with the teacher's SD" (p. 140).

Part III, *Emotions and the Educational Process*, contains three chapters. Chapter 9 focuses on the role of verbalizing emotions by investigating how social distance and dominance impact the lexical choices among Austrian classroom learners of English and British English L1 users make to talk about emotions in English. The chapter reports that cultural and linguistic proximity are utilized by foreign language learners when they verbalize their emotions, taking into consideration

that the frequency of emotion-naming assertions and the richness of the emotion lexicon are similar. Chapter 10 explores the impact of two pronunciation learning strategies, namely record and listen vs. simply repeating without recording, on 12 ESL undergraduate and graduate students' level of motivation, sense of progress, and self-confidence. The results revealed that both strategies were effective, the record and listen strategy were more effective on learners' positive emotions. The penultimate chapter examines emotions in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) at a German high school. The chapter concludes that code-switching in CLIL can lead to both emotional and rational learning. In the closing chapter, the author recapitulates the status quo of emotions and language education, integrates the three perspectives of learners, teachers, and the educational process by highlighting "how the sources of emotions in learners also play a role in the emotions of teachers and how the emotions of both learners and teachers interact in dynamic ways" (p. 218), and discusses the takeaways for theory advancement and future studies.

As an applied linguist and a practitioner, I feel that this volume is meritorious for language educators, students, and researchers in that it brings together three perspectives, namely learners, teachers, and educational processes into account. Besides, the chapters provide theoretically illuminating and empirically convincing studies that not only confirm the previous studies but also pave the way for future research. Had the editors included one chapter on boredom in EFL/ESL classes, it would have been insightful.

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Book Review: Complexity Perspectives on Researching Language Learner and Teacher Psychology

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A Book Review on

Complexity Perspectives on Researching Language Learner and Teacher Psychology

Richard J. Sampson and Richard S. Pinner (Bristol: Multilingual Matters), 2021, xii+304 pages, ISBN: 978-1-78892-355-2

As a paradigm, complexity offers interesting and innovative directions to scrutinize the idiosyncratic, interconnected, and emergent nature of the myriads of socioemotional and psychodynamic factors that play a key role in the process of language learning and teaching. To capture this dynamicity, complexity dynamic system theory (CDST) has exponentially gained interest in fields of second and foreign language education, in general, and language learner and teacher psychology, in particular, mainly at the theoretical level. However, more tangible examples are required to apply these theoretical ideas to methodological practice. To bridge these gaps, *Complexity Perspectives on Researching Language Learner and Teacher Psychology*, edited by Richard J. Sampson and Richard S. Pinner, aims to reconcile theory and practice by including theoretically illuminating and empirically robust studies that delve into various language learner and teacher psychology foci.

This volume consists of 16 chapters. In the introductory chapter, the editors foreground the significance of complexity perspectives on language learner and teacher psychology and succinctly outline the synopsis of the book. Drawing on the tenets of CDST, the authors in Chapter 2 thoroughly elaborate on such concepts as timescales, openness, predictability, variability, self-organization, attractor, and repeller states, as well as fractals, which can provide us with a fruitful glossary of these germane concepts to CDST. The author in Chapter 3 reports on how emotions can dynamically vary and develop and concludes that “multiple threading and timescales analysis does a reasonable job of furnishing visual representations of the emotional context that any teacher encounters and co-forms together with learners in a classroom” (p. 48). Embarking on the scenario-based method, narratives, and affective strategies, Chapter 4 presents the *Managing Your Emotions* questionnaire by taking into consideration the ecologies of language learning and teaching.

Utilizing a mixed-methods design, Chapter 5 provides evidence for the complexity and dynamicity of L2 willingness to communicate (WTC), concluding that “While traditional research helps us view phenomena clearly by simplifying them, a complexity perspective helps us capture complexity by closely examining it, but without necessarily simplifying it” (p. 83). In another evidence-based and mixed-methods study, Chapter 6, set in the Japanese context, delves into the complex issue of silence, a very underappreciated, yet influential topic, in the foreign language

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classroom. The authors conclude “the pairing of empirical data with an open-complexity approach showed how multiple, interconnected variables emerge over time to influence both individual and classroom silence” (pp. 99–100). Enlightened by his narratives of researching lifetime about the complexity, the author, in Chapter 7, features the notion of motivational resonance concerning learner self-concepts, educational cultures, and learner groups and recommends that teachers need to do action-based research. Set in the UK context, from the ecological perspective, Chapter 8 scrutinizes L2 motivation through exploratory practice with pre-sessional courses. The chapter highlights “the interconnectedness between students’ life capital, life story and motivation” (p. 134). Chapter 9 opens up another intriguing dimension of the CDST by nullifying the reductionist approaches that try to compartmentalize the “messy” intricate essence of authentic classroom research and advocating the horticultural metaphor to contextualize dimensions of learner psychology in a listening class.

Embarking on Trajectory Equifinality Approach, Chapter 10 delineates how we can probe into the complex and dynamic learning trajectories of L2 learners and teachers, mediated by socio-cultural factors, by retrospectively exploring the redundancy and complexity of their experiences. Had the authors reported the unpublished results of their studies instead of summarizing their previous studies, the readers would have benefited more. Innovatively employing retrodictive research agenda, Chapter 11 gives credence to the complexity and dynamicity of class climates in two different groups in a Japanese high school. The authors postulate that CDST “will empower teachers and, in return, their awareness about the complexity of teaching will enlighten us about the realities of teaching in a classroom full of complexity” (p. 187). Informed by directed motivational currents, Chapter 12 emphasizes the pivotal utility of cooperation between teachers-as-co-researchers and researchers, by scrutinizing the applicability of formative experiments as a contextualized way of delving into the dynamic emergence of group-level motivation in an Australian context.

Chapter 13 unpacks how autoethnography and social network analysis pave the solid foundation to unravel the intricate dynamicity of two students concerning their group work, seating positions, and the perception of introvert vs. extrovert features. The author concludes that “learners are indeed people-in-context” (p. 230). Set in the Sweden context, Chapter 14 utilizes introspective and dialogical data to spell out how student-teacher perceptions of teacher identity and contradictory selves emerged over a four-week teaching practicum, mediated by the presence or absence of a mentor teacher in the class. The

penultimate chapter draws on the microgenetic approach and frame analysis to investigate language teacher’s cognition. The author analyzed the data gained through her interactions with one of her PhD students, concluding that “a context-sensitive analysis of a teacher’s tacit and declared belief” (p. 266) enables researchers to figure out the intricacies of interaction. The closing chapter provides an overview of studies informed by CDST and recommends that complexity research should be meaningful and doable for practitioner-researchers.

Although we enjoyed reading each chapter of this volume, if the editors included a chapter on the dynamic nature of boredom in EFL/ESL classes, it would have been insightful as well. Despite the shortcomings, the merits of this compendium are as follows. First, it successfully integrates theory into practice in different chapters. Second, the chapters inform us how such factors as dynamics, timescales, fractals, self-organization, co-adaptation, emergence, etc. can be instantiated through different data collection methods. Thirdly, the chapters eliminate viable illustrations of how complexity research can be conducted, with persuasive evidence of why a complexity viewpoint is fruitful to conceptualize the psychology of language learners and teachers. Therefore, we feel confident to suggest this compendium to language learners, teachers, researchers, and practitioners who are interested in the intersection of complexity and learning.

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CZ and RZ read this book together and compared their notes on it and agreed to the final version before it is submitted. Then, CZ drafted the first manuscript. RZ revised the language. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Book Review: Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice

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A Book Review on

Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice

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“We live in a world today where peace is unprofitable.” (p. xxv) echoes the essence of peace in our life and makes the cornerstone of this compendium. The primary objectives of this innovative volume, entitled *Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice*, edited by Rebecca L. Oxford, María Matilde Olivero, Melinda Harrison and Tammy Gregersen, are to share peace theoretical frameworks and applications in English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL), illuminate how to boost teaching, learning, and surviving by integrating peacebuilding into instruction and daily life, cater for contextualized information and transformative strategies that can be utilized to extend the multidimensional aspects of peace, and encourage readers to conduct research that encompass ideas and activities from this volume. Moreover, this volume aims to incorporate and actualize different dimensions of peace (inner, interpersonal, intergroup, international, intercultural, or ecological peace) in our daily life.

Following a Forward and an Introduction, this anthology includes 16 chapters, subsumed under five sections. Section I contains three chapters. Chapter 1 provides a panoramic view of the objectives of the volume, theoretical underpinnings, and outline of the book and calls for peace in EFL/ESL classrooms. Chapter 2 presents some foundational strategies for language teacher educators to become peacebuilders. In so doing, this chapter fleshes out the rudimentary peace knowledge and its four competencies (ethnocultural empathy, intercultural understanding, cognitive flexibility, and emotion regulation) which teachers need to master to enhance peace in their classes. Chapter 3 concentrates on the nonverbal and verbal aspects of peace communication in the classrooms. It highlights that harmony seekers embark not only on their words but also on their gestures, postures, facial expressions, etc. to nurture and nourish peace.

Section II, including four chapters, deals with inner, interpersonal, and intergroup peace. Delving into the role of inner peace and emotion regulation in the Argentinean context is the focus of Chapter 4. It specifically focuses on how language teacher educators prepare future teachers by helping them regulate their emotions and stay peaceful when they encounter the stress of using L2 orally. Chapter 5 highlights the role of different factors that lead to inner and interpersonal peace in the EFL/ESL classrooms, by endorsing Cooperative Open Learning (COOL), a holistic teaching approach. Chapter 6 probes into an underappreciated topic in applied linguistics; that is, how a revolutionary type of love can be related to peace in the process of teacher’s professional identity development, by reporting on the trajectories of a Brazilian teacher of English. Chapter 7 brings

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to the fore that “difference” can be a source of strength that can contribute to unexpected unity through foregrounding transformative learning and peacebuilding activities. The authors conclude that “Peacebuilders offer compassionate words, maintain awareness of body language or advocate visibly and locally for equity and human rights. Peacebuilding fosters transformative learning and initiates internal changes in an individual” (p. 124).

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 comprise Section III, discussing the pivotal role of intercultural and international peace. Set in the US government institutes, Chapter 8 presents illuminating insights on how governmental institutions such as Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) that do not concentrate on peace as an objective can teach languages for peace by employing defined language-learning models. The authors argue “language study has changed them in many positive ways, one of which is that it has predisposed them to peace” (p. 143). The authors in Chapter 9 accentuate that “Peace education research is at the crossroads of peace, education and Research” (p. 158), by unraveling how international faculty and international students can boost peace through enhancing their intercultural competence. Drawing on the tenets of critical language awareness and equity pedagogy, the last chapter in this section explores the role of peacebuilding through social justice pedagogies for Muslim immigrants by asking them to critically think about their identities and encouraging them to participate in discourse communities in ways that let learners co-construct or reconstruct narratives or counter-storytelling to support them as they resist Islamophobia.

Four chapters are subsumed under Section IV, which pertains to the implementation of peacebuilding through positive psychology (PP). This section innovatively integrates peace, positivity, and language. Chapter 11 argues that peace is a missing link in the PP, and like well-being, peace leads to the nurturing and nourishing of conditions that help individuals flourish. Besides, this chapter offers not only a refreshing and sound theoretical background but also realistic applications for our lives. Chapter 12 makes a demarcation between hate speech and hate crimes, both of which are pernicious. The author suggests that the significant factors to defy the challenges of hate can be experiential learning of empathy, education, and knowing individuals from the hated group. The authors in Chapter 13 present such negative words as “negative 3-H,”

namely *hate*, *hurt* and *harm* to inform readers that we can go beyond negativity by utilizing some practical activities. Unlike the previous chapter, highlighting the negativity, the authors in Chapter 14 concentrate on “positive 3-H,” including *hope*, *help* and *harmony*, by providing classroom-friendly activities.

Section V includes two chapters. Chapter 15 is truly dedicated to peace-fostering activities to enhance inner, interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, international, and ecological dimensions of peace. These engaging and thought-provoking activities include holistic instruction, experiential education, contemplative inquiry, and social awareness. The closing chapter brings together the principal themes, synthesizes the theoretical and practical contributions, and calls for more research to continue this line of inquiry.

This thought-provoking compendium, written by 23 scholars, teachers, and language practitioners, showcases numerous instructional, geographical, and cultural contexts. The volume, replete with user-friendly and practical classroom-based peacebuilding activities, reconciles theory and practice in a genuinely innovative manner. This anthology provides plenty of food for peace linguists, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and educators with similar roles in other disciplines.

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Book Review: Stereotypes and Language Learning Motivation: A Study of L2 Learners of Asian Languages

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Keywords: stereotypes, language learning, motivation, L2, Asian languages

A Book Review on

Stereotypes and Language Learning Motivation: A Study of L2 Learners of Asian Languages

Larisa Nikitina (New York, NY: Routledge) (2020), xiii + 121 pages, ISBN: 978-0-367-35806-8

It is conceptualized that “stereotypes serve as an indispensable cognitive device to aid the processing of an incessant flow of information that we receive in our daily life” (p. 1). In the context of foreign language education, this issue becomes more ubiquitous and germane in that language learners need to not only master another language but also enhance their understanding of the idiosyncratic nature of the target language country, its cultures, and community. Consequently, language educators need to serve an essential role in fostering their students’ nuanced and comprehensive appreciation of the world surrounding them. Nonetheless, the associative relationships between language learners’ country stereotypes and their language learning motivation have remained scanty. To bridge this gap, Larisa Nikitina’s monograph, titled *Stereotypes and Language Learning Motivation: A Study of L2 Learners of Asian Languages*, aims to pursue this line of research by scrutinizing the correlations between country stereotypes and L2 motivation, drawing on a robust and systematic methodology. What makes this book picturesque is its focus on mental images that learners of non-European languages hold about Asian languages with respect to their L2 motivation.

This monograph consists of an Introduction and five chapters. Chapter 1, entitled *Stereotypes as a Research Focus*, overviews the origins of stereotypes and appraises the pertinent studies on this construct with a focus on country and national stereotypes as an interdisciplinary construct across diverse fields of study. Regarding the methodological issues, this chapter conceptualizes this construct and its related approaches and elaborates on stereotype content, stereotype formation, stereotype processes, stereotype accuracy, as well as individual and consensual stereotypes. Furthermore, this chapter overviews the methodological approaches by explaining the structured and unstructured approaches, measuring instruments, and assessing stereotype valence and salience. The chapter closes with its detailed account of the research focus, objectives, and methodologies on stereotypes held by language learners.

Chapter 2 reviews the extant literature on attitudes, motivation, and stereotypes in L2 research, aiming to systematically, theoretically, and empirically connect the dots. Drawing on Vygotsky (1934) conceptualization, Nikitina argues that “word meaning and word sense form a dyadic unity” (p. 35), so she considers this theoretical foundation to underpin her study. What seems to be missing in this chapter is to elaborate on how complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) sheds light on the L2 motivation, as an intricate and dynamic phenomenon (Dörnyei et al., 2015).

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Chapter 3 justifies the need to utilize a mixed-methods research design to explore the links between motivation, attitudes, and country stereotypes. Set in the Malaysian context, this study employed a convenience sampling method that included 130 undergraduate students learning Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Myanmar, and Vietnamese. The chapter clearly elucidates the content analysis and coding processes as well as the assessments of stereotype salience and accuracy. However, I expected to see how the author draws on the principles of qualitative analysis by referring to such important issues as confirmability, credibility, transferability, member checking, and audit trail to solidify the findings and pave the way for a better replication and extrapolation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Furthermore, had the author added some teacher-student interpersonal factors (rapport, credibility, confirmation, immediacy, etc.) or psychological variables, the findings could have been more insightful. In the remainder of this chapter, the author describes the quantitative data analysis by running exploratory factor analysis, Spearman correlation test, and regression analysis to scrutinize the correlations between motivation and language learners' mental images of the target language.

The penultimate chapter unravels the findings. It reveals the consensual stereotypes of the six Asian target language countries and elucidates their favourability and salience parameters. Not only does Chapter 4 report on the content of larger categories of images of these countries, but it also sheds light on the interconnectedness of these constructs being informed by both

qualitative and quantitative analyses. I recommend that, in the new edition of this monograph, the author add a colorful image to show the interconnections of these variables by reporting the outputs through AMOS, MPlus, and LISREL. The present evidence-based study focused on the relationships between the language students' mental images of the target language countries and their L2 motivation, so it is expected that the predictive role of stereotypes can be measured. The closing chapter summarizes the key findings, provides a range of methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical implications, and suggests some new strands for future research.

This book has some merits. First of all, it taps upon an underappreciated area of inquiry in the Asian context which *per se* provides a treasure trove of information. Secondly, the monograph is methodologically rigorous and pedagogically illuminating, paving the way for interested researchers to continue this line of inquiry. Thirdly, the review of the theoretical underpinnings and the appraisal of the previous research can offer the readers a refreshing outlook. Fourthly, discussing the findings gleaned from the participants from six countries deeply broadens our perspectives toward the complex and dynamic nature of L2 motivation and stereotypes. All in all, this monograph is an opportune contribution for researchers, teachers, and learners who are interested in the dynamic interplay of "pictures in the heads" and L2 motivation.

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DH was the sole author of this work.

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Teacher Engagement in Language Teaching: Investigating Self-Efficacy for Teaching Based on the Project “Sino-Greece Online Chinese Language Classrooms”

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The support of sustainable learning of foreign languages requires teacher engagement and a high level of self-efficacy, both of which are cornerstones for the persistence of teachers in carrying out teaching activities to help learning. The need for such attributes is even more crucial when online learning platforms as a mode of delivery are becoming increasingly popular. We would argue that keeping students engaged and motivated to attain their academic success online calls for the increased levels of resilience and efforts of teachers. Although self-efficacy of teachers has been widely considered crucial in the professional practices of teachers, there is a paucity of research studies on the self-efficacy of teachers who teach Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) using online platforms. Such a gap becomes prominent after the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in places where there are now numerous calls for online CFL classes. In order to fill in this gap, this study was conducted with a frontline CFL teacher as the participant and aimed to detect thoroughly the trajectories of self-efficacy of a CFL teacher in a completely new teaching context. Embedded in the Project of Sino-Greece Online Chinese Language Classrooms, this study employed narrative inquiry and case study as methodological approaches. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data that consisted of written narratives (the teacher’s teaching journals and reflections, field notes of teaching assistant, and emails of students) and spoken narratives. Three research questions guided this study: *What are the teacher’s beliefs about (1) the opportunity of teaching CFL online? (2) the management of this online project? (3) her personal capability to foster students’ engagement in this project?* These three questions focused, respectively, on the three components of the self-efficacy system of a teacher (personal efficacy, efficacy within the organization, and professional efficacy). Findings illustrated that the efficacy beliefs of the teacher in these three aspects were at different levels, which resulted from the interplay of external and internal factors; when external factors appeared to be negative, internal factors seemed to play an essential role.

Keywords: self-efficacy, CFL teacher, teacher engagement, online teaching, narrative inquiry, case study

INTRODUCTION

While the development of the internet has fostered online teaching in the past two decades (Feghali et al., 2021), it is since the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 that online teaching and learning have become a central topic for investigation. As a result, research studies on teaching approaches (Banack et al., 2020; González-Lloret, 2020), supportive technology and resources (Adam, 2020), teacher-student collaboration (Feghali et al., 2021; Li and Zhang, 2021), and cognitions of teachers (Gao and Zhang, 2020; Sun and Zhang, 2021; Wang and Zhang, 2021) have emerged.

However, recent studies have put emphasis on the formidable challenges occurring in the age of COVID-19. However, it would seem that online teaching may occur in the longer term as it becomes a long-lasting, preferred delivery mode (González-Lloret, 2020). In its favor, online delivery provides students with learning resources directly; therefore, students have more choices of learning outside their schools or universities. It can also create a virtual community that bridges the teacher-student geographical distance and embraces various cultures so that both teachers and students can communicate conveniently and have a sense of belonging (Du et al., 2010; González-Lloret, 2020). In addition, online teaching provides learning opportunities for a more diverse range of students, from young students to those who are employed full time, married, or parents (Feghali et al., 2021). As long as highly motivated, any person can be enrolled in online courses to pursue specific learning goals (Feghali et al., 2021).

All of the aforementioned advantages of online teaching have emerged in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (CFL), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has not drowned the enthusiasm of CFL learners around the world; instead in 2021, more than 180 countries and regions all over the world carried out Chinese language instruction, with over 70 countries having incorporated Chinese into their national education systems, and the number of CFL learners has exceeded 20 million¹. To satisfy the increasing needs of CFL learners, online CFL courses (e.g., the Sino-Greece Project in this study) have emerged and gained increasing popularity. Yet there is still a paucity of research studies on the potential challenges in online CFL teaching and the emotional states of CFL teachers in having to deal with these challenges. In addition, the available research studies on student engagement were often conducted against the backdrop of offline classrooms. The existing knowledge of behaviors of teachers to foster student engagement cannot solve the problems arising from online teaching. This study, therefore, aimed to address these gaps with a case study of a CFL teacher through using the theoretical lens of self-efficacy.

¹From “Ministry of Education: The Number of Foreigners Learning Chinese Exceeds 20 Million” (June 5, 2021) (<http://www.chinese.cn/page/#/pcpage/article?id=699&page=1>).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Engagement

“Student engagement” is a multifaceted and complex construct (Ashwin and McVitty, 2015; Bond et al., 2020), and there still exists no generalized definition that covers all the facets it may cover. The concept of student engagement has attracted many researchers to debate or theorize it from the behavioral, psychological, sociocultural, and holistic perspectives (Kahu, 2013). The behavioral perspective emphasizes the influence of teaching practices on the behaviors of students, such as the time and the effort students devote to educational activities (Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Kahu, 2013). The psychological perspective regards engagement as an internal psychosocial process, enriching the definition of engagement with three dimensions: behavior (i.e., paralleling part of “behavioral perspective”), cognition (e.g., motivation, self-efficacy, and expectations) (Jimerson et al., 2003; Kahu, 2013), and affective dimensions (e.g., sense of belonging, enjoyment, and interest in tasks) (Furlong et al., 2003; Kahu, 2013). The sociocultural perspective focuses on the impact of social contexts and external factors (e.g., disciplinary power, academic culture, and the focus on performativity) on the experiences of students (Mann, 2001; Kahu, 2013). Some researchers have attempted to propose a holistic perspective, drawing these various perspectives together and taking the motivations and expectations of students into consideration (e.g., Yuan and Zhang, 2017). For example, “the three dimensions of student engagement” involve the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of students (Fredricks et al., 2004). “Emotional engagement” refers to the affective reactions of students to classroom activities (e.g., whether students enjoy the lessons) (Van Uden et al., 2014; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). “Cognitive engagement” indicates that students have their goals of learning and understanding the importance of education (Van Uden et al., 2014; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). “Behavioral engagement,” which might be active (e.g., asking questions) or passive (e.g., paying attention in class), means the extent to which behaviors of students are related to the learning process (Nguyen et al., 2018; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). Importantly, these three dimensions are interconnected.

Despite the different perspectives researchers may hold, they all agree that:

- (1) the meaning of “student engagement” should be shaped by specific places and times (Ashwin and McVitty, 2015; Bond et al., 2020), which requires that teachers should analyze the external factors that might impact student engagement;
- (2) student engagement is associated with student motivation (Yuan and Zhang, 2017; Bond et al., 2020; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020) and persistence to learning (Archambault et al., 2009; Wang and Fredrick, 2014; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020), which suggests that teachers should have a good understanding of internal factors of students (e.g., backgrounds, attitudes, confidence, and motivations of students) (Ferris et al., 2013; Ranalli, 2021);
- (3) student engagement is subject to change over time, which indicates that student engagement can be either fostered or

hindered in the learning environment in which they work (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020);

- (4) students who are engaged at school are likely to be engaged in their long-term vocation and will seek to attain occupational achievement (Abbott-Chapman et al., 2014; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020), which foregrounds the importance of fostering student engagement.

These four agreements to some extent imply that teachers play a significant role in fostering student engagement, although it is admitted that students themselves are the persons who really decide to engage or disengage in learning (Shernoff et al., 2016; Quin et al., 2017; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020; Harris and Leeming, 2021). Thus, both educational policymakers and researchers have been attracted to explore effective approaches to fostering student engagement.

Self-determination theory (SDT), for example, puts forward the premise that student engagement will be fostered when teachers support their three basic psychological needs (Van de Bergh et al., 2016; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020): the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). “The need for autonomy” is a sense of psychological freedom and volition to be oneself. To support this need, teachers are expected to invite students to provide suggestions for the teaching content (e.g., in the lesson plan, instructions, and learning activities) so that students can experience learning as a self-chosen act that reflects their own interests, preferences, and values (Stroet et al., 2013). “The need for competence” is the confidence students have that they can be successful academically (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020), which can be supported by teachers providing students with appropriate and relevant learning experiences to enhance their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) (see details in the following section on self-efficacy). “Relatedness” refers to a close bond, which requires teachers to put enthusiasm into lessons, show an open, honest, and caring attitude toward students, and encourage students to support each other. Once students feel personally accepted and have a sense of belonging, positive teacher-student relationships can be developed and relatedness will be attained simultaneously (Korpershoek et al., 2019; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020). To date, much of the research studies on student engagement have been conducted within the context of teaching and learning in offline classrooms.

Fostering student engagement in online classrooms, the new spaces, might be much more challenging. First, within online classroom students might come from diverse countries or regions, which means their sociocultural backgrounds might be quite different. Second, although students in online classrooms may have a greater sense of autonomy because of their self-chosen acts, they may also have more freedom to withdraw from learning; therefore, teachers need to invest more effort to foster the persistence and resilience of students (Asin, 1999). Third, it is challenging to attain relatedness online, because of limitations such as the teaching spaces, time, and internet connections. In addition, no matter what teaching platforms are used, there always exist some objective or subjective drawbacks or uncertainties that challenge teachers in the teaching process.

The existing guidance of behaviors of teachers cannot solve these issues. Thus, it is necessary to deepen our understanding of student engagement online through the practices of teachers, and, understandably, the success of teachers in practices is largely related to their self-efficacy, to which we turn next.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy belief, also known as self-efficacy or efficacy belief (hereinafter “belief”), refers to “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Not only does self-efficacy influence the way people think and feel but also it motivates people to act and perform (Bandura, 1995). Therefore, people with a high level of self-efficacy have more motivation and persistence in performing tasks or adapting to changes in the professional field (Bandura, 2000, 2006; Morey and Ma, 2016). Self-efficacy is dynamic and may differ from one domain to the next (Bandura, 2006; Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020), and how it develops is influenced by four factors: mastery/performance experiences (personal authentic experience), vicarious experiences (authentic experiences of other people), social persuasion, and physiological and emotional state of an individual (Bandura, 1995; Bao et al., 2016; Chen and Zhang, 2019). Successful mastery or vicarious experiences and the positive climates of social or working contexts will work positively to increase self-efficacy, whereas failures may impact negatively (Bandura, 1995). However, whether an experience is a success or failure depends on the interpretation of an individual that is generated by a set of factors, such as personal, social, and situational ones (Bandura, 1995).

Based on this definition, numerous studies support that teaching is a process activated by the self-efficacy of teachers, the influence of which pervades before, during, and after the class. These studies have pointed out that three components make up a system of self-efficacy of teachers, including personal efficacy (beliefs and attitudes toward the teaching profession), efficacy within the organization (interpersonal relationships and support of the organization), and professional efficacy (the ability of individuals to carry out the tasks required in teaching) (Friedman and Kass, 2000; Wang et al., 2015; Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020). Each component interacts intricately with the experiences of a teacher (Bao et al., 2016), students, the organizational climate, and the quality of support provided by colleagues and the organization (Fives and Buehl, 2012; Hoffman and Seidel, 2015; Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020; Zhang, in press). Teachers, whose workplace is characterized by cooperation and support for teachers, tend to have a high sense of self-efficacy (Goddard and Goddard, 2001; Duran and Duran, 2005). These three components echo the three psychological needs (i.e., the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence) to foster student engagement (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020), which are also available for cultivating teacher engagement (Dutt et al., 2020): Personal efficacy supports the need of teachers for autonomy, efficacy within the organization for relatedness, and professional efficacy for competence. In turn, cultivated engagement of teachers will work on their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy of teachers affects their long-term commitment to, engagement with, and persistence in the teaching profession, instructional decisions, and occupational well-being, which in turn impacts motivation, engagement, and learning of students (Pajares, 1992; Hofer and Pintrich, 1997; Klassen and Tze, 2014; Zee and Koomen, 2016; Lauermaann and Berger, 2021). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more willing to set high teaching goals for themselves, experiment with new practices, and invest more effort in coping with difficulties (Dixon, 2011; Bao et al., 2016; Tan and Matsuda, 2020); they are also willing to support the development of intrinsic interests and self-directedness of students (Woolfolk and Hoy, 1990; Bandura, 1995), take responsibility for academic engagement, motivation, and achievements students, and be prepared for the failure of students (Goddard and Goddard, 2001; Guo et al., 2014; Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020).

However, recent research on self-efficacy in the Chinese context or Chinese students residing elsewhere has paid much attention to student learning (e.g., Lam and Chan, 2016), experiences of teacher burnout (e.g., Cao et al., 2018) and job satisfaction (e.g., Liu et al., 2018), emotions and experiences teachers of special education (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020), and teachers' response to educational reforms and teacher identity (e.g., Zhang and Zhang, 2015; Huang et al., 2020). Very few research studies have focused on CFL teachers in the context of online teaching. This study thus sought to fill this gap with a case centering on the self-efficacy of a CFL teacher, exploring how she fostered online the engagement of Greek CFL students.

Informed by the three components of self-efficacy, the following three research questions (RQ) guided this study. These three questions also frame the themes (see *Findings*) emerging from the deductive data analysis.

RQ1: What are the teacher's beliefs about the opportunity of teaching CFL online? (Focusing on personal efficacy)

RQ2: What are the teacher's beliefs about the management of this online project? (Focusing on efficacy within the organization)

RQ3: What are the teacher's beliefs about her personal capability to foster students' engagement in this project? (Professional efficacy)

METHODS

Informed by the study of Dewey (1938) that "interaction" and "continuity" are the two principles of experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), a narrative inquiry was adopted as a research methodology. In the field of language teaching, narrative inquiry, as a type of qualitative method, has proven to be an apt approach to investigate how language teachers interact with specific social, historical, and cultural contexts (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) and how the past experiences of teachers influence their teaching performances (Kane et al., 2002; Norman and Spencer, 2005; Casanave, 2012; Bao et al., 2016). These two principles are also consistent with "engagement in holistic perspective" that engagement is a dynamic continuum with different locations

and times, which is best understood through in-depth qualitative study (Kahu, 2013).

Research Context

This study is based on a project entitled *the Sino-Greece Online Chinese Classrooms*, which provides Chinese learners in Greece with a high-quality learning platform and rich learning resources, and aimed to promote cultural and educational exchanges between China and Greece. All the teachers involved in this project were provided with teaching materials such as prepared teaching plans and PowerPoint slides each week, which ensured that all the teachers followed the same curriculum and the same pace.

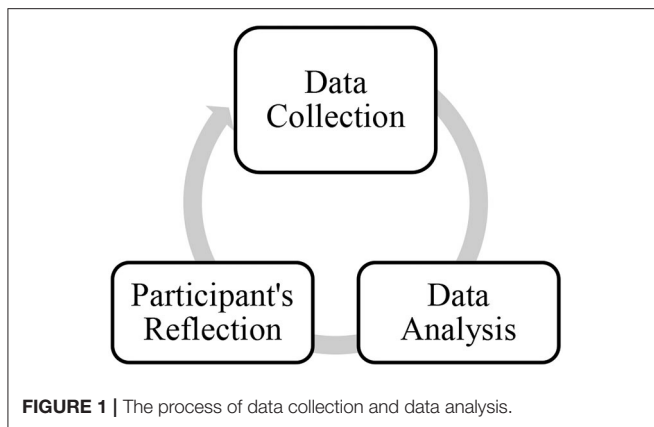
All the CFL teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) were selected from key universities in Mainland China. Teachers were the instructors of the course, while TAs assisted them to manage and observe classes and answered questions of students. Each TA assisted two teachers. Students enrolled in this project covered a diverse range of Greeks who were interested in learning Chinese. The students, for example, included both undergraduates and staff in a Greek University. The ages of the students varied from 20s to 50s. Because of pandemic lockdown, students took this part-time course in personal places rather than on the same campus. Hence, the effort of the teacher in motivating students to keep their enthusiasm for, and engagement in, learning was the prerequisite for the academic success of students.

The first semester of this project lasted 16 weeks: 13 weeks (1.5*2 h/ week) for teaching and 3 weeks for revision. After 16 weeks, students were expected to pass Level 1 of Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi² (HSK, a Chinese proficiency test with six levels; Level 1 is the lowest). That is to say, students should master 150 words/Chinese characters and their usages in daily conversation as required by the official HSK syllabus. Given that there existed no map directing how the online teaching and learning might occur, the completion of these tasks was challenging for both teachers and students. To this end, this study reports on a case study of a CFL teacher during the 16 weeks, focusing particularly on her self-efficacy beliefs about this project, to uncover how willing she was to undertake these tasks and how much effort she invested in teaching language skills and fostering student engagement.

Participant: The CFL Teacher

The participant was CB, one of the frontline teachers of this project. She has a Ph.D. in Education (Applied Linguistics), focusing on language teaching and teacher development. Before this project, she had taught CFL in New Zealand (NZ) for 6 years. However, neither had she ever taught CFL online nor had she ever taught Greek students. She was thus faced with three main challenges: (1) teaching within an unfamiliar online teaching

²HSK (Level I) assesses the abilities of test-takers in the application of everyday Chinese. It is the counterpart of the Level I of the *Chinese Language Proficiency Scales for Speakers of Other Languages* and the A1 Level of the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)*. Test-takers who are able to pass the HSK (Level I) can understand and use very simple Chinese phrases, meet basic needs for communication, and possess the ability to further their Chinese language studies (from <http://www.chinesetest.cn/gosign.do?id=1&lid=0#>).



platform; (2) learning about Greek culture, an unfamiliar culture for her; and (3) catering for a diverse group of students in regard to age and prior learning experiences.

As both participant and researcher in this study, CB came back and forth between the two identities. As a participant, she was the central character who shared her lived and imagined experiences. As a researcher, she was sure to treat herself as the participant ethically; she was able to analyze and interpret the data fully, especially after negotiating with other researchers, and then made the illustrative data presented in findings closest to the lived reality of the participant.

Data Collection

Figure 1 indicates the research process, in which data collection is iteratively interwoven with data analysis (Dörnyei, 2007).

Following the process outlined by Polkinghorne (1995), this study used stories as research data (“analysis of narratives”) and storytelling as a tool for data analysis and presentation of findings (“narrative analysis”). The stories were mainly from two sources: written and spoken narratives (see Figure 2). The data from these sources were triangulated to enrich each other, mapping out a full picture of the self-efficacy of the teacher. As such, narrative inquiry in this study, to some extent, was CB’s self-inquiry, the (re)constructive process (self-study and narrating) and product (enhanced knowledge and written/spoken narratives) of which enabled her to (re)interpret her experiences as a teacher and to build knowledge situated in her teaching context and with her students (Golombek and Johnson, 2017).

Written Narratives

Written narrative data consist of four sections: (1) “Teaching journals” were produced by CB during the 16 weeks, focusing on teaching strategies, emotions (e.g., fears, concerns, and desires), and the stories shared by students (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). These teaching journals might be written in her notebook or shared in the WeChat Moments (an online social networking service, similar to Facebook), in which some photographs were inserted. (2) “Field notes and feedback” were noted down by Daisy (pseudonym), a postgraduate student and TA of CB in this project. Her responsibility was to take notes of class observations (e.g., the behavior of teacher or students) and write down the feedback of students (e.g., thoughts, feelings, and comments of students online) for CB to read after class. (3) “Reflection on or

interpretation of the data” was the stories shared by CB when she interpreted the narratives from the first two sections; these stories correlated with her previous experiences of teaching, learning, and living (Sakui, 2002), eliciting the causation of her perceived self-efficacy. (4) “Emails” were from the Greek students of CB, which in some sense worked as one of the builders of confidence of CB.

On the whole, CB wrote one time or two times a week while Daisy wrote one time every 2 weeks on average. The length of each entry was from several sentences to one or two handwritten pages. The emails were written by students occasionally. According to the timeline, the data were numbered (see details in Table 1). For example, TJ1 was written before TJ 2. All the data were originally in Chinese and translated by the researchers.

Spoken Narratives

Spoken narratives were from the conversations between CB and Daisy through the function of “Hold to talk” or “Voice Call” in WeChat. Conversations occurred when they needed to clarify the content in the field notes, talk about the performance of students, or discuss the topics related to CFL teaching and learning. These spoken narratives, which were transcribed by CB later, to some extent, enhanced the trustworthiness of the interpretation of the written narratives.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted deductively and inductively (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). With deductive thematic analysis, the three themes were determined in advance according to the three components of self-efficacy (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) (see Research Questions). With inductive thematic analysis, subthemes (see Findings) arose from data with constant contrast and comparison (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Miles et al., 2014). Both the paths of thematic analysis were based on a repeated reading of the data and rounds of analysis so that the (sub)themes could be refined (Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

FINDINGS

RQ1: Beliefs About This Opportunity of Teaching CFL Online (Focusing on Personal Efficacy)

The Chinese words below are what CB wrote for an official news report (published on February 21, 2021), indicating her robust self-efficacy about this opportunity.

- Line 1 作为从教十余年的语言教师
(*Having been a language teacher for over 10 years*)
- Line 2 确认自己是个幸运的人
(*I am sure that I am a lucky person*)
- Line 3 行走在语言搭建的桥梁之上
(*With languages as bridges*)
- Line 4 游走于不同的文化之间
(*I have a chance to know different cultures*)

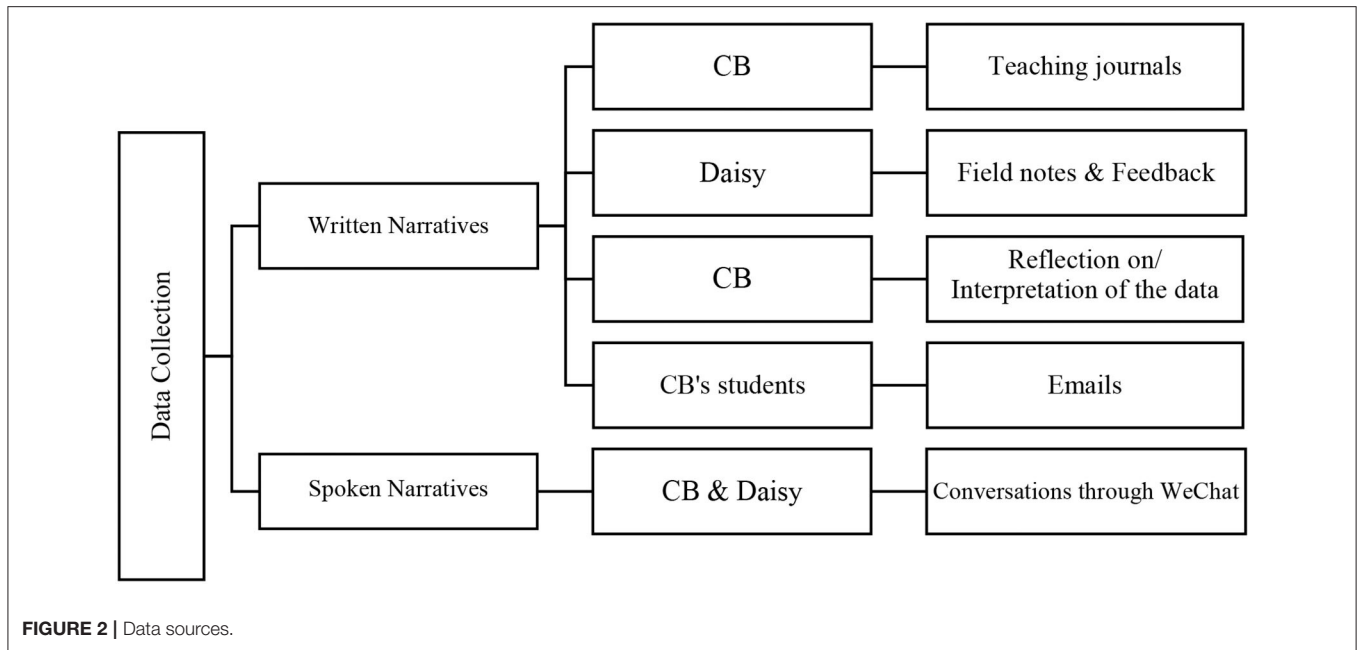


TABLE 1 | Information of collected data.

Sections	Providers	Types of data	Quantity	Coded numbers
Written narratives	CB	Reflective teaching journals (TJ)	15	TJ 1–15
		The stories students shared (SS)	4	SS 1–4
		Unforgettable moments (UM)	4	UM 1–4
		Photos	7	Photos 1–7
	Daisy	Field notes and feedback	8	Daisy's Narratives 1–8
Spoken narratives	CB's students	Emails after the project	5	(Student's pseudonym) Emails 1–5
	CB and Daisy (transcribed by CB)	Conversations	6	Conversations 1–6

Line 5 在与不同国家学生的交流中
(and to communicate with students from different countries.)

Line 6 感受自己的丰富与成长
(I am really enjoying my life growing and becoming enriched in the process.)

Line 7 曾经立志：“再奋斗二十年，让学生点亮世界地图。”
(I once set a goal: “I am determined to work (teach CFL) another 20 years; then I will have taught students from all the countries in the world.”)

Line 8 为了这个梦想，自己努力着、奋斗着、奔跑着。
For this goal, I have never stopped pursuing or endeavoring.

Line 9 今年，点亮的国家是：希腊。
The students I will teach this year are from Greece.
(Excerpt from official news report, February 21, 2021)

From this news, it can be found that (1) she was proud of her identity as a language teacher (Lines 1–2); (2) she enjoyed intercultural communication, because teaching students from

diverse cultural backgrounds also nourished herself in return (Lines 3–6); (3) she treated her career as a life-long mission, to which she was wholeheartedly devoted (Line 7–8); and (4) she was excited about having this precious opportunity to teach Greek students (Line 9). All the words and words between lines imply her firmly established beliefs that she loved her profession deeply, with no regrets.

In addition, “the moment of regaining the lost love” was closer to her emotion then. In her words:

“Although I am enjoying the time with my students in China’s University, I always miss the times when I taught CFL in New Zealand. In my present class, I sometimes shared some stories of my teaching in New Zealand... my present students were really interested in them (stories)... Whenever I heard foreigners speaking Chinese, I felt moved and excited... I am really proud of being a CFL teacher.” (Excerpt from Reflection 1 of CB)

Notably, she missed the days of teaching CFL in NZ and her identity as a CFL teacher, so this opportunity supported her need for autonomy, reflecting her interests, preferences, and values

(Stroet et al., 2013). She thus cherished this opportunity and undertook this teaching task without any hesitation.

RQ2: Beliefs About the Management of This Online Project (Focusing on Efficacy Within the Organization)

The level of self-efficacy of CB within the organization was enhanced as the culture of collaboration in this project was being built (Sachs, 2005; Gong et al., 2018). Leaders of the online project created a supportive professional community by making continuous efforts to improve hardware facilities, providing teaching materials, and solving the problems encountered by either teachers or students instantly. Well-organized online meetings occurred regularly, encouraging teachers to communicate or share their experiences. Through these online meetings, teachers learnt from and helped each other. After the first meeting, CB stated:

I have found a sense of belonging now... I love the community so much. We (teachers) encouraged each other and learned from each other... the meeting was so interesting... this kind of feeling is so cool! (Excerpt from TJ 4)

However, when asked about her attitudes toward the organization before that meeting, she just replied that “I had no idea of it (this organization) ... perhaps, neither liked nor disliked it” (Conversation 2). The change in the attitudes of CB reveals that it was after the meeting that CB started to become satisfied with the management of this project, because the atmosphere of the meeting brought to her a sense of belonging, and as such her need for relatedness was satisfied (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020), which was essential to enhancing her relevant self-efficacy then.

RQ3: Beliefs About Her Personal Capability to Foster Students' Engagement in This Project (Focusing on Professional Efficacy)

When CB was a preservice teacher, she was taught that a good lesson must encompass three indispensable constructs: knowledge to be taught, designs to be made, and students to be known. The three constructs were still what she firmly believed and stuck to. “Knowledge to be taught” refers to the knowledge chosen for a specific lesson, which is transferred from teacher to students implicitly or explicitly through “designs to be made” (i.e., the contents written in PowerPoint slides before the class, pedagogical teaching methods, and skills adopted during the class). “Students to be known” suggests that teachers should get familiar with the names, existing knowledge levels, and cultural backgrounds of the students before the class and further teacher-student relationship during and after the class, which is significant to support relatedness of both teachers and students. However, in a CFL class, the way to complete these three constructs cannot avoid being mediated by various challenges, because the knowledge of a second language is not only the “product of formal learning contexts, but it emerges out of the interaction of different social networks (family, cultural production, and school) with the individual cognitive

and affective factors” (Menezes, 2008, p. 213); therefore, the latent challenges are worthy of the attention of researchers. As such, a series of challenges CB encountered in an effort to complete each construct emerged from the collected data. With inductive analysis, these challenges were summarized into nine themes within five categories in three periods: “teacher’s preparation,” “selection of pedagogical methods and skills,” “cultural awareness,” “teacher-student relationship,” and “students’ choices” (see details in **Table 2**). The intertwining of these challenges worked on the effects of CFL teaching of CB and the learning of students; whether the set teaching goals could be attained was largely dependent on her resilience to dwelling on, coping with, or balancing these challenges.

Preparation of Teacher (Before the Class)

Before the class, CB had a high degree of self-efficacy in relation to “knowledge to be taught” and “designs to be made,” which was reflected in her habit of reorganizing PowerPoint slides. To some extent, reorganizing slides also reflected her need for autonomy. As observed by Daisy, “the order of PowerPoint slides of Ms. CB is often different from the original one” (Narrative 3 of Daisy), to which CB explained,

It is indeed a good way (using these teaching materials) to guarantee that all the teachers teach the same contents at the same pace. However, every teacher has his/her own thoughts, which will be reflected in the way he/she teaches. Actually, to reorganize the PowerPoint slides is to design my teaching plans. (Excerpt from Reflection 3 of CB)

In contrast, the optimistic sense of her self-efficacy about “students to be known” was pessimistic. In the beginning, CB firmly believed that it was a must to memorize the names of the students. For one thing, calling the name of a person correctly can shorten the distance between two strangers, which is helpful to attain relatedness. For another, memorizing the names of other people is a way to show respect for others. Therefore, the teachers who can memorize the names of the students will be in the favor of students. This belief was initiated by her personal experiences as a high-school student. As she reflected,

It is surprising that Ms. Tian (the name of her high-school teacher) could call my name when we met each other for the first time. (Excerpt from Reflection 2 of CB)

When CB became a teacher, she thus took memorizing the names of the students in advance as her compulsory course, which was further reaffirmed by her own students. As one student told her,

Ms. CB is the only teacher who can remember all the students' names within such short time. (Excerpt from Reflection 2 of CB)

However, such confidence was completely diminished when she intended to memorize the official names of Greek students. As she said,

I have a habit: I usually get familiar with students' names before I meet them. But now I don't think I can call their Greek names,

TABLE 2 | Challenges in teaching.

Time	Categories	Themes Summarized from the Data	Data resources
Before the class	Teacher preparation	1. Teachers' capability of planning and reorganizing teaching materials	TJ 3
		2. Teachers lack knowledge about Greek culture and Greek language	TJ1; SS2
During the class	Selection of pedagogical methods and skills	3. Classroom languages: Chinese and English, because the space for TPR (Total Physical Response) is limited	TJ 5
		4. There are not many choices of in-class activities. It is impossible to do activities in out-of-class contexts	TJ 12; TJ 13
	Cultural awareness	5. Teachers should have cultural awareness	TJ 5
	Teacher-student relationship	6. Building teacher-student relationship in online class costs more time than in offline class	TJ 1; TJ 2; TJ 15
After the class	Students' choices	7. Teaching process: Students consist of adult undergraduates and University teachers. They have their own understanding of the language; therefore, they liked to ask questions	TJ 13; TJ 14; TJ 15
		8. To withdraw or to continue?	TJ6; SS 3
		9. To make effort to learn or to learn just for fun?	TJ 10

which exceeds my coping capabilities. The knowledge of Greek language I know is only limited to some letters used in formulas of math or physics, such as $\Omega, \alpha, \beta, \pi, \lambda$... when these letters are put together, I have no idea of how to read at all, let alone the meanings of them. This kind of feelings is so bad. (Excerpt from TJ 1)

It was thus noticed that in the first online lesson, she required all her students to register their English names on the screen and she never mentioned Greek names anymore, to which she explained:

I tried to learn some Greek language online, but it was so difficult for me. I could not master Greek pronunciation within such short time, so I gave up. (Excerpt from Reflection 3 of CB)

Selection of Pedagogical Methods and Skills (During the Class)

When selecting pedagogical methods and skills, CB realized that two main conflicts existed in this online project that affected her self-efficacy. While this was the case, she was determined to overcome the difficulties caused by the conflicts.

The first conflict was between teacher-centered and other approaches. Different network speeds caused asynchronism in the online teaching space, which determined that a teacher-centered approach was more appropriate than other approaches, such as the total physical response method (TPR) (Obitube et al., 2020) and the task-based language teaching method (TBLT) (Ellis et al., 2019). In addition, students were CFL beginners, whose Chinese language proficiency was not good enough to carry out complicated activities. From the perspective of psychological needs, this conflict was a challenge for the need of CB for autonomy. CB presented her reasons,

I can only use English as a tool to explain the new knowledge, because it is impossible for students to understand explanation in Chinese. In addition, students only can see my face, shoulders, and hands on screen, so TPR is not available here. (Excerpt from TJ 3)

In this sense, CB sometimes acted as a drill instructor helping students improve pronunciation and sometimes as an organizer

guiding students to make up dialogues. All of the activities in class were student-student/teacher interactions.

The second conflict was between the aim of teaching and that of learning of students. The aim of teaching was to help students get familiar with Chinese and pass the HSK Level 1 (to get an official HSK certificate), so the teaching, to some extent, was examination-oriented. In contrast, all the students investigated in the class of CB expressed that they were only driven by curiosity and interest (e.g., one student can speak six languages: Greek, English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese). Therefore, what students were concerned with was only whether they had the chance to continue to learn rather than whether they could get an official certificate. In this way, the need of students for autonomy was challenged by teaching goals, the external factor. For example,

...I would like to assure...if we don't take the exam, we can still have a chance to attend the lessons in the future. (Excerpt from Email 2 of Cathy)

...Our knowledge level is low so a certificate is really not useful...BUT I would really like to continue and this is my only concern. (Excerpt from Email 2 of Anna)

Seemingly, the intrinsic interest and motivation of students fostered their learning performance. Their preference was not to accelerate learning to master more knowledge required in HSK Level 1, and they were more willing to talk about their favorite topics (e.g., how to express “I love you” and “handsome boys”) and to ask about the details they were curious about. “The students were so active and lovely. They learnt so hard for their interests” (observed by Daisy).

Although subjected to the two conflicts, CB confidently believed that she could exercise control over these challenges, which paid off in performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1995). Actually, it was her past experiences that supported her need for competence. She indeed made an endeavor to imbue her class with an active and relaxing atmosphere to arouse the desire of students for learning and balancing the required knowledge with the interests of students (Zhang and Zhang, 2020). The teaching outcomes proved that she not only achieved

her teaching aims (e.g., all her students who attended HSK Level 1 passed it successfully) but also protected the interests of students in the Chinese language (e.g., students were eager to continue to learn). This successful experience in turn further strengthened her perceived self-efficacy in teaching approaches.

Cultural Awareness (During the Class)

Some researchers call for the integration of intercultural elements and cross-cultural awareness into CFL teacher educational programs (Moloney, 2013; Lai et al., 2015; Moloney and Xu, 2015; Gong et al., 2018). Indeed, cultural awareness is an essential skill for both language teachers and language learners, especially when they are in a community with diverse cultures. Any potential offense should be avoided. For language teachers, it is necessary to explain the cultural differences in advance when they communicate with students. For students, it is an effective way to master the target language through understanding cultural differences. In addition, the cultural awareness of both teachers and students helped to create an atmosphere filled with respect, so that the relatedness of every member of this class would be supported. Without any hesitation, the self-efficacy of CB was completely strong and she was well-prepared for intercultural teaching and for cultivating the intercultural competence of her students. As she wrote,

When I taught numbers from 1 to 10, I asked students how to use hands to indicate these numbers. I found there were two biggest differences: (1) Greek students needed two hands if the number was bigger than 5; (2) When Greek students showed number 5, their palms of hands were facing themselves. Then I asked why they did in that way, they told me, the palms facing other people meant offending others. (Excerpt from TJ 5)

She thus not only got the meaning of the special gesture then but also explained to the students at the same time,

If you see Chinese people show hand with palm to you, you should also know that it is not intended offence... it is just because of the differences between us. (Excerpt from TJ 5)

Henceforth, whenever she indicated five with hand, she would follow the Greek way. Apparently, CB had already raised her own cultural awareness. However, her cultural awareness was initiated incidentally when she taught in NZ. As she recalled the turning point,

One of my Kiwi (the way local New Zealanders call themselves) students told me, "as a teacher, you should tell me how I am thinking; then I know the differences." Since then, I have kept reminding myself of it. (Excerpt from Reflection 2 of CB)

As some researchers pointed out, native Chinese language teachers educated in China are ill-prepared for intercultural teaching (Gong et al., 2018), which was also true for CB before that turning point occurred during her NZ teaching experiences.

Challenges of Teacher-Student Relationships (During the Class)

According to CB, the relationship between teachers and students online was quite different from that of offline; in other words, the relatedness online was more difficult to be supported. The online relationship was similar to net-friends, who would never meet in real life; the offline relationship was close to friends, who could make face-to-face interactions such as sharing experiences, singing Chinese songs, watching Chinese movies, and telling Chinese stories. Noticing these differences, CB invested effort to bridge the teacher-student distance psychologically *via* activities (e.g., dialogues) in class and emails after class, firmly believing:

Although it was not easy (to build teacher-student relationship), I believed that we were all human beings who could feel empathy. Students could sense my care about them, especially when the sudden earthquake happened; in return, students said "xièxie" ("Thank you" in Chinese) to me, because what I cared about most was their safety then. (Excerpt from Conversation 1)

The actions of CB resonated with her students. Even when the project was over, she still received some emails of students expressing "thank you, Ms. CB, for everything" (e.g., email of Elen).

In return, this sound teacher-student relationship also gave CB a sense of achievement. When CB was asked about which moment she felt happy as a teacher, she thought carefully and answered excitedly,

When the students liked to share their life stories with me; when I could see students' smile on the screen; when students expressed their appreciation to me through emails and hoped to continue to study with me; when I was praised by administrators... Then I knew I had been accepted by all. When I knew my students had passed HSK Level-1, I felt a sense of achievement. Then, I knew I had succeeded, because I had not only attained the teaching goals, but also satisfied students' learning need. (Excerpt from Conversation 6)

As can be noticed in this narrative, although "administrators' praise" encouraged CB, "students" were mentioned most. Apparently, the confidence and happiness of CB were tightly connected with the happiness, performance, and academic achievements of her students, which were also supported by the photographs she provided. One of the photographs, for example, was taken when students wrote Chinese characters successfully for the first time; in that picture, she and her students all smiled happily. She also used that picture in an official news report, hoping to share her happiness of that moment with the wider community.

Choices of Students (After the Class)

Teaching is like playing chess; both teachers and students are players, so both sides are important. Student engagement is influenced by both internal and external factors (Ferris et al., 2013; Ranalli, 2021). To warrant the quality of a language lesson, a language teacher must take into consideration the social networks of students (family, cultural production, and school) and cognitive and affective factors (Menezes, 2008) that might affect the choices of students, such as "to withdraw or to

continue?” and “to make effort to learn or to learn just for fun?” presented in **Table 2**. The choices of students determine their dedication to learning, which in turn might influence teaching. Therefore, teachers need to sustain tenacious self-efficacy to exercise control over situations that are unmanageable (Bandura, 1995).

The first choice “to withdraw or to continue” originated from the characteristics of this project: a part-time course free of charge, which students selected voluntarily and could withdraw from any time. Taking a class of CB as an example, only 10 of the 18 registered students completed the course. Although CB had already understood that the students were adults and the decision they made must be reasonable, she, however, still felt depressed when students withdrew, especially when the withdrawal was caused by sudden and unexpected news. For example:

...One student told me that he had lost her father that week, so he could not continue to follow the course anymore. (Excerpt from SS1)

In addition to such personal stories, on October 30, 2020, when the second class of this course was being taught, a strong earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale hit Samos island of Greece in the eastern Aegean Sea according to the Institute of Geodynamics, the national observatory of Athens. As a result, some students had no choice but to give up learning. CB recalled:

When the earthquake happened, I saw the shaking pictures on the screen, and then some students lost connection... That moment, what I only concerned was students' safety. I really hoped all of them could be safe. But I firmly believe that without earthquake, more students could continue to learn. (Excerpt from Conversation 5)

After students chose to continue, the second choice came “to make effort to learn or to learn just for fun”: what learning attitudes they should hold and how much effort they would invest. After all, a traditional offline class and the current online class are two different learning environments, which in turn lead to different learning effects. A traditional offline classroom creates a relatively high-pressure learning atmosphere, in which students have to prepare well before each class so that they can master the knowledge well; teachers can guide and supervise students face-to-face. In contrast, an online classroom is a low-pressure learning community, which requires self-discipline and engagement of students if they hope to maintain progress (e.g., doing online homework instantly); teachers can only guide students to review orally; therefore, without the effort of students after class, it would be impossible for teachers to warrant teaching quality. In addition, all of the students (seven undergraduates; three staff in the Greek University) studied or worked at home during the lockdown, so their full-time work (e.g., full-time study, business of their families, and professional activities) kept them too busy. In such a situation, formal and concentrated language study became even more difficult for them. As CB wrote:

After Christmas vacation, students have forgotten what they learnt before. Today, I had to help them to review and recall the knowledge

they have already learnt, which led to the pace of teaching becoming much slower than I expected. (Excerpt from TJ 14)

Despite these adversities, CB helped students review the learnt knowledge repeatedly and encouraged every student not to give up, which gave students more confidence and kept their engagement (Ferris et al., 2013; Ranalli, 2021). Eventually, both CB and her students attained their goals, even beyond their original expectations. The development of intrinsic interests of students also reaffirmed the strong self-efficacy of CB, with which she aroused the motivation of students, kept their engagement, and created mastery experiences for her students (Bandura, 1995). As one student expressed in the email,

Dear Ms. CB,

... When I started I did not think I would continue due to my workload. I just started because I love languages. Thanks to you I kept up and I'm looking forward to learning more Chinese... (Excerpt from Email 2 of Christy)

DISCUSSION

The findings show that CB, the CFL teacher, positively dealt with most of the challenges she encountered. Overall, she successfully sustained motivation for and engagement in learning of students and, eventually, helped them attain academic success. However, her self-efficacy in different (sub)themes was not only at dissimilar levels but also dynamic (Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020). To further analyze the factors relevant to the findings, CB was asked to fill in **Table 3**.

As reviewed, self-efficacy is a complicated system developed from four main factors: personal/mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and the physiological and emotional states of an individual (Bandura, 1995). The collective effect of these factors makes it difficult to identify which one is more significant and effective in reality. Therefore, this study categorized the four factors into “external factors” and “internal factors” (see details in **Table 3**) and then analyzed how these factors jointly regulated the self-efficacy of CB.

In **Table 3**, the column of “Levels of self-efficacy” took Likert scale on a range from 1 to 5 (1 indicating the weakest beliefs, and 5 indicating the strongest beliefs) as a reference; the time of this column was divided into two sections: “at the beginning (of the project)” and “at the end (of the project),” so as to show the changes in beliefs of CB clearly. As the numbers in the two sections were presented, the changes in these beliefs were categorized into “enhanced,” “unchanged,” and “weakened.” The causal factors attributing to the changes were listed in the column of “influential factors,” including the external and internal factors that were summarized from the stories in “findings”; after that each factor was “+” or “-,” which indicates whether that factor played a positive or negative role, respectively.

Enhanced Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Influential Factors

As **Table 3** shows, the levels of four beliefs were enhanced, including beliefs in “efficacy within the organization,” “selection

TABLE 3 | Summary of findings.

Self-efficacy			Levels of self-efficacy (Weakest) 1–5 (Strongest)		Influential factors	
			At the beginning	At the end	External factors (vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and working contexts and climates)	Internal factors (personal/mastery experiences, individual's physiological and emotional states)
Personal efficacy			5	5	Support from colleagues and students (+)	Personal professional goal (+); Personal teaching experiences (+); Personal interests and enthusiasm (+); Sense of achievement (+)
Efficacy within the organization			3	5	Support from the organization and colleagues (+)	Sense of belonging (+)
Professional efficacy	Teacher's preparation	Knowledge to be taught; Teaching plans	5	5	Support from the organization and TA (+)	Personal teaching experiences (+); Knowledge of pedagogies (+)
		Students' names	5	2	Experience of CB's high-school teacher (+); Praise from CB's previous students (+); Greek language; (-)	Having no ability to master Greek language within such short time (-)
	Selection of teaching approaches		3	4	Limitations of the teaching space (-); Conflict between teacher-centered approach and other approaches (-); Conflict between the aim of teaching and that of students' learning (-)	Personal teaching experiences (+); Knowledge of pedagogies (+)
	Cultural awareness		5	5	Stories shared by CB's previous Kiwi student (+)	Personal teaching and learning experiences (+)
	Teacher-student relationship		2	4	Limitations of the teaching time and space (-); Appreciation from students (+)	Personal belief in the effects of communication and care (+); Sense of achievement (+)
	Students' choices	To withdraw or to continue?	2	2	Earthquake (-); Students' personal stories (-)	It was a pity (-) Sense of helplessness (-)
To make effort to learn or to learn just for fun?		2	4	Students' personal stories (+/-)	Personal teaching experiences (+); Knowledge of pedagogies (+)	

of teaching approaches,” “teacher-student relationship,” and “students’ choices (to make effort to learn or to learn just for fun?).”

The influential factors in this group can be summarized as “negative external factors (in the beginning) and positive internal factors.” In particular, at the beginning of the project, the external factors contained information with many complexities, ambiguities, drawbacks, and uncertainties (e.g., new students and new teaching platform); therefore, CB should negotiate with students or adapt to the new teaching platform, which required effective cognitive processing (Bandura, 1995). Although the personal teaching experiences of CB (positive internal factors) reminded her that she had the capability to overcome the difficulties eventually, CB still needed more time and practice to enhance her confidence. CB thus drew on her knowledge to weigh and integrate predictive factors, to remember the effective factors she had tested, and to revise her actions (Bandura, 1995). Once she proved she could make it, her confidence was largely enhanced, then came a virtuous circle (Bandura, 2000, 2006; Morey and Ma, 2016). In this process, the self-efficacy of CB developed from weak to strong.

Taking “efficacy within the organization” as an example, CB did not reveal positive attitudes toward the project apparently until she felt cared for and supported by the leaders of this project. The positive feelings were reinforced after the first online meeting when she started to have a sense of belonging. The development of beliefs of CB was congruent with the previous study that the organizational climate and the quality of support provided by colleagues and organization will have positive effects on the self-efficacy of teachers (Goddard and Goddard, 2001; Duran and Duran, 2005; Sela-Shayovitz and Finkelstein, 2020). This also aligns with the sources of self-efficacy, which suggests that positive social persuasion and physiological and emotional states of an individual work positively on her self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

It should also be noted that her self-efficacy in “selection of teaching approaches” and “to make effort to learn or to learn just for fun?” that reached Level 4 after enhanced was still not the strongest. That was because the external factors were not positive then, in which situation what CB could do was to make the best of the existing conditions despite higher expectations she held for her personal teaching performance and academic engagement and achievement of students. In addition, among all

the positive internal factors, the two mentioned most frequently were “personal teaching experience” and “sense of achievement,” both of which were closely interconnected with the support and encouragement from, and academic success achieved by, her students (see excerpts in *Findings*).

Unchanged Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Influential Factors

Four self-efficacy beliefs stayed unchanged, three remained strong, and one weak. The three unchanged strong beliefs kept Level 5, including beliefs in “personal efficacy,” “efficacy in knowledge to be taught and making teaching plans,” and “efficacy in cultural awareness.” In this group, both external factors and internal factors were positive. Obviously, mastery experiences of CB of teaching and learning (positive internal factors) had already established her strong beliefs (Bandura, 1995); supported by positive external factors, she surely had enough confidence to solve the problems or overcome the difficulties (Dixon, 2011; Bao et al., 2016). For example, CB held robust beliefs about this teaching opportunity without any doubt, so she was devoted to this project and invested much effort to achieve her teaching goals and the academic success of students. Her strongest beliefs were also supported by her performances in “cultural awareness” and “preparing knowledge to be taught and making teaching plans.”

The only one unchanged weak belief stayed at Level 2, close to the weakest: “professional efficacy (the choice of the students: to withdraw or to continue?).” On the contrary to the condition of the three strongest beliefs, neither external factors nor internal factors were positive here when she faced the unmanageable situation, so “sense of helplessness” was her main feeling, which is echoed by the study of Bandura (1995) that “inability to exert influence over things that adversely affect one’s life breeds apprehension, apathy, or despair” (p. 1).

Weakened Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Influential Factors

Among the beliefs in all of the (sub) themes, only one was weakened: “professional efficacy (the names of the students).” Self-efficacy of CB in this aspect was at the highest level in the beginning when both external and internal factors were positive (e.g., the previous experiences of her teacher, students, and her own), but this belief was weakened when the negative external factor appeared (i.e., she realized the difficulty of Greek language). Although she invested effort to learn Greek pronunciation positively, the difficulty of the Greek language drowned her enthusiasm and undermined her confidence, so her need for competence could not be supported anymore. Distrusting her capability to master Greek pronunciation within such a short time slackened her effort (Bandura, 1995), so she disengaged in using Greek names of students finally and her belief concurrently became weaker (from Level 5 to Level 2).

CONCLUSIONS

This narrative study has investigated the self-efficacy of a teacher in teaching CFL online and discussed relevant influential factors.

TABLE 4 | Summary of discussion.

External factors	Internal factors	Change of self-efficacy beliefs
+	+	Unchanged strong
-	-	Unchanged weak
-	+	Enhanced
+	-	Not mentioned

By detecting the details of both external and internal factors, it provides a deep insight into the dynamic psychological states of a teacher as she faced a new teaching environment and made ongoing efforts to motivate students to engage in learning. As discussed above, self-efficacy beliefs of CB were mediated by the interplay of external factors and internal factors (see **Table 4**, the further summarized version of **Table 3**). When both of the factors were positive, her beliefs would keep strong and she would keep engaged; when both were negative, her beliefs would remain weak and she would disengage in the relevant act (e.g., learning Greek names). When external factors were filled with uncertainties or drawbacks, the internal factors would be more important in her performance and the development of self-efficacy beliefs.

It should be noted that there is no actual standard criterion to judge whether an external factor is positive or negative; in effect, the judgment was made by CB subjectively. Positive external factors, in her opinion, gave her a sense of security or belonging (i.e., relatedness), which thus led her to develop a relatively strong self-efficacy and more engagement. Those negative ones were new factors that appeared in this project. In order to cope with the new factors that she perceived as drawbacks or uncertainties, she needed to strengthen or reestablish her self-efficacy (i.e., to support the need for competence) through more practices even if her established self-efficacy was already strong. In effect, these findings are also resonated with the “broaden and build” theory in positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2005), which emphasizes the following: Emotion is a precondition for career exploration (Fredrickson, 2005; Robertson, 2018); people can establish positive emotion by engaging in purposeful or prosocial activities, fulfilling their true nature and effective functioning (Ryan et al., 2008); and established positive emotion will lead to a virtuous circle of learning and development in career (Fredrickson, 2005; Robertson, 2018).

In addition, both CFL and online teaching are becoming increasingly popular in the world; therefore, how to keep academic motivation, engagement, and achievements of CFL students online calls for more attention from teachers and researchers. As supportive materials, the stories presented in this study provided a picture of the Sino-Greece online CFL project, including its organization, the status of enrolled students, the challenges teachers might encounter, the goals of teaching of teachers and learning of students, and the achievement it might attain. This picture might be a map for future online teaching in CFL or other similar contexts.

This study was conducted at an individual level. Admittedly, the findings from a single case study cannot be generalized, but these findings also have implications for the questions at hand (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gao, 2010). At present, online teaching, as a teaching approach, is being shared by an increasing number of teachers around the world; hence, it is reasonable to assume that the experiences of CB and the trajectories of her self-efficacy share some similarities with those in the cases of other teachers, which can be tested through further research studies at a collective level in the future.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions generated for the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and

institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CB conceived and designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the first manuscript. LZ and HD revised the manuscript. All authors agreed to the final version before LZ got it ready for submission.

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Book Review: Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms

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Keywords: book review, language learning, contemporary classroom, social perspective, engaging learning

A Book Review on

Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms

Sarah Mercer and Zoltán Dörnyei (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2020, 208 pages, ISBN: 9781108445924

The main purpose of *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms*, written by two prominent applied linguists, is to fully understand how best to initiate and sustain learner engagement in contemporary language classes by embarking on a set of principles and teacher actions. It is documented that engagement is a multifaceted phenomenon, so its complexity and dynamicity have been well-represented and captured in this book by looking at learner engagement from cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social perspectives.

This volume consists of Forward, Introduction, and six chapters. In the introduction, the authors conceptualize student engagement in EFL/ESL classes, elaborate on the advantages of centering on engagement in contemporary L2 classes, and justify why student engagement is essential. Furthermore, they postulate that engagement encompasses active involvement that is suitable for contemporary classrooms. The chapter also delineates the outline of the subsequent chapters.

The focus of Chapter 1 is to discuss the numerous contextual factors that can affect student engagement in L2 classrooms. The authors argue that sociocultural, educational, emotional, and linguistic factors impact student engagement; consequently, they foreground five maxims that enhance student involvement. These principles are as follows: (1) each language has a sociocultural status; (2) language learning needs to be connected to the authentic life beyond the classroom; (3) families can make a rich resource for student engagement; (4) “school priorities, curricular relevance and testing policies have a bearing on engagement” (p. 34); and (5) “whole-school culture can cultivate or kill learner engagement” (p. 37).

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 specifically focus on interpersonal and intrapersonal constituents that make the three cornerstones that are viewed to boost student engagement: “*the learner’s psychological state, their relationship to the teacher and their relationship with their peers*” (italics is original, p. 45). For instance, Chapter 2 concentrates on learners’ mindsets, beliefs, and feelings. The authors aptly enumerate the five facets of creating the learners’ mindsets: “a sense of competence, a growth mindset, a sense of ownership and control over the learning process, confidence/willingness to be proactive and, finally, grit” (p. 70). Furthermore, the chapter also suggests five action strategies to facilitate these maxims “thinking and acting like a coach, making the learning progress visible, discussing beliefs explicitly, building choice and learner voice into the learning process, teaching learners how to learn” (p. 71).

Chapter 3 deals with one of the teacher-student interpersonal variables—teacher-student rapport. The authors stipulate that to boost learner involvement with teachers in relational terms, they

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are required to connect with them socially, affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally. The authors suggest six principles such as “being approachable, empathetic, and responsive to learner individuality, believing in all of your learners’ potential to improve, seeking to support learner autonomy, and remaining passionate about what you do” (p. 95). They also round off the chapter by suggesting five teacher actions.

In Chapter 4, the authors argue that teachers play indispensable role in fostering positive peer relationships and the creation of peer values. They highlight the role of group dynamics in involving students, with an emphasis on peer relationships and classroom culture. This chapter brilliantly captures some principles and actions for teachers. The principles include “creating a safe environment for the learner group to develop and gradually become a mature, productive unit, characterized by cohesiveness and collaboration” (p. 130). The actions that teachers need to embark on to enhance positive group interactions for engagement encompass “mixing up learners, developing a sense of ‘we’ in the class, preparing learners for groupwork through building relevant interpersonal, collaborative and linguistic skills, structuring classroom life around the 3 ‘R’s—Rules, Roles and Routines, and fostering democratic participation” (p. 130).

Chapter 5 presents five principles and five teacher actions to initiate learner engagement on tasks. Thinking concretely about the actual learners, galvanizing students emotionally, creating curiosity, focusing on task set-up, and keeping learners active. The teacher actions to put into practice these maxims encompass commencing task engagement with purposefully small steps, provoking surprising factors, creating puzzles, designing cliffhangers, and embarking on questions to trigger curiosity.

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to sustain learner involvement in tasks. The authors highlight that initiating learner involvement is not enough, and we need to sustain their engagement. To do so, they suggest that teachers need to cater for cognitive challenge, maximize enjoyment, grab attention, employ the power of unpredictability, and acknowledge achievements. Using the power of stories, making the students the heroes of their

tasks, giving rewards, breaking the tasks into smaller parts, and working with the principles are the five teacher actions which can sustain learners’ involvement. The authors close their mission by highlighting three major themes in learner engagement: “*the power of positive emotions, empowering learners as partners in their education and active participation*” (italics is original, p. 207).

This book is highly insightful and thought-provocative because not only does it provide robust theoretical rationales for each chapter, but also it offers down-to-earth principles and viable teacher actions that enable teachers to enact the maxims. Moreover, the book is replete with quotes and reflection tasks that can certainly entice and engage the readers throughout the monograph. What I specifically enjoy reading throughout the book is that the suggested teacher actions do not seem prescriptive, but rather they help to cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, and socially engage learners and sustain their involvement. However, it is suggested that in the next editions, the authors can add rhetorical/relational goal theory (Mottet et al., 2006) to provide consolidated rationales for teacher-student interpersonal relationships. All in all, this book provides treasure trove of information for language students, teachers, teacher educators, and researchers who are interested to maximize learners’ language learning and engagement.

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A Review of Foreign Language Enjoyment and Engagement

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The introduction of positive psychology into foreign/second language learning has led to a multitude of novel theoretical and empirical studies. Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) is regarded as a response to the widely examined concept of classroom anxiety. The majority of these studies have investigated the effect of learners' and teachers' characteristics (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021) pertaining to FLE on learners' academic achievement and their engagement in classroom tasks. Following a seminal study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and the development of the primary FLE scale, some researchers evaluated the extent of learners' enjoyment in the language learning environment; these studies approved the effectiveness and prominence of FLE throughout the learning process. The present review is an attempt to review studies on FLE during the past two decades. The related literature confirms the significance and efficiency of promoting FLE in the classroom because it brings about higher levels of motivation and engagement among language learners and leads to prolonged success and achievement. A summary of the major efforts regarding this area of research is presented in this study.

Keywords: positive psychology, motivation, engagement, foreign language enjoyment, second language acquisition, anxiety

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INTRODUCTION

This manuscript is an attempt to investigate foreign language enjoyment (FLE), as a prominent feature of positive education (PE). The introduction of Positive Psychology (PP) can contribute to leading people toward success in their lives (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 2011). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) claimed that PP should be implemented in SLA because it is necessary to examine and affect students' emotions so that they can flourish and move toward their desirable objectives in future. Since 2016, there has been a shift toward PP in SLA (Lake, 2013). The proponents of this novel area of inquiry have intended to prepare the grounds for further research on the impact of PP in education and particularly language teaching and learning (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2017; Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021). This study attempts to appraise the present literature on FLE to observe the rationale and purposes of the studies and their empirical findings, determine those areas of research that have been disregarded, and propose some new topics for further research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

FLE as a PP Construct

Damasio (1994) and Fredrickson (2004) argued that learning is beyond affective factors and involves a multitude of factors such as communication, rapport, and identity. Having focused on emotion theory and earlier studies on affective factors in FL/SL learning, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) introduced positive concepts into educational psychology. They asserted that it is necessary for language teaching/learning practitioners to consider well-being, hope, empathy, mindfulness, communicative skills, etc., to make a balance in the literature (Snyder and Lopez, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 2019).

Seligman (2018) identified the building blocks of well-being in his PERMA model (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement). Accordingly, FLE can be regarded as the realization of the Positive Emotion element in this model. Moreover, Fredrickson (2001) highlighted the “broadening-and-building” nature of positive emotions as the psychological capacity of individuals, which can lead to expansion of their perception. In language learning, FLE refers to learners’ endeavors to meet learning challenges and broaden their knowledge and proficiency in the classroom (MacIntyre, 2016). Moreover, Botes et al. (2020) concluded that FLE occurs when learners can find appropriate responses to their psychological needs in the classroom. Pekrun et al. (2007) highlighted that enjoyment can result in persistent determination as well as positive and enthusiastic engagement in educational tasks (Mierzwa, 2018). Furthermore, language learners’ evaluation of their own behavior may lead to the feeling of anxiety or foreign language enjoyment (Wei et al., 2019). Consequently, the implementation of PP in language learning might result in academic attainment and success.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Empirical studies on FLE can be categorized into the following four types of research:

Validity of the FLE Measurements

Since the study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) is regarded as the building block of further research in FLE, it is imperative to start this section by highlighting the procedure of this research. They aimed to explore the correlation between enjoyment and anxiety in the language learning process. For this purpose, 1746 language learners with 90 different linguistic backgrounds and nationalities were selected. These learners were studying English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and German. The participants were selected to complete a researcher-made questionnaire on the web. The instrument contained 29 items (21 items developed to measure FLE observing positive emotions regarding the teacher, peers, and the learning experience, as well as eight items were extracted from the FLCA Scale) (see **Appendix Figure A1**). Once the questionnaire was completed, participants were asked to answer the following open-ended question: “Describe one specific event or episode in your FL class that you really

enjoyed, and describe your feeling in as much detail as possible” (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014, p. 246). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) applied some modifications to the original FLE Scale and developed a 14-item questionnaire with an internal consistency coefficient of 0.86. Given the acceptable reliability and validity of the proposed instrument, many scholars have employed this FLE scale or the translated versions in their studies (e.g., the Chinese version developed by Li et al., 2018).

Li et al. (2018), used a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the validity of the Chinese version of the FLE scale. Eventually, they proposed a 11-item scale within three factors of FLE-Private, FLE-Teacher, and FLE-Atmosphere. In a similar vein, Jin and Zhang (2018) investigated the relationship between FLE and academic achievement among 320 Chinese students. They developed a 17-item scale [English Classroom Enjoyment Scale (ECES)] examining three factors including Enjoyment of Teacher Support, Enjoyment of Student Support, and Enjoyment of Foreign Language Learning, which was revised by the same authors in 2019. The revised version of ECES contained 16 items and was claimed to provide a more reliable instrument with more efficient psychometric properties.

Alongside the developments in the measurement of FLE in the above mentioned studies, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2021) employed a longitudinal confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the psychometric properties of FLE scales over time. They also concluded that language learners with higher levels of L2 FLE did not experience great changes over time, while those with the initially lower level of FLE reported significant changes in this construct in the long run.

The Association Between FLE and Demographic Variables

Researchers have examined the relationship between different demographic variables and FLE. In terms of age, for instance, Dewaele et al. (2018) as well as Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) asserted that younger language learners indicated lower levels of FLE. They also revealed that university students showed higher levels of FLE compared to high-school students. Besides, there has been inconsistencies among scholars over the impact of gender on FLE. Some studies provide that female language learners have demonstrated greater FLE (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016), whereas other researchers argued that there is an insignificant difference between the two gender in term of language enjoyment (Mierzwa, 2018; Alenezi, 2020). Since there has been a few researches on the impact of demographic characteristics on FLE, it is imperative to conduct further studies to provide reliable outcomes and implications.

The Link Between FLE and Individual Difference Variables

Foreign language enjoyment has been widely evaluated in association with foreign language anxiety (FLA). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) are considered the Pioneering authors in this regard as they have attempted to observe and compare negative (FLA) and positive (FLE) emotions. Other scholars have also examined the correlation between FLA and FLE; the

summary of findings of such studies highlights a fairly negative relationship between these two concepts (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018; Resnik and Dewaele, 2020).

On the other hand, research on FLA has focused on different variables such as academic achievement, willingness to communicate (WTC), and etc. Since WTC refers to the learner's intention to speak up and communicate with the teacher and peers in the classroom, there might be a correlation between WTC and learners' FLE (Khajavy et al., 2018). Correspondingly, scholars have decided to conduct similar studies concerning FLE in the classroom (Dewaele, 2019; Elahi Shirvan and Taherian, 2020). Consequently, Dewaele (2019) argued that it is necessary for language teachers to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, which can help develop and promote WTC. As a result of such positive environment, language learners could also expand their language learning enjoyment so as to succeed in achieving their linguistic-related objective.

FLE as a Complex and Dynamic Construct

Several studies demonstrated that FLE is a complicated and dynamic concept. Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) implemented a dynamic approach to investigate changes in FLE. All the participants in their study reported a growing FLE over time. They further asserted that learner's variables might not be able to predict language learning achievement, which indicated the dynamic nature of FLE. In addition, Elahi Shirvan and Talebzadeh (2018) argued that language enjoyment changes from topic to topic and among individuals, since learners have experienced various degrees of FLE throughout the learning process in the classroom. This finding can contribute to the effectiveness of interpersonal as well as inherent variables on language learners experiences.

Similarly, Li et al. (2018) conducted a study on the fluctuation of enjoyment and anxiety in the classroom. They further argued that poor linguistic capabilities and the lack of motivation can lead to various levels of FLE and FLCA among language learners. Moreover, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the extent of changes in FLE among language learners. For this

purpose, they employed an ecological momentary evaluation approach using journals, interviews, and enjoyments. Findings of their research indicated that FLE changes from moment to moment and also from months to months.

Additionally, a seminal study was carried out by Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) so as to assess the effect of two different teachers on probable changes in FLE among language learners. They concluded that the teacher's use of target language in the classroom and learners' positive perception of the teacher can lead to a greater level of FLE.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) concluded that foreign language enjoyment is primarily influenced by the teachers' behavior. Consequently, Li et al. (2018) declared that teachers can influence and improve language learners' motivation and engagement in classroom tasks through allowing more foreign language input in the classroom by encouraging student-student interactions. Moreover, there is limited research in terms of the relationship between FLE/Second Language Enjoyment (SLE) and different language skills. Since enjoyment is positively associated with language learners' proficiency, it is recommended to conduct further research to investigate the role of FLE in the development and improvement of language skills. It is noteworthy that since positive psychology constructs are dynamic and complicated, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) proposed the necessity to move toward dynamic research approaches that contribute to the changing nature of language learning concepts in academic studies; for this purpose, future research on anxiety and enjoyment should consider longitudinal perspectives (Elahi Shirvan and Taherian, 2021).

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APPENDIX

The FLE scale

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree/ Disagree /Undecided/ Agree /Strongly agree

1. I can be creative
2. I can laugh off embarrassing mistakes in the FL
3. I don't get bored
4. I enjoy it
5. I feel as though I'm a different person during the FL class
6. I learnt to express myself better in the FL
7. I'm a worthy member of the FL class
8. I've learnt interesting things
9. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments
10. It's a positive environment
11. It's cool to know a FL
12. It's fun
13. Making errors is part of the learning process
14. The peers are nice
15. The teacher is encouraging
16. The teacher is friendly
17. The teacher is supportive
18. There is a good atmosphere
19. We form a tight group
20. We have common "legends", such as running jokes
21. We laugh a lot

The FLCA scale

1. Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it
2. I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class (reverse-coded)
5. I feel confident when I speak in FL class (reverse-coded)
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class

FIGURE A1 | FLE and FLCA scales proposed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014).



The Role of Teacher-Student Interpersonal Relations in Flipped Learning on Student Engagement

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Education, in essence, is an interactive activity in which teacher and student interactions construct a learning path to raise knowledge. However, it is evident that this learning path is not merely cognitive. Thus, the role of interpersonal relationships should not be taken for granted. Teacher-student relationships are among the salient factors in effective teaching. Factors such as these trigger achievement, motivation, and engagement in students (Martin and Dowson, 2009), with student engagement in particular seeming like the keystone for educational achievement. One relative innovation that promotes student engagement and undertakes more effective learning and deeper knowledge of the materials is flipped learning (Kim, 2017). This theoretical review article was written to enlighten scholars, teachers, and learners with key concepts in interpersonal relations and their roles on student engagement in the context of flipped learning. In this study, some pedagogical implications were presented with the prospect of edifying the practice of teachers, students, and syllabus designers.

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INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is one of the contributing factors in the academic achievement of a learner and their intellectual evolution in education (Kahu and Nelson, 2017) and has been premeditated significantly by scholars throughout the world (Bond and Bedenlier, 2019; Bond et al., 2020). Student engagement relates to the vigor and power that students utilize in their learning community and is noticeable throughout every related scope of the behavioral, cognitive, or affective benchmarks. It is formed by a variety of physical and spiritual inspirations, containing the multifaceted interchange of relations, learning tasks, and settings of education (Bond et al., 2020).

Accordingly, it is noteworthy to scrutinize how student engagement can be promoted since there are several elements that manipulate student engagement. For instance, motivation boosts students in the learning process, with motivation being achieved from diverse sources such as parents, peers, teachers, and situations; nevertheless, in the domain of education, teachers have an eminent role that they must be held accountable for Martin (2014). Thus, this investigation of student engagement cannot forego mentioning the positive role of the teacher, as their performance is indeed a crucial aspect in the cultivation of student engagement (Groves et al., 2015). However, it should be noted that engagement is not an aspect of the student, but it can be relatively affected by circumstantial issues that are external to engagement (Sinclair et al., 2003). Concerning

the manifestation of engagement, preserving positive teacher-student relationships as a type of contextual factor is the first step toward helping learners to be motivated, engaged, and thus become successful (Dotterer and Lowe, 2011). Undoubtedly, classrooms are considered intricate social organizations, and within them, teacher-student interactions are also multifaceted. Thus, the scope of the rapport between teachers and learners is essential in the mastery of student engagement (Pianta et al., 2012).

As put forward by Allen et al. (2013), the teacher-student association generates an emotional relation from the student, which causes student achievement. This is because the encouraging relationship between teacher and student develops collaboration and motivation in students, which are, in turn, tied to student success (Chen, 2016; Syahabuddin et al., 2020). Furthermore, the reciprocal care between teacher and learner may diminish undesirable emotions such as tedium, depression, and apprehension, and subsequently sustain student engagement (Furrer and Skinner, 2003).

Through positive relationships, students are encouraged to have autonomous voices to be able to talk over and express opinions spontaneously and safely about their thoughts and those of others, thus, being able to participate in social issues (Keating and Janmaat, 2015). The insight given by teachers should be open-minded, considerate, thoughtful, and free for discussion in order to motivate participation, not only in the classroom, but also outside it (Flanagan et al., 2007). Therefore, evaluating teacher-student relationships in the context of technology utilization is of the utmost consequence, as there is a bulk of inquiries on the role of technology in boosting student engagement (Chuang et al., 2018). Moreover, the majority of the previous studies have been focused on student engagement in different fields (Henrie et al., 2015; Derakhshan, 2021) and the significant role of teacher-student interaction assured the students' success in the classroom (Li and Yang, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

As a type of blended learning, flipped learning has immensely burgeoned thanks to the continued pursuit for a method of learning that copes with the role of technology and supports the mutable desires of the new generation; subsequently, it has been embraced by teachers and scholars (Turan and Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Flipped learning is based on a constructivist agenda embedded in active learning (Webb and Doman, 2019), where the class is not only a place for better teacher-student relations but also for more peer communication (Wubbels et al., 2015). Through a high degree of interaction and collaborative learning practices in flipped learning, the problem-solving skills of learners are reinforced and their confidence is developed; thus, their success is ascertained (Yilmaz and Baydas, 2017; and Akçayır and Akçayır, 2018). The engagement of students in flipped learning has been proven in inquiries, as engaged students have been observed to be more involved in discussions, exert energy in classroom tasks, and demonstrate their enthusiasm to learn (Li et al., 2019; Li and Yang, 2021).

Despite the wide range of research undertaken to date on student engagement and the role of teacher-student interpersonal variables in flipped learning, one can notice the abundant research each concentrating on a particular construct. However,

to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, the presentation of a review study on the above-mentioned issues in education and their connection with each other has been not taken into account. Based on this background, the present study embarked on reviewing the current issue.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN FLIPPED LEARNING

With the arrival of positive psychology in the educational process, the role of emotion became dominant (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). D'Mello and Graesser (2012) evinced that positive emotions may bring about learning interest and motivation among learners, which subsequently result in student engagement. Student engagement lies within the learning procedure, and the role of teachers is crucial to illuminating several variances that exist between levels of classroom engagement (Hospel and Garland, 2016). As Shernoff et al. (2016) declared, the aptitude of teachers for forming the learning settings of their students is a process that affects student engagement. Indeed, it is the teacher who constructs classroom conditions, provides chances and possibilities to engage students (Collie et al., 2016), and creates a considerate and inspiring academic milieu (Shernoff et al., 2016).

Although flipped learning is primarily learner-centered (Bergmann and Sams, 2014), Moore et al. (2014) pinpointed that the most dominant attribute of the flipped classroom is its expansion of teacher-to-student and student-to-student communication and collaboration during class time. These relations are designated as the emotional ties with which students share that which can be interpersonal (Sabol and Pianta, 2012). One of the primary reasons flipped learning has been successful is the emergence of teacher-student interaction, as learners have become skilled enough to be involved in discussions (Kachka, 2012). Furthermore, through collaborative tasks in flipped learning within groups, opportunities are provided for students to communicate with their teacher; through this route, formative feedback can also be presented, and the relation between them is provoked (Yildiz Durak, 2018).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current review provides a venue for the role of interpersonal teacher-student relationships in the educational system. It is a significant supplement to the existing literature in understanding the role of these relationships in student engagement in the flipped classroom. Teachers might accentuate disengagement or low-level engagement students but as a panacea for this problem, the flipped classroom is assumed to contribute to deep learning, encourage them to be involved that sequentially results in the evolution of lifetime learning skills, as well (O'Flaherty et al., 2015). Teacher-student social relationships have also been anticipated as a defense alongside stress, emotional care in regular

life, cooperation in shared tasks, and a foundation for progress (Martin, 2013). In the life of a learner, the energy obtained from teacher-student interpersonal relationships provides a vital route for motivation and engagement (Martin and Dowson, 2009).

In the flipped learning setting, employing teacher-learner communication could enrich student engagement and develop the transformation of the classroom and the learning accomplishment and success of students. By utilizing technology in the flipped classroom, thereby facilitating the communication between learners and teachers, the motivation of students is stimulated, and they subsequently turn into more active and engaged students. Through interaction and cooperation in the flipped classroom, the problem-solving capability of learners could also be fostered, along with their participation being strengthened and their confidence being enhanced (Fung et al., 2021).

The dependence of flipped learning on the growth of autonomy, empathy, and aptitude is supposed to increase student motivation (Abeysekera and Dawson, 2015). Regarding student engagement in the flipped classroom, students pinpointed that the use of classroom tasks triggered their critical thinking, making the tasks a worthwhile effort for learners and teachers (DeRuisseau, 2016). Considering the role of teacher-student relations as a key component of education (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), the results can be taken for granted by syllabus designers to preserve venture in teaching students in the flipped learning approach through tasks that stimulate discussion.

Furthermore, engagement is aspectual and encompasses facets such as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which can predominantly regulate the engagement utilizing tasks and activities of learners (Amiryousefi et al., 2019). Therefore, further research should look at how teachers understand and foster behavioral engagement and whether the formed tactics

in flipped learning are being applied efficiently in terms of expanding the sense of belonging and emotional engagement of students. Concerning cognitive engagement, further research is also required to establish the mastery teachers have over the strategies used in flipped learning. Since the role of the teacher in forming and sustaining student engagement is critical, the present knowledge teachers have regarding student engagement must be re-constructed to determine whether teacher perceptions might affect existing engagement practices.

However, this review displayed that there are still lacunas in the literature that may reflect what teachers truly do in flipped classrooms to cultivate student engagement and what they can do to promote and support student engagement. In this manner, teachers and future teachers can discern how to relate the flipped learning model to their own routines in order to generate the learner-centric learning atmospheres that have been underlined by constructivists. Since the student-teacher relationship is significant in classes, more studies should be implemented to emphasize the learning styles and personality types of teachers and how these influence the way materials are suggested, adapted, and implemented in flipped learning. Finally, as a fertile area of research, more research could investigate the ways that teachers attempt to guarantee student responsibility during flipped learning progress. Based on the literature, it is challenging to envisage the extent to which teachers can promote student engagement based on their interpersonal relations, so the process of their teaching should be further investigated.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Exploring Peacebuilding Strategies to Develop Teacher-Student Interpersonal Relationships in English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language Classrooms

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In the conflict-affected era, there is now an urgent need for a peaceful world. Although the relevance of peace in language education, within English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL), may seem irrelevant to some, the language of peace utilizes an interdisciplinary method that supports students in creating more reasonable discussions. Alternatively, the attention of language teaching is just on the development of cognition in preference to emotions, whereas methods that sustain the theory of the whole person through positive psychology should be presupposed. This review seeks to explore the connection between multiple dimensions of peace and the certain strategies and activities that can be implemented to build peace in EFL/ESL classrooms. Further, the related strategies on the issues, such as self-regulation, engagement, mindfulness, and motivations, are proposed. In a nutshell, the implications of peacebuilding for teachers, teacher-trainers, and future researchers are presented, and new directions for future research are set out.

Keywords: English as a foreign language/English as a second language classrooms, interpersonal relationships, peacebuilding, positive psychology, teacher-trainers

INTRODUCTION

People around the world have confronted with diverse kinds of violence and conflicts derived from some sources, and such violence and conflicts may affect them in a negative way (Agnihotri, 2017); hence, one way to react against violence and its negative effects is peace education that can be presented through personal, interpersonal, and ecological peace (Snauwaert, 2020). As Malala Yousafzai, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, stated, education was the means through which peace could be achieved (Falk, 2013). Peace is a permanent progression that has four components, such as an outcome, a process through negotiation, an individual character, and a culture (Leckman et al., 2014). The whole world seriously needs peace at multiple levels, and the global role of English spotlights its dimensions to bring people together through language peace (Gkonou et al., 2021).

Also, language is fundamental to strategies for keeping, making, and building peace (Oxford, 2014). Among the elements for such peace, positive communication is the key figure known as the language of peace that facilitates agreement in multiple dimensions *via* both verbal and nonverbal communications (Oxford, 2017). A positive feature of peace makes its validation a matter of choice, representing a way of life where one decides on the growth of other's wellbeing that has been accentuated by positive psychology (PP) whose purpose is to approve ways of living that are pleasant (Seligman, 2018), and bring about a life worth living (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 2006).

Peacebuilding, which emerged in peace studies and the work of Galtung (1996), is considered one of the active social routes within language education that strives for creating viable and practical peace through the transformative process that indicates a constant process of altering relations, manners, and attitudes from the negative to the positive (Oxford et al., 2020). When positivity is added to peace, the idea of peace reveals what is taking place in a particular situation (Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2021). Peace psychology, therefore, underscores peace through a nonviolent approach to promote proper actions. This is the same when the word positive goes with psychology that shifts the learners' point of view from oneself toward improving their minds and performance through their activities (Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2021).

However, education also has a negative aspect that can alleviate conflict or build peace (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Peace and conflict happen within each other, in different parts, across time and settings. So, a peacebuilder might be supposed to provide more chances for positive engagements which subsequently may diminish the rate of conflicts. This is congruent with Peterson (2006) who declared that PP is the study of the factors affecting life worth living, not just the elimination or exclusion of the challenges. Even though, at the first step, when talking about peace, the words war, conflict, aggression, and inequality come to a person's mind, the priority based on PP should be given to how enthusiastically build peace and social justice instead of focusing merely on how to avoid or abolish violence (Gibson, 2011).

Peacebuilding education requires discussion across variations for comprehending and controlling conflicts by cultivating positive relations, reassuring social schemes, and coordination between groups and cultures (Olivero and Oxford, 2019). To provide peacebuilders with both theoretical and practical ideas, applicable strategies should be taken into valuable consideration to be integrated into their language teaching settings. It is assumed that emotions affect the strategies learners select to use; as a result, it affects their levels of engagement, learning, and achievement too (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012).

Despite the collection of studies and reviews in this field, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is not enough evidence that focuses on peacebuilding along with its strategies and activities through the theory of PP in the EFL/ESL classrooms. As an effort to fill this research gap, the current minireview contemplates first the multidimensional peace and

accordingly its related strategies and activities with the focus on interpersonal peace that is in line with PP.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL PEACE

There are different dimensions in Oxford's (2013) model for promoting multidimensional peace through language learning. The first one which is the core of the other dimensions of peace is the inner peace, powerfully determined by learners' self-concept and individual attributes (Amerstorfer, 2021). The second type of peace is interpersonal which relies on people's assertiveness, behaviors, and skills (Waelde et al., 2017). The third one is the intergroup peace dimension that entails preserving peace between groups of people according to their gender, culture, religion, and race (Gabrys-Barker, 2012). The next one, intercultural peace refers to congruence among the world; each of them views itself as cohesive by the public (Boulding, 2000). The fifth is international peace that implies achieving peace among countries around the world which encompasses realization further than constricted wellbeing and move toward global wellbeing (Oxford, 2020). The last one is ecological peace which talks about being cautious about the environment and its whole species (Oxford and Lin, 2011).

Strategies and Activities of Multidimensional Peace

Thanks to the internal causes of stress, inner peace can be endangered (Oxford, 2017). Therefore, by utilizing the features of PP and assumption of the peace approach, teachers should strive to detect ways to adjust their negative emotions and strengthen positivity that can be enhanced through relevant and appropriate strategies (Barbeito and Sánchez Centeno, 2018).

These strategies are tied up with learners' self-regulation, motivation, autonomy, mindsets, self-efficacy, resilience, and internal attributions for achievement, displaying the complexity of EFL/ESL learning (Oxford, 2017). One of these strategies is self-regulation that signifies the learners' capability of monitoring their learning, and it can be feasible by negotiation with the more skilled person through scaffolding, and it is classified by stimulating a goal, selecting and using relevant strategies (Oxford, 2011). Learning to regulate emotional stress and taking part in critical practice can help teachers to deal with stressful situations which per se enhances their learners' achievement (Fathi et al., 2020).

The other issues that supported interpersonal peace include empathy, positive revision of conflict circumstances, tolerance, and mindfulness (Rizkalla et al., 2008; Waelde et al., 2017). In their research of Rizkalla et al. (2008) evinced that people who are not able to sympathize with others are more expected to be involved in the conflict.

The use of mindfulness throughout interpersonal conflict enhanced regulation with negative behaviors by others, and in the conflict, those who are more mindful revealed better stress responses (Laurent et al., 2016). In a research carried out by Alkoby et al. (2017), individuals who were exposed to

mindfulness experienced the decline of their negative emotions and perception regarding those they conflict with, and the portability of mindfulness into daily tasks can enhance engagement in peacebuilding dialogue.

The realization of interpersonal and intergroup peace entails the advancement of negotiation and conflict resolution strategies that raise empathy between people and lead to the absence of violence. Indeed, these types of activities pave the ways for both teachers and learners to be engaged in conflictual issues in subject matter that help teachers to elicit the contrasting perspectives of diverse students, and through this teacher-student interpersonal relationships, their positive emotion arises that it has gained remarkable popularity in academic research (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). This is in line with Hiver et al.'s (2021) postulation, declaring that L2 engagement happens when a language learner is spiritually or physically engaged in the process of doing tasks.

Furthermore, through interpersonal activities, such as lectures, discussions, and cooperative group works, opportunities are provided for learners to become critical thinkers, and also develop their mindful attitude, as well (Miller et al., 2019). As Waelde et al. (2017) pinpointed, through Interpersonal activities, learners are tolerant of opposing viewpoints and have interest-based discussions which also boost their motivation and correspondingly result in their overall fulfillment (Olivero & Oxford, 2019). Several studies proved the relationship between teachers' interpersonal communication behaviors and students' engagement, motivation, and success (Derakhshan, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Additionally, to cultivate skills in intercultural communication, various constructs, namely, mindfulness, critical thinking, metacognition, cognitive flexibility, cultural flexibility, and intercultural empathy, are at the center of attention (Wei and Zhou, 2021). EFL/ESL students are supposed to learn strategies to clear up the conflicts that are associated with racism, unfair behavior, bias, and confusion. Besides, ecological peace can be supported by some activities that aimed to help students care about nature, either through verbal or nonverbal forms of language (Oxford, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Since the focus of PP was on wellbeing and personal resources for resilience along with intrapersonal peace, it inclines to neglect probable negative significances for others in the broader social setting, and to date, PP has said little about how it might be settled to foster social justice and the wellbeing of people who face oppression, within nations as well as globally (Becker and Marecek, 2008). Therefore, by assisting expected teachers to turn into more reflective and purposeful peacebuilders, teacher educators can integrate positive peace tasks into their syllabi. Teachers are agents in peacebuilding employing pedagogy and programs to tackle discrimination and conflict (Horner et al., 2015).

In these types of changes, multiple dimensions of positive peace can stimulate innovative ways of thinking about self and others.

The contributions of this review increase consciousness of the importance of encouraging peace in the process of language education and agreed on some beliefs about peace, such as its positivity that is incongruent with PP tasks that prepare situations in which peace flourishes. Through these pedagogical interferences, learners and teachers are suggested to regulate their emotions and be more confident. Indeed, through some interpersonal strategies, such as empathy that can be used efficiently in intergroup programs individuals can realize the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of people from other groups much better that results in conflict reductions. On the whole, to promote peace, EFL/ESL must integrate the progress of learners' critical thinking to convey meaning through the presence of many communicative activities, such as discussions, role-plays, pair work, and problem-solving activities (Kruger, 2012). However, the tasks can be re-designed by teachers in various circumstances grounded on the personality types of their students and their culture in order to motivate them to be involved.

Teachers are persuaded to employ types of activities that facilitate multidimensional peace in their classrooms. However, these activities should be examined again in further studies to show in what way they function with diverse types of people in various situations. Inner peace makes teachers powerful to be inclined to utilize emotional self-regulation in learners to create peace at the primary stages of instruction. Activities that manifest inner peace can help teachers lessen negative emotions and increase positive ones leading to wellbeing in the classroom. Due to learners' stress or lack of self-confidence in addition to social tensions and pressures, a safe setting is worthwhile for the inner peace of learners along with the interpersonal peace that comes true by collaboration. EFL/ESL learners who collaborate in teams should respect and trust each other which are possible through self-regulation, engagement, and teamwork (Amerstorfer, 2021). However, it is also suggested to shift the focus onto specific types of tasks and activities to check out the incorporation of intercultural and ecological peace in EFL/ESL learning.

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Building Teachers' Resilience: Practical Applications for Teacher Education of China

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Teacher resilience has a crucial role to play in teaching and teacher education all around the world. However, few practical attempts have been made to systematically improve and (re)build this characteristic in teachers. Against this backdrop, this article draws on a universal model to offer practical implications of building resilience in the teacher education of China which is largely oriented toward pedagogical and economic concerns rather than the socio-emotional aspects of teaching. More particularly, it explains the history of China's teacher education, the conceptualizations and significance of teacher resilience, and a systematic model to integrate resilience into teacher education. Finally, some practical implications and future directions are provided for avid scholars.

Keywords: teacher resilience, teaching, teacher education, Chinese teacher education, practical applications

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INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, teaching is one of the most challenging and complicated professions in the world owing to its intellectual, emotional, and service-providing nature (Mercer, 2020; Sikma, 2021). Teachers as the “pillars of societies,” need to know “what to teach,” “how to teach,” and “cope with educational adversities and challenges” at the same time (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Sikma, 2021). This justifies the necessity of a shift of attention from students' psychology to teachers' psychology and emotion which came into vogue with the arrival of positive psychology (PP) that capitalized on “how people flourish” instead of lingering on “negative stressors” (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). As teachers carry their own feelings, emotions, and values to the class, caring for their mental well-being and inner states is of utmost significance in all educational contexts (Dewaele and Li, 2020; Zhang and Zhang, 2020; Greenier et al., 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021a). However, in reality, there emerge numerous challenges and setbacks in teaching which causes teachers' attrition, demotivation, stress, and burnout especially during the first 5 years of teaching which is known as “the vulnerability period” during which 40–50% of teachers quit their job (Gallant and Riley, 2014). This may happen due to a high workload, limited support, fear of challenges, lack of time management, and lack of knowledge about how to control students' behaviors and satisfy their needs (Kelly et al., 2018).

The reason beneath these problems in many countries including China is the inadequacy of teacher education programs which do not prepare teachers for the reality of their job, its tensions and challenges, and ways to go about such adversities and stay strong. They solely dwell upon developing teachers' pedagogical skills and students' test performance without working on the social and emotional aspects of teaching. That is why, a professional teacher who is technically expert in his/her subject is not able to cope with the emotional stressors of his/her profession efficiently, and hence attrition and burnout occur. Consequently, teacher

education programs must take a different approach moving from “negative stressors” that make problems for teachers to “positive factors and emotions” which urge teachers to remain in their profession despite its setbacks. One of the most important constructs that boomed in PP trend is teacher resilience which is defined as is a multifaceted, dynamic process comprised of the interaction of personal and contextual resources that permits teachers to bounce back and forth from negative stressors and traumatic events of the field (Li and Yang, 2016; Mansfield et al., 2016). Resilience generates different positive outcomes for teacher education at the macro level and teachers and students at the micro-level. More specifically, it minimizes teachers' stress and burnout, improves their commitment, job satisfaction, well-being, instructional quality, work enjoyment, motivation, professional identity, retention, agency, self-efficacy, and so forth (Brunetti, 2006; Doney, 2013; Richards et al., 2016). Correspondingly, teacher resilience affects students' engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, too (Li et al., 2019a).

This growing body of research signifies the need for integrating teacher resilience into educational systems and teacher education programs worldwide to prepare teachers for coping with the realities of their work. However, few countries like Australia, the United States, Spain, and the Netherlands have taken operational steps to apply a systematic approach to build resilience in their pre/in-service teachers using a groundbreaking model proposed by Mansfield et al. (2016). Nevertheless, in China, with 15 million teachers and 230 million students, the quality of teaching is constantly declining especially in remote districts due to teacher attrition and burnout (Li et al., 2019b). In a context with such regional disparities, teacher education programs are facing a formidable challenge to prepare a resilient teaching force that is both pedagogically and socio-emotionally tough when facing the adversities inherent in teaching a large group of students. Now that a systematic framework that has provided an infusion of insights into teacher education and teaching is available, (re)building teacher resilience in China is by no means a herculean task. In line with this, the present study aimed to explore the practical applications of teachers' resiliency development in teacher education of China.

BACKGROUND

Teacher Education of China

The history of teacher education in China dates back to 1897 when Nanyang College, in Shanghai, began to develop professional teachers (Li, 2016). Then the system went through different reformations which made its developmental trajectory really long. The first movement in teacher education of China was grounded in the Confucian tradition which regarded teachers as the foundation of all education. Unlike Western education which was religion-based, China's education in this period was policy-oriented and societal development was the priority. Next, new educational legislations were laid which divided teacher education into two independent levels for elementary teachers and secondary teachers which offered new visions for teaching in China. Under this rule, teacher education's responsibility was entrusted to independent normal schools and

universities. Then with the outbreak of wars, China changed dramatically and to compete against Western powers, the Soviet model of teacher education was implemented for two decades emphasizing the independent teacher education systems by normal schools and universities. Again, at this time, teacher education was mixed with political issues and its main functions were neglected by the Communist government. After that, in the 1980s, to modernize the country, China modified its teacher education and designed compulsory programs for elementary and secondary teachers lasting 3 and 4 years, respectively. Since the 1990s, the rapid growth of globalization and marketization made the Soviet model of no use in this era and China required professionalized and high-quality teachers at all levels. Hence, Chinese policy-makers decided to separate policy and economy from educational decisions which led to a revision and readjustment of the structure and content of the teacher education system. Moreover, knowledgeable and professional teachers, diverse professional development programs, and socio-economically improved teachers were the core purpose of the Chinese teacher education system (see Li, 2016). Although this system has gained many achievements, it still needs to be revised to:

- Be driven by teachers' needs rather than political and economic needs.
- Improve the quality and equity of education and teacher education.
- Take bottom-up steps to care for pedagogical and socio-emotional aspects of teaching and learning (Hu and Verdugo, 2015).

The Conceptualizations of Resilience

As pinpointed by Beltman (2021), four conceptualizations exist for the concept of resilience. The first conceptualization is *person-focused* and considers resilience as an individual trait manifested during traumatic moments. According to this perspective, a resilient person is one who is able to bounce back in the face of adversity (Doney, 2013). The second conceptualization is *process-focus* or *person-context perspective* which considers resilience as the result of person-context interaction. It defines resilience as a process in which a person, actively, utilizes appropriate strategies to maintain their commitment and well-being in the face of challenges. *Context-focused conceptualization* of resilience argues that aside from individual capacities and strategies, the given context is also paramount. In this perspective, resilience is the ability to adapt to a tense context and maintain one's ability in a challenging socio-cultural context (Johnson et al., 2014). The final conceptualization is *system-focused* which regards resilience as a process with many systems both internal and external to the person which dynamically interact with one another.

The Significance of Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience or the ability to stand against the natural stressors and setbacks in teaching as a tough profession is of utmost importance in all educational arenas in that it can generate numerous positive outcomes. More specifically, resiliency produces job satisfaction, responsiveness, effectiveness,

self-efficacy, sense of pride, sense of agency, interpersonal relationships, competency, autonomy, optimism, positive interpersonal emotions, empathy, and emotionally intelligent teachers (Tait, 2008; Taylor, 2013; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Hence, developing this construct in teachers through rich teacher education programs is a must in academic contexts as teachers are the frontline soldiers in fighting against adversities whose emotional states and readiness makes a great change in

educational outcomes worldwide (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021b).

A Comprehensive Model of Teacher Resilience

The most practical model of implementing resilience in teacher education is that of Mansfield et al. (2016) who regarded

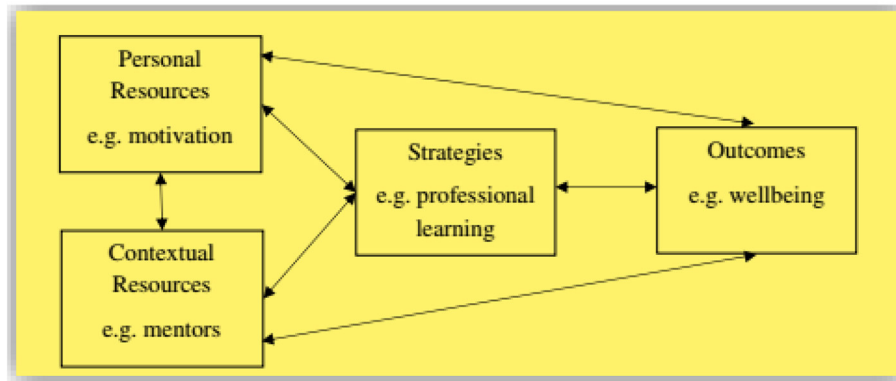


FIGURE 1 | A comprehensive model of building teacher resilience.

<i>Raising awareness</i>	Introduce pre-service teachers to the modules within class or online resources Provide the web address to the modules Encourage students to participate as an optional learning experience
<i>Blended Learning</i>	Ask students to BYOD (bring your own device) or schedule a classroom with designated computers Provide an integrated learning experience by designing your learning activity, tutorial or workshop to connect the online modules to your collaborative learning activities in the classroom Personalise the student experience by leveraging the personal skill-building plan within the modules
<i>Pick and Mix</i>	Select one or more modules for inclusion in a course; e.g. preparation for professional experience, health & PE, integrating technology/ICT Select a specific topic within a module that might complement a learning experience in one week of a course
<i>Holistic Approach</i>	Embed the modules into a learning management system and structure as a compulsory component of a course Students work through personalised plan within or outside of classes Printed toolkit can be used to bring to class for peer-to-peer discussions Responses to scenarios in the modules can form the basis of a learning activity and encourage the creation of more scenarios

FIGURE 2 | A guide for implementing teacher resilience model in teacher education.

resilience as a collective construct growing out of multi-layer systems and ecosystems. Based on this model, resilience is made up of *personal resources*, *contextual resources*, *strategies*, and *outcomes* which dynamically interact with each other (Figure 1).

According to this model, teacher resilience is a dynamic process in which different components have to work interactively and collectively to adapt to adversities that challenge a system (i.e., person, community, institution, and ecosystem). Later, the model changed into five modules of *Building Resilience*, *Relationships*, *Well-being*, *Taking Initiative*, and *Emotions* with related topics to be covered in online and ordinary training courses. The model has been used in different educational contexts (USA, Spain, Australia, and The Netherlands) and the results were astonishing in that teachers' resiliency level improved exponentially. That is because in this model the responsibility of constructing teacher resilience is not placed upon only one group's shoulder but all the educational system parties and their relationships. Not being an exception, the teacher education of China can employ this systematic view of teacher resilience to cultivate their teachers' toughness, immunity, and buoyancy when encountering academic challenges. This model fits the socio-cultural characteristics of China in which the aim of teaching and learning is personal and societal development, there is openness and diversity in academia, and education is an integration of knowledge and social action. These features reflect person-focused, process-focused, context-focused, and system-focused dimensions of Mansfield et al.'s 2016 model. Although the model is yet conceptual for Chinese education, it can be easily implemented with a focus on the dynamic, interactive, and systemic nature of teaching and teacher education. However, it may not work in static and teacher-centered classes where there is no interaction among the nested systems of education.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING TEACHER RESILIENCE

The implementation of Mansfield et al.'s (2016) model in Chinese teacher education has some practical applications. For instance, teacher trainers and program designers can develop online and face-to-face workshops, seminars, webinars, and conferences in which the five modules of the model are comprehensively covered via appropriate tasks and activities whose cumulative outcome would be an augmented teacher resilience. As a universal guide, Mansfield et al. (2016) proposed a sample chart for implementing their model as following (Figure 2):

In addition to building resilience in teachers, this model can be used to assess Chinese teachers' mindfulness, well-being, self-care, positive emotions, and their ability to create a positive educational context that highlights pedagogy, learning, and their emotional aspects.

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IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of this study, which explored the possibilities of building teacher resiliency in the teacher education of China, it can be concluded that teacher resilience is not an innate characteristic but an improvable trait through training and intervention. To do so, a dynamic and systematic model is needed to cause revolutionary changes in this domain. Drawing on Mansfield et al.'s (2016) seminal framework to implement resilience in teacher education, this article explicated the developmental trajectory of China's teacher education and teacher resilience's conceptualizations, definitions, and significance. Hence, it has precious implications for Chinese teachers, students, teacher education, policymakers, materials developers, and researchers. Teachers can use the results to heighten their awareness and ability to tackle teaching difficulties and setbacks. Likewise, students can help their teachers by establishing a positive relationship in the class which fosters resilience building in teachers. The results are beneficial for teacher education in China in that they can revise their professional development programs by offering effective workshops and seminars in which different modules of teacher resilience are taught along with pedagogical techniques required of a teacher.

Moreover, this study raises the awareness and knowledge of policy-makers to separate education from politics and economy and offer professional development courses oriented toward the instructional and emotional advancement of Chinese teachers at all levels. Likewise, the results would be of help for materials developers in that they can design tasks, activities, and textbooks in which the emotional state of the teacher is considered in a way that he/she can handle adversities with ease. Finally, researchers can benefit from this study in that they can run replication studies using the same model in their own contexts. They can also conduct multidisciplinary studies from different perspectives using suitable instruments that can capture the complexity of teacher resilience. More research is required on the cognates of resilience like buoyancy, coping, and hardiness. Additionally, cross-cultural studies can be done on different components of teacher resilience to see if they are universal or culture-specific. Finally, avid scholars can use qualitative research tools in longitudinal studies to examine the dynamism of teachers' resilience level through time.

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Models of Student Engagement in Music Education Classroom in Higher Education

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Higher education is undergoing a paradigm move from passive learning toward active learning. Student engagement is assumed to be a significant criterion and gauge for the quality of the student skill for higher education; however, in the literature, the term engagement remains to be vague to delineate, and it is construed in different ways. Since institutions accentuate preparing alumnae for life further than their education, student engagement has turned out to be a priority for music education, and within the last 5 years, the attention was drawn to “Students as Partners” as a response to “students as consumers” construct manipulating higher education theory. Concerning the literature review, the meaning of student engagement, determinants influencing it, and its merits are brought together. In conclusion, the implications of student engagement are presented, and new guidelines for future research are depicted.

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INTRODUCTION

Albeit the goals of music education are predominantly in the learning of music, the extensive academic objectives of learning through music are renowned in higher education as it intends to reinforce social relationships, organizing involvement in forthcoming work life, and obtaining necessary proficiency (Sutela et al., 2020). Although studies have evidenced that music education has various mental and physical benefits such as well-being, stress reduction, and self-esteem, along with social advantages (Eerola and Eerola, 2014), many shortcomings to the music education in sophisticated professional institutions remain that mostly involve teachers’ distinct academic knowledge clarification and students’ self-practice teaching. Indeed, motivating students for learning is challenging; therefore, it significantly confines the efficacy of music teaching in higher vocational colleges (Xinyue, 2019). So far, a few studies have pinpointed the significance of music education (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2017; Hardcastle et al., 2017; Lasauskiene and Sun, 2019), and they have indicated that in several countries, music teachers are confronting similar difficulties related to teacher training, school music education, music curricula, or overall music education.

Recently, student engagement has been at the center of attention with more emphasis being put on education that dynamically engages learners in their learning process and often associated with student fulfillment or success (Healey et al., 2016) while it can control student frustration and alienation (Fredricks et al., 2004). In the same vein, student engagement in higher education is with no exception which continues to be challenging as surveys from the 1990s straight on have frequently reported high degrees of student apprehension and a lack of confidence among students, as well (Roy et al., 2012). Fostering students’ engagement is a key issue in L2 students’

final achievement that can also obviate the problems in music education (Mercer, 2019).

Engagement in music education is to ensure graduates are provided with supple, new, and proficient skills that assist them to be successful in a musical milieu (Minors et al., 2017). Whereas, some claimed that learners are dissatisfied with conventional teacher-centered approaches in their classes (Garrison and Akyol, 2009), others pinpointed that students are not active regarding their learning (Healey et al., 2016).

Undoubtedly, engagement is multidimensional; a predominant “meta-construct” that attempts to explain the students’ achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004), and it encompasses learning that vigorously engages learners in an extensive variety of quality proficiencies that is influential for both the academic institution and the public (Pike et al., 2011; Bakker et al., 2015). Grounded on the literature review, student engagement comprises of four distinctive related scopes, namely behavioral, affective, cognitive, and social engagement (Bowden et al., 2021). In higher education, student engagement has been moved toward behavioral perspectives that studies have revealed to be associated with high-grade learning results (Krause and Coates, 2008).

In addition, these days thanks to the rapid alterations in the syllabus, the higher education staff is trying to preserve a moderate work-life balance and needs to arrange their health and well-being to diminish job-related stress on the one hand. On the other hand, students strive for their academic achievement by trying to be successful in their dream job, where unfortunately they do not often have the required power, awareness, support, and resources. So, it is maintained that students should be invited into partnership by creating effective teamwork to form engaging learning tasks, selecting appropriate course resources, and planning fascinating evaluation items with students, not for students regarding the “students as partners” approach (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). So this approach is a route that takes in staff and students learning and studying cooperatively to involve and encourage students to study their subjects meticulously and concentrate on learning results (Healey et al., 2016). In this way, both learners and the teacher have equal roles which demolish power between the two and builds equity, and a situation for collaboration (Pownall, 2020). Despite the collection of studies and reviews in this field (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001; Xerri et al., 2018) who maintained the function of student engagement in higher education, as an emerging field, in this review article, the researcher tried to clarify students- staff partnership model in music education.

DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In the higher education circumstances, student engagement is adapted to the communications among the time, effort, and further pertinent means capitalized on by learners and their institutions to enhance the students’ performance and status of the institution (Burch et al., 2015). However, several determinants are vital for staff, students, and institutions in

this territory. Undoubtedly, the ultimate agents for successful engagement are students themselves since they must devote time and effort to academic tasks and practices that are associated with viable educational upshots (Goldsmith et al., 2017). Through interaction with these activities and practice central communicative skills, the students cultivate a disposition that leads to their creativity (Cook-Sather, 2018). In addition, such interaction also involves the staff who is another significant determinant in student engagement. When staff and students are involving dynamically in partnership around teaching objectives, students acquire skills, insights, assurance, and aptitude that govern their engagement both within and beyond the classroom (Oleson, 2016). Teachers are among the other determinants in student engagement who are motivated about what they are skillfully accountable for (Russell and Slater, 2011). Sense of belonging is interconnected to student engagement that can aid higher education institutions to inflate understandings of achievement as not only interpersonal but also individual (Cook-Sather, 2018).

Merits of Student Engagement

Student engagement is a current concern in higher education, gradually more inspected, hypothesized, and discussed with the emergent sign of its critical role in accomplishment (Kahu, 2013). Student-staff partnership can be assumed as a cooperative, reciprocal practice in which the opportunity to collaborate is provided for all participants equally to educational conceptualization, supervisory, implementation, analysis, or inquiry (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). Moreover, through this partnership, students can be qualified with skills relevant and valuable to their future profession (Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill, 2020). Werder et al. (2012) evinced a high sense of management, accountability, and motivation during the learning procedure for learners and staff involving in partnership. In some studies, a renovated awareness of self-mindfulness along with the progress of more comprehensive teaching practices is verified (Cook-Sather and Abbot, 2016). Partnership specifies an inclination of making decisions together and generates learning involvements in cooperation that go further than discussions, making use of the creativity and extending viewpoints of both learners and teachers (Matthews, 2016).

Besides its manifold benefits aforementioned, some studies have presented the efficacy of students-staff partnership that boosts motivation (Nygaard et al., 2013; Cook-Sather et al., 2014), cultivate attentiveness and sense of identity (Dickerson et al., 2016), improves learning regarding employability expertise and graduate qualities (Pauli et al., 2016).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In a student-staff partnership, taking on a counselor role develops their self-confidence as well as making them attentive to the university’s academic approaches (Jensen and Bennett, 2016). Integrating the student viewpoint into educational decision-making could result in more appropriate, applicable, directed and effective socially engaged curricular activities and accordingly better learning results for students (Grant, 2019)

and it allowed staff to be acquainted with their students better (Curran, 2017). Teachers' role in music education is as a good presenter, facilitator, evaluator, director, supplier to the teaching, and self-assessor (Ballantyne et al., 2012). Alongside musical and academic proficiency, teachers should also have personal potentials like organizational skills to clarify and assert concepts evidently, and they should be capable of motivating others as well (Jorgensen, 2011). In music education, students as teachers and professional composers have the freedom to explore musical ideas and concepts, while experimenting on their instruments which promotes their creative thinking (Wendzich and Andrews, 2019). By empowering students to try their instruments, they begin to discriminate what sounds and musical combinations worked well-together, and in this way, they are engaged with the issue and they commenced to problem-solve (Hickey, 2012). Sharing ideas allows students to feel group possession of the compositional work, and accordingly feeling authorized and through safe collaborative situations, they can develop empathy with the music instructors as a key educational policy (Andrews, 2016). By putting students in challenging situations, the student-teachers are supposed to collaborate to be able to control challenging situations

which trigger their intercultural competence to control diverse cultures and situations and determine various ways of tackling music and music education (Broske, 2020). Due to changes in society in music education and the trouble of engaging all adherents of society in music education, enlightening expansive learning could be the preliminary point, starting with inquiring accepted practice and forming new practices which reflect both cultural and spiritual subjects and basic issues in music teaching (Engeström, 2008). Regarding studies that offer such an engagement perspective, further research is required about viable pathways toward professional development music workshops to strengthen the efficacy of student/teacher/staff collaboration and they should concentrate on educational strategies that could cultivate collaboration in music education. Proposing new learning activities, extra-curricular prospects that allow students to improve their engagement as musicians should be taken into consideration.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Toward the Role of EFL/ESL Students' Silence as a Facilitative Element in Their Success

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Following the recent evolution of research perspectives toward student silence, an increasing number of studies have sought to empirically probe into the beneficial role of this variable in students' success. Yet, a limited number of review studies have been carried out to illustrate the complex nature of student silence and its positive consequences (e.g., success, increased learning outcomes, etc.). Hence, this study aims to review different definitions of "student silence" to elucidate its facilitative function in EFL/ESL students' success. Providing empirical evidence, the role of student silence as a facilitative element in English language learning was proved. Finally, some pedagogical implications for EFL/ESL teachers and teacher trainers are also discussed.

Keywords: student silence, facilitative function, EFL/ESL students, success, English language learning

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, students' silence in English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) classes had been perceived as a detrimental learning behavior, inhibiting interactions between teachers and students (Wang and Liu, 2021). However, in recent years, several scholars (e.g., Hanh, 2020; Harumi, 2020; Peng, 2020; Tsui and Imafuku, 2020) have suggested that silence may not always be an impediment for students and may rather serve a facilitative function in language learning. In this regard, Harumi and King (2020) have emphasized the need to distinguish the pedagogical roles of silence as a "voluntary productive communicative resource" or a "mode of learning" and of reticence as "withdrawal from learning" (p. 6). In an attempt to characterize the pedagogical role of student silence, Hanh (2020), stated that silence may be beneficial for students' success as it offers more opportunities for reflection and cognition. In the same vein, Harumi (2020) also noted that students' silence on the surface has the potential to promote L2 learning by leaving more space for "attentive listening, thinking, and reformulating ideas" (p. 39).

The notion of silence is literally defined as "the absence of vocalization" (Bosacki, 2005, p. 6). For many previous studies (e.g., Granger, 2004; Liu, 2005, 2006; Liu and Jackson, 2009; Delima, 2012), the concept of student silence had negative connotations. In his study, Granger (2004), for instance, referred to students' silence as "disobedience," "conflict," and "misbehavior." Similarly, Liu and Jackson (2009) also defined student silence as an emotional reaction against the teachers' authority and a means of passively expressing unfavorable feelings. However, with the latest evolution of research perspectives toward student silence, an increasing number of recent studies has adopted positive perspectives to define this concept. According to some studies (e.g., Hanh, 2020; Tsui and Imafuku, 2020), students' silence should not be deemed as an absence of thought or absence of communication but rather it should be considered as another means of communication.

Given the significance of classroom silence in second language learning, several empirical studies have been carried out to investigate the role of this factor in English language learning (e.g., Bista, 2012; Bao, 2014; Banks, 2016; Min, 2016; King and Smith, 2017; Juniati et al., 2018; King et al., 2020;

Maher and King, 2020; Hongboontri et al., 2021). However, most of the researchers have chosen to probe into the impeditive role of students' silence in their learning. Furthermore, a small number of studies in the form of review have been conducted to explain the multidimensional nature of student silence. Hence, in the current review article, the researcher endeavored to illustrate the concept of student silence, on the one hand, and to elaborate on its facilitative effects on EFL/ESL students' success, on the other hand.

The Concept of Student Silence

Student silence is an elusive and ambiguous concept with various communicative connotations that cannot be easily characterized. As such, there is a wide range of controversy regarding the definition of this concept. To be more specific, Granger (2004) simply defined student silence as "the mere absence of speech" (p. 3), as opposed to Liu (2002), who characterized this concept as a communicative strategy through which students show respect to their teachers and classmates. As another example, Bruneau (2008) conceptualized student silence as "a lack of communication contact with other classroom participants" (p. 78), whereas Meyer (2009) referred to this concept as another means of communication. Two distinctive attitudes were applied in conceptualizing the notion of student silence. Those who had a negative viewpoint toward student silence characterized it as students' unresponsiveness, inattentiveness, and disengagement in educational contexts (Nakane, 2007; Ping, 2010; Choi, 2015). On the other hand, those who had positive perceptions about students' silence defined this concept as "a voluntary productive communicative resource able to enhance L2 learning opportunities" (Harumi and King, 2020, p. 6).

In an attempt to categorize different types of student silence, Kurzon (2007) classified this variable into two groups, namely *intentional silence* and *unintentional silence*. While students' intentional silence is strategic and deliberately employed for certain reasons, their unintentional silence is accidental and unconscious, occurring when a student is extremely anxious or ashamed.

The Facilitative Role of EFL/ESL Students' Silence in Their Success

Historically, in almost all educational settings, students' verbal behavior has attracted more favorable attention than their silence. More specifically, in second language learning contexts, students' speech as the language output has been the focus of much research. However, considering visible/audible behaviors as the sole language output indicates an extremely simplistic position toward students' advancement (Innocenti, 2002; Galletly and Bao, 2015). In this regard, Bao (2020) noted that based on how silence is deployed, "the occurrence of inner speech in the learner's system deserves to be considered as a type of production, especially when ideas or thoughts are taking shape in the mind" (p. 18). Based on this logic, the place of student silence in EFL/ESL classes has been revisited. That is, several scholars (e.g., Harumi, 2020; Harumi and King, 2020; Karas and Faez, 2020; King et al., 2020; Peng, 2020; Tsui and Imafuku, 2020)

re-examined the role of student silence in second language learning. Harumi and King (2020), for instance, referred to student silence as a "mode of learning" that enables students to listen more attentively, which in turn enhances their academic success. Similarly, Harumi (2020) also explained that students' silence as a learning tool can offer more space for students' reflection, resulting in increased learning outcomes. Additionally, King et al. (2020) also suggested that students' intentional silence can give them an invaluable chance to revise and reformulate their ideas, which may help them to overcome their feeling of anxiety. With a low level of anxiety, students are more likely to engage in classroom activities (Liu and Jackson, 2011; King, 2014; Effiong, 2016).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The positive and facilitative role of student silence in English language learning was empirically proved by several recent studies (e.g., Hanh, 2020; Harumi, 2020; Humphries et al., 2020; King et al., 2020; Maher, 2020; Maher and King, 2020; Peng, 2020). For instance, Harumi (2020) investigated classroom silence, its consequences, and different appropriate approaches to interact with this phenomenon. To do this, 56 English language teachers took part in this study. The required data were gathered through observations and open-ended questionnaires. Analyzing the obtained data, the researcher found that students' silence can serve a facilitative function in their success if language teachers know how to interact with it. In another study, Hanh (2020) studied the silent behavior of 85 EFL students who voluntarily participated in the study. Analyzing students' responses to the questionnaire and interview questions, the researcher evinced what factors contribute to students' silence and how the silent behavior of students can promote their learning. Besides, to this end, King et al. (2020) probed EFL students' silence in relation to their sense of anxiety. In so doing, structured classroom observations, self-report reflection sheets, and stimulated recall interviews were employed to collect data. In light of the results of analyses, the researchers explained in what ways students' intentional silence can reduce their sense of anxiety.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this review article, the concept of student silence, its distinctive definitions, its different types (i.e., intentional, unintentional), and its positive consequences (i.e., success, increased learning outcomes) were explained. Furthermore, some empirical studies conducted on student silence were also summarized to prove the positive effects of students' silence on their learning outcomes. According to what was theoretically and empirically reviewed, it can reasonably be inferred that the silent behavior of students can play a pivotal role in their academic success only if it is appropriately utilized and managed by classroom participants (i.e., teachers, students). The implications emerging from this

review relate specifically to EFL/ESL teachers. First and foremost, teachers should not perceive students' intentional silence as their academic disengagement since they typically employ silence to think, reflect, and listen more attentively (Harumi and King, 2020). Second, teachers should not push their students to talk as it may increase their sense of fear and anxiety (King, 2014; King and Smith, 2017). Besides, the findings of this review have some pedagogical implications for teacher trainers. Given the significance of the silent behavior of students in their success (Maher, 2020; Maher and King, 2020; Peng, 2020; Tsui and Imafuku, 2020), teacher trainers should alter teachers' attitudes toward this phenomenon and instruct them how to appropriately interact with their students' silence.

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Toward the Association Between EFL/ESL Teachers' Work Engagement and Their Students' Academic Engagement

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Given the fact that EFL/ESL students' academic engagement is of high importance for their learning success, numerous studies have been carried out to identify factors contributing to students' engagement. However, the role of teacher personal factors, notably teacher work engagement has received scant attention. Moreover, no review study has been conducted on this issue. Accordingly, the present review intends to explicate the multidimensional essence of teacher work engagement and student academic engagement and the association between these constructs. In light of the theoretical and empirical evidence, the role of EFL/ESL teachers' work engagement in improving their students' academic engagement was proved. The pedagogical implications of the findings are also highlighted.

Keywords: teacher work engagement, student academic engagement, EFL/ESL teachers, learning, academic engagement

INTRODUCTION

Due the fact that students' academic engagement is at the heart of their success (Carver et al., 2021), it has received a remarkable attention in field of education, notably second language education. Student academic engagement refers to "the amount (quantity) and type (quality) of students' active participation and involvement in language learning tasks/activities" (Hiver et al., 2021b, p. 2). As put forward by Baralt et al. (2016), student academic engagement as a complex and multidimensional concept encompasses a range of factors that interact to demonstrate students' positive emotions toward the learning process. Regarding the importance of EFL/ESL students' academic engagement in their success, Hiver et al. (2021a) postulated that students' academic engagement is intertwined with their learning success, mainly due to the fact that students with a high level of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement typically put more effort to learn the resources and materials. Hence, It is essential to investigate factors contributing to EFL/ESL students' academic engagement. Numerous research studies endeavored to investigate the probable role of students' personal factors in their academic engagement (e.g., Wang and Eccles, 2013; Kahu et al., 2015; Qureshi et al., 2016; Ramshe et al., 2019; Khajavy, 2021). Additionally, some previous studies have been conducted on teachers' interpersonal variables to examine their effects on students' learning engagement (e.g., Estep and Roberts, 2015; Imlawi et al., 2015; Derakhshan, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021; Zheng, 2021). Nevertheless, a few studies have been carried out to probe the casual relationship between teachers' personal factors such as work engagement and

students' academic engagement (e.g., Wu, 2010; Cardwell, 2011; Cinches et al., 2017).

Teacher work engagement as the prime instance of teacher personal factors refers to “a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions” (Maslach et al., 2008, p. 104). In a more comprehensive definition, Cardwell (2011) characterized teachers' work engagement as their “interest in,” “enthusiasm for,” and “investment in” teaching (p. 17). To him, interested and enthusiastic teachers are able to effectively engage their students in the learning process. Similarly, Cinches et al. (2017) also suggested that highly engaged teachers have a sense of inspiration and enthusiasm that enable them to teach more effectively. They explained that one of the key factors contributing to students' academic engagement is the quality of instruction.

In spite of the fact that teachers' work engagement may affect their students' academic engagement (Cardwell, 2011; Hospel and Garland, 2016; Cinches et al., 2017), a limited number of studies have examined the relationship between these two variables. In addition, no review study has been conducted to illustrate teacher work engagement, student academic engagement and the association between these two variables. Hence, in this review study, the researcher attempted to explain the complex and multifaceted nature of teaching and learning engagement, on the one hand, and to illustrate the positive relationship between EFL/ESL teachers' work engagement and their students' academic engagement.

Teacher Work Engagement

Teacher work engagement is conceptualized as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind,” comprising three dimensions of *absorption*, *dedication*, and *vigor* (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 75). Absorption is described by being deeply focused and joyfully immersed in one's vocation (Bakker et al., 2008). Dedication, as the second component of work engagement, is characterized by being totally engaged in one's profession, and having a sense of “significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Bakker et al., 2008). Finally, vigor is defined as having a great deal of energy while working, being inclined to put effort in one's vocation, and remaining persistent in challenging situations (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Taken together, engaged teachers are more concentrated on, dedicated to, and passionate about their profession (Hakanen et al., 2006).

Student Academic Engagement

The notion of student academic engagement is conceptualized in different ways. That is, there has been a debate over the definition of this concept. Skinner et al. (2009), for instance, defined student academic engagement as “the quality of students' participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, individuals, aims, and place that comprise it” (p. 495). Later, Philp and Duchesne (2016) defined students' engagement in terms of the quantity and quality of their effort in fulfilling their academic responsibilities.

Like its definition and conceptualization, there is a range of controversy regarding the dimensions and components of

TABLE 1 | Components of student academic engagement.

References	Components of student academic engagement
Finn (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation: Students' active participation in classroom tasks/activities • Identification: Students' sense of belongingness
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigor: Students' amount of effort and persistence in challenging situations • Absorption: Students' immersion in classroom tasks/activities • Dedication: Students' sense of inspiration and enthusiasm toward the learning process
Jimerson et al. (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective Engagement: Students' emotions and attitudes toward teachers, classmates, and classroom context • Behavioral Engagement: Students' observable actions • Cognitive Engagement: Students' viewpoints about themselves, teachers, classmates, and instructional-learning context
Willms (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Engagement: Students' participation in academic/non-academic activities • Psychological Engagement: Students' sense of belongingness/attachment

student academic engagement (Table 1). For instance, Schaufeli et al. (2002) proposed “*Vigor*, *Absorption*, and *Dedication*” as three components of student academic engagement, as opposed to Jimerson et al. (2003) who enumerated “*Academic Engagement*, *Behavioral Engagement*, and *Cognitive Engagement*” as the main dimensions of this concept. As another example, Finn (1989) divided students' academic engagement into two dimensions of “*Participation* and *Identification*,” whereas Willms (2003) classified the components of student academic engagement into two categories of “*Behavioral Engagement* and *Psychological Engagement*.”

Among the aforementioned models of student academic engagement, the model of Schaufeli et al. (2002) has been more prevalent. That is, several empirical and theoretical studies (e.g., Alrashidi et al., 2016; Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Derakhshan, 2021) employed this model to illustrate the multidimensional nature of student academic engagement.

The Positive Relationship Between EFL/ESL Teachers' Work Engagement and Their Students' Academic Engagement

Concerning the importance of English language teachers' work engagement in their students' academic engagement, Van Uden et al. (2013) suggested that those teachers' who are interested in and enthusiastic about their vocation foster their students' engagement. To them, engaged teachers can easily shape the classroom atmosphere in a way that students enjoy the learning process. This, in turn, encourages students to actively participate in classroom tasks and activities. Similarly, Hospel and Garland (2016) also stated that teachers' level of engagement can make a huge difference to students' sense of inspiration, commitment, and enthusiasm toward the learning process. They explained that engaged teachers are able to provide a stimulating learning

environment wherein students' tendency to become involved in the learning process can be dramatically enhanced. Additionally, Taylor and Parsons (2011) proposed that highly engaged teachers commonly put more effort to teach the materials effectively. To them, when students witness teachers striving to teach them effectively, they will be motivated to take part in classroom activities.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

For more than three decades, the primary concerns of research in the domain of language education were teacher and students' negative variables such as burnout, disengagement, and dropout (e.g., Cephe, 2010; Mukundan and Khandehroo, 2010; Jahedizadeh et al., 2016; Seifalian and Derakhshan, 2018; Fathi et al., 2021). However, in recent years, interest in the school of "Positive Psychology" has inspired researchers to turn their focus to more positive variables. Accordingly, attention shifted from dropout and burnout to academic engagement and work engagement, respectively. In this regard, several scholars attempted to investigate teacher work engagement, student academic engagement, and their educational consequences. However, a limited number of studies have been conducted on the association between these two variables (e.g., Wu, 2010; Cardwell, 2011; Cinches et al., 2017). Cardwell (2011), for instance, tried to explore the association between teacher work engagement and student academic engagement. Employing self-report and observer-report questionnaires, participants' viewpoints toward the role of teacher work engagement in student academic engagement were gathered. Based on the results of analyses, the researcher submitted that teachers' work engagement can positively influence their students' academic engagement. In a similar vein, Cinches et al. (2017) also endeavored to examine the probable relationship between teacher effectiveness, teacher engagement, and student academic

engagement. To do so, three pre-developed scales were distributed among the participants (i.e., 2,238 students, 98 teachers). Analyzing respondents' answers to the questionnaires revealed that both teacher effectiveness and engagement can positively predict student engagement.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the current review, two important concepts of teacher work engagement and student academic engagement, their definitions, and their underlying components were fully illustrated. Further, using theoretical and empirical evidence, the favorable association between these two variables was explained. In light of the existing evidence, it can be concluded that teachers' work engagement is critical in improving students' level of academic engagement. This finding appears to be beneficial for EFL/ESL teachers. Given the fact teachers' work engagement can positively predict their students' academic engagement (Cardwell, 2011; Hospel and Garland, 2016), those EFL/ESL teachers who intend to improve the academic engagement of their learners may enhance their professional engagement (i.e., vigor, absorption, dedication). It means that instead of pushing their students to participate in classroom activities, they should work on their own engagement in order to motivate students to become involved in the learning process.

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AZ and YY read the relevant literature and explicated the multidimensional essence of teacher work engagement and student academic engagement and the association between these constructs. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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The Role of the Negative 3-H Trio in Second Language Education

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Language has been proven to strongly affect different aspects on one's life/career including his/her identity and interpersonal communication skills beyond the immediate context. Given this, now proper discourse and interlocutor's emotions are highlighted in academia. However, few studies (if any) have explored the role of negative stressors and constructs in L2 classroom discourse and interpersonal communication competency. To fill this yawning lacuna, the present study provided a glance at the impact of three negative language aspects of *hate*, *hurt*, and *harm* (also called negative 3-H trio) on L2 education. Moreover, it presents the definitions, origins (positive psychology, positive peace psychology), dimensions, and applications of each aspect. Finally, some implications and future directions are suggested to avid scholars in L2 and mainstream education.

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INTRODUCTION

Languages and words are by no means neutral tools but considerably powerful to exert short-term and long-term impacts on people's minds and hearts (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al., 2020). They can permeate into one's identity, unite/split people, establish/remove boundaries, and simultaneously produce harmony and conflict (Siddiq, 2016). Language is at the core of human's natural quest for connectedness to a community in which the quality of relationships is largely dependent on one's interpersonal communication expertise. Language and discourse can form a harmonious context for living, working, and studying if the interactants are linguistically and (inter)culturally aware and competent (Holmes, 2008; Wang et al., 2016). Contrarily, improper use of language can ruin everything and generate conflict, violence, adversity, or even wars. Hence, it is conceivable that positive relationships and peace in any context depend on a chain of rings with language and communication skills being the core.

In foreign/second language education which is full of adversities, caring for stakeholders' emotions and interpersonal communication abilities is vital as they influence many aspects of teaching and learning including engagement, performance, achievement, well-being, motivation, and success (Gabryś-Barker, 2016; Derakhshan, 2021; Greenier et al., 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). All the desired outcomes of education are at the mercy of a positive atmosphere and rapport between the teacher and students in the class as a social context. This raises the significance of communication skills such as proper discourse, credibility, clarity, immediacy, and care for cultural disparities. Additionally, in EFL/ESL contexts in which the students grapple with a different language and culture, peace-building practices are pivotal. This conceptualization is engrained in *positive psychology* and *positive peace psychology* as two recent trends which focus on "how people

thrive” and “actively build peace” instead of dwelling on life’s negativities and inequalities (Gibson, 2011; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). However, these schools do not ignore the role of negative emotions and conflicts in teaching and learning.

In tune with this contention, the present article aimed to scrutinize three negative aspects of classroom language (i.e., hate, hurt, and harm) known as the 3-H trio, represented *via* a bad language and classroom context. In EFL contexts where teachers and students, sometimes, cross linguistic and cultural boundaries on some subjects, interpersonal communication knowledge and awareness are essential for practitioners to observe the pre-figured classroom objectives and, in turn, convert the negative aspects into peace-building activities which can upsurge several aspects of L2 education.

BACKGROUND

Positive Psychology vs. Positive Peace Psychology

The interconnectedness of emotions, inner states, language, and education is best addressed in positive psychology (PP) and positive peace psychology (PPP) as two recent trends. These schools have commonalities yet function independently. PP examines how individuals can flourish and be happier by focusing on positive emotions like joy, hope, passion, resilience, optimism, and the like instead of negative feelings (Dewaele, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Li, 2020; Li et al., 2020; Greenier et al., 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021). It rests on three pillars of *positive subjective experience* (emotions), *positive individual traits* (individual characteristics), and *positive institutions* (contexts) (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). On the other hand, PPP, which is fresher, capitalizes on how to vigorously establish peace and social justice instead of focusing chiefly on how to preclude or eradicate violence and conflict (Gibson, 2011). In L2 settings which are full of setbacks, PPP is a non-violent approach that underscores peace through peaceful tools to produce harmonious relationships (Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2021). Both trends run against dysfunctional, absence-based, and deficit-oriented conceptualizations of wellness and peace. Like PP which highlights positive emotions without disregarding negative stressors, PPP considers peace to go beyond the absence of conflict (Peterson, 2006).

Interpersonal Communication and Peace in L2 Classrooms

By nature, the human being is social and seeks interpersonal, intergroup, and intercultural connections with others irrespective of physical and special proximity. According to socio-cultural theory (SCT) and the social dimension of constructivism, this creates a web of associations among people worldwide whose behaviors and actions leave strong imprints on others (Davies-Vengoechea, 2003). In the globalization era in which people from various cultures and social norms seek communication with others, interpersonal communication skills are of paramount importance to survive and convey the message properly. In the context of world Englishes and English



FIGURE 1 | Dimensions of peace language.

as an international language (EIL), learning English is not just for classroom use but to have intercultural communications *via* scientific works, conferences, meetings, and so on. Hence, EFL/ESL and mainstream educational contexts need to develop interpersonal communication skills/awareness of students and teachers. This is the case as people belonging to different cultures may perceive the same thing differently. So, interpersonal interaction skills do not only take into account “what to say” but also about “how to say it” to observe intercultural norms and etiquettes. In L2 education in which stakeholders face numerous linguistic and intercultural conflicts, there must be formed a harmonious and peaceful environment for learning to occur. This needs a positive rapport and interpersonal competency to bear disparities and even convert them into learning opportunities.

As stated, people may think about an identical issue from different angles and form different opinions which may lead to conflict in L2 classrooms. What matters extensively in such unharmonious milieus is the importance of discourse and discursive devices used to express meanings. EFL practitioners as peace-builders should educate their students on the way they produce the language and its consequences. Other than meta-linguistic knowledge, EFL students need to know the dimensions of a peaceful language as well. According to Oxford (2014), peace has six nested dimensions including *inner*, *interpersonal*, *intergroup*, *intercultural*, *international*, and *ecological peace* (Figure 1).

Inner peace is the core dimension that concerns harmony in the heart and inside the individual. *Interpersonal peace* is harmony and caring for family and friends and includes love, trust, kindness, compassion, and respect. *Intergroup peace* is harmony occurring among groups classified by religion, race,

gender, age, class, and ethnicity. *Intercultural peace* concerns harmony among different societies and cultures. *International peace* refers to international collaboration among different nations. Finally, *ecological peace* concerns valuing and caring for the natural environment. These are critical in L2 education as peace involves establishing a positive relationship with people belonging to other cultural groups, respecting their rights, and resolving conflicts constructively (Oxford, 2014). In the absence of classroom peace, interpersonal communication skills like interaction clarity, credibility, and immediacy which affect different aspects of learning are unlikely to emerge. Correspondingly, conflicts and disputes may pop out in a community of practice (COP) in which there is no or insufficient harmony among its members. Therefore, EFL teachers are obliged to develop their students' interpersonal communication skills to operate efficiently inside and outside their English class and offer useful peace-building activities to create a positive discourse context that generates favorable outcomes such as improved students' engagement, motivation, interest, achievement, resilience, and success.

The Tripartite of Negative 3-Hs in Language Education: The Definitions and Applications

The traditional myth that teaching and learning depend solely on teachers' pedagogical techniques and students' attempts is now dispelled with the emergence of emotionology in education. Given its prominence in EFL/ESL contexts, research on inner states, feelings, and emotional aspects of language learning and teaching has witnessed a boom of interest among scholars with the advent of humanistic psychology (Prior, 2019). These emotions can be negative (e.g., stress, anxiety, and tension) and positive (e.g., optimism, grit, hope, flow, and happiness). Concerning the role of positive emotions, numerous studies indicated that they increase engagement, motivation, achievement, success, efficacy, interest, performance, etc. (Bolkan, 2017; Derakhshan et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Li, 2020; Derakhshan, 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). As for negative emotions, a huge body of research points to their detrimental impacts on the teaching-learning cycle from different angles including motivation, passion, strategic-investment, retention, concentration, satisfaction, and performance. What seems to be missing in researching negative emotions in L2 learning which has been in the limelight for decades until the turn of the millennium and a shift of focus toward positive emotions introduced by PP is the role of negative factors and stressors in the classroom discourse and interculturality level of EFL students and teachers. As a case in point, the conceptualization and impact of negative language aspects like hate, hurt, and harm (known as negative 3-H trio) produced by language has long been kept under the carpet until Curtis and Oxford's 2021 groundbreaking study which defined the concepts and their practical applications in the classroom to establish a peaceful learning context. As the first H element, "hate" refers to a dislike feeling about someone or something which is the opposite of "love." It can be expressed through

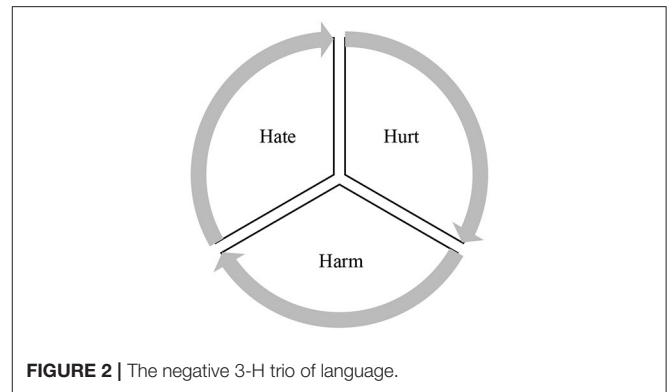


FIGURE 2 | The negative 3-H trio of language.

different communicative modes (written, spoken) and causes destruction on various levels from personal (e.g., break up with someone) to societal level (initiating wars). On the other hand, "hurt" is the emotional and physical damage of the language to someone which can be transient and lasting depending on the severity of hateful language. The final H, "harm" seems much similar to "hurt" but its degree of injury is higher. Like "hurt," "harm" causes both emotional and physical injury. It is worth noting that these triple Hs are by no means mutually exclusive and there are some overlaps and associations among them. To put it differently, they are like a nested system that has grown out of each other in that hateful language and discourse hurts and harms people. Likewise, hurting and harming others with hateful language generates and sparks hatred (Figure 2).

Another important note is that these three negative language aspects vary in their degree (i.e., slight, severe) and duration (i.e., short-term, long-term) depending on the discourse context and interlocutors. A hateful, hurtful, and harmful language or message may be damaging for an interlocutor in a specific context but bearable in another setting for another interlocutor. In L2 education which is imbued with cultural and linguistic adversities and the penultimate goal is to communicate effectively in the globalized world, stakeholders are required to know the role and significance of their discourse in the class. In a class made up of a group of students belonging to dissimilar cultures, EFL students and teachers are expected to use a positive and respectful language to create peace and harmony as prerequisites of learning and teaching. As the knowledge of interpersonal communication skills and the mentioned tripartite model is context and culture-specific, EFL practitioners need to turn the paradox of using the negative trio into reality by some instructional techniques. Teachers as the catalysts of change can do so by offering activities related to each H including running discussions in L1 about "bad language" and its dire consequences, using audio-visual tools (pictures, drawings, magazines, and cartoon) related to a hateful, hurtful, and harmful interpersonal communication behavior, using dictionaries and other primary sources to spot the origin and development of the three concepts, conducting critical discourse analysis (CDA) on films and textbooks representative of the negative 3-H tripartite, and discussing different impacts of a bad language on the process of language education.

In summation, the triple H model is very important in English language education as EFL/ESL students are now facing speakers from different cultures which entails improving their intercultural awareness/competence and minding their language as it might cause irretrievable damages in international encounters.

Implications and Future Directions

In this article, it was contended that language affects many aspects of one's life including education and identity. Moreover, emotions and inner states were found to have a close tie with success in mainstream and L2 education. With the spread of English and the removal of temporal and special boundaries, now EFL/ESL students need to be experts in intercultural interaction norms which is not achievable except through an education that concerns the impacts of emotions on language utterances. Focusing on three negative constructs of hate, hurt, and harm, the present research went through the roots, definitions, applications, and dimensions of these language aspects. The results are insightful for EFL and mainstream education teachers and students in that they increase their awareness and competency in interpersonal communication skills and the power of language through appropriate classroom tasks. Teachers can develop their interpersonal skills to establish a friendly rapport in the class which facilitates the transmission of knowledge to the students. Moreover, teacher trainers can offer training

programs and workshops to pre-service and in-service teachers regarding different language-related emotions and interpersonal communication skills. Furthermore, materials developers can benefit from this study in that they can design materials and tasks which reflect the negative 3-H trio and their criticality. Finally, researchers in L2, as a microcosm of general education, can conduct future studies on other emotion-related variables and their impacts on language education and classroom discourse. Avid researchers are also recommended to qualitatively explore this tripartite in mainstream education, EFL, and ESP contexts from the perspectives of different stakeholders. Finally, running CDA, case, and longitudinal studies through diaries and portfolios are novel ideas in this line of research as well.

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JC: revised the majority of the original paper. XZ: added the figures and analyzed the figures. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Book Review: The Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching Connecting Sophisticated Thinking From Early Childhood to PhD

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Keywords: book review, engaged learning, teaching thinking, constructivist learning, education

A Book Review on

The Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching Connecting Sophisticated Thinking From Early Childhood to PhD

John Willison (Singapore: Springer), 2020, xiv+190, ISBN: 978-981-15-2682-4

The prime focus of John Willison's innovative monograph, entitled *The Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching Connecting Sophisticated Thinking from Early Childhood to PhD*, is to assist learners to learn efficaciously to resolve intricate problems, contemplate innovatively and critically, and finally make practical decisions. In so doing, the book foregrounds the quintessential components of the Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching (MELT) to enrich our understanding of the dynamic interplay across multifarious educational contexts, postulations, and tasks by enabling a myriad of viewpoints and practices to work concomitantly to boost the enhancement of students' sophisticated thinking. Furthermore, the MELT illuminate the viable ways through which educational energies and ideas can work together to get rid of the vicious circle of our solutions that contribute to more problems. Representing diverse perspectives of education theory and practice and reconciling them, the MELT embarks on discovery learning, objectivist learning, and constructivist learning from primary school to Ph.D. studies across all disciplines. In other words, the essence of the book is echoed as "the book introduces the MELT as a way to conceptualize how such enabling, connecting, deepening and engaging may take place" (p. 9).

The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 conceptualizes the MELT, explicates their objectives, and provides an overview of the MELT's six facets of sophisticated thinking that is detailed along a continuum of learning autonomy. Besides, this chapter elaborates on different modules of learning that are rampant across formal education and diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts by highlighting the dire need to enhance sophisticated thinking so that we can address educational and planet-wide problems provided that we can (re)conceptualize models such as MELT to integrate disparate teaching approaches and ideas. Chapter 1 also outlines the structure of the book, delineating the components that are essential to each MELT facet and to learning autonomy. The author cogently argues that the facets of MELT are inextricably bound processes whose descriptions function as triggers and connectors, so these six facets cannot independently function properly to reflect the meaning for every context. Therefore, their practicality is highly contingent on educators who capitalize on them and who know what needs to take place in any learning context that they are fostering. Finally, this chapter clearly justifies the need to draw on a wide range of teaching and learning strategies that are definitely crucial to

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effective engagement, hoping that these conceptions are concomitantly taken into consideration as a holistic package to be more mutually supportive.

The title of Chapter 2 is “What Will We Use” that aims to represent a thorough explication of the MELT and its six facets of sophisticated thinking, by paying close attention to how much support students need with respect to *learning autonomy* from primary school to university. Moreover, the author appraises the extant literature that has informed the development of MELT, articulating that much of the background is descriptive and lacks theoretical underpinnings and evidence-based studies. Providing several instances of teachers utilizing MELT, Chapter 3 showcases how teachers from primary school to postgraduate education can arrange and facilitate more sophisticated thinking across the educational trajectory by sharing their own experiences and pedagogical interpretations of what constructs MELT and what should be implemented in each of these educational contexts.

Chapter 4 brings together the competing theories, namely Objectivism, Social Constructivism, and Personal Constructivism, which underpin the MELT, in productive tension. More specifically, the author adroitly links these competing theoretical underpinnings to “the *learning autonomy continuum*, with the aim of arousing awareness and choice of where to operate on or across this continuum” (p. 34–35). Chapter 5 justifies the need to take into account the seminal and contemporary learning theories such as Threshold Concepts, Cognitive Load Theory, Connectivism, and Reflective Practitioner, by considering what they mean for recent educational practices in light of MELT. The author unpacks and situates these learning theories on MELT’s *continuum of learning autonomy*, and empathizes that it is pivotal that teachers are cognizant of these theories and their application in action research and classroom contexts.

Chapter 6 delves into the relationship between humans and the environment and problematizes why things happened in a way that inevitably culminated in environmental devastation and social upheaval. The author hopefully and cogently argues that in order to alleviate the existing problems and terminate the vicious circle of the problems, MELT may be part of a solution that does not lead to more problems. Chapter 7 deals with how much scaffolding and guidance students need while utilizing MELT’s learning autonomy continuum. This chapter takes into account those individuals who are engaged in education and the amount of scaffolding they need to put into practice MELT in diverse educational settings. The author contends that autonomy in MELT is a relational word, which is bound to ownership

of teaching and learning, so the need for ownership and empowerment seems to play a crucial role when considering what kind of scaffolding is required by students and teachers. The interconnected and coherent trajectory of students’ learning highly depends on teachers, parents, schools, and universities; therefore, to develop ownership and empowerment, teachers need to be autonomous as well.

I personally find this book insightful and thought-provoking in that it appropriately problematizes how teacher-student relationship, engagement, and autonomy can be enhanced through the MELT by conceptualizing different models, drawing on different conceptual frameworks, and exemplifying real examples from primary to university education. Besides, each facet of the MELT is well-explicated throughout the book, paving the way for caregivers, researchers, learning advisors, learning designers, teachers, parents, practitioners, and students from primary school to Ph.D. to put them into practice. However, had the author included more evidence-based studies to delineate how these facets can be implemented, this monograph would have been more insightful.

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A Book Review on Teacher Educator Experiences and Professional Development: Perspectives From the Caribbean

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Keywords: develop professional teacher educators, teacher educator experience, teacher professional development, teachers' needs for professional development, English language teacher development

A Book Review on

Teacher Educator Experiences and Professional Development: Perspectives From the Caribbean

Jennifer Yamin-Ali (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 2021, xii+155 pages, ISBN: 978-3-030-66719

Research corroborates that “two qualities which may show teachers the right way in this career journey are their inclination toward education-based research practice and attending to their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs” (Derakhshan et al., 2020, p. 1). However, the pendulum has swung much toward teacher professional development (PD) needs, with little attention dedicated to identifying teacher educator professional development needs. Consequently, Jennifer Yamin-Ali’s monograph, entitled *Teacher Educator Experiences and Professional Development: Perspectives from the Caribbean*, is a thoughtful voice on teacher educators’ professional growth. Reliable and valid research findings constitute an authentic and underappreciated image of a teacher educator from different viewpoints. The specific locus of the research described in this volume is a School of Education, with 34 teacher educators, located in the Caribbean. The book unpacks how such factors as teacher-student interpersonal factors, teacher support, teacher feedback, teacher knowledge and competencies, positive collegial atmosphere, valid course evaluation designs, action research, public advocacy, peer evaluation, self-reflection, among many other factors can contribute to the teacher educators’ PD repertoire.

This monograph, a collection of novel and exploratory research articles concentrating on five different aspects of teacher educator PD needs, encompasses five chapters. Triangulating data through questionnaires, interviews, and institutional student assessment of courses from 460 student-teachers from two programs, Chapter 1 explores how student-teachers’ voices and feedback can determine the PD needs for teacher educators. The findings document that time management and planning, course evaluation, action research, teaching competencies, specific teaching skills and strategies, self-studies, and personal factors constitute the professional development needs of teachers that should be seriously taken into account. The chapter highlights the role of interpersonal communication factors and emotions to boost personal interaction, communication, and engagement. Yamin-Ali recapitulates that “teacher educators should be instrumental in the development of the instruments used for their formal evaluation, which can consequently provide more reliable and valid results on which to base decision-making as far as their developmental needs are concerned” (p. 33).

In another evidence-based study, Chapter 2 scrutinizes to what extent teacher educators’ development is fostered through non-teaching and non-research activities. Collecting data from

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19 teacher educators through a closed-answer questionnaire, Yamin-Ali brings to the fore the intricacies of teacher educator roles in the higher education contexts. The author highlights that such needs as “peer evaluation, leading teams, chairing a meeting, coordinating a programme, initiating a community of practice, public advocacy, processes of the department, staffing procedures and resolving conflict” as well as cordial collegial relationships (p. 39) should be taken into consideration to develop professional teacher educators.

Looking at the professional needs of teacher educators from teacher educators’ lenses is the focus of Chapter 3. This chapter cogently argues that the practitioners’ self-perceived voices play a vital and precious source in identifying their developmental needs. The findings of analyzing the qualitative data gleaned from 14 teacher educators reveal that “knowledge of institutional procedures and collegiality” (p. 71), facilitating personal reflection, improving the opportunities to learn through doing, fostering teamwork, as well as strengthening interpersonal communication with student-teachers and staff.

Like Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 probes deeply into analyzing the detailed narratives and trajectories of four teacher educators’ reflections and accounts of professional identity, coping strategies, desires, hardships, and successes to become a teacher educator. The chapter concludes that “self-doubt, a feeling of inadequacy, lack of confidence and a lack of direction surfaced as part of the experience of becoming” (p. 103) a teacher educator. Besides, boosting positive teacher-student collegial relationships and sustained self-reflection can help teacher educators to develop professionally.

Chapter 5 seems to be truly engaging in that the author uses a warm-in-person tone to delineate her personal trajectories to become a teacher educator. The author, as the participant of this empirical chapter, provides instances of how culture and context can pave the way for the PD through encounters with others. The author concludes that “The narrative of my journey toward ‘teacher educator’ has been not just sprinkled with, but punctuated by, serendipitous notes that formed harmonious chords toward a career crescendo” (p. 147).

As a teacher and a teacher educator, I assume that this monograph is enriched not only by the evidence-based research

but also by the personalized trajectories of becoming a teacher educator. Although the empirical research studies are contextualized in the Caribbean context, the appraisal of review of the literature and the pertinent theoretical underpinnings about the work and life of teacher educators transcend the local context and deal with the international landscape of becoming and being a teacher educator. Furthermore, the book provides plenty of food for thought because each chapter offers a critical discussion of teacher educators’ PD needs through the prism of teacher educators, student-teachers, and the author herself by collecting rich data through open- and close-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and narratives. Nonetheless, I suggest that, in the new edition, the author can add a detailed description of how she codified, analyzed, and interpreted the qualitative data, bearing in mind such concerns as confirmability, credibility, dependability, transferability, member checking, audit trail, and inter-coder agreement so that the trustworthiness of the evidence-based studies will be enhanced.

As such, this thought-provoking book sheds light on teachers’ needs for professional development, contributing to the research field of teacher development as well as to building teachers’ academic community. It is useful for student-teachers, teacher educators, academic developers, practitioners and researchers in teacher education, as well as those accountable for administering schools of education and teacher training courses.

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The Role of Positive 3-H Words in Peacebuilding and Engagement in EFL/ESL Classes

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This review aimed at investigating the role of help, hope, and harmony formally known as positive 3H on students' engagement and peacebuilding. This topic has recently attracted attention since teachers and the way they treat students are said to play a paramount role in the learning process and as a result, peace can be built in the classroom and students also are more likely to be actively engaged in the tasks. To start with, a definition for positive 3-H was presented coupled with the role it plays in language learning contexts. Then the way both inner peace and interpersonal peace have been applied in the learning process to build peace is discussed. Following that, the effects of positive 3-H on students' engagement and peacebuilding through raising some relevant activities are dealt with. Finally, implications and further directions are put forward.

Keywords: positive 3H, peacebuilding, engagement, emotions, English as a second/foreign language

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INTRODUCTION

People's hearts and minds are found to be undoubtedly affected by language and words, and the effect might be either short-term or long-term (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al., 2020). It has always been people's natural desire to feel connected to a community and fit in with a group of people; therefore, long-lasting relationships can be strongly dependent on the amount to which a person can communicate interpersonally (Holmes, 2008). In terms of positive 3-H and peacebuilding, a cognitive dimension of learning is involved as well as a linguistic one. Positive 3-H (Help, Hope, and Harmony) (Curtis and Oxford, 2021) indicates how individuals can thrive and be happier, concentrating on positive emotions like hope, enthusiasm, resilience, positivity, and so forth rather than negative feelings (Dewaele, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Li, 2020; Li et al., 2020). The process of deeper learning is affected by learners' variables such as well-being, self-efficacy, etc. Moreover, students reach the expected consequences of education as long as they are provided with a positive ambiance coupled with a rapport between teachers and students throughout the class that can be regarded as a social context since it is a microcosm of society. Having given that a language learning situation where students have to struggle with learning a new language and practices through which peace can be built seem crucially significant. These mentioned practices have been conceptualized in both positive psychology and positive peace psychology characterized by the way people thrive and the amount they can actively build peace rather than growing negative senses within themselves (Gibson, 2011; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). The present article aims to scrutinize three positive aspects of classroom language (i.e., help, hope, harmony) and their effects on both peacebuilding and students' engagement in the classroom context. For more clarification, some activities, through which peace can be built and negative emotions can be reduced, have been added as well.

BACKGROUND

Definitions of the Positive 3-H Words

Education is not merely giving students information; instead, through the given information, students' lives should be harmonized. The phrase Positive 3H (Curtis and Oxford, 2021) refers to hope, help, and harmony. Regarding the pivotal role of positive emotions, many studies have proven the fact that a feeling of being engaged, being motivated, being successful, being efficacious, being interested, accomplishing one's goals, performance, and so forth, are enhanced (Derakhshan et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Li, 2020). To explicate it more, "Hope" has been defined in positive psychology in a cognitive theory as (a) an individual's belief in his capabilities and as a consequence of it, mental goals and desired future aims can be envisioned, paving the way to move toward one's goals and (b) the ability and motivation to start and feel determined as they are striving hard to achieve their goals. According to Snyder's model, the higher the levels of enduring hope, the greater the academic entrance exam scores and the higher the self-esteem would be. As a matter of fact, the process of learning a new language is anxiety-provoking, and it is the teachers' hopeful comments that help students not to lose hope (Snyder, 2000). In terms of "Help," the considerable role of teachers is emphasized because through their caring help and encouraging words, students' anxiety can be assuaged and weakened; accordingly, students' communicative abilities can be expressed to the people by whom they are surrounded. It can vividly be interpreted that a rapid decline in students' motivation can be halted as challenging situations along with supportive, helpful encouragement are provided by both the teachers and mentors (Curtis and Oxford, 2021). "Harmony" refers to people living and working together without fighting and disagreeing with each other. Empathy, which means the experience of people's feelings and thoughts, has been shown to be the stepping stone to human "Harmony" (Oxford, 2016). Another aspect from which harmony can be taken into consideration is change since learning a new language needs one to give up his comfort zone. Change that is extremely stressful at times can be experienced by the students who are seriously studious since change challenges the items which are familiarized to us and thus, one's normal needs for safety, being comfortable, and having control over what has been done are questioned. Despite the fact that no one likes to experience the feeling of being disturbed within themselves, it is an inseparable part of growing (Singer, 2007).

The Definition and Application of Negative 3-H Words

As for positive emotion, Curtis and Oxford (2021) raised another taxonomy in which hateful, hurtful, and harmful language is stressed. They might seem synonymous at the first glance; however, they can be used in their own contexts. "Hate" refers to a feeling of dislike. It can be shown in many communicative contexts from personal to societal. A serious argument, for example, is caused by using a hateful language. "Hurt" and "Harm" seems the same in that both bring about physical and emotional injury, yet the point is that the degree of injury would

be higher when harming someone. Similarly, hurt sometimes has a positive effect, while harm does not.

One of the activities that can be put into practice is using insults in L1 so as to stop using them in L2. Care should be taken so as not to offend anyone in the class since the words are so insulting that they cannot be used in public. According to Dewaele (2011) teachers perceive that both boredom and anxiety are the most important sources for lack of improvement in foreign language learning that may be caused by being hurt in the learning context. It is hence not surprising that researchers in SLA and in language teaching research have concentrated on ways to provide a positive and stimulating learning environment in order to engage learners and enhance their language learning motivation (Dewaele, 2011).

Applying Peacebuilding for Inner Peace

When learning a new language, the students' aim is two-fold: to acquire knowledge about the language and speak it fluently and to raise educational knowledge to teach foreign language learners; thus, the learning process is impacted by the emotions either positively or negatively (Swain, 2011). Students' motivations, attention, and self-regulation either favorably or unfavorably are the emotions that are affected through this process. In recent years, emotions have received a more significant role in academic studying as they have been demonstrated to affect students' persistence and the strategies applied for it, students' engagement, learning, and accomplishments. So considering positive 3-Hs and positive psychology in which improving positive emotions, increasing engagements, appreciating meaning in life are highlighted, positive emotion makes learning easier since it has a tendency to widen one's horizon, therefore resulting in an increase in attention, creativity, and thriving (Fredrickson, 2001).

Furthermore, students' emotions can be managed and regulated so that positivity would be ameliorated. Regulating emotion can be enhanced through a conversation with people who are more capable either peers or teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). With regard to this method, a goal is activated, strategies are opted for and applied, an outcome is identified, and consequently, emotions can be regulated. Regarding that, Inner peace is linked to a person's emotions, it can be easily jeopardized by internal stressors, such as the lack of emotion regulation and self-direction, in addition to external factors (Oxford, 2017a,b). It can be taken as an example, university students put a strain on themselves to achieve specific goals and they are expected not to fail (Pekrun et al., 2002). These are the internal threats that may lead to unpleasant learning results. With regard to the above example, negative emotions cannot often be managed successfully and may put both inner peace and well-being in danger.

The two main categories of peace in L2 education are inner peace and interpersonal peace; the former is concerned with one's peace within himself, and the latter is peace with whom you know. Inner peace was defined as a state of well-being that does not depend on the presence of external or internal pleasurable stimuli. In the L2 learning context, inner peace is relevant to learners' characteristics and self-concept which is

about the beliefs such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy that learners have about their abilities and how they evaluate their competence in the context of L2 learning (Williams et al., 2016). Self-concept can also be influenced by friendly teachers supporting their students so that the students can be encouraged to learn from their mistakes so both self-esteem and self-confidence can be boosted in the students in this way; hence, they develop their beliefs about themselves even faster contributing to enhancing their inner peace.

The Effect of Positive 3-H on Students' Engagement and Peacebuilding

Engagement refers to the amount learners participate actively in the activities. Engaged learners can be responsible for their learning and it is unlikely to attain meaningful learning without being engaged. Engagement is said to be context-specific, for instance, learners' culture, family, school, peers affect their engagement (Hiver et al., 2021). Learner engagement is a complex construct consisting of multiple dimensions which together contribute to successful learning. Wang and Derakhshan (2021) highlighted that affective, social, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of engagement are interrelated, leading to the improvement of particular habits and attitudes toward learning. Most language professionals have reached the agreement that for communicative skills to be mastered, participation is the key to success and it takes learners' passionate engagement (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). What can be pinpointed is that disengagement gives rise to a reduction in positive emotions, such as self-esteem and self-regulation and an increase in helplessness (Derakhshan, 2021).

Some activities have been created to involve the students and help them build peace. According to Gregersen and MacIntyre (2021), the activities should not be necessarily content-specific, but a positive psychological context should be set that could cause more meaningful learning. One of the organized activities is classified into three phases: forethought, performance, reflection. In the first phase, the task was analyzed by the students to understand and be alert about the emotions that were felt, throughout oral production. During the second phase, they were persuaded to monitor their performance and the focus was on the experienced emotions during the task; as a result, they could perceive how to regulate the emotions. Through the last phase, they were promoted to estimate how these strategies aid them in finding inner peace (Oxford, 2017b).

Implications and Future Directions

As emotions are of great importance in building one's character and helping one develop a sense of tranquility to learn a new

language, this study has focused on positive emotions known as positive 3-H words which facilitate the process of learning. Consequently, there are a few restrictions that should be kept in mind and should also be addressed in future studies. Even though emotions are said to play a paramount role in the process of learning, surprisingly it has received little attention. Had students been provided with helpful ideas, a harmonious learning situation, and hopeful comments and encouragement, peace could have been built through the process of learning and anxiety would have been lowered. Studies have been conducted to collect information about what types of emotions impede the process of learning; however, a few studies were carried out to describe a learning atmosphere in which positive 3-H words are applied in all aspects, and building peace is the most crucial priority. Honestly, when peace is built, most of the negative feelings, impeding the learning process, will be diminished and thus, the process of learning will be facilitated. As it has been explained, both linguistic and cognitive dimensions should be taken into account if we expect one to grow faster in terms of personality and grasping a new language. So from an institutional point of view, teachers should be trained to utilize positive 3-H words while teaching so that students feel blissfully happy and they can cope with stress which arises while learning a new language. Yet, high engagement is highly unlikely to be achieved through classes. Nonetheless, as it was proposed by Schlechty (2011), one which is not hard to achieve is that most students should be involved most of the time. In this regard, researchers should conduct both qualitative and longitudinal studies for monitoring these activities applied through the class and their long-term effects on students' educational and personal lives. Additionally, thanks to state-of-the-art technology and a fast-changing world, a new way of interacting between teachers and students has been put forward, online classes, so emphasis should be laid on how and why anxiety is experienced during such classes.

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Investigating Students' Metacognitive Experiences: Insights From the English as a Foreign Language Learners' Writing Metacognitive Experiences Questionnaire (EFLWMEQ)

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While research on metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies in second language (L2) writing has proliferated, little attention has been paid to metacognitive experiences in learning to write. This study contributes a novel 6-point Likert scale questionnaire, *EFL Learners' Writing Metacognitive Experiences Questionnaire (EFLWMEQ)*, and reports insights into learners' metacognitive experiences gathered from its use. The questionnaire was designed to investigate, first, the nature of students' metacognitive experiences when they learn to write in English as a foreign language (EFL) and, secondly, the relationship between students' metacognitive experiences and their writing performance. To this end, the questionnaire was developed and validated with two independent samples of 340 and 540 Chinese undergraduates whose metacognitive experiences were measured as they learned to write in EFL. Data were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), respectively. Findings of EFA and CFA revealed a four-factor structure of students' metacognitive experiences of EFL writing: Metacognitive estimates, metacognitive feelings, online task-specific metacognitive knowledge, and online task-specific metacognitive strategies. Results showed that students' metacognitive experiences had positive correlations with their EFL writing test scores. Importantly, the CFA results from the sample of 540 students supported the four-factor correlated model with the best model fit, confirming the validity and reliability of the *EFLWMEQ*. This study has theoretical and pedagogical implications for how learners' metacognitive experiences can be managed in learning to write, particularly in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: metacognitive experiences, metacognition, EFL writing, EFL learners, development and validation of questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Writing is generally regarded as a problem-solving process that requires metacognitive control of text generation and recursive revision, not only in first language (L1) contexts (Hayes, 2012), but also in second language (L2) settings (Hyland and Hyland, 2019). Given that L2 writing entails complex and recursive interaction of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes, learners improve their writing performance by developing metacognitive competencies. Researchers have endeavored to improve learners' L2 writing performance by identifying common learner characteristics and innovative pedagogical approaches (e.g., Teng and Zhang, 2016, 2020; Lee and Mak, 2018; Wei et al., 2020; Yu, 2020). Nevertheless, L2 writing remains a daunting task for language learners who struggle to gain metacognitive control.

Metacognition is deemed a crucial determinant for language learning success (Wenden, 1998; Zhang, 2001, 2010; Zhang and Zhang, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019, 2021a). "Metacognition," initially coined by Flavell (1976), refers to "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them" (p. 232), knowledge that can be used by learners to monitor, regulate and develop their cognitive processes. Metacognition plays a pivotal role in learning to write: "metacognitive variables play an even more important role than linguistic competence in successful L2 writing" (Devine, 1993, p. 116). Therefore, we propose that understanding the relationship between metacognition and writing performance will offer new insights into L2 writing instruction.

Metacognition can be categorized into three subcategories, namely, metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences, and metacognitive strategies (Flavell, 1979; Papaleontious-Louca, 2008; Efklides, 2009). Given that writing is a cognitively demanding process, learners' orchestration of metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences, and metacognitive strategies could help them to monitor and regulate their writing process (Hacker et al., 2009; Wu, 2021). Of the three subcategories, metacognitive knowledge is the foundation that promotes the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the learning process; metacognitive experiences, in turn, instigate the revision of metacognitive knowledge (Garner, 1987; Papaleontious-Louca, 2008). Metacognitive strategies involving planning, monitoring, and evaluating their writing enable learners to achieve their learning goals. A number of studies have investigated the impact of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies on L2 learners' writing performance (e.g., Zhang, 2008; Ruan, 2014; Zhang and Qin, 2018; Teng and Zhang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021b). However, research on metacognitive experiences in L2 writing has not gained much attention, despite L2 writing being a common experience for millions of learners. For Chinese EFL learners, EFL writing instruction focuses on passing exams at the expense of active learning (Yang and Gao, 2013, Yu, 2020; Chen et al., 2021), which might impact their metacognitive experiences in learning to writing. This study focuses on the often-overlooked dimension of metacognitive experiences.

Metacognitive experiences, the focus of investigation in this article, include cognitive experiences and affective experiences in the cognitive process (Flavell, 1979). What distinguishes metacognitive experiences from other kinds of experiences is that they involve current and ongoing cognition and emotions, i.e., the affective feelings, involved during the cognitive process (Papaleontious-Louca, 2008). The affective perspective has been increasingly recognized as influential in metacognition and learning (Fisher, 2018). As Prior (2019) states, it seems that, following on from the proverb about blind men experiencing an elephant differently, *elephants* are a popular metaphor in discussions of the emotion about L2 learning. Perhaps this powerful metaphor is employed because emotions vary as much as an elephant's tail differs from its ear, and there is a lack of L2 writing research that makes comprehensive sense of L2 learning emotions. While L2 writing researchers have exclusively investigated either metacognition or emotion (e.g., Ruan, 2014; Jin and Zhang, 2021), little attention has been given to exploring them together. Metacognitive experiences not only affect metacognitive knowledge by supplementing, revising or deleting knowledge, but also by activating strategy-use for L2 writers (Lee and Mak, 2018; Teng, 2020; see also Papaleontious-Louca, 2008). Metacognitive experiences lead learners to revise original goals and establish new goals that enable progress in their learning process.

Considering the role of metacognitive experiences in the learning process, previous studies have examined metacognitive experiences in specific domains, such as mathematics (e.g., Akama and Yamauchi, 2004) and reading (e.g., Zhang, 2002, 2010). Investigating metacognitive experiences in specific domains provides new perspectives for L2 writing research. However, there is a paucity of research into metacognitive experiences in L2 writing, perhaps surprisingly, given that metacognitive experiences play an important role in language learning. To date, to the best of our knowledge, Wu's (2006) research, mainly concentrated on the affective experiences of metacognitive experiences, was the only study exclusively exploring metacognitive experiences in EFL writing. In addition, little research has addressed the development of instruments for measuring students' metacognitive experiences in the field of L2 writing research, particularly for EFL learners who are most often exposed to English in classroom settings. To fill these lacunae, this study, situated in an EFL learning context, investigates the nature of students' metacognitive experiences in EFL writing through developing and validating a self-report questionnaire, the *EFL Learners' Writing Metacognitive Experiences Questionnaire (EFLWMEQ)*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nature of Metacognitive Experiences

Researchers have defined metacognitive experiences from different perspectives. Metacognitive experiences refer to what an individual goes through during the cognitive process, that is, the individual's "online" metacognitive knowledge, ideas, beliefs, feelings, goals, and judgments (Efklides, 2001). Flavell

(1979) defined metacognitive experiences as any kind of affective and cognitive experience but did not elaborate on the subcategories of metacognitive experiences. Efklides (2001) developed Flavell (1979) work by teasing out various aspects of metacognitive experiences in the psychological domain. Metacognitive experiences comprise metacognitive feelings, metacognitive judgments/estimates, and online task-specific knowledge (Efklides, 2001), a composition which is relevant to monitoring and regulating the cognitive process. As Tarricone (2011) states, metacognitive experiences are conscious cognitive and affective experiences, including “awareness, unexpected awareness, thoughts, intuitions, perceptions, feelings and self-judgements of oneself as a cognisor during problem-solving and task completion” (p. 130). Metacognitive experiences are online, that is, occurring during the cognitive process, and specific, occurring in the interface between particular individuals and specific tasks. The adjective “online” distinguishes metacognitive knowledge and strategies that occur spontaneously within metacognitive experiences from the metacognitive knowledge and strategies that make up the solid foundation of learning. The difference between metacognitive knowledge and online metacognitive knowledge includes the fact that metacognitive knowledge is sustained within long term memory whereas online knowledge occurs within working memory.

Taxonomy of Metacognitive Experiences

There is a growing understanding of the taxonomy of metacognitive experiences in the field of educational psychology. Following Flavell (1979) definition of metacognitive experiences, Efklides (2002a,b) developed a framework of metacognitive experiences encompassing ideas, feelings, judgments, and online metacognitive knowledge in problem-solving process. Metacognitive experiences have personal characteristics associated with individuals' feelings; such metacognitive feelings are the products of nonanalytic and non-conscious inferential processes (Efklides, 2001), that is, they occur spontaneously. Metacognitive feelings can be categorized into the *feeling of difficulty* that arises when the task seems too hard (Efklides et al., 1999); the *feeling of familiarity* when recognizing a previous occurrence of a stimulus and fluency of processing (Nelson, 1996); the *feeling of confidence* that results when individuals reach the answer (Nelson, 1984), the *feeling of satisfaction* when the quality of an answer evidently meets the criteria and standards (Efklides, 2002a), and the *feeling of knowing* and its related tip-of-tongue level of fluency. Those kinds of feelings affect learners' self-regulation decisions. Metacognition regulates cognition through both the cognitive regulatory loop and the affective loop (Efklides, 2009): both conscious thought and spontaneous emotion affects thinking. In this study, the connotations of *emotions* and *feelings* are interchangeable.

It has been established, too, that metacognitive experiences also entail metacognitive judgments/estimates of cognition. Metacognitive judgments/estimates are categorized into *judgment of learning*, *estimate of solution correctness* (focusing on the quality of the answer), *estimate of time needed or expended*, *estimate of effort expenditure*, and *episodic memory judgments* (source memory information) (Efklides, 2001). Metacognitive

judgments can be products of nonanalytic judgments (Koriat, 2000), occurring instantly without stages of analysis. In addition, metacognitive judgments are linked with metacognitive feelings. Estimates of time and effort for problem-solving processes are often associated with *feeling of difficulty* (Efklides, 2002b; Efklides, 2008). Recognition of correctness leads to a learner's feelings of confidence and satisfaction, and these feelings enable them to monitor the outcomes of problem-solving and thus learn effectively (see also Efklides, 2006). Metacognitive judgments are related to learners' self-monitoring of their own cognition and experiences.

Online task-specific metacognitive knowledge relates to the spontaneous awareness of task-related characteristics and knowledge about both task and strategies in real time. It is a manifestation of the cognitive and analytic processes that individuals need to accomplish a task (Efklides, 2006). Furthermore, online task-specific knowledge also involves episodic memory, so learners draw on past personal experiences when dealing with tasks.

Informed by Efklides (2002a,b) framework of metacognitive experiences in the field of educational psychology, the current study envisions EFL writing metacognitive experiences as a multidimensional construct given that writing is an intricate and recursive process. EFL writing metacognitive experiences subsume (a) metacognitive judgments/estimates; (b) metacognitive feelings; (c) online metacognitive knowledge; and (d) online metacognitive strategies. The first three dimensions of metacognitive experiences are aligned with Efklides (2002a,b) framework in the field of educational psychology. Considering the intricacy of L2 writing, this study additionally proposed the fourth dimension, online metacognitive strategies, referring to metacognitive strategies that students use spontaneously to regulate the writing process in real time. In real time, or “online,” metacognitive experiences can activate metacognitive strategies that control behaviors in the writing process. The proposed framework captures the detailed components of students' metacognitive experiences in the process of writing.

Research on Metacognitive Experiences in Teaching and Learning

The past few decades have witnessed the investigation of metacognitive experiences from theoretical and empirical perspectives (e.g., Papaleontious-Louca, 2008; Norman and Furnes, 2016). Researchers have concentrated on theoretical analysis, exploring classifications of metacognitive experiences (e.g., Efklides and Vauras, 1999; Efklides, 2001). Efklides (2002a), for example, incorporated metacognitive experiences including metacognitive feelings and judgments/estimates into educational psychology research.

Another strand of research has investigated metacognitive experiences within subject-specific classroom settings. For example, Zhang (2002) observed metacognitive experiences while investigating 160 EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of strategy use in reading. Zhang (2002) used a 36-item Metacognitive Awareness Questionnaire, whose findings revealed that EFL learners' confidence, effectiveness, repair

strategy, and perceived difficulty in completing reading tasks were pertinent to performance. Regarding affective experiences, Yu (2020) examined the dimension of enjoyment in EFL learning classroom. The findings revealed that enjoyment of EFL learning had a positive effect on English achievement.

Interest in the significance of metacognitive experiences in teaching and learning led to an interest in questionnaire development. Efklides (2002a) began the process by developing a semantic scale questionnaire exclusively measuring metacognitive experiences, involving prospective and retrospective experiences (i.e., before and after the cognitive process) in the field of educational psychology research. Drawing on Efklides (2002a) metacognitive experiences questionnaire, some researchers have undertaken considerable exploration of metacognitive experiences, and by doing so, achieved an in-depth understanding of metacognitive experiences in the learning process (e.g., Akama, 2007). For example, Akama and Yamauchi (2004) employed Efklides (2002a) metacognitive experiences questionnaire to investigate learners' metacognitive experiences in completing mathematics tasks. They found that there were significantly different metacognitive experiences between successful and unsuccessful learners. Successful learners reported higher feelings of satisfaction, confidence, knowing, and estimates of solution correctness, compared with unsuccessful learners. Further research on metacognitive experiences investigated different teaching contexts. Efklides and Vlachopoulos (2012) also assessed metacognitive experiences in mathematics, and they posited that feeling of difficulty affected the organization of learners' metacognitive knowledge. In the multimedia learning context, Norman and Furnes (2016) broadly examined metacognitive experiences involving predictions of performance, judgments of learning, and confidence ratings, and they found that online learning impeded metacognition compared to in class learning. Recently, Davari et al. (2020) reported on an investigation with 748 Iranian EFL learner. They found that L2 emotions were not a binary structure (i.e., positive and negative emotions), but the results of statistical analysis showed an eight-factor structure of L2 emotions.

Moreover, researchers have been increasingly aware that metacognitive experiences play a crucial role in L2 writing, as experiences interplay with metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. Kasper (1997) surfaced L2 the significance of students' positive and negative experiences when they wrote an autobiographical passage. Wu (2006) investigated metacognitive experiences through an open-ended questionnaire and journal writing by itemizing the positive and negative metacognitive experiences in EFL writing. Dong and Zhan (2019) examined 56 undergraduates' EFL writing experiences throughout metacognitive instruction. Cognitive and affective experiences, including positive and negative feelings, were found to relate to learning outcomes. Unfortunately, they did not intensively investigate learners' metacognitive experiences in learning to write in EFL. Although an array of theoretical and empirical studies has shown that metacognitive experiences affect learners' performance, there is a paucity of research into metacognitive experiences in L2 writing. Empirical research on the relationship between metacognitive experiences and L2

writing is still cursory, and yet, such research is likely to be of help to both L2 writing instructors and researchers.

Research on Metacognition in L2 Writing

Research on metacognition in L2 writing has mainly involved three dimensions, namely, metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences, and metacognitive strategies (e.g., Wu, 2006; Karlen, 2017; Zhang and Qin, 2018). Researchers have considered that L2 writing problems may emerge due to a lack of one or more of the metacognitive components related to the nature of the cognitive activity (Negretti and McGrath, 2018; Teng, 2020). Given the interactive relationship between metacognitive experiences, metacognitive knowledge, and metacognitive strategies, this section specifically focuses on metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies in L2 writing.

With regard to metacognitive knowledge in L2 writing, researchers have focused on investigating the subcategories and the influence of metacognitive knowledge (e.g., Victori, 1999; Ruan, 2014). For instance, Kasper (1997) conducted an in-depth study using a questionnaire to assess metacognitive knowledge of participants who were writing autobiographies. This allowed her to examine the role of metacognitive knowledge (e.g., person, task, and strategy knowledge) in L2 writing performance. Results revealed that learners' strategy knowledge was related to their writing performance, while person and task knowledge did not significantly affect the performance of learners with high proficiency level. Ruan (2014) adopted an exploratory study using small group interviews with 51 English-major students to describe Chinese EFL learners' metacognitive awareness in EFL writing, locating details about students' strategy awareness of planning, generating text and revising strategies to create a model for EFL writers to follow. Teng (2020) study found there was a positive relationship between EFL learners' metacognitive knowledge and regulation between writing performance.

Metacognitive strategies could be considered as central to effective foreign language writing performance (Victori, 1999; De Silva and Graham, 2015; Teng and Zhang, 2020). Successful language learners need to deploy various self-regulatory processes, for instance, activating knowledge, and monitoring and regulating their learning process metacognitively (Azevedo, 2009). Language education researchers have acknowledged that the role of metacognitive strategies is critical in developing foreign language writing skills (Bui and Kong, 2019). Using a questionnaire approach, Bai et al. (2014) conducted a study into the relationship between writing strategies and English proficiency based on O'Malley et al. (1990) framework of writing strategies. Students' use of planning, text-generating, revising, monitoring and evaluating, and resourcing strategies were found to be significantly correlated with their writing performance.

Unsurprisingly, given the consistent evidence of relationships between metacognitive components and language proficiency, instructors and researchers have added metacognitive factors in writing instruction to improve learners' writing ability to develop students' writing ability (e.g., Yeh, 2015; Negretti, 2017; see also, Yu, 2020). For example, De Silva and Graham (2015) adopted stimulated recall to explore the impact of writing

strategy instruction on learners with high and low attainment. They found that all learners benefitted from strategy instruction. Negretti and McGrath (2018) found students in the writing class with metacognitive knowledge scaffolds could use genre-based knowledge in their writing. It seems clear that students who know more about metacognitive strategies and how to use them learn and perform better than those with less metacognitive knowledge and strategy (Winne and Hadwin, 1998; Zhang, 2008; Zhang et al., 2016; Zhang and Zhang, 2019).

Taken together, prior research on metacognition in L2 writing provides strong evidence that metacognitive factors contribute to better writing performance. Despite some consideration of metacognition in L2 writing, metacognition has not been sufficiently investigated in the context of EFL writing, that is, the context wherein English writing is learned in a situation where English is rarely used. Arguably, this context provides one of the most challenging learning settings, which cannot be overlooked due to the sheer number of English learners involved in EFL learning contexts. In addition, research on *metacognitive experiences* in L2 writing has not gained much attention given the contribution of metacognitive experiences in the cognitive process, with EFL writing being given little attention. This study is premised on the need to further unravel the nature of EFL student writers' metacognitive experiences in order to assist teachers and learners aiming to improve writing performance.

Measuring Metacognitive Factors in L2 Writing

Among assessment methods, a questionnaire is a commonly employed instrument for evaluating metacognition (Wirth and Leutner, 2008). The self-report questionnaire is prominently used to gather holistic and comprehensive information about metacognitive factors in foreign language writing. For example, the use of questionnaires provides holistic and large-scale information about learners' metacognitive activity (e.g., Karlen, 2017; Zhang and Qin, 2018; see also Chen et al., 2021). Questionnaires can stimulate and solicit individual perceptions and interpretations of language learners' own learning experiences, gathering data that can provide explanations for their behaviors (Dörnyei, 2011; Iwaniec, 2020).

Metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies are two important constructs for investigating foreign language writing *via* questionnaires. Karlen (2017) assessed metacognitive strategy knowledge for planning, monitoring and revising in academic writing. Results showed satisfactory psychometric properties of his questionnaire. Other researchers also developed new survey instruments for assessing metacognitive strategies in foreign language settings. Zhang and Qin (2018) developed a 23-item instrument for assessing EFL writers' metacognitive strategies in multimedia environments. They found that Chinese EFL learners' writing strategies could be divided into three types, including metacognitive planning, metacognitive monitoring and metacognitive evaluating. Escorcia and Gimenes (2020) developed the Metacognitive Components of Planning Writing Self-Inventory to measure language learners' metacognitive knowledge and self-regulation strategies in writing. Their

analysis pointed to three factors: Metacognitive conditional knowledge, covert self-regulation, and environmental self-regulation. So far, available studies have given insight into the metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies language learners use in L2 contexts.

Yet, despite interest in metacognitive knowledge and strategies, questionnaires to capture the nature of metacognitive experiences has not gained much attention. Efklides (2002a) made an initial move, constructing a semantic differential scale questionnaire for assessing individuals' metacognitive experiences in the cognitive process. The questionnaire included two sections, namely, prospective reports and retrospective reports. However, Efklides (2002a) instrument was initially developed for psychological research and is difficult to apply directly to the field of L2 writing research. To date, no models or scales have been exclusively developed to assess metacognitive experiences in EFL writing. The research gaps prompted this study's development of an instrument for investigating students' metacognitive experiences in EFL writing.

METHODS

This study was designed to investigate the multifaceted nature of EFL writers' metacognitive experiences through validating a new questionnaire in an academic EFL learning context. This is because questionnaires are the most promising method for providing insight for the generalization of EFL learners' writing metacognitive experiences. Framed within an adapted framework of metacognitive experiences, the EFL Learners' Writing Metacognitive Experiences Questionnaire (*EFLLMWMEQ*) was developed and validated through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. This study aimed to address the following two research questions:

1. What factorial structure best represents the dimensions of EFL writing metacognitive experiences?
2. If there is an acceptable model fit, how do the dimensions of EFL writing metacognitive experiences correlate with EFL students' writing performance?

Participants

A total number of 880 students were recruited out of around 10,000 second-year undergraduates through convenience sampling from a national university in Northeast China. Two groups of second-year undergraduates volunteered to participate. Their ages were between 18 and 22 ($M = 19.69$, $SD = 0.72$). On average, these EFL learners had 11.53 ($SD = 2.11$) years of English learning experiences, and Chinese is their mother tongue. They had no study abroad experiences. Even though participants were recruited from different disciplines, their professional majors did not affect their metacognitive experiences of EFL writing as they experienced the same English writing syllabus at a national university. All the participants had enrolled in an English writing course in their second year of undergraduate study. The writing course was designed to improve writing performance and prepare students for the national College English Test (CET). These participants were selected because, as stated by the university,

they are permitted to take CET-Band 4 in their second-year study. As such, they had the motivation to participate in this study given that they were under pressure to pass CET-Band 4.

For initial validation of the *EFLWMEQ*, 340 undergraduates from six faculties at the university were invited to participate. Convenience sampling was used, with participants selected from the Faculties of Earth Science ($N = 96$, 29.4%), Engineering ($N = 33$, 9.0%), Information Science ($N = 34$, 9.4%), Medical Science ($N = 69$, 20.6%), Science ($N = 55$, 16.1%), and Social Science ($N = 53$, 15.5%). Of these participants, 57.7% were males and 42.3% were females. For cross-validation, the second group of participants was 540 second-year undergraduates (66% male, 34% female) from four faculties (Engineering, $N = 107$, 19.8%; Humanities, $N = 79$, 14.6%; Information Science, $N = 187$, 34.6%; Science, $N = 167$, 30.9%).

Instruments

Development of the *EFLWMEQ*

Given that there were no existing questionnaires for exclusively measuring EFL writers' metacognitive experiences, we developed the *EFLWMEQ* through multiple resources: existing literature on metacognitive experiences (e.g., Efklides, 2002a,b; 2009), established questionnaires for assessing metacognition (e.g., Zhang and Qin, 2018), and semi-structured interviews (e.g., Ruan, 2014). We extensively reviewed research on the measurement of metacognition in EFL writing (e.g., Zhang and Qin, 2018), given the overlapping nature of metacognitive knowledge, experience and strategy. Twelve second-year undergraduates from different faculties at one university were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews for item generation of the *EFLWMEQ*. Because metacognitive experiences are intrapersonal, undergraduate learners with authentic experiences were chosen to give advice rather than instructors or experts, in alignment with Dörnyei (2011) suggestion that targeted participants in the item-generating process adds to the credibility and quality of questionnaire items. Informed by Efklides (2002a,b) theoretical rationale of metacognitive experiences in the field of psychological research, we proposed a modified multidimensional model of EFL students' writing metacognitive experiences, including metacognitive feelings, metacognitive estimates/judgments, online metacognitive knowledge, and online metacognitive strategies.

Following Dörnyei (2011) guidance on questionnaire development, 28 items were included in the *EFLWMEQ* under two sections, namely, participants' demographic information, and their metacognitive experiences in EFL writing. A 6-point Likert scale was adopted for measuring EFL writing metacognitive experiences. The reason for choosing a 6-point Likert scale was due to the Chinese EFL learning context. As stated by Cohen et al. (2018), "there is a tendency for participants to opt for the mid-point of a 5-point or 7-point scale. This is notably an issue in East Asian respondents, where the 'doctrine of the mean' is advocated in Confucian culture" (p. 327). Adopting 6-point Likert scale was to prevent students from selecting the midpoint. Questionnaire items were scored with numbers

from 1 to 6 for responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Initial piloting was carried out to check the content and face validity of the instrument. Once a preliminary draft of the metacognitive experiences instrument was completed (drawing on the literature review depicted before), two experts in applied linguistics and educational research scrutinized the initial item pools as a means of ensuring the validity (Petrić and Czár, 2003). After that, two focus group interviews were conducted with 10 second-year undergraduates and 10 EFL writing instructors to assess the clarity and readability of the *EFLWMEQ*. As representatives of those who would be using the questionnaire, the undergraduates were invaluable. The EFL writing instructors provided comprehensive feedback on our questionnaire based on their professional expertise. English language was used for the questionnaires as the undergraduates had a reasonably good command of English vocabulary. They have gone through College Entrance Exam and averagely learned English for more than 11 years. Also, questionnaire translation from English to Chinese might change the original meaning of the items, and translation back into English could also introduce slippage. The choice to use English meant that the wording of questionnaire items needed to be both accurate and simple. Initial piloting led to revising two double-barreled items and deleting four unnecessary items. The *EFLWMEQ* with 24 items was generated with no initial problems.

Writing Test

In this study, participants who enrolled in the writing course were invited to complete a writing task of at least 150 words on a given topic in 30 min in the classroom setting. The composition in this study was an argumentative writing task that was selected and modified from the CET-Band 4. An argumentative writing task is a typical genre that university students encounter in English proficiency tests, such as CET and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). It is an effective approach to evaluate students' writing performance based on their linguistic competence, critical thinking, and articulation of ideas (Hirose, 2003). The validity of CET has been widely recognized, and 30 min is allowed in the standard CET. Therefore, we adopted and revised one writing task from CET-4 as the writing prompt for this study (see **Appendix B**). The writing topic selected for this study was general, culturally inoffensive, and familiar to undergraduate students' experiences.

The assessment of students' writing performance was in accordance with Jacobs et al. (1981) ESL Composition Profile. The rubrics of this profile evaluated five aspects of writing performance, namely, content (30%), organization (20%), language use (25%), vocabulary (20%), and mechanics (5%). Each subcategory had four rating levels. Two experienced EFL writing instructors were invited to mark students' compositions. A training session was conducted, and each rater assessed 100 writing compositions, i.e., around 20% of the samples, and compared their scores. They discussed any discrepancies with reference to the composition profile. The inter-rater reliability was $r = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$, indicating acceptable reliability. After

the training session, the two raters assessed the remaining writing compositions separately.

Data Collection

In the initial validation of the *EFLWMEQ*, a total of 340 self-report questionnaires were distributed to students after the first session of the writing course at the beginning of the semester. On average, students spent approximately 15 min completing the *EFLWMEQ*. At the end of the semester, another sample of 540 participants enrolled in the writing course was first required to finish an argumentative writing task. After that, in the classroom setting, students completed the refined version of the *EFLWMEQ* that elicited their authentic context-based metacognitive experiences. To enhance the reliability and validity of this study, in-class tests and subsequent time constraints were designed to control complicating factors. For instance, students were not able to look up the dictionary or search the information online. Students were required to finish the writing task within 30 min.

Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was adopted as a data reduction technique to summarize variables into a small set of factors (Allen et al., 2014). We used EFA to investigate the dimensions underlying the *EFLWMEQ*. Before conducting EFA, we eliminated invalid data, including mischief answers and missing values from the database. The assumptions of linearity, singularity and homogeneity of the sample were thoroughly checked, and no outliers were detected. After data screening and cleaning, the sample size of 310 cases was then subjected to EFA. The sample size of this study also met the desired case-and-variable ratio as there were at least five cases for each of the variables (Field, 2018).

The 24 items of the *EFLWMEQ* were subjected to principal axis factoring (PAF) analysis with an oblique rotation (direct oblimin) using IBM SPSS Version 26.0. This is because we assumed that the items might have shared sources of error, and the factors of the measured structure were interrelated (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Pallant, 2016). To decide the number of retaining factors, the results of Kaiser (1960) eigenvalues-greater-than-one (K1) rule, the scree test and the parallel analysis were adopted (Pallant, 2016; Field, 2018). The cut-off value for a significant factor loading was set at 0.32 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007), as the first round of the sample size of this study was over 300.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The second round of data was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA aimed to cross-validate the structures generated in EFA to assess the construct validity and discriminant validity of the newly-developed questionnaire (Awang, 2012). IBM SPSS AMOS Version 26.0 was used to examine the factorial structure underlying the *EFLWMEQ*. Maximum likelihood (ML) estimation, a technique for CFA, was employed to evaluate the model parameters and model fit indices (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Prior to conducting CFA, all the assumptions of

normality, linearity and homogeneity of the collected data for multivariate analysis were checked. Given the sensitivity of CFA to outliers and missing values, we also thoroughly scrutinized the data. After data screening and cleaning, the final sample size was 513 that met the desired cases-to-variables ratio (5:1) for conducting CFA (Field, 2018).

Data collected from the revised version of the *EFLWMEQ* were analyzed through several omnibus fit statistical analyses to assess the goodness-of-fit of the hypothesized model. Although there are no golden rules for evaluating model fit, the chi-square statistic (χ^2) and its degrees of freedom (*df*) and *p*-value are the fundamental statistics when researchers report CFA results (Kline, 2015). Nevertheless, chi-square values are sensitive to sample size; for example, chi-square values may yield a statistically significant result with a large sample size (Hooper et al., 2008). As such, we also consulted three absolute fit indices that were recommended by Hair et al. (2010), namely, the value of the ratio of χ^2 divided by its degree of freedom (χ^2/df); the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR); and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with its corresponding 90% confidence interval (Steiger, 1990). We also considered the fact that the value of χ^2/df less than 3.0 with a non-significant *p*-value indicates the best model fit to accept the null hypothesis. There is no difference between implied variances and covariances of a model, and the observed variance and its covariance (Marsh et al., 1988). Hu and Bentler (1999) propose that the recommended values of RMSEA are ≤ 0.05 , indicating a generally acceptable model fit, and the recommended values for SRMR are < 0.05 . Two incremental fit indices, the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker and Lewis index (TLI), were taken into consideration (Tucker and Lewis, 1973; Bentler, 1990). Models with threshold values of CFI and TLI are equal to or > 0.90 , indicating acceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Although the model fit indices can describe the model specification, those indices are affected by model parsimony or degrees of freedom (Byrne, 2016). As the value of Gamma Hat is not affected by sample size (Fan and Sivo, 2007), Gamma Hat was reported in this study as a powerful index. The recommended value of Gamma Hat is > 0.90 , which indicates an acceptable model fit. Given that there is no consensus for the threshold values of model fit indices, these indices are guidance rather than stringent rules for evaluating model fit (Hooper et al., 2008). **Table 1** presents the threshold values of goodness-of-fit indices.

Relationship Between EFLWMEQ Scores and Writing Test Scores

The relationship between the proposed model and writing performance was tested through Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between the identified factors of EFL writing metacognitive experiences and EFL learners' writing test scores. Effect size was reported to show the relationship between EFL writing metacognitive experiences and EFL writing performance.

TABLE 1 | Benchmarks of Goodness-of-Fit indices.

Indices	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	Gamma Hat	SRMR	RMSEA
Acceptable value	≤ 3.0	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08	≤ 0.06

RESULTS

Results of EFA

Descriptive analysis of the *EFLWMEQ* revealed that the mean scores of 24 items ranged from 3.12 to 4.52, with the standard deviations from 1.06 to 1.32. The values for skewness and kurtosis of 24 items were within the critical points of |3.0| and |8.0| respectively (Kline, 2015), indicating the normal distribution of data for EFA.

The KMO measure was 0.909 ("marvelous" according to Hutchison and Hutchison and Sofroniou (1999), p. 78), suggesting the adequacy of the sample size for EFA. The inspection of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2956.283$, $df = 276$, $p < 0.001$) and correlation matrix of questionnaire items (the presence of many coefficients of 0.32 and above) indicated that the *EFLWMEQ* was suitable for EFA. The initial communalities of all the *EFLWMEQ* items ranged from 0.286 to 0.607. Item 1 was removed as its factor loading was 0.20, which was less than the threshold value (Allen et al., 2014). Items with factor loadings >0.32 and no crossing-loadings were retained for further statistical analysis (Pallant, 2016; Field, 2018). After several iterative rounds of EFA, a four-factor model with 21 items (items 1, 3, and 11 were excluded) was generated, which accounted for 57.12% of the total variance on the earlier version of the *EFLWMEQ*. PFA analysis of the retained 21 items confirmed a four-factor model, explaining 57.12% of the total variance.

The items that loaded onto each of the four factors were analyzed thematically for the purpose of identifying a potential construct that the *EFLWMEQ* represented. Through the examination of items clustering, four factors were identified and labeled as: Factor 1, *Metacognitive Estimates of EFL Writing (MEEFLW)*, consisted of seven items including items 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24, accounting for 34.91% variance; Factor 2 was named as *Metacognitive Feelings of EFL Writing (MFEFLW)*, involving items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, and 17, accounting for 10.61% variance; Factor 3, *Online Metacognitive Knowledge of EFL Writing (OMKEFLW)* had three items (items 13, 14, and 15), accounting for 6.52% variance; Factor 4, *Online Metacognitive Strategies of EFL Writing (OMSEFLW)*, including items 8, 9, 10, and 11, accounting for 5.09% variance.

Reliability analysis was conducted to check the internal consistency of the *EFLWMEQ*. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to reduce the subscale of a questionnaire, including multiple factors (Field, 2018). The values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the subscales of the *EFLWMEQ* were high. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the four factors ranged from 0.700 for Factor 3 to 0.852

TABLE 2 | Factor loadings and reliability of the *EFLWMEQ* ($N = 310$).

Factor	Item	Factor Loading				α
		1	2	3	4	
Factor 1	Item22	0.632				0.852
	Item23	0.541				
	Item20	0.534				
	Item21	0.529				
	Item18	0.487				
	Item24	0.459				
	Item19	0.423				
Factor 2	Item 7		0.759			0.807
	Item16		0.687			
	Item 5		0.626			
	Item17		0.543			
	Item 6		0.514			
	Item 2		0.506			
	Item 4		0.477			
Factor 3	Item13			0.633		0.700
	Item14			0.592		
	Item15			0.419		
Factor 4	Item11				0.777	0.827
	Item10				0.670	
	Item 8				0.619	
	Item 9				0.508	

Items with a factor loading of 0.32 or greater are included; α = Cronbach's alpha.

for Factor 2. The internal consistency for the four-factor scale was much higher than the benchmark value of 0.60 that DeVellis (2012) proposed, which suggested robust reliability of the *EFLWMEQ*. Table 2 shows the factor loadings of EFA results and internal reliabilities of the *EFLWMEQ* subscales.

Cross-Validation of the *EFLWMEQ*

Multivariate normality was checked through Mardia's coefficient and multivariate kurtosis critical ratios. The value of Mardia's coefficient for examining multivariate normality was 59.856, which was much less than the recommended value 288 calculated from the formula $p(p+2)$, where p is the total number of observed indicators (Raykov and Marcoulides, 2008). Multivariate kurtosis critical ratios were also less than the cut-off value of five (Byrne, 2016), also indicating multivariate normality of the data. No outliers were detected using Mahalanobis distance. All assumptions for multivariate analysis revealed that the data were sufficient to conduct CFA.

Results of CFA

A four-factor correlated model with 21 items was proposed in EFA, where each indicator was constrained to load only on the first-order factor it was designed to measure. Factor covariance's were free to be estimated, and error terms associated with each indicator were uncorrelated. Initial CFA results for the four-factor model with 21 items were not fully satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 559.840$; $df = 183$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.059$; TLI = 0.859; CFI = 0.877; RMSEA = 0.063 [0.057, 0.069]; SRMR = 0.0623; Gamma hat = 0.94). In reviewing modification indices, we made attempts to improve the model fit of the four-factor correlated model. In the end, Items 4, 6, 17, 18 and 19 were removed from the four-factor model as they had strong error covariance and standardized residual covariances with other items. Thus, the results of CFA revealed a four-factor correlated model with 16 items.

With reference to convergent validity of the *EFLWMEQ*, all the 16 items were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) with standardized estimates loadings higher than 0.50, showing an acceptable effect size (Hair et al., 2010). The threshold value of standardized estimates loading is 0.50 for newly-developed questionnaires (Awang, 2012). The CFA results of the revised model with 16 items indicated an acceptable model fit with $\chi^2 = 279.672$; $df = 98$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.854$; TLI = 0.908; CFI = 0.925; RMSEA = 0.060 [0.052, 0.069]; SRMR = 0.049; Gamma hat = 0.960. The number of indicators for each factor was greater than two. Given that no remaining modification was theoretically justifiable, no *post-hoc* modifications were conducted. **Figure 1** shows the four-factor correlated model of the *EFLWMEQ*.

Model Comparisons

Model comparison is a highly recommended procedure to evaluate the construct validity of factorial structure for scale development (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2015; Teng and Zhang, 2016). We proposed three comparison models by using a succession of CFA for developing a theoretical justified model, including a one-factor unidimensional model with all 16 items loading on a single latent factor (Model 1); a four-factor uncorrelated model (Model 2); and a four-factor correlated model with the four factors related to one another (Model 3). So, the proposed correlated model (Model 3) was compared with the other two models (i.e., Model 1 and 2) to test its construct validity (see **Table 3**). We consulted the chi-square difference test with the corresponding change of the degrees of freedom to evaluate the significant differences among the three models (Kline, 2015). We fitted the data into Model 1 ($\chi^2 = 796.979$; $df = 104$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 7.663$; TLI = 0.670; CFI = 0.714; RMSEA = 0.114; SRMR = 0.877; Gamma hat = 0.860); Model 2 ($\chi^2 = 704.254$; $df = 104$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 6.772$; TLI = 0.714; CFI = 0.752; RMSEA = 0.106; SRMR = 0.205; Gamma hat = 0.870); and Model 3 ($\chi^2 = 279.672$; $df = 98$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.854$; TLI = 0.908; CFI = 0.925; RMSEA = 0.060; SRMR = 0.049; Gamma hat = 0.96) respectively. Model fit indices of Model 3 were statistically better than Model 1 ($\chi^2_{diff} = 517.307$, $df_{diff} = 6$, $p < 0.001$) and Model 2 ($\chi^2_{diff} = 517.307$, $df_{diff} = 6$, $p < 0.001$). CFA results of Model 3 (the four-factor correlated model)

reached an acceptable model fit. The 16-item parameter estimates were statistically significant, and standardized estimates loadings on the hypothesized latent variables were greater than the cut-off point 0.50, showing an acceptable effect size (Raykov and Marcoulides, 2008). Therefore, the four-factor correlated model was retained in this study, supporting the construct validity and convergent validity of the *EFLWMEQ* (see **Appendix A** for the finalized version).

Relationship Between EFL Writing Metacognitive Experiences and Writing Performance

The correlation matrix revealed the four factors of the *EFLWMEQ* were significantly correlated with moderate degrees, as **Table 4** presents. The adequate range of correlations ranged from 0.353 (*MEEFLW* and *MFEFLW*) to 0.753 (*MEEFLW* and *OMKEFLW*), which confirmed the discriminant validity of the *EFLWMEQ*. These four factors were correlated but were also distinct constructs. **Table 4** also shows the correlations between four types of EFL learners' metacognitive experiences and the writing test scores. The writing scores were positively correlated with metacognitive estimates of EFL writing ($r = 0.118$, $p < 0.05$) and online metacognitive knowledge of EFL writing ($r = 0.100$, $p < 0.05$), showing a small effect size. Nevertheless, there were no significant relationships between EFL learners' writing scores and the other two subcategories of EFL writing metacognitive experiences, that is, metacognitive feelings and online metacognitive strategies.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to further research investigation of EFL writers' metacognitive experiences through validating a questionnaire with psychometric properties and contributing it to the writing research community. Data collected from the *EFLWMEQ* were subjected to EFA and CFA to ensure validity and reliability (Hair et al., 2010), and results showed a four-factor correlated model of EFL writing metacognitive experiences, including metacognitive estimates, metacognitive feelings, online metacognitive knowledge, and online metacognitive strategies. Cross-validation of the *EFLWMEQ* provided empirical evidence for the psychometric property of the questionnaire in terms of construct validity, discriminant validity, and internal reliability. The four-factor correlated model indicated that the four factors were distinctive but correlated constructs underlying EFL writing metacognitive experiences. Therefore, scores of the *EFLWMEQ* with 16 items capture the richness of individual students' EFL writing metacognitive experiences. A higher score reveals that EFL learners have richer metacognitive experiences in the course of learning to write. The positive relationship between students' EFL writing metacognitive experiences and writing performance was supported by the results of correlation analysis.

Factor one, labeled metacognitive estimates of EFL writing, including five items, refers to EFL learners' judgments of their effort (e.g., *I pay attention to vocabulary use in my writing*) and time expenditure in EFL writing. In examining this category of metacognitive experiences, we found that EFL learners tried

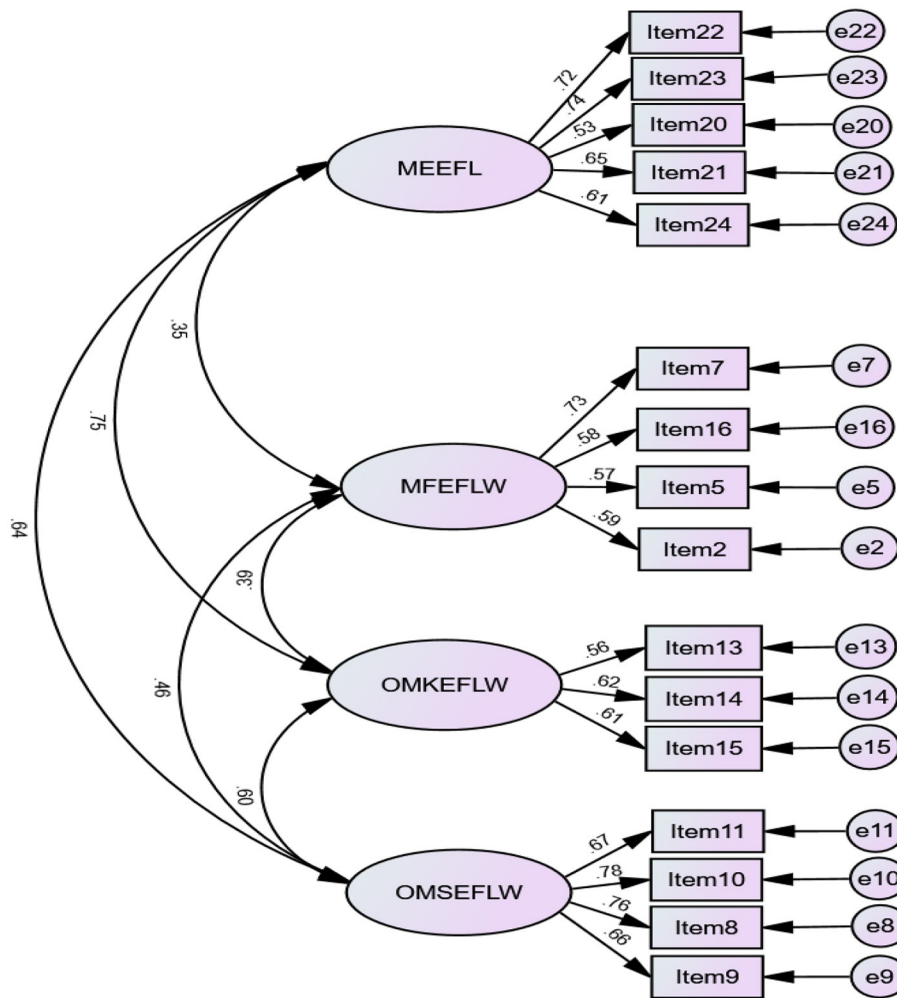


FIGURE 1 | A Four-Factor Model of EFL Writing Metacognitive Experiences ($N = 513$). MEEFLW, Metacognitive Estimates of EFL Writing; MFEFLW, Metacognitive Feelings of EFL Writing; OMKEFLW, Online Metacognitive Knowledge of EFL Writing; OMSEFLW, Online Metacognitive Strategies of EFL Writing.

to estimate their effort expenditure in the process of writing regarding vocabulary use, grammar use, sentence structures, and organization. Moreover, students paid attention to the time needed or expended (e.g., *I check if I finish this writing task on time*). This might be attributed to examination culture in the Chinese EFL learning context, even though process-oriented and genre-oriented writing instruction is advocated in the Chinese EFL learning context (see Zhang and Zhang, 2013; Yeh, 2015). In our study, results showed that metacognitive estimates of EFL writing were significantly correlated with EFL learners' writing scores. Unsurprisingly, in the process of EFL writing, students who concentrate on vocabulary use, language use, and organization would normally complete writing tasks within time as they expect. This finding aligns with some existing studies on the relationship between metacognitive judgments and learning (e.g., Norman and Furnes, 2016; Negretti, 2017). These findings indicate that learners' metacognitive judgments contribute to their learning performance.

TABLE 3 | Model fit indices for the three models.

Indices	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	Gamma Hat	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1	7.663	0.670	0.714	0.860	0.877	0.114
Model 2	6.772	0.714	0.752	0.870	0.205	0.106
Model 3	2.854	0.908	0.925	0.960	0.049	0.060

Factor two, including four items, was named metacognitive feelings of EFL writing. This category refers to the affective character of metacognitive experiences in EFL writing process. Findings showed that EFL learners produce metacognitive feelings comprising feeling of confidence (e.g., *I feel confident about myself as a writer*) and feeling of satisfaction (e.g., *I am satisfied with my writing*) in the course of fulfilling writing tasks. These metacognitive feelings are nonanalytic, nonconscious, and retrospective, as reiterated by Efklides (2002a,b); Efklides (2006).

TABLE 4 | Correlation matrix for the four-factor model and writing performance.

	MEEFLW	MFEFLW	OMKEFLW	OMSEFLW	Writing Performance
MEEFLW	1				
MFEFLW	0.353**	1			
OMKEFLW	0.753**	0.387**	1		
OMSEFLW	0.639**	0.462**	0.600**	1	
Writing Performance	0.118*	0.078	0.100*	0.073	1

MEEFLW, Metacognitive Estimates of EFL Writing; MFEFLW, Metacognitive Feelings of EFL Writing; OMKEFLW, Online Metacognitive Knowledge of EFL Writing; OMSEFLW, Online Metacognitive Strategies of EFL Writing; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$.

The results of our study are in line with some existing studies on emotions in the field of L2 learning research (e.g., Kasper, 1997; Zhang, 2002; Wu, 2006; Davari et al., 2020). The findings reveal that emotions such as confidence and enjoyment occurred in EFL writing. Our findings provide insight into EFL writing instruction. Teachers should enrich students' positive feelings and alleviate negative feelings in L2 writing instruction classes. Differing from some previous studies on emotions in L2 learning (e.g., Jin and Zhang, 2021), no significant relationship was found between metacognitive feelings and writing performance. This might be attributed to high-stakes testing culture in the Chinese EFL learning context (Carless, 2011). Students did not pay much attention to feelings in learning to write, perhaps because scores were the focus rather than emotions.

Factor three, named online metacognitive knowledge of EFL writing, with three items, depicts EFL learners' online metacognitive knowledge about writers themselves (e.g., *I learn/write more if I am interested in this writing topic*), task knowledge (e.g., *I ensure the first and last sentences are strong enough to explain my meaning*), and strategy knowledge (e.g., *I use what I have learned from my English courses*). It should be noted that, in our study, metacognitive estimates are nonanalytic, while online metacognitive knowledge is task-specific and analytic in EFL writing process. The results of this study reveal that EFL learners tended to employ their online metacognitive knowledge, including person, task, and strategy knowledge to facilitate their writing performance. This finding also showed a significant positive correlation between online metacognitive knowledge of EFL writing and students' writing scores, endorsing previous research (e.g., Negretti and McGrath, 2018; Teng, 2020). The consistency of findings indicates the interactional nature of metacognitive knowledge in EFL writing process. Metacognitive knowledge is centrally involved in the monitoring and regulation of language learning (Wenden, 1998). As such, students who achieve better writing performance have applied their online metacognitive knowledge involving person, task, and strategy dimensions.

Factor four, online metacognitive strategies of EFL writing, included four items, and refers to EFL learners' online metacognitive strategies while composing a writing task (e.g., *I check my spelling*). In examining these four items, we found that EFL learners tried to adopt multiple metacognitive strategies (i.e., metacognitive monitoring and evaluating), to improve their writing performance. Note that online metacognitive strategies

are included in EFL writing metacognitive experiences because, in real time, students orchestrated clusters of metacognitive strategies regarding the writing process (i.e., task-specific metacognitive strategies). Students reported use of metacognitive monitoring and evaluating related to language use, organization, and mechanics of writing. This finding aligns with some prior studies on metacognitive strategies in EFL writing (e.g., Zhang and Qin, 2018; Dong and Zhan, 2019). Nevertheless, EFL learners' online metacognitive strategies did not have a statistically significant correlation with their writing scores in our study, which is not consistent with results of some existing research (e.g., Bai et al., 2014; De Silva and Graham, 2015). A possible explanation for this might be that in our one-off study, students might have applied low calibration of their writing performance, and thus failed to perform as well as they expected. Further research could investigate this discrepancy.

Taken together, our findings confirm that EFL writing metacognitive experiences include both affective and cognitive regulatory loops, which suggest EFL learners who have relatively intense metacognitive experiences tend to perform better in learning to write. The findings of our study differed from Efklides (2001) research findings that the relationship between learners' metacognitive experiences and task performance was not significantly strong. This inconsistency is perhaps due to types of tasks. We adopted an EFL writing task, whereas Efklides (2001) employed mathematic tasks. Results of our study suggest that EFL writing metacognitive experiences involve students' estimate of effort expenditure, estimate of time expended, feeling of confidence, feeling of satisfaction, online metacognitive knowledge (i.e., person, task, strategy knowledge), and online metacognitive strategies (i.e., self-monitoring and self-evaluating) in completing a writing task. Given the overlapping interaction among metacognitive experiences, metacognitive knowledge, and metacognitive strategies, EFL learners' metacognitive experiences also demonstrate their employment of online metacognitive knowledge and orchestration of online metacognitive strategies in the EFL writing process (see also Lee and Mak, 2018). Although we found a weak correlation between EFL metacognitive experiences and writing scores, this study has provided preliminary empirical evidence that the richness of EFL learners' metacognitive experiences probably affects their writing performance. Metacognitive

experiences, including both judgments and feelings monitor the outcome of a problem-solving process (Efklides, 2012). Such intense metacognitive experiences help facilitate students' attainment of better EFL writing performance as metacognitive experiences mediate in the interface between EFL writers and writing tasks.

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to investigate students' metacognitive experiences in learning to write in EFL through a newly-developed questionnaire (the *EFLWMEQ*). To the best of our knowledge, this study serves as an initial attempt to exclusively measure EFL learners' writing metacognitive experiences in an EFL learning context. Framed within an adapted framework of metacognitive experiences, data collected from the *EFLWMEQ* substantiated a four-factor correlated model, namely, metacognitive estimates of EFL writing, metacognitive feelings of EFL writing, online metacognitive knowledge of EFL writing, and online metacognitive strategies of EFL writing. The four-factor model of EFL writing metacognitive experiences indicates that the *EFLWMEQ* was a reliable diagnostic instrument with good validity and reliability, indicating the construct of metacognitive experiences is multidimensional. One novel finding of this study was that metacognitive estimates and online metacognitive knowledge of EFL writing were significantly correlated with EFL learners' writing performance.

Our findings have some implications. Theoretically, the present study helps enrich the taxonomy of metacognitive experiences in learning to write in EFL. The findings broaden understanding of the nature of EFL writing metacognitive experiences, and the relationship between metacognitive experiences and writing performance in EFL learning contexts. The findings of this study lend support to the transferability of metacognitive experiences framework from educational psychology to EFL writing. Our newly-developed instrument with robust validity and reliability for measuring EFL writing metacognitive experiences makes a methodological contribution to the research community. Given that the *EFLWMEQ* was validated as a reliable diagnostic instrument, researchers could deploy this questionnaire to investigate EFL writing metacognitive experiences in a similar learning context. EFL writing instructors might want to use the *EFLWMEQ* to assess students' metacognitive experiences in learning to write in the classroom setting. Likewise, EFL learners could use it to self-diagnose their EFL writing metacognitive experiences, enabling them to have a better understanding of how they can make use of metacognitive experiences. The investigation of EFL writing metacognitive experiences sheds light on the importance of metacognitive experiences for EFL teachers and students. Considering the importance of metacognitive experiences, L2 researchers and practitioners need to pay attention to learners' metacognitive experiences in language learning. With reference to meta cognitively oriented instruction, teachers should not only focus on fostering students' metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies, but also help students develop a

rich repertoire of metacognitive experiences to expedite their learning-to-write process and improve their writing performance in L2 learning contexts.

Despite the significant findings, like any other study, ours also suffers limitations that need to be addressed in future studies. Due to the convenience sampling, this study only recruited undergraduates in the Chinese EFL learning context. Therefore, it may not always be suitable to generalize the findings of this study to EFL learners in other learning contexts. In addition, we measured EFL learners' metacognitive experiences after they finished a writing task, but students' metacognitive experiences are dynamic during the writing process. This study did not examine the dynamic nature of the construct, metacognitive experiences. A qualitative study into EFL learners' dynamic change of metacognitive experiences when they learn to write is well in order. Multiple methods for data collection, for example, interviews and reflective journals, are recommended for better understanding of EFL learners' metacognitive experiences in learning to write.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

QS conceived of the initial idea, fine-tuned by LZ and SC. QS designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted of the manuscript. LZ and SC revised and proofread the manuscript. All authors agreed to the final version before LZ got it ready for submission as the corresponding author.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.744842/full#supplementary-material>

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The Role of Teacher-Student Relatedness and Teachers' Engagement on Students' Engagement in EFL Classrooms

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Relationships in language contexts or interactions between teachers and learners might play an eminent role in EFL learners' language ability development. The current review brings to the fore an overview of teacher-student relationships and factors that contribute to this interaction. It has been revealed that EFL teachers' and learners' expectations, beliefs, personality, knowledge, and the language teaching context all play a role in creating an adequate relationship among teachers and learners. This overview suggests several practical tasks to develop a positive relationship between teachers and learners in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: language learner psychology, teacher-student relatedness, academic engagement, teacher support, language ability enhancement

INTRODUCTION

Relationship is the key aspect of human social life, and relationship skills are the most important strategies that lead us to success (Lambert and Zhang, 2019; Hiver et al., 2021). According to the self-determination theory (SDT) (Cooper, 2013; Ryan and Deci, 2017), healthy behavior depends on satisfying psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relationship. If needs are met to some extent on an ongoing basis, people might grow effectively and function well (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020); nonetheless, if these needs are not met, individuals are more likely to witness abnormalities and dysfunctions (Al-Hoorie, 2016).

Like other learning environments, the most dominant relationship in an EFL [English as a foreign language] learning environment is the relationship between teachers and students (Patall, 2013; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021); therefore, teachers play a significant role in any language teaching-learning process (Derakhshan et al., 2020). Employing this efficient relationship, EFL teachers can facilitate the teaching process and even compensate for textbook deficiencies and lack of facilities (Oppermann and Lazarides, 2021). Conversely, those teachers who lack this ability can turn the best teaching situation and subject matter into an inactive and unattractive learning environment (Phung, 2017). If this connection is established in a language learning environment, educational goals might be achieved with more quality and ease. This interaction is manifested in the relationship between teachers and students. In the teaching process, not only the teachers' experiences and academic approaches but also their whole personalities and methods are effective in creating conditions for students to learn and change (Mouratidis et al., 2013).

One of the factors that play a pivotal role in students' engagement and success in an EFL context is the quality of the teacher-student relationship (Zhang, 2020). This relationship can

mediate among students' self-regulation, classroom culture, and academic motivation with students' engagement and success (Froiland and Worrell, 2016; Hiver et al., 2021). From a theoretical point of view, similar to financial poverty that leads to the employment of children or adolescents, motivational poverty also plays an indispensable role in investigating the reason for boredom and dropping out of universities around the world. In other words, language students' outputs do not arise as a result of a simple cause-and-effect relationship, but rather appear to be the result of regular interactions of the individual (teacher and student characteristics) and contextual (educational environment) factors (Derakhshan et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be argued that EFL students' success in educational activities is influenced by their individual differences and the messages they perceive from the language learning context. Close relationships with teachers might promote healthy socio-emotional development and also lead to adaptation and success in language learning environments (Cornelius-White, 2007; Pishghadam et al., 2019). However, language teachers have some challenges such as different levels of parental involvement, decomposing facilities, the risk of violence, and diverse students in their teaching environments (Pennington and Richards, 2016).

It is quite evident that the conventional role of teacher-centeredness in a language teaching context might not be satisfactory to alleviate such growing challenges (Chen and Kent, 2020). A language classroom can be considered as a dynamic context that has its structure and norms and is under the control of subtle behavioral factors (Xiang et al., 2017). Despite its obvious scientific aspect, this relationship is not limited to the transfer of scientific and technical teachings from the teacher to the student (Zhang, 2020). EFL students also perceive behavioral culture, personal character, social perspective, and teaching style. Unlike mechanical relationships, the teacher-student relationship in a language classroom is a complex human relationship in which various factors such as abilities, personality, and family circumstances are in interaction (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Numerous factors attributed to students' emotional arousal might affect the teacher-student relationship and subsequently influence the quality of language teaching and students' language learning enhancements. However, the importance of this relationship has not received especial attention in most EFL contexts. Given the importance of establishing an effective interpersonal relationship in the language teaching process and achieving educational goals in language learning environments, it is necessary to pay more attention to this relationship and help EFL teachers to achieve their basic goal that is, the enhancement of language abilities through an effective relationship.

TEACHER RELATEDNESS AND ENGAGEMENT

EFL researchers have conducted numerous studies and focused on various aspects of the classrooms and teaching contexts to find out the factors that improve the quality of students' educational paths (Reyes et al., 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017; Dao et al., 2019; Aubrey et al., 2020). Studies have shown that the

general policies of any educational system, the perceived social expectation of teacher-student interactions, and teacher-student biological experiences all affect the dimensions of the teacher-student relationship in EFL contexts (Jang et al., 2010). However, this interaction can be positive or negative.

A positive relationship with a teacher in addition to academic achievement (Storch, 2008) will lead to a high level of class participation (Phung, 2017; Pishghadam et al., 2021b), positive academic motivation (Patall et al., 2018), and learners' self-confidence (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020), a feeling of empathy and mutual understanding between teacher and student (Zhang, 2020), and more efficient instructional task design (Lambert and Zhang, 2019). According to Patall (2013), teacher-student relationships are a key part of successful language teaching and learning. Obviously, EFL students need their teachers in many learning environments. A positive teacher-student relationship, motivation, attachment to school, cooperation in class activities, hard work in dealing with problems, friendly help and support, understanding of interpersonal behavior, and creating responsibility and freedom can be effective (Wang et al., 2021). In other words, EFL students who have a warm and intimate relationship with their teachers have high self-confidence, interest in their teacher, more motivation to learn a positive attitude toward school, and enjoy the acceptance of their peers and classmates (Pishghadam et al., 2021a).

In contrast, in a negative relationship, the classroom process can have a moderating effect on solving students' behavioral problems. In other words, students who have inappropriate relationships in the classroom and conflicts with their teachers suffer from problems such as dropping out, being rejected, not being accepted by peers, and increasing inappropriate behaviors. Patall (2013) believes that the educational and emotional interactions of teachers and classmates in students with behavioral problems lead to higher academic achievement and reduction of behavioral problems. It is generally believed that EFL teachers with high self-efficacy are usually more successful in dealing with students with behavioral problems (Oppermann and Lazarides, 2021).

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

In the last two decades, the concept of students' academic engagement has attracted increasing attention from EFL researchers and educators. Many studies have shown that academic engagement has been able to predict a wide range of developmental and educational outcomes (Reyes et al., 2012). Academic engagement is a multifaceted concept that includes behavioral, cognitive, and emotional (Hiver et al., 2021). According to Patall (2013), academic engagement is considered as a "communication" process that reflects students' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and motivational capacity and status.

The review of literature has revealed that there is a link between academic engagement and context adjustment. The studies reveal that the quantity and quality of teacher-student interactions significantly predict the level of satisfaction or stress among EFL students (Al-Hoorie, 2016; Wang et al., 2021). They have shown that teacher-student relationships,

especially interactions that focus on academic or intellectual content, affect students' academic performance and language ability. They also show that the rate of scientific progress of EFL students who had more interaction with teachers is higher than what was predicted before their enrollment (Dao et al., 2019; Azkarai and Kopinska, 2020; Hiver et al., 2021). Likewise, EFL students who have a negative feeling toward their teacher make less progress than expected. Most students who interact individually with teachers experience the deepest kind of learning; since they had the opportunity to ask questions about their ambiguities and interests (Lambert and Zhang, 2019). Teacher-student interaction includes formal communication within the classroom and informal communication outside the classroom, which is very important for the intellectual development and scientific and educational continuity of students (Oppermann and Lazarides, 2021). Review of related literature has shown that factors such as similarity and closeness between a teacher and students (Azkarai and Kopinska, 2020), teacher's personal relationship with students (Froiland and Worrell, 2016), simplicity and intimacy of a teacher (Hiver et al., 2021), teacher's sense humor (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020), and creating opportunities for asking questions and solving problems (Cooper, 2013) can have a significant impact on creating an effective communication between a teacher and students in the classroom. Looking at an opposite aspect, the researchers stated that interaction between teachers and students outside of the classroom can take many forms: in person or online during office hours, communication via e-mail are examples of these cases. Out-of-class interaction provides teachers with the opportunity to discuss lessons or classroom management styles with students and make them more professional and personal (Patall et al., 2018). Out-of-class communication provides a cycle of extensive and individual interactions, and such opportunities can lead to greater classroom productivity and it will also increase language student learning (Phung, 2017). On the other hand, due to a large number of students, this task may be time-consuming. Communicating with teachers increases the students' self-confidence and motivation to learn (Pennington and Richards, 2016). Considering that the role and expectations of EFL teachers and students in such interactions are not structured; creating a successful relationship requires careful consideration (Pishghadam et al., 2021b).

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present findings suggest useful and practical tips and several courses of action to create a positive teacher-student relationship in EFL contexts. EFL teachers should:

Determine Their Temporal and Spatial Boundaries

Similar to what Patall et al. (2018) argued EFL teachers should think about whether or not they want students to contact their home. Can students visit them outside of office hours? How long should students wait for their email response?

Identify That These Interactions Are Part of Their Curriculum and Not Random and Purposeless Conversations

These interactions are a part of their teaching responsibilities. It is also important to be aware of the characters in the classroom, both as an EFL teacher and as someone who interacts with students. Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of teachers' and learners' personality awareness in language classrooms.

Be Aware of Their Students' Individual Learning Styles and Teaching Methods

Awareness and attention to different language teaching and learning methods are extremely important; since this knowledge provides a great opportunity to address academic challenges. Many researchers such as Cooper (2013) and Lambert and Zhang (2019) stated that it is essential to notice that the learning method is not the same for all students. They use a wide range of learning methods including competition, collaboration, avoidance, partnership, affiliation, and independence.

Use Technology to Create Opportunities to Interact With Students

One of the out-of-class communication opportunities that in Phung (2017) words may lead to a greater classroom productivity is electronic mail. Electronic mail can be a convenient way of communicating and provides information between teacher and student outside the classroom, although it creates high expectations and workload, especially in crowded classrooms.

Evaluate Teacher-Student Interaction

The literature suggests several ways to examine how teacher-student interaction affects language students' learning outcomes. Although what happens in this interaction can be evaluated by qualitative methods, there are simpler and more effective methods for the relative evaluation of these interactions (Storch, 2008; Zhang, 2020). A simple method is to record the number and duration of students' referrals to the teacher and compare it with classroom scores and the tests at the end of the semester. Teachers can also find a list of students in the class by those who come to their office, people who communicate with them online, and students who do not interact, prepare, and observe how each group behaves. They can ask students who interact with them outside the classroom to describe how these interactions affect their learning. Use these experiences to motivate students in future classes.

Further studies need to be done to establish whether educational policies have any impact on teachers' relationship with their students in EFL language classrooms.

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SG independently read the relevant literature and wrote the paper entitled *The Role of Teacher-Student Relatedness and Teachers' Engagement on Students' Engagement in EFL Classrooms* and revised it before it was submitted to this special issue.

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A Conceptual Review of Teacher Enthusiasm and Students' Success and Engagement in Chinese EFL Classes

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The swift growth and progress of colleges and universities across China noticed a request for teaching and learning English as Foreign Language (EFL), and regarding the quality of higher education, student engagement has been at the center of attention which has a remarkable role due to the arrival of positive psychology in language learning recently. To this end, on the one hand, nurturing student engagement in EFL classes corresponds to requests from the recent national university English curriculum selected in 2015 in China. On the other hand, a bulk of studies has acknowledged difficulties that hinder the construction of a learner-centric learning situation. Moreover, there is a dearth of inquires which have focused on teachers' role in general and affective aspects namely enthusiasm, in particular. According to the literature review, the definition of these constructs, namely teacher enthusiasm and students' success and engagement are presented. In a nutshell, the implications for teachers, university administrators, teacher-trainers, and future researchers are presented, and new directions for future research are allocated.

Keywords: Chinese EFL classes, students' success, engagement, teacher enthusiasm, learner-eccentric learning

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1990's, the rapid development of the higher education system in China has caused a chain of difficulties, such as a decrease in educational expenses for each student, failing teaching circumstances, and extensive variants in teaching quality among the institutions (Wang, 2017). Accordingly, there has been an obvious failure in general quality, and many teachers and scholars have recently articulated apprehensions about the quality of teachings; therefore, higher education in China is shifted from quantity extension to quality improvement (Yin and Wang, 2016).

Although the teaching quality was monitored by the Chinese Ministry of Education, the reported issues are related to some significant determinants manipulating teaching, such as accommodations, tools, and the guidelines of teaching, in preference to the factors associated with the reality of teaching such as teachers' teaching tactics, methods, and the characteristics of stakeholders such as students and teachers (Yin and Wang, 2016). For instance, great attention has been paid to emotion in previous years due to the dominance of positive psychology in language learning, and researchers approved that learners encounter different types of emotions in language learning (Dewaele and Li, 2020), so emotions have an indispensable role in language learning process and success (Li, 2020). The emotional scale has shifted its priority from the traditional concern in anxiety to embrace elements of positive psychology such as pleasure, enthusiasm, hope, happiness, appreciation, etc. (MacIntyre et al., 2019).

Moreover, one of the predominantly significant positive psychosomatic constructs in education is engagement for its relations to different student results containing success, fulfillment, and motivation (Neel and Fuligni, 2013). Oga-Baldwin (2019) pinpointed that the research in the student engagement domain focused on two aspects, namely affective factors, and social factors. While the former is related to factors such as motivation, emotion, attentiveness, the latter refers to the antecedents of student engagement and environmental factors such as teacher and peer relations. The influences of individual and environmental determinants on student engagement are addressed by Mercer (2019) as she declared that those students who felt knowledgeable, independent, and have positive interactions with their peers and teachers, enjoy learning more, and then turn into a more interested and engaged person in the language course (Hiver et al., 2021).

Recently, while it is indicated that many issues are determining the learning procedure and the quality of learners, more attention is being devoted to the conception of how social environments are associated with student engagement (Shoshani and Eldor, 2016). The classroom is the cornerstone for accomplishing a learner-centric, involving learning setting that is representative of increasing their attentiveness (Exeter et al., 2010). Student engagement is reflected as a flexible process powerfully influenced by the parents, school, and society, which sequentially support students' cognition, emotion, and performance (Lam et al., 2012).

Among those contextual elements such as teachers, peers, parents, and society, the teacher takes on a fundamental role in affecting student engagement and success and can enlighten many of the discrepancies frequently detected within stages of classroom engagement (Pishghadam et al., 2021). Similarly, teachers' use of cooperative teaching styles along with interpersonal interaction motivates student engagement (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Indeed, the success of the teaching is influenced by the teachers' qualifications in controlling and implementing the system (Çevik Kiliç, 2018); however, to date, the role of teachers' positive emotions on student engagement has not been scrutinized.

One of these constructive positive emotions is teacher enthusiasm that has been regarded as a central characteristic of an effective teacher and also a predictor of student learning behavior, emotional states, and presentation (Lazarides et al., 2019). Teacher enthusiasm is interpreted as a conjoined manifestation of positive emotional involvements and the behavioral display of these involvements in teaching (Keller et al., 2018) that has constructive effects on students' motivational, emotional, and social consequences, other than their academic success.

Similarly, teacher enthusiasm is being defined as nonverbal communication that the teacher replicates (Baloch and Akram, 2018); teacher competence and effective teacher features are based on positive emotions (Keller et al., 2018), and positive emotional involvements happen while acting out their responsibilities (Keller et al., 2014). The teacher's enthusiasm positively affects learning success (Cui et al., 2017). The positive consequences of teacher enthusiasm are also in proportion to the standard valuable effects of positive emotions in improving

presentation, success, and fulfillment (Keller et al., 2014). Even though researchers have not investigated a relationship between teacher enthusiasm and student engagement, previous research indicated that motivated teachers activate student attention, stimulate learners to be more interested and engaged, and encourage them to be attentive (Zhang, 2013).

Most of the studies carried out on student engagement originated from research in the United States (Shaw et al., 2015; Witkowski and Cornell, 2015). Although student engagement is valued among Chinese teachers (Zhu and Arnold, 2013; Wang, 2017) thanks to its high relationship with teaching success and improvement (Yin and Wang, 2016), just a few studies have been done in China to explore student commitment. For instance, Zhang et al. (2015) investigated student engagement in China from the students' perceptions. Accordingly, there is a request for more research on the role of English teacher enthusiasm in involving students in classrooms in a Chinese setting.

TEACHER ENTHUSIASM

Since enthusiasm is hypothesized as an emotional construct, derived from the positive emotion in general and the intrinsic motivation domain in particular (Kunter and Holzberger, 2014). Enthusiasm can boost a wide range of teaching and learning consequences, as well as teaching success, students' presentation, and motivation (Hsu, 2010). This construct was eventually defined as enthusiastic teaching behaviors, which were reflected as a central predictor of teaching superiority and efficacy (Patrick et al., 2000). Since teacher enthusiasm supports the teacher's active interaction with students, it is called teacher immediacy, as an indefinable construct that has been regarded as nonverbal behaviors that allude to physical and emotional intimacy between individuals (Keller, 2011). Enthusiastic teachers use humor to make learning enjoyable and entertaining (Frenzel et al., 2009) that it can be followed by teachers talk with a smile on their face that cause confidence in learners that makes the classroom setting sociable and collaborative that is related to the nonverbal immediacy (Derakhshan, 2021).

Researchers describe teacher nonverbal immediacy as a variety of behaviors that increase psychological closeness between communicators including eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, and movement (Pogue and AhYun, 2006). An interested teacher often vitalized the class with pleasure, satisfaction, and eagerness involves learners to take part and inspires them to explore (Patrick et al., 2000).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As has been mentioned in the literature review, teacher enthusiasm is considered as a vital teacher distinctive feature that reveals its significant role on student inspiration and engagement through sympathetic instructional practices such as support for independence, aptitude, social empathy, and subject relevance. Engagement engenders learning and envisages learning success, and it is regarded as one of the solutions for the problems of students' disengagement such as low accomplishment and great

dropout rates. In the class of an enthusiastic teacher, learners feel more autonomous and less concerned (Cui et al., 2017). When students feel confident in the class, they are ready to take educational and emotional risks, so they become self-confident enough to be engaged in the route of learning (Ulmanen et al., 2016). Indeed, building a warm learning milieu without any criticism sets grounds to nurture student engagement. So it is recommended for teachers who are caring about the quality of their classroom to increase students' sense of belonging through interaction and immediacy that lead to students' emotional engagement. Moreover, the teacher enthusiasm can boost students' attentiveness and their inclination and willingness to learn that can be employed through tasks that trigger extrinsic rewards, fulfill learners' intrinsic well-being, and provide a sense of possession and autonomy to students that all lead to a cognitive engagement (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012).

Regarding the manifestation of teacher, it is worth mentioning that enthusiasm might be also significant for the teachers themselves which bring about work-related well-being of a teacher as enthusiastic teacher is inclined to be more fulfilled in their life and at the work (Burić and Moe, 2020).

Enthusiasm is two sides of the coin; one side is behavioral aspects that indicate nonverbal forms of teacher immediacy, such as tone, facial motions, comicality, eye contact, smiling, and body movement, a sympathetic and caring classroom setting (Witt and Wheelless, 2001) where students feel motivated (Derakhshan, 2021). Nonverbal immediacy behaviors in interactions are rewarding that inspire students to be more attentive during class instruction (York, 2013). Teachers' immediacy behaviors can contribute to teaching efficiency through preserving learner attention and inhibiting boredom and consequently it may raise student motivation as a purpose of teacher's enthusiasm (Babab, 2007; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). The other side of enthusiasm is behavioral in which the teacher may transfer

enthusiasm by verbal signals and prompts, such as mentioning the value of the learning subject matter or articulating teachers' interest (Patrick et al., 2000).

Given the prominence of teacher enthusiasm for both students and teachers, teacher trainers and Chinese university managers should concentrate on promoting interest and pleasure in teaching and the subject matter. Furthermore, a situation without stressful working situations is required for the teachers that allow sustaining enthusiasm and by cultivating teacher enthusiasm, a viable positive result on teaching quality, teacher well-being, student motivation, engagement, and learning can be accomplished.

In summary, future studies on students' engagement are required to explore the most engaging approaches and motivational directions regarding teachers' enthusiasm, differentiating between enthusiasm for the subject and teaching. So, future researchers should run studies that consider both dimensions of teacher enthusiasm to add new perceptions in this field.

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A Review of the Effectiveness of Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety on Learners' Engagement and Attainment

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Cognitive factors are not the fundamental determinants of success in language learning. Foreign language attainment depends on both cognitive and affective factors, highlighting the deeper impacts of the former. Some scholars started to investigate affective issues, particularly negative emotions in language learning studies; nevertheless, reducing negative emotions such as anxiety should be accompanied by the development of positive emotions (e.g., well-being, autonomy, and enjoyment). Since then, a great number of researchers have examined the impact of anxiety and enjoyment in foreign language literature, particularly after the introduction of reliable and valid foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) scales. So, the present study aims to review contemporary scholarly articles and books in this regard. Findings suggest that there has been a major interest in the evaluation of FLCA and FLE across a variety of dimensions including personality traits, interpersonal characteristics, and classroom conditions. The central issues are summarized into three categories of the relationship between FLCA and FLE, the robustness of respective scales, and the impact of individual and interpersonal factors. Hence, this research attempts to highlight probable gaps and areas for further examinations to help enrich the literature and improve the theoretical knowledge.

Keywords: positive psychology, foreign language enjoyment, foreign language classroom anxiety, second language acquisition, success, engagement, attainment

INTRODUCTION

The present review study aims to explore foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) as fundamental emotional factors in the process of (foreign) language learning. The introduction of the concept of “affective filter” by Krashen (1985) led language learning scholars to consider negative affective factors in the classroom as they can demotivate language learners. Consequently, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) argued that anxiety might result in students' poor performance in the classroom and imperfect language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) development of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) prepared the ground for more systematic investigations of anxiety in FL settings, and they further asserted that assessment anxiety,

fear of communication, and negative appraisal apprehension were the main causes of FLCA. Since then, there has been a great body of research on FLCA from various perspectives e.g., language cognition (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994), FL production (Matsuda and Gobel, 2004), individual characteristics (Liu, 2006), etc.

On the other hand, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) claimed that the attainment of success should be regarded as a prominent objective in people's lives. They further argued that positive psychology (PP) highlights the effects of happiness, well-being, and creativity on individuals (Oxford, 2016). Therefore, some studies were conducted on the concept of PP and its implications on people's occupation, education, and social lives (Wang et al., 2021). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) as well as Lake (2013) were among the pioneering scholars who emphasized the implementation of PP features in language teaching and learning. As a response to the multitude of studies on negative emotions such as anxiety, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) proposed that it is time to consider positive emotions in the language learning profession. They also asserted that employing PP in second/foreign language classrooms can result in the development of motivation, enjoyment, as well as persistence, and ultimately long-standing acquisition of FL.

This review study is intended to analyze the existing literature on FLCA and FLE to explore the research methodologies, theoretical foundations, and empirical findings accordingly.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

FLCA as an Affective Factor

Language learning practitioners traditionally believed that it was a process of cognitive engagement in perceiving and producing the target language to convey the meaning. However, since the 1980s, many scholars have highlighted the significant role of affective factors along with cognitive capabilities that can lead to successful FL attainment. Scholars have focused on the impact of a number of negative factors (emotions) in language learning experiences and outcomes, including attitudes toward teachers, boredom, and anxiety (Elahi Shirvan and Talebzadeh, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021a).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language learning classroom anxiety stems from complicated feelings, understandings, and behaviors pertaining to the process of language learning. Findings of a review study by Young (1999) indicated six sources of language learning anxiety including classroom processes, teacher-learner interactions, individual and interpersonal issues, language testing, learners' attitudes toward language learning, and teachers' beliefs about learning process. Moreover, FLCA was perceived as "the classroom related apprehension and stress," which commonly happens while performing FL tasks such as speaking activities (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994, p. 284).

Dewaele et al. (2018) concluded that lower scores in FLCA are associated with higher levels of attitudes toward the target language and successful FL learning; consequently, it is necessary to observe and identify primary causes of language learners'

anxiety in the classroom and then reduce FLCA to help them flourish in their language learning process.

FLE Represents Positive Psychology

With the advent of positive psychology (PP) whose primary objective was to help people flourish and lead them toward success in their lives, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) highlighted a crucial gap in the literature (Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda, 2016). They claimed that the existing studies in second/foreign language learning have not examined the influence of positive individual and interpersonal factors (e.g., creativity, perseverance, hope, autonomy, enjoyment, etc.) accordingly (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 2014, pp. 279).

Fredrickson (2001) proposed that FL learners can broaden their understanding and proficiency in the classroom and build personal and social resources to achieve linguistic goals (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) concluded that FLE occurs within three main dimensions of positive setting (feeling of fulfillment from the classroom), positive private (internal or personal feeling of satisfaction), and positive atmosphere (pleasant relationship with teachers and/or peers).

Findings of a seminal study by Pekrun et al. (2007) revealed that learners may experience positive and constant engagement in classroom activities if they perceive they can perform appropriately in classroom tasks, which is regarded as an instance of FLE. Moreover, the PERMA model, developed by Seligman (2018) acknowledged that well-being depends on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. A relatively recent study by Li (2021) systematically reviewed the concepts of psychological well-being, mindfulness, and immunity of teachers in the domain of EFL/ESL educational contexts. Therefore, language learning scholars are recommended to investigate FLE in the academic setting so that learners can develop and improve necessary requirements that lead to success.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The majority of empirical studies on FLCA and FLE can be summarized into the following headings:

The Relationship Between FLCA and FLE

MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argued that positive and negative emotions belong to the same dimension of language learning, but these two concepts are not necessarily opposite. Furthermore, findings of significant research by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) reported FLCA and FLE are adversely correlated. However, a single learner can report high levels of FLCA along with high levels of FLE. Hence, it is imperative to investigate these two concepts using different scales within the same conceptual category.

Dewaele et al. (2018) conducted a study on 189 high school students. The learners were asked to complete a 10-item questionnaire (extracted from Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014 FLE Scale) along with an 8-item questionnaire (extracted from Horwitz et al., 's, 1986 FLCA scale). The authors concluded that

there is a minor, but significant negative relationship between FLE and FLCA.

The Robustness of the FLCA and FLE Scales

Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that foreign language classroom anxiety is associated with language classrooms pertinent to feelings, perceptions, and behaviors. Consequently, they developed the FLCAS to measure learners' anxiety in foreign language classrooms based on three main domains of test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative appraisal. The original scale consists of 33 items including 24 positively worded and 9 negatively worded statements that are scored based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree and 5 = I strongly agree). The total score of the questionnaire would range between 33 and 165. Moreover, the reliability of the scale was assessed and confirmed using internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93). Furthermore, Jin et al. (2020) used the Chinese version of FLCAS to observe the impact of interventions on the reduction of anxiety among 42 language learners. They reported a significant decrease in the classroom anxiety scores after the intervention.

Given that, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) attempted to investigate the relationship between FLE and FLCA among 1,746 language learners from different countries, they developed a standard scale to measure FLE. The proposed scale included 21 items pertaining to interest, creativity, fun, and self-importance as well as teachers and peers' impact in the FL classroom. They further modified this scale in 2016; the newly developed questionnaire contained 14 items and the reliability of the scale was approved based on the internal consistency coefficient of 0.86. All the items are positively worded and rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = absolutely disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The total score of the questionnaire would range from 14 to 70.

In an attempt to examine Chinese high-school students' FLE, Li et al. (2018) developed the Chinese version FLE scale based on the original questionnaire which was proposed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). The Chinese questionnaire included 11 items and the internal consistency of the scale was approved with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.82.

Individual and Interpersonal Factors Affecting FLCA and FLE

Following the development of FLE scale, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) conducted a seminal study to examine the nature of the relationship between FLCA and FLE in 1,740 foreign language learners with different personal characteristics. The research findings demonstrated that there was a significantly positive relationship between FLE and age, FL proficiency, academic degrees, multilingualism, classroom tasks, as well as teachers' support. They also emphasized that such factors had a significantly negative impact on FLCA.

Findings from Dewaele et al. (2018) study demonstrated that learners' age had a significant influence on FLE, but it had no effects on FLCA. They further declared that there is a significant association between language proficiency and FLE

and FLCA; the higher the learners' level of FL, the higher FLE scores and the lower FLCA scores were reported. Finally, they asserted that attitudes toward the target language and also toward teachers have significant impacts on FLE, yet moderate effects on FLCA.

It is always crucial for teachers and even material developers to be aware of individual differences (e.g., emotions) among language learners and to design FL courses so that all sorts of learners can benefit from the content in a supportive and low-stress atmosphere (Benesch, 2017). Similarly, Gkonou et al. (2020) argued that there is a strong and direct relationship between teachers' motivation and learners' motivation in the classroom. They claimed that teachers' enthusiasm and empathy can help language learners perceive lower anxiety and experience higher levels of self-confidence and autonomy while performing classroom tasks (Derakhshan et al., 2021b).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Previous studies highlighted the significance of positive and negative emotions in language learning outcomes; it is hence imperative to employ reliable and valid instruments to conduct appropriate and generalizable studies. FLCA scale and FLE scale are among the well-known and highly reliable instruments, respectively. These two questionnaires have been translated into other languages; however, there is still the need to translate them into more languages such as Persian and also to perform psychometric analysis on the modified versions of these instruments.

It is also noteworthy that language learning is a dynamic process, particularly the emotional aspect of FL learning (Li et al., 2018; Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more longitudinal studies to ensure the reliability and generalizability of the respective findings. For instance, Elahi Shirvan and Taherian (2021) investigated the improvement of FLE and FLCA among 367 undergraduate students. The data were collected using FLE Scale and FLCA Scale from October to November 2016. They concluded that there is a substantial but negative relationship between the growth of FLE and FLCA.

Arnold and Fonseca (2007) argued that the learning environment (including teachers and peers' support) should direct learners toward facing and resolving educational challenges, and eventually FL attainment. In a similar vein, Nemati et al. (2020) proposed that interesting classroom tasks, sociocultural and intrinsic factors, as well as positive attitudes to teachers and fellow classmates, have led to a significant improvement of FLE and moderate reduction of FLCA (in particular, speaking-induced anxiety) among Iranian learners with intermediate and upper-intermediate English proficiency levels. However, Dewaele et al. (2018) concluded that learner-related variables can have more significant impacts on language learning compared to external factors (language classroom, peers, and teachers). Consequently, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth studies on the effectiveness and significance of teachers'

and peers' role in the improvement of FLE and reduction of FLCA.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JS read contemporary scholarly articles and books and presented the effectiveness of foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety on learners' engagement and attainment.

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The Effects of Boredom on EFL Learners' Engagement

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This article aims to delve into the role of boredom on students' engagement which has always attracted attention in that it is one of the most common academic feelings felt by students that causes them to feel more or less enthusiastic to engage in class activities, and there is a growing increase in such feelings among adolescents; therefore, its various dimensions should be taken into consideration. First and foremost, a variety of definitions from different points of view have been proposed. Then, with a focus on the distinction between state boredom and trait boredom which is one of the most radical classifications of boredom it has been continued. Following that, the antecedents of boredom are additionally taken into consideration along with the role of boredom in students' engagement that necessitates a few changes in the curriculum of schools. Moreover, some coping strategies on how to overcome boredom have been featured. Finally, in the discussion part, the emphasis of the points, which have been mentioned above, in the learning context for both teachers and students has been discussed, and new suggestions for further studies have been proposed.

Keywords: boredom, engagement, learning, teaching, strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Boredom in Literature

In Charles Baudelaire's (2012) (as cited in Pawlak et al., 2020a, p. 3) interpretation, boredom is viewed as a complex problem that should be struggled with to create creativity. In other words, it is associated with an internal element of creativity. In his writing, boredom has been perceived as an action-provoking force that urges people to seek something through which they can feel alive. Additionally, boredom has been featured in Joseph Brodsky's (1995) (as cited in Pawlak et al., 2020a, p. 3) essays as a psychological Sahara characterized by the infinity of time, tedium, duplication, increasing sense of belittlement, diminishing any signs of self-praise. It is also mentioned that boredom should be embraced so that its mechanisms can be perceived (Pawlak et al., 2020a).

Definition of Boredom

Not surprisingly, there is no fixed accepted definition for boredom because it is a complex construct that is rooted in a variety of factors and many other factors are impacted by it (Caldwell et al., 1999; Ally, 2008). The following feelings are accompanied by boredom: tedium, anguish, listlessness, lethargy, doldrums, or languor. The highly disturbing nature of boredom is also revealed by the aforementioned factors (Goldberg et al., 2011). Boredom in psychology can be regarded as a permanent (trait, it is a personality attribute) and temporary (state, it arises due to the situation) affective experience by which the learning process is severely inhibited and lack of interest in the class activities occur (Daniels et al., 2015). Lack of interest includes when the desire for partaking in the class activities is lowered and learners are inclined to escape such a context. Boredom

results in feeling disengaged, therefore leading to avoidance behaviors. Consequently, there is a cause-and-effect link between lack of interest and boredom in which the former may lead to the latter (Pekrun et al., 2011).

From a societal aspect, boredom is viewed as a resistance to school rules and limitations forced by the educational system. Boredom defined by Barbalet (1999) is a high arousal state through which one can feel a sense of restlessness and irritability. However, according to Harris (2000), a sense of low arousal and dissatisfaction when feeling bored ascribes to an environment that is not sufficiently stimulating. As has been shown above, boredom can be defined from different aspects, which *per se* makes it a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted phenomenon.

State Boredom vs. Trait Boredom

Boredom can be viewed as a more situation-based feature (Pawlak et al., 2020b). State boredom is referred to as a temporary, context-based, short-term condition that is rooted in an individual's understanding of their environment of learning which is not stimulating enough and it is impoverished (Bench and Lench, 2013). As for trait boredom, it is an inherent part of one's personality. This type of boredom is categorized into two classifications, external boredom proneness which is relevant to an uninteresting environment, and internal boredom proneness that refers to an individual having difficulty in involving things to do (Macklem, 2015).

The Antecedents of Boredom

Many models have been put forward considering the causes of boredom. Out of which some are mentioned here. A method formulated, known as the attentional theory of boredom proneness (Harris, 2000; LePera, 2011) in which boredom is experienced as a result of the students' expectations and interests which have not been met and that is the reason why time seems to slow down for them and self-sustained attention has to be generated by students rather attentional control.

The control-value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006; Tulis and Fulmer, 2013; Li, 2021) asserts if no value is found through the completion of a task, then the students are obliged to implement it whether they like it or not, hence, they are more likely to see boredom emerging with its avoidance behaviors. To put it simply, students feeling more valued and competent are less likely to feel bored. The Menton Theory of Boredom (Davies and Fortney, 2012) in which mentions referred to the usage of mental energy units known as mentons. It stipulates that when individuals receive exposure to over-challenging or under-challenging tasks, they feel bored. Surprisingly the fruit of being motivated to seek new incentives so as to do something with tasks can occur as a consequence of boredom.

According to a study carried out, the following factors contributing to an imbalance between what a learner feel inside and the external classroom factors: when a learner's comprehension is lowered, not having enough L2 skills, the difficulty level of tasks, when learners are bombarded with a lot of input, and not coming up with new ideas. All the aforementioned points have been found as the reasons behind boredom (Nakamura et al., 2021).

Likewise, four classifications have been formulated for the causes of boredom in online classes: teacher-related factors such as instructional practices and personality, IT/computer-related factors such as nature of online classes and computer literacy, task-related factors, such as task overload, task difficulty, and dull materials and subjects, and student-related factors, such as unmotivated students and students' irrelevant talk (Derakhshan et al., 2021). Similarly, based on a study conducted, boredom was experienced from low to moderate level by the learners attending online classes rather than traditional face-to-face classes; thus, a new type of boredom that can be found in language online classes should be analyzed and handled (Li and Dewaele, 2020).

Disengagement and Boredom

One of the components which are adversely affected by boredom is engagement leading to a lower level of performance. To prevent disengagement, boredom should be overcome (Macklem, 2015). Engagement is an indispensable part of the process of learning and a multifold phenomenon. It has been classified into different categories: Behavioral engagement such as the effort; emotional engagement such as high levels of enthusiasm which is associated with low levels of anxiety and boredom; cognitive engagement such as the usage of learning strategy and self-regulation; agentic engagement such as the amount of conscious effort so that the learning experience would be enriched (Veiga et al., 2014; Hiver et al., 2021). Out of the afore-mentioned categories, the one which is highly important in the learning process is behavioral engagement in that it is pertinent to the actual recognition of an individual's learning talents (Dörnyei, 2019; Oga-Baldwin, 2019).

Another possibility that can be viewed is to consider engagement from two other aspects, internal and external. The former implies that how much time and effort is allocated to the process of the learning while the latter entails the measures that are taken at the institutional level so that the resources would be dealt with along with other options of learning and services for support which encourage the involvement in activities resulting in the likely outcomes such as consistency and satisfaction (Harper and Quay, 2009; Kuh, 2009). Much attention is deserved to be paid to engagement since it is perceived as a behavioral means with which students' motivation can be realized and as a consequence, development through the process of learning can happen (Jang et al., 2010). Active involvement should be strengthened in L2 classes to prevent disruptive behaviors and diminish the valence of emotions which are negative such as feeling anxious, frustrated, and bored.

It has been claimed by some writers (e.g., Skinner, 2016) disengagement itself does not happen frequently in educational settings due largely to the fact that it is relevant to extreme behaviors, and it is when another phrase disaffection can be considered significant. Disaffection is characterized by disinterest, aversion, resignation, and reduced effort. Therefore, our perception of boredom as a complex emotion can be enhanced, and it can be dealt with more systematically if boredom is viewed through the following factors, disengagement and disaffection. In language learning context and use, engagement with learning a language is a cognitive, affective,

and/or social process where the learner is viewed as the agent and language is regarded as the object. The learner is engaged:

- Cognitively: the engaged individual is alert, complete attention is focused, and their own knowledge is constructed.
- Affectively: the engaged individual has a positive, intentional, willing, and independent approach toward the language and/or what it represents.
- Socially: the engaged individual is interactive and initiating” (Svalberg, 2009, p. 247).

Coping Strategies About Boredom in Educational Settings

Students should be trained to accept boredom as a transient lack of stimulation and to understand their needs and feelings to attend to the tasks with more diligence, sobriety, and engagement (Eastwood et al., 2007). Boredom can be reduced by providing students with options so that they could feel more autonomous in the process of learning. To lower boredom, mastery goals through which the real meaning of perseverance can be shown can additionally be enhanced. It enables students to be less susceptible to surrender in negative situations and causes them to have more determination to find task-based self-improving activities (Pekrun, 2006; Turner and Husman, 2008; Furner and Gonzalez-DeHass, 2011).

Last but not least, teachers’ enthusiasm about their academic value and about the content of the classes in addition to respecting students’ requirements and attitudes is another factor that helps one minimize the possibility of feeling bored. Another factor leading to a reduction in boredom is that giving students positive affective feedback which leads to believing in their own abilities and overcoming boredom. It has also been reported that even in online classes students have an inclination to be engaged in discussions and it is what makes the class more interactive and challenging (Derakhshan et al., 2021).

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CONCLUSION

In this article several parts have been discussed, the definition of boredom, the causes of boredom, the effect of boredom on students’ engagement, and how boredom can be coped with. It should be taken into account that teachers are not just responsible for conveying the pedagogical knowledge in classes, instead what seems essentially vital is the amount to which teachers make an effort to make the class more interactive and make the tasks more challenging so that students would feel more focused and less bored. It turned out engagement is the key to not feeling bored. The more engaged the students are, the less bored they feel and the less monotonous they find the class activities. Without a shadow of a doubt, further studies can be conducted to aid students not to feel bored and to actively participate in the class activities. Thanks to cutting-edge technology, everything has been revolutionized; therefore, new types of boredom that are pertinent to online learning environments, for example short attention span and students’ low literacy of computers, had better be carried out (Kruk, 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021).

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The Role of Grit in Students' L2 Engagement in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom

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Due to the rapid development of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), on the one hand, and the arrival of positive psychology (PP) in the process of language education, on the other hand, student engagement has been burgeoned and got a noteworthy role in the academic field. The present review attempts to investigate the relationship of grit with students' L2 engagement, by examining both backgrounds and consequences of grit. Consequently, the effectiveness of findings for policymakers and academic experts is discussed, along with the prominence of strengthening grit in the scholastic contexts in order to cultivate character in learners and improve their prospects.

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INTRODUCTION

With the enhancement of positive psychology (PP), scholars have regularly discerned its significant role in the second language acquisition (SLA) field (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019a). In the psychology and learning domain, PP has represented abundant attention in recent years (Seligman et al., 2006; Karlen et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) acknowledged the objectives of PP and delineated the three aspects in the PP study, namely constructive individual behaviors, progressive involvements, and positive associations. Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda (2016) highlighted that those students' behaviors, encouraging feelings, and learning situations are three significant facets that affect students' presentation in language education.

Positive psychologists have tried to improve the attentiveness of how regular persons flourish under more non-threatening circumstances to catalyze a shift in the emphasis of consciousness from concentration only on replacing the wickedest issues in life to shape constructive eminences (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). One of the desired learners' involvements in the educational performance field is their engagement, which is hypothesized as covering the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral scopes (Mercer, 2019). Behavioral engagement talks about the students' actual disposition to take part in tasks, while emotional engagement is perceived as learners' emotional state of commitment and connection to a task (Mercer, 2019). In addition, cognitive engagement occurs when one is effectively and emotionally faced, and captivated by an individual's work (Lei et al., 2018). However, regardless of its short history, engagement has extended remarkable prevalence in educational investigation entrenched in PP (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

Mastering a second/foreign language (L2) is a broad practice; therefore, L2 students will during this process, without a doubt, face disappointments, and demoralizations. Nonetheless, L2 students' reactions to these disappointments can be unique. Some may see disappointment as a sign of an absence of insight and fitness and probably will not place more conviction into learning a language (Khajavy et al., 2021). Others may see disappointment as a natural part of language learning and focus more on learning L2; accordingly, L2 students' observations of their L2 learning capacity are identified with their strength in L2 training.

As declared by Khajavy et al. (2021), the connection among these impressions of L2 learning capacity and exertion in L2 education could be clarified by grit, as a positive, non-intellectual attribute, which has as of late gotten a lot of consideration.

As stated by Keegan (2017), grit has been recommended to assume a critical part in assisting learners with putting forth the ideal attempt to further develop their English language capability despite the difficulties they face. The idea of grit as an indicator and basic component of success and accomplishment has been of significant interest in character and learning psychology throughout previous years. Grit has additionally been receiving attention in further diverse areas, containing business, medical services, and instruction (Sudina et al., 2021). Grit is viewed as an individual quality regular in leaders, and a significant forerunner of progress and greatness in each domain paying little mind to skill or ability (Duckworth and Yeager, 2015).

Additionally, grit is a self-guideline and non-intellectual behavioral characteristic made out of two center aspects: (a) persistence of effort and (b) constancy of interests (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009). The former is the effortful quest for objectives despite mishaps. The latter is responsibility and energy devoted to one objective. A mix of these two characteristics has been anticipated for several years, as grit is planned to catch the long-conversed collaboration between the "energy and persistence" needed to influence enduring objectives (Duckworth, 2016).

Since the effective authority of an L2 is profoundly subject to L2 students' supported exertion and energy throughout an extensive time (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013), research of grit and its connection to learners' language accomplishment turns out to be promptly pertinent in SLA. By comprising commitment and accomplishment as results, the discrepancy impacts between grit and accomplishment and grit and commitment can be inspected; thereby, revealing different advantages that grit might bring to learners' education. As learner attentiveness has been demonstrated to be a noteworthy school element for learners' accomplishment and well-being (Wang and Eccles, 2012), commitment will be analyzed as an autonomous scholarly result of grit.

Studies have proved that grit is significantly associated with desire, resilience, well-being, enthusiasm, pleasure, and life fulfillment (Calo et al., 2019; Karlen et al., 2019; Moen and Olsen, 2020; Shakir et al., 2020), while it is negatively interrelated to burnout, hopelessness, and stress (Datu et al., 2019; Moen and Olsen, 2020; Shakir et al., 2020).

For years, grit, as a non-cognitive personality attribute, had a fundamental role in student accomplishment (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009) and spiritual paradigms such as despair and enthusiasm (Steinmayr et al., 2018; Datu et al., 2019). Keegan (2017) emphasized that grit can efficiently stimulate efficacious education in English for Foreign or Second Language Learners (EFL/ESL) who are supposed to dedicate high levels of consideration to English. Although, grit has been examined in other realms, particularly in psychology (e.g., Duckworth et al., 2007, 2009), few studies have regarded it among EFL learners. Undeniably, few inquiries have investigated the rapport between grit and language acquisition, regardless of grit's noticeable part in language learning in comparison to other issues (MacIntyre et al., 2019b). Despite the wide range of research undertaken to date, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the effect of grit on language engagement is not presupposed.

GRIT

Grit comprises two lower-order segments, the persistence of exertion and constancy of well-being (Duckworth et al., 2007). The primary sub-construct, persistence of exertion, shows a capacity to keep up with exertion for a long time notwithstanding challenges or disappointment. The second sub-concept, constancy of interests, alludes to the capacity to support comforts for a long period notwithstanding difficulties or misfortunes.

Grit is a moderately new hypothesis created by Duckworth (2016) that associates the constructs of zeal and determination to one's capacity to effectively reach their objectives and Duckworth (2016) asserted that grit clarifies why some are successful in rushing into their objectives, while others are not. Grit is the energy one needs to stay with long-term life objectives regardless of the hardships, disappointments, or difficulties experienced (Duckworth and Gross, 2014; Duckworth, 2016). Grittier people see life as a long-distance race and show a solid hard-working attitude and responsibility. The construct of grit does not propose that people do not encounter disappointments or misfortunes, but that they can remain on track and press forward toward their definitive objective. Grit develops over a long period of figuring out how to manage and move past dismissal and disappointment (Duckworth, 2016). It is created as an individual learns the contrast between low-level objectives and higher-level objectives and figures out where to put their energies. Duckworth (2016) believed that it is not the ability that makes an individual gritty, rather the eagerness to continue learning and developing through one's zeal for a movement. Duckworth (2016, p. 42) expressed, "talent is how quickly your skills improve when you invest effort." When these improved abilities are used, accomplishment develops. The exclusive requirements set upon instructors highlight the pertinence of grit as a significant personality characteristic (Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth, 2014).

Educational psychologists (e.g., Duckworth et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2014) have presented an intense attentiveness in grit and its inspiration on learners in scholastic situations and findings proved that gritty students commonly outperformed

in exams than less gritty learners. Grittier learners also display developed educational hopes and show developed degrees of education from schools (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Although, Ivcevic and Brackett (2014) have not reported any relation between grit and learners' accomplishment, the meta-analysis done by Credé et al. (2017) represented a positive correlation between students' grittiness and their educational presentation.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current minireview tried to focus on the considerate aspect of grit in the EFL setting, particularly about learning engagement. In line with applied perception, it is suggested that EFL students may take advantage of activities or mediations intended to enhance constructive behaviors, such as grit and consistency. Within the EFL setting, some tasks and actions simplifying grit may be prepared to boost learners to set long-term goals constructed on their benefits. To accomplish these objectives, practice is required particularly concerning the mechanisms of failure and obstacles, teaching students how to hold failure as a prospect to be engaged.

The review provides fundamental proof about the significance of considering the settings in which learners are establishing their grit. It is overcritical that instructors, researchers, and authorities change from a reductionist perspective of students' grit, with which the learners are seen as either gritty or not to reflect whether class settings care for all students' grit. This is primarily precise for learners who face wide degrees of difficulties in their normal lives and so may have extreme grit. If grit should be engaged in instructive settings, instructors and policymakers need to discover significant methodologies of evaluating and reinforcing learners' grit. Scholars, specifically, have a pledge to inspect grit regarding learner results as well as in terms of students' more extensive conditions.

A noticeable distinctive of grit is its flexibility (Clark and Malecki, 2019), which means grit can be amended by involvement

in the classes. In the SLA setting, the flexibility of grit can arrange for L2 teachers with an instrument to make their learners overcome the probable obstacles they might come upon throughout the L2 procedure. It could accordingly be maintained that regardless of the significant role of grit in learners' educational success, it has not been satisfactorily premeditated, especially in the EFL setting. As a result, mastery of the role of grit deals with new standpoints for higher teaching supervisors when bearing in mind the students' academic presentation. Grit is a disposition attribute that can be fostered and taught to scholars (Ebadi et al., 2018). Higher academic administrators can improve grit in students by providing chances to undertake long-term purposes worthy of learners' determination and providing a demanding and compassionate setting to accomplish their objectives. Instructors and experts could accentuate fulfillment with peer relationships in the development of instruction by encouraging supportive and collaborative peer tasks and actions that enable group cooperative learning to support them in the process of learning, surge their degree of grit and increase their educational presentation, engagement, and determination (Lan and Moscardino, 2019; Derakhshan, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Grit has got significant consideration as an important personality aspect that needs to be reinforced in youth and has been acknowledged divergent from care in its multifaceted confidence on both attention and strengths (Duckworth et al., 2007). As grit involvements and correlated experimental investigations are still emergent, more studies are compulsory regarding if grit is to some degree teachable in school or not, and if so, focus on the suggested approach to teach it. These are the current issues that must be taken into account by researchers and scholars.

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Toward the Impact of EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy on Students' Engagement

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Given the centrality of students' engagement in their academic success, considerable attention has been paid to this construct and its potential predictors. Notwithstanding, a limited number of studies have focused on the role of teacher self- and collective efficacy as antecedents of student engagement. Further, no review study has been carried out to illustrate the impact of EFL teacher' efficacy on learning engagement. Hence, the current study intends to review the previous studies conducted on this topic to probe into the beneficial effects of EFL teachers' sense of efficacy on students' academic engagement. The predictability power of EFL teachers' self- and collective efficacy was confirmed through empirical and theoretical evidence. The conclusion and pedagogical implications of the finding are also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Owing to the fact that students' engagement plays a vital role in increasing their learning outcomes (Carver et al., 2021), inspiring students to become involved in the learning process has always been a priority for teachers in all academic contexts. Student engagement is conceptualized as "one's tendency to be behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively involved in academic activities" (Sharkey et al., 2008, p. 404). As put forward by Appleton et al. (2008), engaged students are those who perceive the learning process positively and put more effort into achieving the course materials. Concerning the importance of student engagement in educational contexts, Wang et al. (2011) submitted that student engagement is tied with higher achievement, continual development, and academic success, mainly due to the fact that engaged students demonstrate more perseverance and effort in pursuing different phases of learning. As such, identifying internal (i.e., student-related factors) and external factors (teacher-related factors, context-related factors) that are capable of predicting students' engagement in instructional-learning contexts is of high importance. In this regard, several studies have been carried to examine the role of student-related factors (e.g., Skinner and Pitzer, 2012; Yin and Wang, 2016; Zhen et al., 2017) and context-related factors (e.g., Chong et al., 2010; Raftery et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2019; Teng and Wang, 2021) in students' level of engagement. Additionally, some empirical and theoretical bodies of research have been dedicated to the role of teacher-related factors in students' learning engagement (e.g., Gibbs and Powell, 2012; Van Uden et al., 2013, 2014; Dewaele and Li, 2021; Jiang and Zhang, 2021; Zheng, 2021). However, a significant portion of studies on teacher-related factors have investigated the effects of teacher interpersonal factors on students' engagement, hence, the role of teachers' personal factors such

as self-efficacy and collective efficacy as potential antecedents of student learning engagement has remained elusive in educational research.

One of the important teacher personal factors is teacher self-efficacy, which refers to “teachers’ beliefs about their personal capabilities to perform their duties in the classroom” (Klassen et al., 2010, p. 466). As put forward by Stephens (2015), self-efficacious teachers are able: (a) to devise and employ alternative English teaching methods when the desired learning outcomes are not achieved; and (b) to cope with a challenging situation by manipulating the situation’s emotional and cognitive processes. In contrast, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy are inclined to dwell on their inadequacies and overestimate the difficulty of challenging situations. When it comes to the significance of EFL teacher’ self-efficacy, there is a large consensus among the scholars that self-efficacious teachers are more capable of motivating their pupils to become involved in the learning process (Martin et al., 2012; Van Uden et al., 2013, 2014; Papa, 2015). Another prime instance of teacher personal factors is teacher collective efficacy, referring to “the beliefs teachers possess in their collective capabilities to influence the lives of their students” (Klassen et al., 2010, p. 465). According to Khong et al. (2017), teachers’ positive perceptions regarding faculty members’ capability to fulfill their professional responsibilities can favorably impact students’ engagement, achievement, and academic success.

Despite the significance of teachers’ sense of efficacy (i.e., individual and collective efficacy) in enhancing student engagement (Papa, 2015; Khong et al., 2017), only a few studies have been carried out to probe into the association between these variables. Moreover, to our knowledge so far, no review study has been done to elaborate on the definitions of EFL teacher’ self-efficacy, teacher collective efficacy, and student engagement, as well as the association between these constructs. In view of the factors afore-mentioned, the current study attempts to fill this gap by reviewing the existing definitions of teacher efficacy and student engagement and highlighting the positive connection between these valuable constructs.

Student Engagement

Given the complexity and multidimensionality of “*Student Engagement*,” scholars described this concept in various ways. Hu and Kuh (2002), for instance, simply defined student engagement as the amount of effort students dedicate to learning English tasks. Skinner et al. (2009) further conceptualized student engagement as “the quality of students’ participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, individuals, aims, and place that comprise it” (p. 496). In a more comprehensive definition, Zepke and Leach (2010) characterized student engagement as “one’s cognitive investment in, active participation in, and emotional commitment to his/her learning” (p. 169).

In an attempt to characterize different dimensions of student engagement, Schaufeli et al. (2002) broke this construct into three main components of “*Vigour*,” “*Dedication*,” and “*Absorption*.” Vigour is referred to the amount of perseverance and effort students demonstrate in executing their academic

responsibilities. Dedication, as the second component, is tied with students’ sense of pride, enthusiasm, and inspiration for participating in classroom activities. Finally, absorption is related to students’ feeling of being thoroughly immersed in learning tasks/activities. In a different classification, Fredricks et al. (2004) categorized the concept of student engagement across three dimensions of “*Cognitive*,” “*Behavioral*,” and “*Emotional*.” According to Fredricks et al. (2004), students’ cognitive engagement is intertwined with their tendency and inclination to learn complicated issues. To them, students’ behavioral engagement is related to their active and continuous participation in academic activities. Emotional engagement, as the last dimension, relates to students’ positive reactions to their classmates, instructors, and learning environment (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy refers to “one’s beliefs in his/her capability to organize and execute the courses of action required producing given attainment” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). More specifically, “*Teacher Self-efficacy*” is characterized as teachers’ personal beliefs about their potential to accomplish their academic responsibilities (Klassen et al., 2014). That is, self-efficacious teachers are those who believe in themselves and their professional capabilities. As put forward by Sarfo et al. (2015), the construct of teacher self-efficacy encompasses three major dimensions of “*efficacy for student engagement*,” “*efficacy for instructional strategies*,” and “*efficacy for classroom management*.” As such, self-efficacious teachers are more successful at engaging students, employing instructional strategies, and managing classroom environment (Sarfo et al., 2015).

Teacher Collective Efficacy

The concept of collective efficacy is generally defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required producing given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). Similarly, “*Teacher Collective Efficacy*” refers to teachers’ conviction in the collective capacity of faculty members to positively affect students’ learning outcomes (Goddard et al., 2015). According to Chong et al. (2010), school and university administrators can enhance teachers’ sense of collective efficacy. That is, educational institutions whose instructors demonstrate higher sense of collective efficacy may have more supportive administrators.

The Effects of Teachers’ Self- and Collective Efficacy on Students’ Engagement

In an attempt to illustrate the significance of teachers’ self- and collective efficacy, Papa (2015) stated that efficacious teachers who believe in their own and their group’s professional capabilities are more inclined to implement new instructional methods and approaches which encourage students to take part in classroom activities. In another attempt, Stephens (2015) explicated that teachers with a stronger sense of academic efficacy are more inclined “to engage in pedagogy that is characterized by positive, proactive, and solution-focused orientations, resulting

in increased student engagement” (p. 2). Similarly, Van Uden et al. (2013) postulated that instructors' sense of efficacy can favorably influence their “*affective orientation*” toward their pupils, leading to higher student engagement. Furthermore, Sarfo et al. (2015) also proposed that efficacious teachers commonly exhibit higher persistence and effort, which inspire students to become engaged in the learning process.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Given the pivotal function of teachers in enhancing students' engagement (Stephens, 2015), several scholars have attempted to examine the effects of teacher-related factors on learning engagement. However, the majority of these studies have focused on teachers' interpersonal factors and their associations with student engagement (e.g., Derakhshan, 2021; Zhang, 2021; Zheng, 2021). Hence, a small number of studies have explored the impact of teacher personal factors such as self- and collective efficacy on students' academic engagement (e.g., Van Uden et al., 2013, 2014; McDavid et al., 2018). Van Uden et al. (2014) studied the role of teachers' beliefs about personal and collective capabilities in enhancing students' engagement. In doing so, 200 teachers and 2,288 took part in this study. Employing digital questionnaires, the participants' viewpoints and attitudes toward the association between teachers' sense of efficacy and learning engagement were gathered. The analysis of participants' responses revealed that teacher efficacy can dramatically and positively predict students' learning engagement. In a similar vein, McDavid et al. (2018) investigated teachers' perceptions regarding the function of their self-efficacy in their students' academic engagement. To do so, 148 faculty members were asked to complete some online questionnaires. Analyzing participants' responses to the questionnaires, the researchers found a favorable association between learning engagement and teachers' sense of efficacy. That is, participants perceived teacher sense of efficacy as a strong antecedent of students' academic engagement.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this review study, the constructs of teacher self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and student engagement were thoroughly characterized. Further, the effects of teachers' individual and collective efficacy on students' engagement were illuminated

through the use of empirical and theoretical evidence. With regard to the existing evidence, it can be inferred that teachers' sense of individual and collective efficacy can positively influence students' learning engagement. However, it is worth noting that teachers' individual as well as collective efficacy have been neglected in enhancing students' learning engagement. To some extent, this finding can be illuminative and inspiring for both pre- and in-service teachers in any educational institution (i.e., school, university, etc.). Given the significance of teachers' individual and collective efficacy in fostering students' engagement (Stephens, 2015), teachers who aspire to increase their students' engagement should believe in their own and their colleagues' professional capabilities. Additionally, this review study has an important implication for administrators. As put forward by Chong et al. (2010), supportive administrators are able to dramatically enhance teachers' sense of collective efficacy. As such, educational administrators are expected to support their teachers in improving their collective efficacy, which is essential for increased learning engagement. Moreover, researchers can continue conducting studies on the role of self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and other teacher-student interpersonal variables (Fathi et al., 2020; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

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Predictors of Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Teaching EFL: An Examination of "Nateness" and Teachers' Training

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The study aimed to establish the link between teacher training and "nateness" on teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English as a second language. By applying a teacher's sense of efficacy scale, we measured the self-efficacy of a total of 281 foreign teachers in Chengdu, China. We adopted MANOVA and tested the influence of "nateness" and teachers' training on teachers' self-efficacy. Our analysis shows that while being a native speaker does not necessarily influence a teacher's self-efficacy, trained teachers have higher self-efficacy than untrained teachers. Thus, the current study lends credence to the view that language proficiency should not be allied with being a language teacher. Instead, educational administrators and policymakers should focus on language teachers' professional development rather than emphasizing the native/non-native teachers' distinction.

Keywords: EFL teacher, teacher's self-efficacy, teaching English (as a foreign language), teacher training, nateness perception

INTRODUCTION

English remains the first global language and a popular international language in China (Gil, 2011). As a result, understanding and speaking English is an added advantage to many Chinese in light of the new 'one belt and one road' policy, one of many policies that seek to extend China's global relationship with the rest of the world (Aoyama, 2016). However, connecting China to other countries will require the English language for communication since the Chinese language does not enjoy wide acceptance. For this reason, the study of English is a compulsory subject from the basic to the tertiary levels in China (Braine, 2012). There is, therefore, a significant burden on authorities to meet the demand for English teachers for academic and non-academic purposes. According to Zheng and Zhang (2014), in 2013 alone, there were about 300 million Chinese learning English in China, with only about 100,000 foreign English teachers. Similarly, there was a 298% growth in China's English education market between 2016 and 2017 alone, from ¥123.6 billion to ¥489.7 billion (Farrell, 2018). Generally, there is an imbalance between the demand for, and the supply of qualified professional English teachers, compelling schools to fill this gap with unqualified persons.

Two main channels exist for recruiting teachers to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in China: State-sponsored programs in TEFL and free training for Bachelor's or Master's holders of translation or English literature (Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). In the absence of qualified foreign

teachers, unqualified foreigners are used. In such situations, peoples' belief in their abilities and capabilities play a significant role in determining these teachers' output.

Self-efficacy plays a vital part in teaching because of its ability to either help or hinder performance for both professional and non-professional teachers arriving in a new environment (Bandura, 2010). In this study, a professional teacher refers to one, who, having gone through an organized and certified program or having satisfactorily completed a prescribed course of training at a higher education institution, or such other course or courses which educational stakeholders determine as satisfying requirements for classification as a teacher, is duly qualified to carry out the duties of a teacher/educator. In this paper, we use "professional teacher" and "trained teacher" interchangeably. As part of its culture of learning, the typical approach to TEFL in China has been a combination of the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods (Hu, 2002). This is mainly characterized by cross-linguistic comparisons and a detailed study of grammar by memorizing vocabulary and sentence structure. There is a direct contrast with communicative language teaching (CLT), primarily employed in English language teaching and learning. In this teaching method, meaning is primary, and the focus should be on teaching communicative functions, rather than only linguistic knowledge and the capacity to use structural patterns (Brown, 2001). The CLT approach is considered an alien methodology at variance with the traditional Chinese teaching method condensed into the '4 R's and 4 M's' (Brown, 2001, p. 100). The four Rs are reception, repetition, reproduction, and review. The four M's represent memorization, meticulousness, mastery, and mental activeness. In Hu (2005) view, the significant factors that pose a potential conflict in CLT's application in the Chinese culture of learning are the embodiment of different and opposing philosophies in teaching and learning. Therefore, teaching and learning in China are different from the West; hence, teachers need to grasp the country's teaching philosophy to succeed. Thus, foreign teachers' self-efficacy will play a vital role in successful teaching.

An emerging argument is that target language proficiency should not be associated with nativeness; rather, adequate preparedness through training should be one of the main criteria for assessing native and non-native teachers (Medgyes, 1992; Braine, 2010). Choi and Lee (2016) suggest that professional training and target language proficiency form the sources of teacher's self-confidence, which are vital requirements for second language teachers. They note that the preferred teacher has both traits, whereas teachers with insufficient levels are least preferred. These claims are supported by the existence of literature on language teacher's proficiency (Hoang and Wyatt, 2021), teachers' training (Shum et al., 2020), and self-efficacy.

While admitting there have been studies in the Chinese setting (Cheung, 2008) similar to the current endeavor, none of them combines the bundle of variables used in the current study. Given that an estimated 80% of language teachers are non-native English speakers (Braine, 2018), we follow Choi and Lee (2016) conclusion and test whether being trained and/or being a native speaker of the target language influences the three dimensions of self-efficacy. The study, therefore, presents a

two-fold dimension to understanding the effects of English language teachers' self-efficacy as far as China is concerned. Using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), the paper assesses these relationships to establish whether teachers' training and/or nativeness result in higher self-efficacy and better performance.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, by Bandura (2010, p. 1), "is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce chosen levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives." To Maddux (2002), self-efficacy is what individuals believe they can do with their abilities and skills under certain conditions. Teacher self-efficacy may be explained as teachers' personal beliefs in carrying out activities through adequate planning and organizing to attain set educational goals (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010). It is also about how teachers utilize their competence and professional discipline to influence students' behavior, knowledge, and values (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). It thus depicts what teachers can do in a particular situation, not what they have accomplished or why it was accomplished in the past (Goddard et al., 2004). The self-efficacy of teachers involves the choice of activities, effort, and persistence. People with minimal self-efficacy are unlikely to engage in challenging tasks. In contrast, individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy are more persistent and enduring even when they face difficulties.

The work by the Research and Development (RAND) corporation is the foundation of teachers' self-efficacy. It is the degree to which teachers believed in whether their ability to take charge of reinforcement was within their remit or the environment (Rotter, 1966). Student motivation and performance were presumed to be significant reinforcers for teaching behaviors. In the RAND researchers' view, the expectation is that high levels of teachers' self-efficacy could strongly influence students' motivation and achievement. A second view of the theory emerged as a result of the research of Bandura (1977a). In his view, teachers' self-efficacy is a cognitive process in which individuals build self-beliefs about their ability to accomplish a task within acceptable limits. This sense of self-belief controls the energy expended and the endurance and persistence required to face and overcome challenges. These two views of the theory form the underpinnings of teachers' self-efficacy but undoubtedly create gaps in the theory's clarity. Some of these issues border on whether teachers' self-efficacy is a one-size-fits-all or specific to certain conditions and whether the theory needs refinement to capture other vital assessment areas (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers' self-efficacy is also related to classroom organization, levels of persistence on a task, instructional strategies, questioning techniques, innovation, degree of risk-taking, management of students' on-task time, and teacher feedback to students (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). The TSES concentrates on classroom management, student engagement

activities, and instructional strategies as the three cardinal areas of teachers' self-efficacy.

Hoy and Weinstein (2015) describe classroom management as an overarching term comprising creating a productive, orderly learning environment to influence students' behavioral changes and guide them to accomplish their objectives. Recent studies and theoretical developments have resulted in a refinement of classroom management along two continuums: structure versus chaos; and autonomy support versus control (Jang et al., 2010). Furthermore, countless novice teachers believe that handling their classroom is a precondition to teaching content (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2016); nonetheless, studies have demonstrated that novice teachers have weaker classroom climates than experienced teachers. Gibson and Dembo (1984) suggest that classroom management strategies influence teachers' perceptions of their competence. Teachers with higher perceptions of self-efficacy tend to have better-planned classrooms, more organized, student-centered, accommodating, and amenable to new ideas (Anthony and Kritsonis, 2007) and highly effective in using classroom management skills (Lazarides et al., 2020). Teachers with less classroom management skills tend to have classrooms characterized by aggression (Shernoff and Kratochwill, 2007). Higher self-efficacy beliefs were more associated also with higher ratings of closeness and lower ratings of conflict with students across all grades (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Henson (2001) finds that more practical teachers, use the enhanced classroom management approach (seating, creating routines, instituting reward systems, using technology), while Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) report that a teacher's self-efficacy determines his/her inclination to work with students with difficulties instead of referring them to special education programs. Similarly, Landrum and Kauffman (2015), and Putri and Refnaldi (2020) consider the use of rewards and punishment as alternatives in managing classrooms. They intimate that teachers' main reason for adopting such an approach is to ensure their efficiency since it is an easy way of managing a student's misbehavior, giving teachers a feeling of control.

Bandura (2010) proposes four self-efficacy sources: mastery, vicarious experiences, physiological disposition, and social persuasion. According to Goddard et al. (2004), mastery experience is the most common and direct self-efficacy source. Behavior, personal and environmental factors influence self-efficacy (Bandura, 2010). Mastery experience continuously dominates as a strong force in nurturing teachers' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997a). Engaging students in classroom lessons is a measure of mastery experience. Therefore, there is a significant reinforcement of teachers' self-efficacy when observing students involved in in-class activities. When students have low interests or are not engaged, teachers' responsibilities increase (Ross et al., 1996), undermining their sense of efficacy.

Self-efficacy is specific to each situation and is applied differently among individuals. For example, teachers' self-efficacy in a classroom may vary according to the subject taught and the students' level. Individuals differ in how they nurture their self-efficacy and the intensity of such nurturing within their specialty area (Bandura, 2010). For example, a

teacher could have high self-efficacy in classroom management but low self-efficacy in student engagement activities. Therefore, the existence of a multi-purpose measure of perceived self-efficacy is a mirage. According to Bandura (1977b), the "one-size-fits-all" method usually has incomplete predictive and explanatory values because the items in an all-purpose test may have little or no bearing on the task. Moreover, generalized scales ordinarily neglect an individual's specific demands and situations to serve all needs, leading to ambiguity in measurement.

The predisposition of teachers, influenced by their initial preparation, physical and emotional condition, and external factors such as the background and demeanor of colleagues, contribute to the level of self-efficacy (Schnuck et al., 2014). In addition, teachers' qualities such as sex, grade, level taught, and experience also play a significant role in determining their self-efficacy (Berger et al., 2018). Generally, the ability to succeed raises teachers' self-efficacy, while failure decreases it.

In the literature, two major scopes of teachers' perceived efficacy (TES) are discussed: General Teaching Efficacy (GTE) and Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). PTE signifies a teacher's belief about their ability to change a students' performance, while GTE encompasses the teachers' beliefs about the influence of external factors and the teacher's ability to affect students' performance. Conceptual questions have been raised mostly about the GTE, which focuses more on teachers' ability to influence outcomes and is noted as a measure of locus of control (Rotter, 1966), a justification for its inaccurate measurement of self-efficacy (Faez and Karas, 2017). However, the development of what is currently known as the teacher's sense of efficacy scale (TSES) has improved the methodological concerns in the TES (Wyatt, 2014).

According to Wheatley (2002), doubt and uncertainty are sometimes beneficial to a person's self-efficacy. The foundation of Wheatley's challenge to Bandura (1997b) idea is that self-efficacy doubts are necessary for teachers' learning and improvement processes. For example, this uncertainty could emanate from a test on teachers' beliefs about their current tasks. To mitigate the impact of teacher's self-efficacy doubts, Wheatley (2002) proposes follow-up coaching.

Native and Non-native Language Speakers

The main criterion for describing a person as a native speaker considers the circumstances of acquisition; thus, a native speaker is perceived as someone who acquires a language at childhood (Davies, 2003). Native language represents "the language a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he or she is living" (Richard, 1985, p. 241). This means that it is possible to be a native speaker of two or more languages if acquired early in childhood.

Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, (2001) think that "nativeness" is a social construct rather than a linguistic category. The description of English speakers as "native" or "non-native" speakers hinges upon several social considerations, such as the notions of what and how a native speaker should look or sound like. To Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, p. 36), "the distinction between a native and

non-native speaker of English — long taken for granted in linguistics — is being increasingly called into question in World English research.”

Parental guidance affects language development for native speakers, as language learning begins through engagement with caregivers and parents. According to Gass et al. (2010), being exposed to a language through language input and instruction and socialization with, for instance, English-speaking peers helps develop the language. According to Kachru (1997), this category comprises speakers who usually set the standards for English-language proficiency, particularly those from countries where English is the native language for most people, such as the US and the UK. Following this, Kachru (1997) proposes three descriptions of English speakers around the world. Countries that recognize English as a native language are referred to as the Inner Circle (e.g., Canada, Britain, Australia, Ireland, North America). The Outer Circle treats English as a second language or an official language (e.g., India, Malaysia, Ghana, South Africa, Philippines). The Expanding Circle are the countries that accept English as a foreign language (e.g., China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia). Based on this classification, citizens of countries belonging to the outer and expanding circles are non-native speakers.

Non-native speakers either speak or learn English as a second language (e.g., Netherlands) or as a foreign language (e.g., China) (Kachru, 1997). A non-native speaker does not have the opportunity to develop through the initial processes of native speakers. It has been claimed that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) face problems in terms of a lack of confidence and students' biased attitude (Reis and Johnson, 2010), even though they are the majority of the English language teachers. Studies insist that foreign language teachers should hear, understand, speak, read, and write in the target language with a minimum proficiency level, either advanced or higher (Omaggio and Higgs, 1984). The command of a language is a mark of a good teacher. Teaching qualifications, exposure to native speakers, and living in an English-speaking country all affect teachers' knowledge of and self-image regarding the language; the higher the NNEST's proficiency in English, the more confident they become (Reves and Medgyes, 1994).

The goal of learning English varies in every country. For example, it is used primarily for communication in Venezuela, whereas it is for business communication in China. In Venezuela, upon graduation, EFL teachers are hired to teach in high schools without passing an exam or obtaining a certificate that shows their English competency (Chacón, 2005). Venezuela, also, places great emphasis on descriptive linguistics. Thus, the study of language at the sentence level overlooks the social nature of language as a means of communication and interaction (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). Generally, teachers in Venezuela may not acquire the communicative competence to perform in the four primary language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. Without this competency, teachers find themselves unable to use communicative language teaching (CLT) in their English classes (Li, 1998) as they do not consider themselves competent in English and tend to have a low sense of self-efficacy. In Hong Kong, it was realized that NNESTs were influential in

pedagogy but were found to be weak linguistically. On the other hand, NESTs had a perceived linguistic strength but had pedagogical weaknesses (Ma, 2012).

Inadequate language knowledge can influence the teacher's self-esteem and professional status and interfere with simple teaching procedures. Perceived language proficiency is of concern to NNESTs and impacts their professional self-esteem and confidence (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). CLT's implementation requires EFL teachers to be competent in the English language to teach it in Iran. EFL teachers are expected to use English with functional ability in communicating across language skills (Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). Research points to perceived language proficiency as an essential factor for NNEST since it impacts their professional confidence and self-esteem (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999).

In concluding this section, we adopt the words “native” and “non-native,” mostly from Kachru (1997). Native English speakers are considered mainly those who use English as their first and mother tongue and are recognized as such. On the other hand, non-native speakers have another language as their mother tongue or L1 and have studied English as a second or foreign language and sometimes adopt it as an official language. Based on the foregoing, we hypothesize that:

H1: Professionally trained teachers have higher self-efficacy than untrained teachers.

H2: Native English-speaking teachers have higher self-efficacy than non-native English teachers.

METHODS

Participants

The study population is foreigners in China, with the sample being foreign English language teachers in kindergartens and training schools living in Chengdu. Language Training Schools (popularly called training schools) in the Chinese context are designed for persons who are interested in out of formal school English language training. They train persons of all ages to speak, read and write in English. The participants have taught or teach English in public and private kindergartens and English language training schools. The recruitment of the study group was first through contacts with training schools and convenience sampling. Next, an online questionnaire was distributed to principals of training schools contacted as well as general and known teachers' social media platforms, with specific guidelines on the target groups. In all, two hundred and eighty-one (281) questionnaires were returned out of an expected number of 400, representing a response rate of 61.8%. The variables were measured using self-reported assessments.

The study adopted and modified the 12 item Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) proposed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), which is used not only for general teaching but also for language teaching (Chacón, 2005; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008; Swanson, 2012; Clark, 2016; Berger et al., 2018; Azari Noughabi and Amirian, 2021; Gumah et al., 2021). Although other self-efficacy scales exist specifically for language teachers, such as the Second/Foreign Language Teacher Efficacy Scale (S/FLTES) developed and used

by Swanson (Swanson, 2012; Url and Swanson, 2012), the S/FLTES is still new and needs further development and testing on a more extensive and diverse S/FL teaching population. The TSES was considered appropriate because of the aspects of teaching that it measures and its extensive use and validity. Bandura (2006) points out that self-efficacy scales should measure what they purport to measure and have both discriminative and predictive validity. Hence the reason for the modification. Statement such as *I am able to calm down a student who is noisy and disruptive in my English class* (classroom management), *I can motivate students who show low interest in learning English* (student engagement), and *I can use a variety of assessment strategies in my English class* (instructional strategies) constituted the measurement items. Respondents were thus mandated to indicate their level of agreement to each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The measurement of teacher training was executed through answers to a self-reported assessment such as *Have you gone through formal teacher training?*, which required a “yes” or “no” answer. Formal teacher training means being trained for not less than 1 year in instructional and methodological approaches to teaching based on a specific country’s accepted training curriculum. This does not necessarily mean being trained only to teach a language but could include other subjects while excluding online TESOL/TEFL training.

Similarly, “nativeness” was measured by answering “yes” or “no” to the question, *Is English the first language or the mother tongue (L1) of your country?* In response to this question, respondents were expected to indicate whether they were born and bred in a native English-speaking country and/or have English as a first language (L1). Again, this shows whether English is their native language or not based on the operational definition.

Reliability and Internal Consistency

In testing the reliability of the TSES, Cronbach’s alpha (α) values were used. **Table 1** provides an overview of the reliability level emerging from Cronbach’s alpha statistics. Each of the TSES dimensions (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement activities) showed high reliability and internal consistency based on an acceptable standard of $\alpha < 0.70$. An examination of the item-total statistics table indicates that none of the variables examined obtained values < 0.30 .

ANALYSIS

We used MANOVA to compare native English speakers with trained teachers on their self-efficacy levels in teaching English. MANOVA measures several dependent variables (DVs) in a

single experiment, with a better chance of discovering which factor is significant. It also protects against Type I errors that can occur in independent multiple ANOVAs and reveals differences that ANOVA tests cannot discover.

The descriptive statistics in **Table 2** show that more male respondents (62.6%) than females were engaged in teaching jobs in Chengdu-China. Among this group of respondents, the majority (63.4%) were within 25–34 years old, while respondents aged 55 years or more represented only 2%. There was a significant difference between trained and untrained teachers (57.6 and 42.4%, respectively). Trained teachers (162) have teaching experience ranging from less than 5 years (50.6%) to more than 20 years (3.7%). Individuals with TEFL training represented 76.9%, most being native English speakers (59.1%). Foreign teachers had been engaged from less than 6 months to over 5 years, with the majority having worked for between one and 5 years (40.9%).

In **Table 3**, we show the relation between the variables of interest in a correlation matrix. All other variables were significant except for nativeness and student engagement activities that did not show any statistical significance. Thus, the level of correlation does not pose any collinearity problem.

The descriptive statistics presented in **Table 4** contain the overall and group means, standard deviations, and the results for each independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV). The Table shows a higher mean score for trained teachers who are native speakers in classroom management (29.11) and a mean score of 29.46 in instructional strategies for teachers who are neither untrained nor native speakers.

A homogeneity test using Box’s M-test of equality of covariance matrices showed a p -value of 0.03, which means significant differences exist among the independent variables (IV) in the covariance matrices. This is against the assumption of MANOVA, but the sample size and the unequal values of each observation could explain the discrepancy. Since the assumption is violated, we used Pillai’s Trace for the multivariate test (Olson, 1976). This test is considered a powerful and robust statistic for general use, particularly for departures from assumptions such as assumption of homogeneity of variance. It is also a good choice when you have uneven cell sizes or small sample sizes (Pillai, 1955) We controlled for age, sex, and education to test the IVs’ effect on the DVs. **Table 5** shows the multivariate test results, indicating significant relations between trained teachers and the IV ($F = 5.17^{***}$, observed power = 95.9%), and the DV and the IV ($F = 1.45$, observed power = 51.2%). This shows that nativeness did not influence self-efficacy.

We noted that there was a positive relationship between trained teachers and instructional strategies ($F = 8.92$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.032$, power to detect the effect = 90.9%). Classroom management was also positively influenced by training ($F = 6.79$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.025$, power to detect the effect = 83%). There was a statistical significance in the relationship between trained teachers and student engagement activities ($F = 14.52$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.051$, power to detect the effect = 98.4%). Based on these findings, the combined effect, as shown in **table 5**, supports **H1**. The second IV (nativeness) did not produce any statistical significance in its

TABLE 1 | Reliability statistics.

TSES	No. of items	Alpha (α)	GFI	TLI	CFI
Instructional strategies	4	0.84	0.928	0.980	0.985
Classroom management	4	0.92	0.857	0.920	0.936
Student engagement activities	4	0.91	0.898	0.952	0.966

TABLE 2 | Background information of respondents.

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	176	62.6
	Female	105	37.4
Age (years)	Below 25	34	12.1
	25–34	178	63.4
	35–44	52	18.5
	45–54	13	4.6
	55 and above	4	1.4
Education	High school	6	2.1
	Diploma	13	4.6
	Bachelor	145	51.6
	Masters	114	40.6
Years on the Job	Below 6 months	63	22.4
	6–12 months	82	29.2
	Above 13 months but below 60 months	115	40.9
	60 months and above	21	7.5
Have you gone through formal teacher training?	PhD	3	1.1
	No	119	42.4
If yes, how many years of teaching experience do you have?	Yes	162	57.6
	Less than 5	82	50.6
Do you have a TEFL certificate	5–10	39	24.0
	10–15	19	11.7
	15–20	16	9.9
	More than 20	6	3.7
	No	65	23.1
Is English the first language or mother tongue (L1) of your country?	Yes	216	76.9
	No	115	40.9
	Yes	166	59.1

N = 281

TABLE 3 | Correlation between variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Trained teacher	1				
2 Native speaker	0.134**	1			
3 Instructional Strategies	0.199***	0.103*	1		
4 Classroom Management	0.188***	0.096*	0.576***	1	
5 Student Engagement	0.220***	0.033	0.648***	0.463***	1

Note: indicates significance at *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

TABLE 4 | Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Trained	Native	Mean	SD	Frequency
Instructional Strategies	No	Yes	28.27	3.602	87
		No	29.46	3.659	46
	Yes	Yes	29.97	3.808	77
		No	30.45	3.468	71
Classroom Management	No	Yes	26.41	5.290	87
		No	28.43	5.739	46
	Yes	Yes	29.11	4.822	77
		No	28.96	4.269	71
Student Engagement	No	Yes	26.95	4.488	87
		No	26.93	5.908	46
	Yes	Yes	28.60	4.132	77
		No	29.55	4.249	71

Note: N = 281.

TABLE 5 | Multivariate tests results.

Variable	Value	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed power
Trained	0.055	5.17	0.002	0.05	0.959
Native	0.016	1.45	0.227	0.01	0.512

Note: significance level at p < 0.01.

relationship with the three dimensions of self-efficacy. For this reason, we conclude that **H2** is not supported.

We used the tests of between-subject effects (**Table 6**) to confirm the hypotheses by checking the IV's individual effect on the DV.

DISCUSSION

Trained foreign teachers become the preferred candidates for employment opportunities because of their knowledge and experience. In other words, they have better teaching skills and understand both child psychology and teaching methodologies based on teacher training modules. A requirement in this section for issuing a work permit or a work visa for a teaching job is that the applicant should have a teaching certificate (Zheng and Zhang, 2014). From the analysis, trained teachers have higher self-efficacy levels than untrained teachers. This finding is consistent with prior studies that have

TABLE 6 | Tests of between-subjects effects.

Source	Dependent variable	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed power ^a
Corrected model	IS	40.66	3.07	0.01	0.06	0.95
	CM	64.92	2.57	0.02	0.05	0.91
	SE	95.71	4.66	0.00	0.09	0.99
Intercept	IS	4,839.41	365.75	0.00	0.57	1.00
	CM	4,920.50	195.06	0.00	0.42	1.00
	SE	3,375.89	164.40	0.00	0.37	1.00
Sex	IS	4.76	0.36	0.55	0.01	0.16
	CM	10.24	0.40	0.52	0.01	0.17
	SE	31.24	1.52	0.22	0.01	0.34
Age	IS	3.63	0.27	0.60	0.01	0.15
	CM	0.06	0.01	0.96	0.01	0.10
	SE	13.35	0.65	0.42	0.01	0.21
Education	IS	27.83	2.10	0.15	0.01	0.42
	CM	1.08	0.04	0.84	0.01	0.11
	SE	191.25	9.31	0.00	0.03	0.92
Trained	IS	118.08	8.92	0.00	0.03	0.91
	CM	171.36	6.79	0.01	0.02	0.83
	SE	298.22	14.52	0.00	0.05	0.98
Native	IS	24.70	1.86	0.17	0.01	0.39
	CM	50.72	2.01	0.16	0.01	0.41
	SE	0.14	0.01	0.93	0.01	0.10

Note: significance level at $p < 0.01$.

established that training and professional development influence teachers' self-efficacy (Kraut et al., 2016; Clark and Newberry, 2019). It also supports Bandura (1997a) assertion that mastery experience is the dominant source of self-efficacy, which can also be attained through training. Vicarious experience emanates from observation, which can be achieved among others by watching teaching videos online, identified as a source of preservice teachers' self-efficacy (Karsenti and Collin, 2011). A study by Drago-severson (2002) revealed seven main professional development models for training teachers. These are observation, study groups, mentoring, individual guidance, in-service training, improvement process, and action research/inquiry. These added training models could make the difference between trained and untrained teachers. Kraut et al. (2016) study confirm the foregoing claim by establishing a positive relationship between professional training, teachers' self-efficacy, and performance. Moreover, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, (2009) assert that follow-up coaching promotes mastery experience, influencing higher self-efficacy to implement new strategies. Therefore, it is no surprise that trained teachers have higher self-efficacy and thus an edge over untrained teachers.

Our study however shows no difference in the level of self-efficacy among native and non-native English teachers in the three TSES examined. In Korea, Choi and Lee (2016) found that teachers with minimum proficiency were highly unlikely to increase their English use in the classrooms even with high self-efficacy. Also, with low self-efficacy and high proficiency, English will not be taught to a desirable level. In TEFL, Chacón (2005), and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) confirm that teachers' self-efficacy varies based on tasks and teaching expectations and

teachers' self-assessment of their language proficiency. In this study, one reason for this trend is that NNESTs could utilize several language teaching methods. Medgye (2011) calls it learner models, while Ehrman et al. (1990) call it language learning strategies. This superiorizes NNEST over NEST in most cases. Also, as Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) revealed, although NNESTs face prejudice, resulting in them losing confidence in teaching, they could combine the various teaching methods within their reach to enhance their self-efficacy and performance. In the study by Reves and Medgyes (1994, p. 361), NNESTs showed "deeper insights into the English language" and seemed more qualified than NESTs. They showed more responsiveness towards their students and could predict the difficulties faced by their students. Discourse skills provides the means to teach English through English. This includes the ability to maintain communication in English (fluent, accurate and comprehensible) and more importantly, the extent to which the teacher can use English as a medium to teach English (Richards, 2017). Eslami and Fatahi (2008) study revealed a positive link between teachers' perceived level of language proficiency and sense of self-efficacy. Moreover, the higher the teacher's sense of self-efficacy the more they tend to employ communicative-based methods in their classes, and the proclivity to focus more on meaning rather than accuracy. This supports the argument that target language proficiency should not be associated with nativeness and that nativeness does not necessarily imply that teaching a language is the preserve of native speakers.

Evidence from various countries provide different findings on whether language proficiency levels affect teachers' self-efficacy in

teaching English. While others indicate NESTs' strength in linguistic abilities, NNESTs have strength in pedagogy. In the view of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a foreign language teacher should have adequate competence in the hearing, understanding, speaking, reading, and writing of the target language (Omaggio and Higgs, 1984), which are the considered strengths of a NEST. In support of our findings too, Medgye (1992) notes that school administrators in France and England do not use nativeness as a basis for recruiting teachers. The study has identified no difference in the self-efficacy of NEST and NNEST in the teacher efficacy areas examined among the population studied.

CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that professionally trained and untrained teachers will continue to teach English in China, as will native and non-native English speakers because of the severe shortage of language teachers. The present study indicates that professionally trained teachers have a significant advantage in TEFL in China, confirming the findings of other professional training and self-efficacy studies. This supports the view that specific personal characteristics can influence self-efficacy. In this case, professional training determines teachers' self-efficacy in TEFL among the study group.

These findings provide evidence to support the theoretical propositions by Pasternak and Bailey (2004) that being prepared pedagogically and linguistically is essential and should be the paramount consideration in comprehending the professional status, growth, and practices of English teachers. Though this conclusion seems obvious, human resource managers should support the development of these skills, through in-service training, online learning, seminars and workshops, to advance their professional growth and development. Indeed, EFL teachers perceive technology as a vital learning tool in the 21st century to enhance pedagogical competence (Siregar et al., 2020). These are effective for promoting mastery experience, translating into higher self-efficacy beliefs which are critical in enhanced performance in classroom management, instructional strategies and student engagement activities.

However, linguistic ability does not mean nativeness. Nativeness and linguistic ability should not be used interchangeably. The two teacher characteristics should be treated separately and not as interchangeable constructs as done in previous research (Swanson, 2012). Levis (2020) makes a similar distinction between intelligibility and nativeness in language teaching and how each principle addresses teaching goals. These unique features are distinct and have varied influences on individuals. Therefore, our findings demonstrate how each characteristic provides a theoretical understanding of the TEFL profession and is a field of study worth considering further.

We recommend that policymakers amend the rules for language schools that require obtaining work permits for foreign teachers before they can teach legitimately. By making the requirements flexible, authorities could monitor

and ensure that teachers who have work permits obtain the required training and certification within a specified period. The government could also identify and provide appropriate training on TEFL while making use of Chinese support staff. Even though studies have shown that schools and parents prefer foreign teachers to local Chinese teachers (see Rao and Yuan, 2016), it is important to restate Swanson (2012) conceptual distinction, namely; that nativeness should not be equated to linguistic ability. Schools and parents should therefore be encouraged to patronize Chinese-trained English teachers to fill existing teaching vacancies. We also recommend blending NEST with NNEST to provide a suitable situation and allow one group to make up for and plug the other's weaknesses (Selvi, 2011; Mannes and Katz, 2020). Despite the different attributes shown by both types of teachers, they complement each other. Students agree that collaborative teaching is better when addressing this dichotomous world of NESTs and NNESTs (Mhd Fauzi and Hashim, 2020). Finally, given that this study is situated in the Chinese cultural-context, and since culture plays a significant role in teachers' perceptions of themselves and their profession, we are constrained in widening the scope of application of the findings of our study. Additionally, the outbreak of Covid-19 limited the use of interviews and other qualitative research approaches in this study. We, therefore, recommend that future studies consider adopting a mixed-methods design in order to understand this phenomenon from another perspective. The insights from such an endeavor will be especially interesting to school administrators and policymakers.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BG: contributed to the design of the study, collected data, and carried out the analysis. The content of the article was also drafted and proofread by the author. NK: contributed to the design of the study, and supported in collecting data. The content of the article was also proofread by the author. PA: contributed to the design of the study, and took part in the data analysis DK; Supported data collect and proofread the final draft of the paper MA: Proofread and edited the final part of the paper.

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The Implications of EFL/ESL Teachers' Emotions in Their Professional Identity Development

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The leading implementers of the curriculum and educational system are teachers, so the success and failure of the educational system depend mainly on its teachers. If teachers have an established professional identity, it leads to the success of the educational system. Professional identity, like other aspects of the teaching and learning process, is influenced by various factors. Investigating this concept requires identifying the factors affecting it. One of the most important factors that influence teachers' professional identity is teachers' emotions. Teachers' emotions also can have a significant impact on teachers' performance. After searching the databases, this review article examines the role of teachers' emotions and their professional identities in English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. This review paper unpacks that factors such as teachers' pedagogical beliefs, their positive and negative emotional experiences, their environmental and cultural factors, and their perceptions and expectations of these conditions could affect their emotions as well as their professional identity. Teachers' identity is shaped through ongoing negotiation and interaction that encompasses their personal and professional lives. Taking these factors into account in teacher training courses might notify teachers of the challenges that they might have in their classrooms and provide them with practical solutions.

Keywords: teachers' professional identity, teachers' emotions, teachers' beliefs, teacher development, teacher education program

INTRODUCTION

Due to the growing globalization and the simultaneous spread of English throughout the world, the study of socio-cultural and political factors of education in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular has become one of the necessities of today's international societies (Kanno and Stuart, 2011; De Costa and Norton, 2017). The purpose of education in today's communities is not only to transfer knowledge from the old generation to the new generation and to strengthen the mental powers of learners but also to develop a comprehensive understanding of effective communication in meaningful ways (Liu and Xu, 2011; Norton and De Costa, 2018). The development of a society and its comprehensive development depend on the educational system of that society and the teachers of that system (Tsui, 2007; Lee et al., 2013). A teacher is one of the key stakeholders of this sensitive profession in any educational system (Derakhshan et al., 2020a). Improving teacher quality is a key element in improving education (Timoštšuk and Ugaste, 2010). However, research shows that

teachers especially EFL/ESL teachers during the first few years of their professional life quit their jobs at high rates. One of the reasons for this could be the lack of a desirable professional identity in the EFL/ESL field of study (Lee and Jo, 2016).

Such development requires interested, compassionate, efficient, professionally qualified, and well-formed EFL/ESL teachers (Karlsson, 2013). Educational policymakers believe that identity is one of the basic pillars of achieving the macro goals of the educational system (Pillen et al., 2013; Henry, 2016). Thus, investigating teachers' professional identity helps us to understand who teachers are and how they operate, and how to move through the various social, cultural, political and economic discourses that have permeated their workplace (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). To investigate an EFL/ESL teacher's professional identity, we must first know what identity is. The teachers' professional identity has been investigated by many researchers since 1970 (Henry, 2016). The origin of the identity of EFL/ESL teachers depends on their education in teacher education programs (Sutherland and Markauskaite, 2012). The interest in investigating identity arises from epistemological and methodological changes from cognitive and psychological approaches of those that design critical and social frameworks of teacher education programs (Stenberg, 2010).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Professional identity, like other aspects in the teaching and learning process, is influenced by a variety of factors inside and outside EFL/ESL teachers, among which their emotions cannot be overlooked. The database searching shows the role of teacher's emotions and their professional identities in EFL/ESL teaching practices.

Teachers' Professional Identity

The concept of identity has different definitions in the literature. Besides, the concept of professional identity is used in various ways in teacher education programs (Lutovac, 2020; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021b). Marcia (2002) defines professional identity as follows: Professional identity is the measurement of personal skills and values related to active employment and exploration, followed by job commitment. Based on this criterion, Marcia divides professional identity into four categories: (1) Successful identity, (2) Early identity, (3) Late identity and (4) Confused identity. Successful identity includes people who are committed to professional goals and values through interaction with the environment and involvement in professional exploration. Early identity refers to those individuals who have committed to professional values and goals through their adaptation to the beliefs and attitudes of others, such as parents and other important people (Lee et al., 2013; Pillen et al., 2013). Late identity refers to the identity of those who seek professional interests, values and perspectives in order to achieve professional commitment. Finally, the confused identity describes individuals who are committed to professional values and goals by engaging in professional exploration. Marcia's quadruple identity is not necessarily a different and exclusive stage of a growing chain. It is not fixed in nature, but it may change over time. Marcia (2002)

refers to the skills and abilities as well as the professional interests of individuals as important indicators in the formation of their professional identity. He points out that if this identity is created, the person will be able to establish a deep and mutual relationship with the environment and society and have a sense of unity and connection about himself and his profession, and also to achieve inner and psychological satisfaction in his teaching environment.

Some studies have linked the concept of professional identity with teachers' concepts or perceptions of themselves (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Chong and Low, 2009; Dang, 2013). These studies have shown that teachers' attitudes about themselves are strongly influenced in determining how they teach, how they progress as teachers and their attitudes toward educational change (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Lutovac, 2020). The formation of professional identity is a topic that is mentioned in many sources as one of the vital points for the success of any language context (Lee and Yin, 2010; Kanno and Stuart, 2011). It is often seen as a struggle because EFL/ESL teachers need to understand different and sometimes competitive perspectives, expectations and roles they must face or adapt to (Cheng et al., 2009; Derakhshan et al., 2020a).

Previous studies have demonstrated the essential role of teaching practice and reflective activities in shaping teachers' identities (Liu and Xu, 2011; Sutherland and Markauskaite, 2012; Norton and De Costa, 2018). Emphasis on professional identity in the early stages of the career can help educators to overcome the multidimensionality and complexity of the teaching profession so that they can contribute to their and students' success in the language environments (Chen, 2019a). If identity is built into the discourses and contexts in which teachers work, teachers' identities can be determined in advance (Tsui, 2007; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). However, it is important to note that identity formation is not a fixed action and does not occur at certain times (Lutovac, 2020). Teachers create their identity through a process of ongoing negotiation, debate, and dialogue that includes both their personal and professional lives (Tsui, 2007).

Therefore, professional identity is an ongoing process in which new experiences and the interpretation of these experiences play a significant role. In general, it is assumed that the development and formation of teacher identity never stops and can be considered a lifelong process (Chong and Low, 2009). In addition, professional identity is influenced by both the person and the context (Dang, 2013). This means that the professional identity of the teacher is not completely unique. Professional teachers are expected to think and act professionally, but no doubt not only their professional characteristics but also their personal and environmental characteristics are involved in their decision making (Pillen et al., 2013; Chang-Kredl and Kingsley, 2014). In general, it is stated that professional identity is dynamic. However, how teachers deal with these characteristics varies depending on the value they place on them personally (Stenberg, 2010). Dang (2013) explains further and believes that teachers' professional identities are clearly not individualized and unchangeable. Language teachers may try to maintain their habits and routines, but they are subconsciously influenced by external factors (Henry, 2016).

From another point of view, the teacher's professional identity includes sub-identities that are more or less harmonious (Chang-Kredl and Kingsley, 2014). Teachers' sub-identities originate from their different contexts and relationships in the language teaching environment. Some of these sub-identities may be broadly linked and can be considered as the core of teachers' professional identities (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021b). However, some of them might be in consistent with other identities, and some of them might be in complete conflict with them. It seems essential for a teacher that these sub-identities be balanced and not in conflict with each other. During primary teacher training, teachers often experience such conflicts.

Although many studies have been conducted on teachers' professional identities, it is not yet possible to determine how and what specific characteristics shape teachers' identities (Lutovac, 2020). Chen (2019a) considered identity as an experience in relation to the three modes of belonging that are interaction, imagination, and balance. There are many theories about how identity is formed, for example, Identity Discourse Theory (IDT) that emphasizes identity is formed mainly through language (De Costa and Norton, 2017). Another view considers identity construction through participation in meaningful social activities (Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019). The formation and growth of professional identity are the processes of maturity of an individual that begin before and during the learning of a profession (for instance as an EFL/ESL teacher) and continue to grow until the individual is recognized as an expert in that profession (Lee and Yin, 2010; Kanno and Stuart, 2011).

One of the factors affecting the teachers' professional identity is individuals' events and past experiences. Experiences from childhood, education, dramatic life events, etc. are effective in developing the EFL/ESL teachers' professional identity. These factors include aspects of life that are outside of the professional context (Chang-Kredl and Kingsley, 2014). In other words, teachers' personal and family life experiences that might include their school experiences and interactions during this period can be considered as one of the effective factors in developing their professional identity.

Another factor that might play a significant role in shaping teachers' professional identity is the teacher education program (Lutovac, 2020). Teacher training programs have an important impact on the formation and development of teachers' professional character. University environment and its leadership style, teachers' teaching experiences, job duties and workplace characteristics, and attachment to the job and the emotional environment of the workplace are among the subcategories of this important factor that are also effective in developing teachers' professional identity. In other words, physical, emotional, and social dimensions of teachers' workplace can motivate or demotivate teacher students (Sutherland and Markauskaite, 2012).

Numerous studies have revealed that in all these processes, from childhood to school experience, from individual life to teacher education programs, and from teacher education programs to the actual teaching environment or classroom, teachers' emotions play a central role in shaping teachers'

professional identity (Cross and Hong, 2012; Chen, 2016; Barcelos and Aragão, 2018; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2019).

Teachers' Emotions

Recently, many studies have been conducted on why paying attention to emotional factors can support the language teaching/learning process (Cowie, 2011; Bahia et al., 2013; Barcelos and Aragão, 2018; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021a; Wang et al., 2021). Dewell and Paulsco (2019) point out that emotions play an astonishing role in English language teaching and learning. This can cause more concerns for EFL/ESL learning environments and the internal interactions of EFL/ESL teachers and learners. It is not always possible to provide a clear definition of this factor. But when dealing with emotions in the second language or foreign language learning process, what we are dealing with is primarily about the emotional, mood, or attitudinal aspects that affect teachers' and learners' behavior (Taxer and Frenzel, 2015; Miri and Pishghadam, 2021). Yoo and Carter (2017) focused on a language class and the impact of teachers' emotions on different aspects of a language class. They believe that success in learning a second or foreign language depends less on the materials, techniques, and language analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between people (teacher-students and students-students relationships) in the classroom.

Inside each teacher includes individual factors such as attitudes, teaching motivations, communication motivations, self-esteem, anxiety, boredom, and teaching methods that greatly affect the way they teach and interact in language classes (Aragao, 2011; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021). In addition to the learner's talent, these factors can affect the development of language skills. These relationships exist not only between students and between teacher-students, but also between teachers and students and the target language and culture (Becker et al., 2014). The importance of emotions in learning a second language and a foreign language cannot be denied (Chen, 2016). Emotions have both positive and negative impacts (Yoo and Carter, 2017). The positive impact of emotions can lead to more effective learning, and the negative impact can close the mind and prevent students from learning (Chen, 2019b). So we need to look for ways to both avoid negative reactions and create a positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom among our students.

There is a relationship between learning and emotional factors in any situation in the classroom, but it is very important in language learning because if students cannot control the language completely, they can be less self-confident and therefore not learn the subject matter well (Cross and Hong, 2012). This can affect learning in many ways. If there are disorders related to learners' identities, learning becomes more complex, so teachers must consider the emotional aspect of language learners and avoid possible obstacles in the cognitive process (Farouk, 2012). For the past two decades, researchers have paid special attention to the teachers' emotions as one of the influential areas in English language classes (Cross and Hong, 2012; Yoo and Carter, 2017; Chen, 2019a). Teachers' professional identity development research has focused more on examining rational factors such as teacher knowledge, teacher skills, and capacities (Golombek and Doran, 2014). Although teachers' emotions are just as important

as other factors, the impact of this factor on the development and formation of teachers' identities and students' learning has generally been overlooked.

According to researchers, emotions are a mysterious human phenomenon that has remained an unsolved mystery to researchers for many years (Lanas and Kelchtermans, 2015; Fathi et al., 2021; Greenier et al., 2021). Horwitz (2001) was the first to speculate that non-native language teachers are prone to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). She believes that anxiety in these teachers arises from the irrational analysis of their abilities in the target language. Contrary to what many studies have suggested, anxious teachers do not always have a foreign language deficit and are less fluent in the target language than their less anxious counterparts. She believes that anxiety is more prevalent among perfectionist teachers in language learning that tend to recognize and magnify small and insignificant shortcomings in the target language production. Horwitz (2001) believes that teachers who pursue an ideal and unrealistic level of expertise in the target language are more likely to be concerned about their competence as second-language or foreign-language teachers. Chen (2019a) stated that emotions as a social construct have been built in the society in which the teacher lives and teaches. Teachers' professional identity stems from conscious or subconscious judgments about their success in achieving goals or maintaining standards or beliefs during interactions.

Research on teachers' emotions has gained more attention in recent years (Nichols et al., 2017). The studies highlighted that teachers' emotions affect all teachers' actions such as teachers' behavior, teaching methods, professional identity, personal life, their educational changes, and students' behavior and learning (Timošćuk and Ugaste, 2012). There are numerous studies conducted on teachers' emotions, most of which were qualitative studies that used semi-structured interviews as their data collection instruments (Bloomfield, 2010; Anttila et al., 2016; Zhu, 2017; Derakhshan et al., 2020b). A quantitative study can also be valuable to the relevant studies. In a more comprehensive view, Farouk (2012) stated that teachers' emotions consist of three levels. The first level is the dynamic mental state of teachers, the second level is the ability of emotional self-regulation, and the third level is their responses to external and internal stimuli.

Teachers' emotions are internal and hidden emotions that are expressed in communication and interaction with students, their parents, and their colleagues. This means that the environment is an integral element of teachers' emotions (Chang-Kredl and Kingsley, 2014). Thus, it can be said that teachers' emotions are directly related to the environment; it means that teachers' emotions do not exist independently in a particular teacher or environment, but are expressed through interaction between the person and the environment (Benesch, 2012; Derakhshan et al., 2019). Understanding and instilling these emotions provides an extraordinary opportunity for teachers to make a real difference in the lives of their students, but it is important to note that these changes also affect the lives and even the performance of the teachers (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011; Chen, 2019b). Teachers' emotions have great potential for both strengthening interpersonal relationships in EFL/ESL classrooms and developing extracurricular activities outside of

the classrooms. This feeling can even create opportunities for students to learn and teach in different situations (Anttila et al., 2016). Lack of positive or negative emotions can limit teacher education processes (Zhu, 2017).

Teacher Professional Identity and Teachers' Emotions

Although researchers have proposed several definitions as well as different measurement criteria for assessing teacher identity (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004), they all agree on two salient features of teacher identity. The first characteristic is that identity is not examined but is a process that is constantly interpreted (Sutherland et al., 2010), it means that a person is not evaluated, but his reaction to an emotional act is analyzed. The second prominent feature is the emergence of identity in the interaction of teachers with students and understanding of the environment in which they work.

Many studies have focused on the professional identity development program (Bijard et al., 2004; Benesch, 2012; Timošćuk and Ugaste, 2012). They have identified four different groups of emotions among foreign language teachers: (1) energy, excitement, and passion; (2) internal conflict, frustration and discouragement; (3) vulnerability, interaction and hope; and (4) generosity, gratitude and inspiration (Zhu, 2017).

The results of these studies show that any change, correction or improvement in education is associated with different emotions. Regarding the identity of novice teachers, Anttila et al. (2016) proved that teaching is not just a technical task and teachers should also be familiar with psychological issues. This acquaintance includes emotional experiences that provide outstanding information about how teachers' identities evolve. Importantly, these studies have proven that there is an interrelationship between emotional experiences and professional identity. Not only the identities of novice teachers affect their actions and emotions, but their actions and emotions also affect the formation of their professional identity (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the literature, the researchers have found that studies that focus on teachers' emotions in EFL/ESL classrooms clearly show positive results for teaching. Recent studies clearly show that good cognitive performance and effective learning are strongly influenced by emotional factors. To achieve successful teaching in the classroom, it is very important that language teachers pay special attention to the emotional factors and teacher students and student-student relationships. A review of these studies showed that the relationship between teacher identity and emotion is not one-way or linear. Rather, they are inextricably linked to each other through a continuous, multidirectional interactive process. For example, when teachers experience certain unpleasant emotions, these emotions may challenge and alter the existing identities related to their beliefs about teaching. This performance is not just about unpleasant emotional experiences. Pleasant emotional experiences may also give rise to

emerging identities (Cross and Hong, 2009). Similarly, incoming emotions can affect how subsequent emotional reactions occur or are interpreted (Yoo and Carter, 2017). Therefore, new methods should be sought for both avoiding negative reactions and creating positive feelings in the classroom among our students.

Implications for EFL/ESL Classrooms and Teacher Education Programs

One important way to pay more attention to the relationship between teachers' emotions and their professional identity is to create new activities in EFL/ESL class. Although there is a lot of content in textbooks, sometimes teachers can generate new activities and investigate their impact on students' emotions. Among the goals that are considered in doing these exercises are to increase students' motivation, improve their self-esteem, help them to achieve a better understanding of each other, and the ability to do group works.

These types of activities can also be very positive for teachers' progress because if teachers work with only one textbook, teaching will not be so creative and interesting for them and their students. Thus, teachers can become more autonomous and sometimes creative and generate activities to improve their professional identity and students' learning (Sutherland et al., 2010). In this way, they can have a closer relationship with their students and their experiences. Cross and Hong (2012) emphasizes that teachers can use humanitarian activities to complete, review, and introduce their existing content. They do not mean abandoning the syllabus but suggest that by adding meaningful and personal activities, they can increase students' interaction and interest and cultivate their positive emotions. In general, teachers should follow their own curriculum, but they can go beyond the textbook and do any exercise that increases productivity and strengthens teaching. Using the knowledge of their students, teachers can create activities that are appropriate and interesting to their students. By understanding their emotions, teachers can also help promote their students' independence and motivation.

In some studies language classes were taught with a focus on the emotional factors, using neither a textbook nor a pre-determined curriculum. In the end, the language skills of the students were clearly better than the control groups, which were taught in conventional ways (Nichols et al., 2017). The students in the experimental groups had significant motivation for the class and also showed significant improvements in factors such as self-confidence, creativity, willingness to speak in front of others, ability to control their own learning, and autonomy. Therefore, positive relationships with students along with paying attention to the development of language skills can create effective and coherent classes.

One of the questions that every teacher may have in teaching is how much they should involve their emotions in the process of managing and controlling the classroom. Two important points should be considered about a teacher's emotions. The first is to moderate and control them. The learning environment is like a chemistry lab for students. They need to learn how to behave in the classroom, without witnessing teachers' explosions.

In other words, teachers should expect any behavior from their students and be prepared to face different situations without reaching the blast point. Second, teachers should base their emotions on students' success and achievements, not on students' emotions in the classroom or their mood. Students' emotions are always fluctuating, and teachers need to control their emotions in the face of these fluctuations. The relationship between learning and emotional factors should be balanced, because, in language learning, if students cannot control the language completely, they might be less confident with themselves and therefore not have a better understanding of the subject matter (Cross and Hong, 2012). It is the same with teachers' emotions toward students' learning. In other words, teachers should not react violently and unpredictably to students' behavior and always treat them with care. It is suggestive that teachers encourage students more, and be more patient and positive in the classroom.

An emotionally stable teacher is someone who can gain students' trust by controlling and communicating with them. Only in the long run can the desired result be achieved if a balance is struck between the emotions of teachers and their students. The success of in EFL/ESL classroom depends more on what goes on between teacher and students (Yoo and Carter, 2017). Behavior cannot be controlled in any situation with fluctuating emotions. Teachers' emotions have been studied from different aspects. Various studies have shown that teachers generally have three categories of characteristics: First, mastery of specialized knowledge of the subject of teaching. Second, mastery of the components of a teacher's job, including teaching with all its components, from lesson plans to active teaching methods and proper assessment methods. However, the third category of characteristics is the character of a teacher or the personal characteristics of a teacher.

It is generally believed that any expert teacher, even if he or she has good skills in teaching methods, will not be an effective teacher unless they add the characteristics of the third type to their teaching. In this view, the influential element that communicates is the teachers' view of their works, which can be very effective in the effectiveness of their activities. The most influential teachers were not preferably teachers who had a lot left in their students' minds from their level of literacy, but teachers who paid a lot of attention to them as human beings, for teachers' identity is always created through a process of ongoing negotiation, debate, and dialogue including their personal and professional lives as well (Tsui, 2007). They have been with their students and the students have felt this companionship.

From the findings of the current study, teacher educators can discover the importance of teachers' emotions in shaping teachers' identities in EFL/ESL classrooms. The study showed that teachers' positive or negative emotional experiences that conflict with novice teachers' beliefs have a significant impact on identity formation. There are some critical points that should be considered in designing any effective teacher education program that promotes teachers' professional identity: (1) teachers' pedagogical beliefs, (2) teachers' positive and negative emotional experiences, (3) the teaching environment and culture,

and finally (4) teachers' understanding and judgment about themselves and these three vital points. Environmental and cultural factors and their relationship with teachers' professional identity can be highlighted in future studies.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Fostering EFL/ESL Students' State Motivation: The Role of Teacher-Student Rapport

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It is maintained that one of the significant determining issues of success is motivation, and enhancing EFL/ESL students' motivation is dominant in cultivating their learning in the classroom. Moreover, teachers are reflected as the most noteworthy figure of any scholastic organization and the positive rapport between students and teachers is significant for learners' state motivation. In line with the investigations of teacher-student rapport, principles from positive psychology (PP), and motivational theories such as self-determination and rhetorical/relational goal theory, the present theoretical review seeks this type of relationship and its effects on learners' motivation. Student-teacher rapport results in progressive practices for learners, as well as superior classroom involvement, and motivation. Subsequently, the helpfulness of findings for teachers, learners, materials developers, and teacher trainers are conferred.

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INTRODUCTION

Assuming a significant part in learners' education and academic achievement, as shown by research, motivation tends to become weaker and weaker as learners become older and transfer to higher grades and education. A particularly significant stage is the change from primary to secondary education (Murphy and Alexander, 2000; Yeung et al., 2011). In order to capture the role played in the social climate of the class, it is crucial to comprehend the distinctions and longitudinal changes in learners' motivation (Opdenakker et al., 2012). As stated by Corpus et al. (2009), learners' commitment and motivation can be positively influenced by educators who showed inspiring performance. Teachers are likewise key figures, who, especially through class contacts, shape learners' education (Pianta et al., 2012). For instance, researchers have examined learners' motivation as both a state- and a trait-like factor. As described by Christophel (1990), state motivation is a situational concept that alludes to the work put in the direction of a specific assignment domain at a specific point in time. As asserted by (as cited in Goldman et al., 2017), trait motivation is a somewhat steady paradigm that alludes to the general drive of learners toward learning and education. In light of its solid relationship with compelling teaching practices like non-verbal promptness, lucidity, affinity seeking, affirmation, and humor, state motivation is frequently favored by many researchers (Comadena et al., 2007; Goodboy and Myers, 2008; Kerssen-Griep and Witt, 2012).

Language learning is an activity that mainly happens in classes; notwithstanding, few know that motivation develops in these conditions or the ordinary associations between learners and teachers (Ushioda, 2013). There is a need for a study that carries out narrower experimental attention, and which can reveal insight into motivation as it arises in specific exercises and arranged

connections since L2 motivation research has generally emphasized learning procedures at an overall level (Ushioda, 2016). The class climate adds to the improvement of learners' motivation and commitment to learning, and further develops learners' scholarly execution (Velayutham and Aldridge, 2013). As a component of the class climate, the teacher-student relationship has been confirmed to be of imperative significance for learners' education (Hughes et al., 2012). Indeed, learners and teachers who arrange a learning relationship in a learning environment to deliver desired learning results are at the focal stage of all instructive frameworks (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Besides, the acknowledgment that a psychological portrayal of a relationship with an educator can establish a wellspring of motivation is significant since language learning happens at the micro-level of societal action, and includes interactive connections with others inside repeating contexts of use (Henry and Thorsen, 2018). The study of motivation in L2 education goes back to several years ago as some scholars (e.g., Bravo et al., 2017; Busari, 2018; Djaya et al., 2018; Wijnen et al., 2018) pinpointed that motivation is viewed as one of the main persuasive and prominent issues in a person's accomplishment for learning both second or foreign language.

Furthermore, positive teacher-student connections fill in as an outside wellspring of motivational change, thereby adding to dynamic learning practices (Ma et al., 2017). One's motivation and accomplishment in a course might be vigorously impacted by the educator's performance and the students' cooperative activities, as some may have encountered (Passini et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2015). According to social motivation theorists, learners with social help from educators will develop solid motivational convictions that will advance dynamic learning commitment and great execution (Furrer and Skinner, 2003). Indeed, a steady teacher-student rapport can even halfway counter the regularly noticed decrease in learners' self-governing motivation as time goes by (Lapointe et al., 2005). The presumption that the nature of instructor-learner rapport assumes a focal part in advancing motivation and expanding learning returns to speculations from interpersonal psychology, which sees an individual's conduct with regards to conditional causality and reciprocal impacts (Strack and Horowitz, 2012).

Studies on the significance of high-quality teacher-student connections have gotten expanding consideration in 20 years (Roorda et al., 2011). High-quality teacher-student connections give a steady establishment to long-haul learners' education (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). Learners will perform better scholastically and experience more prominent school commitment at the point when they feel their teachers like them (Wang and Eccles, 2013). Numerous inquiries have discovered that learners with close educator rapport are bound to encounter scholastic interest, commitment, accomplishment, self-efficacy, and motivation as opposed to learners with more far-off relations (Sakiz et al., 2012; Tosto et al., 2016).

Learners are bound to miss their classes when they do not feel upheld by their educators (Demir et al., 2019). They are motivated to go to their classes at the point when they have more noteworthy degrees of teacher-learner rapport or trust their

educators at higher levels. Learners have more opportunities to develop rapport with their educators when they go to class consistently, and this might advance ceaseless participation. Positive teacher-student connections help learners' transferring to school (Cheung, 2019). When learners were involved in school and had confidence in their capacities, they acclimated it better. Furthermore, learners had more significant levels of motivation when they cooperated with their educators all the more regularly (Liu and Chiang, 2019).

The relations between educators and learners influence learning conditions as many pieces of research have certainly focused on educator cooperation with learners as a recognizable factor to start critical base and motivation for the instructing and learning cycle, to rouse learners' motivation to take a functioning part in the learning climate, to show the teachers' accommodation, and to build a positive class climate that will help learners' education (Bouras and Keskes, 2014).

In light of the fact that learners and teachers are similarly accountable for the fruitful realization of the educational and learning cycles, the rapport between the two is significant (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Thus, they should cooperate to assemble positive learning conditions. By utilizing social practices that are related to learners' positive encounters, educators trigger the foundation of such conditions (Bolkan et al., 2016). Since learning incorporates social, mental, and emotional connections, it could be said that learning includes something beyond simple openness to data. Along these lines, successful education is normally realized inside a positive teacher-learner relationship setting (Strachan, 2020). In spite of the fact that teacher-learner rapport is an indispensable part of any learning situation, the way toward making and keeping a positive rapport is a challenging task for some accomplished educators (Strachan, 2020). Hence, it is extremely fundamental to apprehend the cycles of fundamental successful teacher-learner connections.

Besides, language learning is an intrinsically friendly interaction, considerably more than other scholarly subjects (Mercer and Gkonou, 2020), so the nature of the teacher-learner connection is very significant in the L2 setting (Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). Generally, the language information is educated and utilized adequately through various methods of correspondence (Frymier et al., 2019). Accordingly, there is a great necessity for connections with individual conversationalists (i.e., the educator or friends). Depending on how well educators and learners interact with one another, their instructing and learning encounters can either improve or get ruined, respectively.

Rapport further develops various class domains; explicitly, it advances motivation, criticism, learners' education, correspondence, and obviously the educator's well-being. Learners, who often communicate with a teacher, are more fulfilled and are less inclined to drop out (Wasley, 2006). It is at that point that educators should place more accentuation in building positive rapport in the English as a Foreign Language class as it will certainly be a pivot (Dyrenforth, 2014).

Learners' motivation is a key to numerous compelling teaching practices and their definitive impact (positive or negative) on learners' education results (Frymier, 2016). Two

issues have obstructed researchers in testing and appreciating motivational clarifications of educators' correspondence manners. The functional cross-over between the proportions of motivation and emotional learning is the first issue (Goldman et al., 2017). The second issue is the oversimplified perspective on motivation as a paradigm changing just in amount and not in value (Goldman et al., 2017).

The self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012) and rhetorical/relational goal theory are powerful clarifications of motivation theories that resolve this issue by offering a complete hypothetical structure for understanding educators' correspondence manners (Frymier, 2016). Correspondence analysts must start to accept the self-determination theory to see how educators meet learners' fundamental requirements and how the satisfaction of these necessities works with learners' practices and, eventually, teaching (Bolkan et al., 2016).

Educator promptness, affirmation, and affinity seeking work with positive instructor-learner connections, which, therefore, works with need fulfillment (Frymier, 2016). In particular, when learners feel associated with the instructor by the expansion of these conducts, they are bound to have their relatedness needs fulfilled. Additionally, rhetorical conducts like instructor lucidity and pertinence would almost certainly establish learning conditions that serve to fulfill the necessities of skill and self-sufficiency, opening the entryway for learners to foster their inherent motivation for education.

Upon reviewing the collected works on correspondence and motivation, Frymier (2016) contended that the motivation hypothesis, particularly SDT, gave the best clarification to the connection between instructors' correspondence conduct and learners' education. She contended that compelling educators' correspondence conducts like instantaneousness, lucidity, affirmation, and affinity seeking are likely to be associated with fulfilling learners' requirements for relatedness, skill, and independence, thereby, in a roundabout way, impacts intrinsic motivation.

As stated by Wentzel et al. (2010), a few pieces of research find that learners who foster positive associations with educators are emphatically propelled to seek scholarly greatness. By approvals corresponding to the learner out in the open, to such an extent that the learner who is publicly praised frequently becomes and remains profoundly intrigued by coursework and performs better, educators help to motivate learners' education in the class (as cited in Liu and Chiang, 2019). While literature corresponds that learner-educator rapport is fundamentally identified with learners' motivations, the direction of this connection relies upon the specific communication style (Liu and Chiang, 2019).

Positive teacher-student rapport is strong expeditors of a widespread sort of appropriate learner-related results such as engagement, accomplishment, motivation, and confidence (Davis, 2003; Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Havik and Westergård, 2020; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021). Mainly, a high-quality teacher-student rapport heightens learner motivation; on the contrary, a poor relationship between them is echoed as a failure on students' motivation in the procedure of learning (Wubbels and Brekelmans, 2005; Opdenakker et al., 2012). Outstandingly, longitudinal

investigation demonstrated that students who face a route of connectedness with an educator similarly preserve motivation (Hamre and Pianta, 2005). In addition, Joe et al. (2017) stated that teachers' educational provision of learners, and their encouragement of reciprocal self-esteem in the classroom, influence learners' motivation to a great extent.

Regarding EFL/ESL students' state motivation investigation, the impacts of constructive teacher-student rapport have not been studied earlier, and accordingly, it becomes a pertinent topic for this review. Moreover, the main lacuna in this theoretical review based on the researcher's knowledge is that although teacher-learners rapport has been much under investigation in general learning, they are not taken into account from the EFL/ESL perspective (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). As a result, thanks to the integral relational aspect of language teaching (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) and grounded on the current development and flourishing of PP in SLA emphasizing that constructive emotions (Wang et al., 2021), between teacher and learners, must be taken into consideration in L2 teaching and learning and clarifying how and why teacher-student rapport is related to learner motivation has been an enduring trial.

THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

The self-determination theory and rhetorical/relational goal theory are two of the most generally utilized theoretical methods clarifying the significance of high-quality instructor-learner connections, as a segment of the interpersonal psychology area.

Self-Determination Theory

The self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008) clarifies the connection between educator-learner connections and great school revision or scholarly motivation through the satisfaction of three essential mental requirements: the requirement relatedness, the requirement for skill, and the requirement for self-governance. Learners' education and motivation for accomplishment, which is connected to learning, will be expanded if an instructor meets these three fundamental requirements of learners' by showing responsibility, guaranteeing clear structures, and reinforcing the self-governance of learners (Roorda et al., 2011). Self-determination theorists utilize the attachment theory to characterize "commitment" as an emotional part of educator-learner connections. Accordingly, the essential requirement for attachment is firmly connected to the idea of wellbeing (Roorda et al., 2011). The nature of educator-learner connections is thus estimated by the satisfaction of the previously mentioned three essential requirements, which fortify one another and accommodate ideal and healthy development (Bakadorova and Raufelder, 2018).

In particular, SDT envisages that intrinsic motivation relies upon three fundamental mental requirements: the requirement for autonomy, the requirement for competence, and the requirement for relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Being the apparent wellspring of one's own behavior is known as autonomy which is positively correlated with teacher success and consequently learners' motivation (Derakhshan et al., 2020). People feel autonomous when they disguise

their conduct as a declaration of their very own free will (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Feeling compelling in one's continuous collaborations in a social climate is known as competence. People experience competence whenever they experience testing opportunities that permit them to relay their actual capabilities (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Perceiving an association with others is known as relatedness. Individuals need to have secure associations with others for relatedness to be fulfilled. These significant interpersonal associations might be developed with the educator and/or different learners in the learning setting. Thus, relatedness assumes a fundamental part in encouraging commitment, particularly when initial intrinsic, or inborn, motivation is deficient (Ryan and Deci, 2009). Relatedness is experienced when people foster a feeling of belongingness with their companions, or with others for whom they have high regard (e.g., Moller et al., 2010; Beachboard et al., 2011).

All the more explicitly, when learners experience relatedness with instructors, they get more prominent joy from learning exercises in a school subject and are bound to see themselves as more skilled in this subject (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Participating in communications and keeping up with connections is subject to interpersonal motives, from a socio-motivational viewpoint. Certainly, individuals can be variously motivated to connect. The two fundamental elements of interpersonal motives are agency and communion. The former identifies with attention on self-interest, accomplishment, and individual impact, and the latter identifies with an emphasis on enthusiasm and social cooperation (Horowitz et al., 2006).

The Rhetorical/Relational Goal Theory

Proposed by (as cited in Zheng, 2021) to perceive how the cycle of instructional correspondence works, the rhetorical/relational goal theory is a hypothesis in the domain of instructional correspondence. In light of this theory, teachers and learners in the class have rhetorical and relational objectives that they wish to accomplish. The significant obligation is the educators' as they are relied upon to oversee both relational and rhetorical necessities simultaneously through their manner decisions to satisfy the class's needs; thus, ideal learning can occur when these objectives are attained and learners' needs are fulfilled.

It is important to mention that the rhetorical and relational practices of educators fill various roles. For example, teachers utilize rhetorical educational correspondence practices to advance compelling educating and influence convictions, perspectives, and practices of students in the class through molding their planned instructional messages (Beebe and Mottet, 2009). Then again, as stated by Myers (2008), educators utilize relational instructional correspondence practices to trigger the development of a commonly formed proficient relationship and rapport with their learners. Certainly, to achieve good results in any learning setting, educators should utilize a combination of rhetorical and relational practices (Myers et al., 2018).

TEACHER-STUDENT RAPPORT

An amicable educator-learner relationship identified with delight, association, regard, and common trust is known as rapport (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Being significantly relationship-based, it is a relational bond during the education cycle (Frisby and Housley Gaffney, 2015). As stated by Frisby et al. (2016), rapport, in contrast to other educational correspondence factors, is less examined. However, since rapport is an inevitable part of instruction as well as the fact that learners' learning starts from it, it is perhaps the most important component of educational correspondence. Rapport can be built by educators in the class by advancing free expression, respecting learners' mentalities, giving fitting criticism, utilizing humor, displaying eagerness in learners' education, and being delicate and enthusiastic (Weimer, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current review of literature has some implications for instructive situations. Consequently, it can be of importance to several participants in the educational setting, together with teachers, teacher trainers, materials developers, and those who are responsible for employing teachers, and those preparing teacher professional development programs.

The current review can be instructive and beneficial for language educators as they ought to attend workshops that are intended to emphasize the relational part of the class climate to learn explicit techniques which will work with positive associations with learners (Terry, 2006). Given the significance of social practices and the impression of the connections on learners' education, educator training in building connections to accomplish positive results is probably an advantageous endeavor.

Based on this theoretical review, it is confirmed that teacher-student rapport not only boosted the rudimentary teaching development but also supported the growth of students' motivation on the way to success. It is the responsibility of the teachers to build students' motivation and inspire them to create positive approaches toward learning and their behavior is thoroughly correlated with student motivation and presentation and teacher support through interpersonal relationships is interconnected to students' subject-related motivational aspects (Yildirim, 2012). The more, the students face teacher support, the greater their degree of motivation in the route of language education which is concerning their social-emotional regulation (McElhaney et al., 2008).

From an informative perspective, the present review sheds light on the importance of student-teacher rapport as it inspires and motivates the educator to articulate the new teaching methods and review their ideas to construct a positive relationship with students to boost motivation that results in their engagement and achievement. It is worth noting that teachers who have a constructive relationship with their learners generate a classroom atmosphere that improves learning and runs into learners' emotional and scholastic desires. Positive student-teacher rapport provides the groundwork for efficacious

alteration to the educational situation for learners at the inception of their formal teaching. Learners, who reflect that their educator does not support them in the classroom, have low attentiveness and they are less motivated and active in the learning setting (Tyler and Boelter, 2008). In the same way, when educators collaborate with learners and have a respectful and sympathetic attitude toward learners, their stress diminishes and they can fully focus on their lessons with the high motivation that is congruent with Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), who evinced that the L2 Motivational Self System creates a brilliant route of attentiveness and engagement. Moreover, teachers should develop their interpersonal behavior through cultivating their proximity, i.e., their physical and emotional confidence to learners and such performances will generate a constructive reaction from learners toward their educators, firmly functioning to surge learners' pleasure by articulating confidence, and being supportive (Beebe and Mottet, 2009). Accordingly, by adopting interactional manners, and cooperating with learners not only in the class but also before and after the class, educators are supposed to accomplish higher motivation leading to educational and emotional upshots.

As for students, this line of review can be of importance as it increases their consciousness and awareness of the fact that an educational method is a co-built event whose attainment is not wholly the responsibility of educators. Indeed, learners are correspondingly dominant in providing an abundant way for their achievement to happen. They try to begin a sociable rapport with their teachers, and this closeness enhances their confidence and motivation. When learners are acquainted with their dynamic role in the learning process, they show more motivation and commitment in their performances.

The next participants who can use this review are teacher trainers who can nurture the knowledge of novice educators

regarding teacher-student rapport as they can propose workshops, conferences, and other preparation developments in which educational, emotional, and interpersonal features of education are correspondingly taught. For better upshots, governments need to fill the lacuna between government and language school organizations. Appropriate supervision and psychoanalysis should be provided for students at diverse levels of their learning development to motivate them in language learning. More in detail, teacher mentors can provide a chance for educators to discern the implication and practice of teacher-student rapport in the achievement of their careers. Additionally, materials developers can take advantage of this type of research in a way to design courses that consider the teacher-student rapport as a core component of education that emphasizes rapport in the process of accomplishing tasks and in such a way that educators can focus on their clearness, rapport with students, and authority.

In conclusion, portfolios, philosophical papers, and think-aloud procedures can be employed as well to perceive the mental procedures that teachers and learners come across. Likewise, the interpersonal rapport of teachers and learners should be studied from the points of view of both teachers and learners. Further research can be utilized on the opinions of administrators, teacher trainers, too. In addition, enthusiastic scholars are recommended to scrutinize the influence of educators' experience level, academic experiences, age, and gender in this domain.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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The Effect of Teacher Caring Behavior and Teacher Praise on Students' Engagement in EFL Classrooms

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The emergent respect for the prominence of engagement in the present education has made it one of the most widespread inquiry issues that it has been regarded as the ultimate target of learning. In the language teaching field, the idea of student activities for learning is intensely rooted in the prevailing standards of effective language learning, which considers language communication and interaction as analytical for language improvement. Moreover, teachers as center of learning process is the most prominent research attention, and teachers play a key role in regulating the education process as well as students' learning achievement. However, there is an absence of research which have considered teachers' care and praise among all positive interpersonal behavior and its significant effect on students' engagement. So, the present review attempts to focus on teacher care and praise, and their effects on student engagement in EFL classrooms. Subsequently, some implications are presented to clarify the practice of teachers, students, teacher educators, and materials developers.

Keywords: teacher caring behavior, teacher praise, students' engagement, EFL classroom, teacher's effect on language teaching

INTRODUCTION

In language learning, some students are not motivated enough, so they lose their primary attentiveness that ultimately results in dropping out and quitting without graduation (Finn and Zimmer, 2012), and lack of their engagement has a remarkable role in this way (Fredricks et al., 2004; Ladd and Dinella, 2009). That is to say, students give up studying English because they become less engaged; hence, they might lose their initial interest gradually, which can result in dropping out.

Student engagement, as a strategic factor of learner achievement in higher education, has been at the center of the attention of directors, experts, and scholars in the previous decade (Kahu and Nelson, 2018). In language learning, some researchers have paid attention to engagement in the classroom and have been of service to this domain to date (Philp and Duchesne, 2016; Oga-Baldwin, 2019). Second language acquisition (SLA) has undertaken a shift toward Positive Psychology (PP; MacIntyre et al., 2019), which has fortified studies on engagement, focusing on some vital PP aspects embedded in the heart of positive language learning (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020; Wang et al., 2021).

Engagement is two sides of the coin; one side is disengagement that is what learners do to elude attending to learning tasks, while the other side is the way a student is involved in these tasks (Lei et al., 2018). Engagement arises moderately out of “bright side” precursors, such as teacher care which derives from self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan and Deci, 2017). In line with SDT, all learners have a series of three fundamental widespread spiritual needs that is those for autonomy (need to encounter preference and self-authorization in individual’s performance), competence (need to sustain progress and a nous of reflectance in one’s communications with the situation), and relatedness (need to go through deep, approachable, and mutual care within individual’s interactions; Mercer, 2019; Reeve et al., 2019). The fulfillment of these needs throughout language learning regulates the degree to which learners flourish and show adaptive functioning, namely, inherent motivation and engagement (Reeve et al., 2018). The relationships between teacher and student, which can be associated with learners’ basic emotional needs, are among the levels of encouragement on learner improvement (Froiland et al., 2019; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021) and are the outcomes of a continuing interaction between the educator and the learner’s features (Sabol and Pianta, 2012). Relatedness can envisage learner behavioral, emotional, and agentic engagement since good teacher-student relations can boost learners’ participation (behavioral engagement), nurture students’ optimistic outlooks toward the course and its tasks (emotional engagement), provide learners the self-confidence to work on difficult actions (cognitive engagement), and boost learners to speak out concerning their education requirements (agentic engagement; Ruzek et al., 2016; Vollet et al., 2017).

Student engagement is noteworthy since it can envisage learners’ success or academic advancement (Ladd and Dinella, 2009). Also, student engagement is by some issues, such as teacher support or social experiences that provide teachers with instant feedback and praise on their efforts to inspire learners during the teaching process for assessment determinations (Reeve, 2012). It is maintained that engagement would be the best educational indicator of students’ motivation and its dynamic and flexible features (Appleton et al., 2006) entail that it can be reformed as a result of various intrapersonal and interpersonal ecological elements (Fredricks et al., 2004). Teachers’ interpersonal relationship is the main element in the academic setting that exerts a central effect on students’ engagement (Jiang and Zhang, 2021). Likewise, student engagement is inclined by relative variants, such as learning situations or approaches and techniques utilized by teachers (Fredricks et al., 2019). Some longitudinal research (Jang et al., 2016; Reeve et al., 2018) within the SDT framework indicated that modifications in student engagement are affected by their learning milieu and such relation is mutual; when situating in classroom circumstances, this ecological element is hypothesized as their teachers’ diverse appealing practice. In previous theories, student engagement has been proposed to be mutually a procedure and a consequence (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). It might be perceived as an interpersonal development triggered by reciprocal interpersonal interactions

(Pianta et al., 2012), while as a consequence, student engagement refers to what learners do in the process of intervention. Furthermore, it is adjudged as a moderator between learners’ academic settings and student consequences (Appleton et al., 2006).

Moreover, the success of language learning in the classroom depends on the teacher, and it is stated that students’ achievement or failure in learning can rely on the efficacy of the teachers (Luz, 2015). Sarter (2012) declared that human emotions have been brought to light recently. Although among the emotions that have been tackled so far, anxiety, depression, and stress have been the most prominent, during two previous decades, positive emotions, like love, pride, hope, and enjoyment, have been brought into view (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014), as generated by the advent of PP into second language learning (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Correspondingly, there has been growing consideration to the role of emotions in teachers’ lives, and emotion is a crucial element of teaching (Samier and Schmidt, 2009). It has been revealed that most teachers all around the world feel negative in language learning classrooms, so it can be proposed that teachers’ emotions should go beyond emotional issues and should turn into social aspects. Thus, sociology can be considered as an agenda to be aware of the social foundations of teachers’ feelings (Tsang, 2015). Lacking constructive emotions, teachers may not be interested or motivated to develop students’ academic, social, and emotional progress (Day and Qing, 2009). The significant role of positive emotions is assured as it helps to foster students’ emotional powers and wellbeing, and encourages social manners and it organizes the social properties for the students’ achievement in language learning (Zhang et al., 2019). Prosocial behavior is a premeditated action to assist others when it is done intentionally instead of reacting to another’s command or by the expectancy of a reward or reprimand (Grusec et al., 2011). Prosocial manners happen as peers support, care, collaborate, and demonstrate respect for each other, and variations in learners’ prosocial behavior are more receptive to sympathetic interactions and involving students in a caring situation (Cheon et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the relations between teachers and learners and teacher manners can meaningfully influence student engagement (Groves et al., 2015). Through interactions with teachers, the students encounter emotional and attitudinal stability and obtain satisfactory emotional support from their teachers which results in effective learning (Pekrun and Schutz, 2007). As stated by Malaimakuni (2016), effective teachers must have adequate knowledge of the subject matter and in giving their knowledge to students, they routinely should have noble relational communication. Among numerous issues, which provide emotional support for language learners, the relationship between teacher and learner is prominent which is actualized as the most authoritative tool that teachers have, when trying to cultivate a satisfactory learning setting (Strachan, 2020; Li and Yang, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Because the teacher-learner relationship is dominant to the satisfaction of learners’ emotional needs, scholars have emphasized its quality and nature (Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014). This relationship

in the classroom is essential for not only teachers' progress but also students' progress (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020). Therefore, they must cooperate together to build worthwhile learning circumstances in which the teacher motivates the formation of such situations by taking on relational performances that are related to students' positive involvements (Bolkan et al., 2015).

A positive relationship between the teacher and learners may be thoroughly associated with the passions, particularly the positive ones emphasized in PP, that students may face within the route of language learning (Dewaele et al., 2019; McIntyre et al., 2019). A positive relationship between teacher and learner is acknowledged by empathy, caring, participation, hope, and esteem, and all examples of teacher positive behaviors investigated to date are teacher care, stroke, immediacy, credibility, simplicity, approval, and praise (Frisby, 2019). It is hypothesized that for increasing student engagement, teachers should be friendly, sympathetic, sociable to students' distinctiveness, support learners' independence, and be eager about their careers (Frisby, 2019). To this end, teachers can take on varied roles, such as taking care of their conversation, being cautious about feedback to learners, listening to them, providing inquiries to involve learners, and reconsidering classroom management to control relations (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). In academic state, the construct of "care" has been broadly investigated and is evolving as an essential element of successful education (Velasquez et al., 2013; Pishghadam et al., 2019). In this situation, caring encompasses presenting emotional provision and venture in the rapport with learners, and it is similar to what individuals do and say in their performances and communications (Davis et al., 2012).

Furthermore, caring has been clarified as those feelings, activities, and thoughts that emanate from an educator's aspiration to stimulate, help, engage, or motivate their learners (O'Connor, 2008). Concentrating on the mutual nature of this construct, it is claimed that "caring education is the performance that arises from a reciprocal caring relationship between learner and teacher, where learning takes place through modeling, discourse, and approval at the social levels" (Velasquez et al., 2013). Teacher care inspires learner-related capabilities, such as engagement, self-confidence, wellbeing, feeling appreciated, and achievement (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Havik and Westergård, 2020).

In addition, praise has been reflected as providing encouragement, self-confidence, and good teacher-learner relationships and it is believed that in educational psychology, teacher praise is an essential basis of support for effective student presentation and an indispensable and influential part of teaching and it is a noteworthy strategy in engaging student in the route of learning and praising students in the class fosters language students' learning motivation and behaviors (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008). Praising is a technique to reward students who involve in echoing good behaviors or accomplishing better presentations to take advantage of praise (Brophy, 2004).

Undoubtedly, the reward of the teacher is a type of gratefulness of the work of learners which can be done through

phrasing praise proclamations as a statement of educational response and feedback instead of appraisal and assessment (Brophy, 2004). This is congruent with Deci et al. (2001) who pinpointed that verbal rewards should be explanatory more willingly than regulatory since the regulatory types are inclined to challenging motivation. Verbal praise should embrace gratefulness of the students' presentation because the teacher is acting two things equivalently; he is gratifying learners for their performance while teaching them how to allocate their determinations to their inherent enthusiasm rather than to extrinsic motivations provided by the teacher (Brophy, 2004), and it is evinced that the use of praise brings about inspiring learners of having a feeling of superiority and self-assurance in their abilities and accomplishments. As Firdaus (2015) stated, the use of praise will be influential if the teachers discern about it well and how to employ it. Moreover, Hodgman (2015) claimed that praise can be positive support toward students' manners and confronts the students in a challenging setting to be involved in the educational inquiries and decrease the learners' problems. Teacher praise is frequently acclaimed as behavior management preparation, which is maintained by some studies (Conroy et al., 2008; Epstein et al., 2008).

Taken together the significance of teacher caring behavior and praise as types of positive interpersonal interactions in language education, on the one hand, and learner engagement, on the other hand, it seems required that investigating the rapport between these two constructs has superiority. Furthermore, the rapport between student engagement and teacher caring behavior and teacher praise has not been much investigated in the language education field thus far. Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to bridge this lacuna by investigating the connection between student engagement and teacher praise and caring behavior in the EFL context.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: DEFINITION AND DIMENSIONS

As stated by Dörnyei (2018), student engagement as a whole relates to involvement in educational tasks and activities. More accurately, engagement can be illuminated as the level of a student's enthusiastic participation in instructional activities (Reeve, 2012), or a person's extreme participation in an action (Reeve et al., 2004). Concerning the dimensions of learner engagement, Appleton et al. (2006) utilized the *cognitive* and *emotional* modules to measure student engagement. Hart et al. (2011) focused on the three sub-constituents to measure student engagement, namely, *emotional*, *cognitive*, and *behavioral*, and another component which is *agentic* was added by Reeve (2013).

The behavioral engagement is elucidated as the noticeable educational presentation and sharing activities and tasks which is evaluated through visible educational act containing: student's positive behavior; participation; attempt to focus on activities; involvement in class negotiations; contribution in educational

and co-curricular tasks; persistence; and resiliency, when confronted with challenging actions (Khademi Ashkzari et al., 2018).

The affective or emotional aspect of engagement relates to the cumulative and permanent degrees of emotions encountered by learners and gains the level of desire learners perceive toward the tertiary knowledge (Bowden, 2013), and this type of engagement evinced through intensified levels of positive emotions during activities, which may be presented through pleasure, superiority, enjoyment, eagerness, and interest (Klem and Connell, 2004). Students who are passionately involved in academic activities are capable of detecting the objective of the tasks and social communications (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Social engagement examines the links of belongingness shaped between students and their classmates, educational staff, and other pertinent facts in their tertiary practice (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). It engenders feelings of determination, socialization, and association to the tertiary source (Eldegwy et al., 2018) that are noticeable in language learning contexts through collaboration with speakers (Mercer, 2019). Social engagement in the classroom is operationally defined as directions of the learning setting, such as assistance, listening to others, taking part in a class on time, and preserving a sensible teacher-learner power construction (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012), while out of the class, it is presented through students' involvement in groups, where ties are molded with others founded on shared principles, wellbeing, or perseverance (Wentzel, 2012). Students without social engagement are ready to undergo isolation and loneliness bringing about condensed wellbeing (McIntyre et al., 2018).

Cognitive engagement talks about active mental states and goal-oriented learning strategies that students employ in educational activities during learning developments (Lei et al., 2018). Learners who are cognitively involved reveal a better understanding of educational work through their opinions, theories, and approaches implemented during educational activities (Khademi Ashkzari et al., 2018).

Agentic engagement refers to the learners' participation in the current teaching that is thoughtful and originated by the student (Reeve, 2013) and this dimension of engagement is close to the other three, as it is also a practical student-originated route to educational development.

TEACHERS' POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

Teacher Caring Behavior

Caring is a passion, a connection, and a behavioral sign that can be theorized as an emotion, an inspiration, and/or behavior, displaying an apprehension about other individual's emotional states and desires (Mayseless, 2015). Teacher care refers to teachers' performances to fulfill students' spiritual and passionate desires through running a positive, caring, and nurturing setting (Laletas and Reupert, 2016). In the educational setting, teacher care represents a noteworthy facet of teacher-student interpersonal relationships (Gasser et al., 2018) and teacher care affects

teachers' establishment of support to students, demonstrating awareness in students' learning (Gabryś-Barker, 2016). Caring was hypothesized to be an essential component for generating and preserving influential teacher-student interactions (Noddings, 2006), permitting teachers to concede and react to their students' desires and provide them with safety and care (Mayseless, 2015). It has been proposed that caring is advantageous for both the care receiver and the care provider, as it stimulates the care provider's joy, pleasure, self-assessment, social relations, and ties between them (Lavy and Bocker, 2018). In fact, teachers can stimulate the positive emotions of learners by involving them in meaningful tasks, providing a milieu that boosts their contribution in classroom negotiations, and presenting empathy (Gedzune, 2015). Some issues related to students, such as engagement, self-confidence, wellbeing, and achievement, are encouraged by teacher care (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Lavy and Naama-Ghanayim, 2020).

Teacher Praise

Baumeister et al. (1990) as cited in Abbasi et al. (2015) declared that praise is *encouraging interpersonal feedback*. Positive feedback is categorized as a dynamic element in nurturing learners' educational success and strengthening the preferred classroom behavior. Nicols (1995) as cited in Abbasi et al. (2015) pinpointed that positive feedback is perceived as an attractive corresponding that is in line with the learner's self-image. Praise is generally regarded as positive feedback since it has the same meaning as it makes students feeling reinforced and meaningful and praise can be universal or specific (Moffat, 2011). The former refers to as behavior-specific praise (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011), while the latter type of praise is a well-organized and constructive educational tactic that can surge an extensive range of proper behaviors (Jenkins et al., 2015). Teacher praise is a manifestation of support or appreciation that goes further than feedback for an accurate reaction (Reinke et al., 2007). Teacher praise is regarded as a classroom strategy as dependent or a result of suitable student behaviors. In academic settings, praise should be associated with the performances or skills that the teacher desires to develop (Partin et al., 2009). Praise makes the students feel respectable, and it increases student-teacher relations through constructing a positive learning setting, diminishes troubles in the classroom, and makes learning promising (Rathel et al., 2014). To develop student engagement and success, teachers use praise regularly to reassure suitable behavior, while it reduces problematic behaviors in the classroom (Reinke et al., 2007).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The teacher-student interactions, which occur through supportive and approachable relationships in addition to positive and promising behaviors of teachers toward students, affect foreign language satisfaction (Pishghadam et al., 2021). As stated by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), and Li et al. (2018), teachers and some of their features, such as care, respect, helpfulness, and positive attitude, seem to be among the factors that play a

prominent role in foreign language interest. When the positive teacher-student interactions are shaped, learners' motivation, learning achievement, and engagement are developed (Henry and Thorsen, 2018). The results of the study by Royer et al. (2019) about the role of teacher praise in educational situations proved the declines of unsuitable behaviors. Teacher praise is spontaneously associated with the eminence of the student-teacher relations as Cook et al. (2018) indicated that providing praise to students can support the improvement of positive relations with learners. In the same vein, Epstein et al. (2008) acknowledged teacher praise as one of the operational approaches that support student performance and involvement and consequently undergo social and behavioral accomplishment. Rahimi and Karkami (2015) stated that teachers commonly use reward strategies in general and praise, in particular, to elude reprimand and violence strategies since these types of strategies have a destructive impact on their motivation and commitment. The study conducted by Awang et al. (2013) indicated that teachers praise is a common management strategy that is used in the classroom to manage behavior and upsurge student learning engagement in the classroom.

While there are quite a few empirical researches on Positive Psychology worldwide, there is a relatively small number of researches on Positive Psychology in China. Li (2020) has hosted a column in *Journal of the Foreign Language World*, one of the top linguistic journals in China, featuring the study of emotions in SLA. In this column, Dewaele and Li (2020) contributed a critical review on the previous theories and practices in emotion studies in SLA, proposing that the future of emotion studies can be combined with the control-value theory from the perspective of educational Positive Psychology. The next three empirical studies in the column echo with this proposal. Han and Xu (2020) investigated cases of EFL college students' academic emotions after receiving written corrective feedback in learning second language writing and their emotion-oriented, appraisal-oriented, and situation-oriented self-regulation strategies. The study has generated implications for using Positive Psychology to facilitate students' wellbeing. Another empirical study conducted by Jiang (2020) used focused essay technique to examine teacher-related factors in affecting EFL classroom enjoyment. Jiang's research has implications for promoting Positive Psychology in China's EFL classrooms. The last empirical research article by Li (2020) is also conducted in the realm of Positive Psychology. The method of questionnaire and self-rating test is used to investigate students' emotional intelligence, emotions, and their relationship with English achievement. Emotions, such as enjoyment, anxiety, and burnout, exert influence on students' emotional intelligence in general. Emotions and EI have correlations with English achievement. Li's (2020) research offers a unique perspective of understanding emotion intervention in L2 pedagogy. This column has demonstrated a variety of research methodologies and perspectives, covering a wide range of emotions in EFL learning, such as enjoyment and emotional intelligence, and has implications for using Positive Psychology in EFL setting.

Li's research interest remains in Positive Psychology of SLA. Li (2021) critically reviewed the researches in PP from

the past to the present, advocating that the conception of positive language education will promote language learning emotions as well as the wellbeing of the students. Positive Psychology in SLA has attracted research interest not only in China, but also in worldwide. Empirical studies are still in urgent need to investigate the role of PP in language teaching and learning.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current review may have some implications for researchers, teachers, and teacher educators in the EFL context. From the operational viewpoint, developing the interrelations of teacher and student features in the EFL milieu can be significant in developing learner engagement. Likewise, this study can be of help to the language teacher in search of ways to improve student engagement.

This review can help teachers to be acquainted with the status of some individual aspects like teacher caring behavior and praise in inspiring positive results concerning student engagement. Thus, teachers and teacher trainers keen on increasing the positive upshots of EFL classes can meditate on the findings of this study and make enhancements in their works. Based on the low degrees of learner engagement, it is necessary for teachers to scrutinize methods to enthusiastically involve learners in the classroom (Nguyen et al., 2018). Teachers evinced that distractions, rebellion, and disengagement are among the most reliably demanding and unsatisfying manners with which they face in their life (Alter et al., 2013). Learner engagement is promoted and nurtured with the mastery of the use of motivating teaching behaviors (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). More precisely, the teaching behaviors should embrace implementing great levels of relatedness care from the outset and teachers need to engross learners in the syllabus with learning tasks, while witnessing the learners with endurance and providing regulation with positive feedback, namely, praise and support during interventions. Based on the literature review, the authors concluded that teachers' classroom management and learner engagement, and the relations between learner and teacher are significantly integrated.

Teacher praise is a widespread classroom-managing approach that successfully impacts student learning (Floress et al., 2017). Praise is an active and concrete policy that is employed to surge learners' prosocial behaviors (Dufrene et al., 2014). Teacher praise and overt inspiration can also be salient for constructing students' self-confidence (Dweck, 2007). Assisting teachers to utilize praise in the classrooms is prominent as it can prevent student problems. However, the fact that several teachers do not logically arranged for more positive than negative in their classrooms (Reinke et al., 2013; Derakhshan et al., 2021) specifies that it is required to conduct further study to investigate what teaching approaches and types of praise will result in successful teacher praise. Undoubtedly, having a more detailed perception of how praise functions in EFL classrooms will assist all learners to be efficacious in the EFL classroom. Although the significant

effect of teacher praise is certified in language learning, studying the kinds of praise can be most efficient will be worthwhile in evolving proper proficient progress for teachers in further studies.

Teachers can encourage positive relations through activities that convey hope, compassion, and care and in which they identify the independence and individuality of students (Gkonou and Mercer, 2018). All learners have strong points, and it can be essential for them to be able to ascertain these and use them (Mercer, 2019). Teacher care speaks of teacher-originated actions that cultivate positive social ties with learners which demands sustaining a classroom setting in which the learners feel appreciated and are simultaneously respectful of the teacher as the power character (Ware, 2006). The caring relation constructed between teacher and student through interactions appeared to manage their conception and creations of themselves. When learners feel that the teacher is caring for them, they become more self-confident and regard themselves as superior learners. Sequentially, for the teachers, students' mutuality permitted them to perceive the positive effect of their caring for most learners leading to their engagement in the process of learning. Teacher caring behavior has been related to a widespread series of positive results comprising higher presence, enhanced academic success, and decreased drop-out proportion (Foster, 2008).

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Autonomy-Supportive Faculty, Students' Self-System Processes, Positive Academic Emotions, and Agentic Engagement: Adding Emotions to Self-System Model of Motivational Development

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The aim of this study was to investigate mediating roles of students' self-system processes and positive academic emotions in a relationship between supporting autonomy and agentic engagement. In This research structural equation modeling was used to analyze a conceptual model. The sample consisted of 452 undergraduate students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. The research instruments included the autonomy-supportive environment inventory, the self-system processes questionnaire, three questionnaires of academic emotions, and the agentic engagement scale. The findings showed that supporting autonomy had an indirect effect on students' achievement emotions, via self-system processes. Self-system processes had direct and indirect effects on agentic engagement, via positive academic emotions. Supporting autonomy had an indirect effect on agentic engagement by mediating role of self-system processes and positive academic emotions. Accordingly, emotions are proximal determinants of agentic engagement. Supporting autonomy and self-system processes affect agentic engagement from the pathway of academic emotions. Therefore, in addition to environmental factors and self-appraisals, it is necessary to consider students' emotional experiences to promote agentic engagement in learning settings.

Keywords: autonomy support, self-system processes, academic emotions, agentic engagement, faculty

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of any education system is to promote learners' academic assets (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012; Skinner et al., 2017). According to the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998), the root of any development and achievement can be ascribed to complex, progressive and reciprocal interactions between an active, growing, bio-psychological organism (e.g., a learner) and people, objects and symbols (e.g., teachers, classmates, assignments, and goals) in its immediate environment (e.g., academic microsystem; school or university). These persistent forms of interactions are named proximal processes. These processes are a primary engine of individual achievement in the relevant microsystem, meaning that the individual evolves in that environment just through engagement in these interactions (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

Academic engagement, as far as the field of educational psychology is concerned, is considered as a proximal process, meaning that the only path to achieve assets (learning, good grades, resilience, etc.) in learning settings is engagement (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012; Skinner et al., 2017; Hiver et al., 2021).

Academic engagement is defined here as a powerful, directed and sustainable action. The three core features of this definition include being powerful, directed and sustainable, which are fundamental concepts in the area of motivation. This is because engagement is an outward manifestation of motivation (Skinner et al., 2009, 2017). Motivation is a fundamental source of energy, goal and sustainability, whereas engagement is the visible manifestation of them. Therefore, academic engagement refers to interactions of individual characteristics with important environmental characteristics and includes initiation of motivated action and its durability in the face of challenges and barriers. More specifically, academic engagement means learner's constructive, enthusiastic, willing, cognitively-focused participation in learning tasks and activities, which directly leads to positive academic performance (Skinner et al., 2009, 2017; Reeve et al., 2020a).

Scholars of academic engagement have taken into account different dimensions of academic engagement (Skinner et al., 2009, 2017), including the behavioral (effort and persistence), emotional (enthusiasm for learning and classroom) and cognitive (using effective cognitive strategies). The past few years have witnessed the emergence of a new dimension, which is agentic engagement (Reeve and Tseng, 2011). It refers to the fact that in addition to their behavioral and cognitive engagement, learners can also meaningfully contribute to teaching-learning processes. Not only do they try to learn, but they also seek to create motivationally a more supportive learning environment for themselves (Reeve et al., 2020b). Overall, agentic engagement is defined as learners' constructive contribution to the process of learning. Examples of agentic engagement embrace: expressing preferences, interests, and needs, asking questions, expressing attitudes, making suggestions and asking for elaboration (Reeve, 2013; Reeve et al., 2020b). It shares some common ground with other dimensions of engagement as it acts as a student-initiated pathway toward academic achievements. Notwithstanding this, significant differences can be observed and it is qualitatively different. As a matter of fact, agentic engagement is a unique proactive and a transactional form of engagement. Proactive suggests that learners, who demonstrate agentic engagement, may perform some actions before the process of learning begins (e.g., they ask their teacher). Transactional implies they negotiate with their teacher to construct a more motivationally-supportive learning environment (e.g., they speak with their teacher about how challenging, individual, satisfying or goal-congruent learning is). Of the diverse dimensions of engagement, the agentic dimension is the only one that counteracts the direct impact of environmental factors on achievement and explains the unique variance of success or achievement. This stresses that agency completely mediates the association between environment and positive educational assets (Reeve, 2013; Reeve et al., 2020b).

Given the importance of academic engagement and, in particular, the role of agentic engagement in yielding academic assets, some scholars of educational psychology have attempted to explain it. The sequence of *environment-self-action (engagement)* has been frequent in many models proposed in this regard (Connell and Wellborn, 1991; Skinner et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012; Reeve et al., 2020a). As pioneers in the field of education, Connell and Wellborn (1991), in their Self-System Model of Motivational Development maintain that the features of the environment (structure, participation, and autonomy support) determine academic engagement through self-system processes. Self-system processes are a set of appraisal processes through which individuals appraise their position in a given environment according to three basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness). These needs are organismic priorities around which the self-system is organized (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Competence refers to the need to experience oneself as capable of producing desired outcomes and avoid negative outcomes. Autonomy is the need to experience of choice in the initiation and maintenance of an activity. Relatedness is concerned with the need to feel connected with the social surrounding and the need to feel like a valuable person who is capable of love and respect. Self-system processes develop through interactions of individuals with their environments. When the psychological needs are met by such environments as schools and universities, student academic engagement can be boosted (Cheon and Reeve, 2015; Joe et al., 2017; Al-Hoorie, 2018; Patall et al., 2019; Reeve and Shin, 2020; Tirado-Morueta et al., 2020; Sökmen, 2021). Accordingly, inspired by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) and Self-System Model of Motivational Development (Connell and Wellborn, 1991), Skinner et al. (2009) put forward their theory of General Positive Motivational Development. In this coherent model, environmental variables (choice, structure, autonomy support, respect, etc.) shape different dimensions of engagement and bring about positive outcomes through self-perceptions (competence, task value, autonomy support, control beliefs, etc.).

In this way Reeve et al. (2004) offered the student-teacher dialectical framework. To better understand concepts of motivation and engagement within Self-Determination Theory, as the scholars put, it is essential to bear in mind that students have inner motivational resources (e.g., basic psychological needs) that allow them to be innately active and to be capable of engaging themselves constructively in learning settings. Learning settings can offer meaningful opportunities wherein inner motivational resources are either supported (autonomy-supportive environment) or ignored (controlling environment). Therefore, learning environments affect students' motivation and engagement and the other way around (Reeve, 2012, Reeve et al., 2020a). In autonomy-supportive environment, autonomous students' motivations (interests, needs, preferences and personal goals) are supported (Assor et al., 2020). Three core characteristics of autonomy-supportive environment are provision of choice, provision of criticism and provision of goal/value/interest examination (Assor, 2012). Creating an environment wherein students can choose among different alternatives is provision of choice. Giving students a chance to

express their agreement or opposing views in an empathetic, friendly and respectful environment is called provision of criticism. What is more, provision of goal/value/interest examination can be defined as presenting opportunities for students to engage in activities, tasks, experiences and discussions which allow them to assess and ponder their purposes, values and interests critically. The meaningful contribution of autonomy-supportive environment to academic engagement has been documented in several studies (Matos et al., 2018; Pineda-Báez et al., 2019; Benlahcene et al., 2020; Reeve et al., 2020a; Jiang and Zhang, 2021; Parker et al., 2021).

As observed in the models mentioned earlier, academic emotions that form an important part of learners' daily experiences (Wang et al., 2021) and effect agentic engagement have been ignored. On the other hand, the Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006) explains academic emotions and introduces proximal antecedents of engagement as academic emotions. This may imply that academic emotions mediate the relationship between self-perceptions of the learning environment and academic engagement. In the latest version of Control-Value Theory, the Motivational-Emotional Model, Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014) presented various forms of academic emotions (achievement emotions such as hope, epistemic emotions such as curiosity, and social emotions such as empathy) and detailed their role in different dimensions of engagement. Research in this area has also highlighted the role of academic emotions in engagement (King et al., 2015; Zhen et al., 2017; Bordbar, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Carmona-Halty et al., 2021).

In an attempt to present a novel conceptual model, this study extends Self-System Model of Motivational Development (Connell and Wellborn, 1991), together with consideration of Control-Value Theory (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). The present model (Figure 1) takes into account the sequence of *environment-self-emotion-action* and introduces positive academic emotions as proximal antecedents of agentic engagement. Hope is a positive and activating emotion that it is linked to student's future academic achievement (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Curiosity is the desire for the acquisition of new knowledge and information and generates positive feelings of intellectual interest and eliminates conditions of informational deprivation (Litman, 2019). Empathy is an

emotional ability and refers to students' reactions to the observed experiences of another person in academic settings. It embraces emotional (ability to experience another person's emotions) and cognitive (ability to sense another person's emotions) reactions (Vossen et al., 2015).

Based on this conceptual model, it is expected that when the faculty provide their students with choice, criticism, and goal/value/interest examination opportunities, it will result in students' positive self-appraisals (perception of competence, autonomy, and relatedness). These appraisals can create positive emotional experiences in the learning environment. Ultimately, these emotional experiences will shape the agentic actions in students, actions that are the only path toward academic achievements and accomplishments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

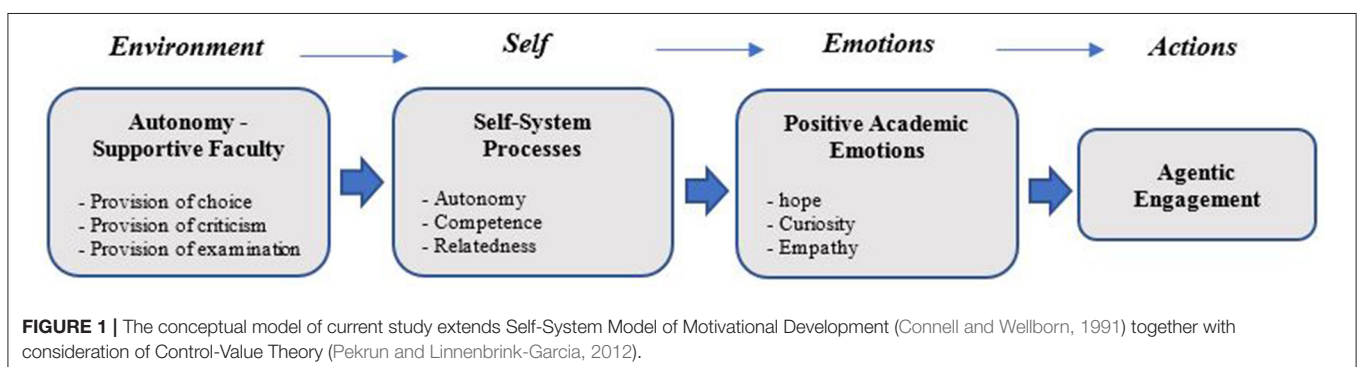
Participants

The population for this investigation includes all undergraduates at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in the first academic semester of 2019–2020. Following randomized multistage cluster sampling, 452 students (255 females and 197 males) were chosen as the research sample. Six faculties, including *Educational Sciences and Psychology* ($n = 82$), *Sciences* ($n = 75$), *Humanities and Literature* ($n = 78$), *Architecture* ($n = 65$), *Law* ($n = 73$) and *Agriculture* ($n = 79$), were chosen and from each faculty two classes were randomly picked out. All students of each class attended the survey, with an age range of 19 to 24 years.

Questionnaires

The Agentic Engagement Scale

Reeve's (2013) Agentic Engagement Scale was used to measure students' agentic engagement. It has five-point Likert scale items, varying from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). To gauge the scale validity, convergent validity was used. The Academic Engagement Questionnaire score is significantly and positively correlated with the Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale score (0.51) and the Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire score (0.48). Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that all items had a significant factor loading >0.47 . Goodness-of-fit indices showed that the model fitted the data adequately,



and Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated high internal consistency (0.89).

Self-System Processes Questionnaire

To assess individual's basic needs satisfaction in general, Gagné's (Gagné, 2003) nine-item measure was used. This self-report scale measures to what extent individuals agree or disagree with items relevant to perceived autonomy, perceived competence and perceived relatedness. Items are rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Confirmatory factor analysis showed that all items had a significant factor loading >0.40 and, like the original study, the items were loaded on their relevant factors. Goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data adequately, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated acceptable internal consistency for the whole questionnaire (0.80).

The Autonomy-Supportive Environment Inventory

To assess faculty's autonomy-supportive behavior, three aspects, namely, provision of choice, provision of criticism and provision of goal/value/interest examination were investigated. The first two aspects were taken from autonomy-supportive environment inventory developed by Assor et al. (2002) and the last one from Assor's (Assor, 2012) Goal/Value/Interests Examination Support Scale. Each scale has 7 five-point Likert scale items, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). For this study, confirmatory factor analysis suggested that all items had a significant factor loading >0.40 , and, like the original study, the items were loaded on their relevant factors. Goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data adequately, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported as 0.89 for provision of choice, 0.81 for provision of criticism and 0.85 for provision of goal/value/interest examination.

The Subscale Hope From Academic Emotions Questionnaire

The subscale hope was taken from Pekrun et al.'s (Pekrun et al., 2002) academic emotions questionnaire. This scale has three subscales of class-related hope, learning-related hope and test-related hope. For the present study, the two sub-scales of learning-related hope (with six items) and class-related hope (with eight items) were utilized and the items are assessed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Confirmatory factor analysis for this paper indicated that all items had a significant factor loading >0.48 and, like the original study, the items were loaded on their relevant factors. Goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data adequately, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported as 0.90 for class-related hope and 0.89 for learning-related hope.

Epistemic Curiosity Questionnaire

This scale was developed by Litman et al. (2010) to assess epistemic curiosity and has 10 items. It is scored on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 4 (almost always). The reliability of the original scale is 0.75 and its validity was measured using convergent validity and discriminant

validity (Litman et al., 2010). Epistemic curiosity questionnaire score is significantly and positively correlated with the intrinsic motivation inventory score (0.36) and is significantly and negatively correlated with the extrinsic motivation inventory score (-0.15). In this research, Goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data adequately, and the whole questionnaire enjoyed a high internal consistency (0.87).

The Empathy Subscale From Empathy and Sympathy Inventory

This 12-item questionnaire was developed by Vossen et al. (2015) and measures empathy and sympathy. It is scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The subscale empathy has eight items and its original reliability is 0.86, and test-retest reliability for the original measure was 0.66 with a 2-week interval. Vossen et al. (2015) used internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity to measure validity. The empathy questionnaire score is significantly and positively correlated with the perspective-taking questionnaire score (0.49) and is significantly and negatively correlated with the aggression questionnaire score (-0.45). In current research Confirmatory factor analysis showed that all items had a significant factor loading >0.41 and, Goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data adequately, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable internal consistency for the questionnaire (0.85).

Procedure and Data Analysis

Prior to the survey, the participants completed an informed consent form to participate in the study and they were assured that their information would be confidential and participation is entirely voluntary. Participants were then asked to complete the questionnaires to collect the necessary data. Each questionnaire took ~ 25 min to complete.

The present research follows Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationships between variables in the proposed model. The data analysis was guided by Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) in SPSS (version 21). Also, AMOS (version 21) was utilized to perform SEM for the analysis of structural relationships between variables of the model and path coefficients. To find the mediation effects of mediator variables, the bootstrapping method was used.

RESULTS

To check the assumptions of SEM, data screening was utilized for normality, outliers, and missing values. Univariate normality was assessed by skewness, kurtosis and Q-Q plot, and multivariate normality was measured by Mardia's coefficients in AMOS. Skewness and Kurtosis values for all observed variables are $< +1$ indicating that the distribution of all observed variables is not significantly different from the normal distribution. Additionally, Mardia's coefficient showed a multivariate normal distribution. Examination of the normal probability plot of the observed variables revealed that the points are closer to the diagonal line enjoying a normal distribution of the variables. In order to check the linearity of the relationship between the research variables,

TABLE 1 | Mean and standard deviation of research variables.

Variables	Mean	SD
Provision of choice	21.52	5.12
Provision of criticism	22.91	4.51
Provision of examination	23.24	4.12
Autonomy	11.12	2.52
Competence	12.32	1.92
Relatedness	12.14	2.01
Hope	54.51	9.20
Curiosity	29.50	7.13
Empathy	26.72	4.11
Agentic engagement	19.53	3.92

the residual scatterplot and scatterplot matrices were examined. In the matrix of scatterplots, all plots were approximately elliptical and showed the linearity of the relationship between the observed variables. The residual scatter plot was not curved and was distributed in a rectangular shape around the zero residual value, indicating a linear relationship between the predicted dependent variable scores and the predicted errors. Multi-collinearity of predictor variables was also examined using tolerance statistics and variance inflation factor. The results showed that the tolerance values obtained for the variables are above 0.01, which indicates the absence of multi-collinearity of the variables. Also, the amount of variance inflation factor obtained for the variables was <10 , which indicates that there is no multi-collinearity of the variables.

The descriptive statistics can be seen in **Table 1** which gives a snapshot of the research variables. To analyze the mediating role of self-system processes and academic emotions in the relationship between faculty's support of autonomy and agentic engagement, initially goodness of fit indices and then regression weights and coefficients of the structural relationship of latent variables in the model were analyzed. In order to find a better model fit, the insignificant path in the model was removed and then modification indices were taken into account. The AMOS proposed some modifications, including the calculation of covariance among errors of observed variables. Goodness-of-fit indices are reported in **Table 2**. After a round of modifications, goodness-of-fit indices suggested that the model fitted the data perfectly.

The regression weights of three measurement models were significant (**Figure 2**), suggesting that all indices were determinants of the relevant latent variables. Of the three indices of faculty's support of autonomy, provision of criticism had the highest weight in defining the latent variable; in other words, the most powerful index. As to the latent variable of self-system processes, perceived autonomy was the most powerful index. Finally, hope was the most powerful index of academic emotions.

The outputs of structural model analysis, namely, the direct effects of latent variables in the model and the indirect effects—using bootstrapping and with a 95% confidence interval—are shown in **Table 3**. As **Table 3** shows, the variable of faculty's

support of autonomy has a significant and direct effect on self-system processes. This variable has a significant and indirect effect on agentic engagement, via self-system processes and academic emotions. Also, this variable has a significant and indirect effect on academic emotions, via self-system processes. Self-system processes have a significant and direct effect on agentic engagement. In addition, the self-system processes have an indirect effect on agentic engagement, via academic emotions. Overall, it can be concluded that these self-system processes and academic emotions play a mediating role between faculty's support of autonomy and agentic engagement, and the research model accounts for 51% of students' agentic engagement variance.

DISCUSSION

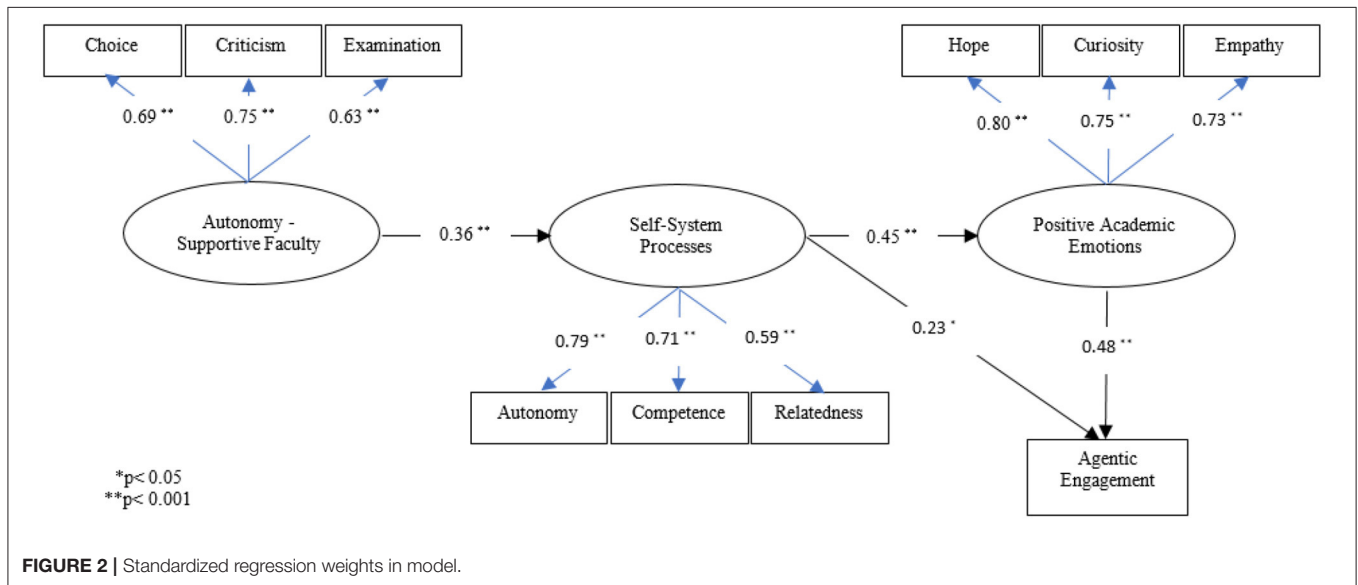
This research aimed to investigate the mediating role of students' self-system processes and academic emotions in the relationship between autonomy-supportive faculty and students' agentic engagement. The results suggested that two paths in the final model determined agentic engagement: *environment-self-agentic engagement* and *environment-self-emotion-agentic engagement*. Faculty's autonomy support explain students' agentic engagement variance via self-system processes. Also, faculty's autonomy support and self-system processes explain agentic engagement via academic emotions.

As to the mediating roles of self-system processes in the relationship between autonomy-supportive faculty and agentic engagement, the initial models showed the path *environment-self-agentic engagement* (Connell and Wellborn, 1991; Skinner et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012). Numerus studies have confirmed this path (Reeve and Shin, 2020; Tirado-Morueta et al., 2020). According to organismic approaches, learners and more generally humans are active agents and can effectively engage themselves in the (learning) environment (Reeve, 2013; Ryan and Deci, 2017). Engagement in the environment has root in intrinsic motivation (such as basic psychological needs). Autonomy supportive environments offer opportunities for learners which can result in vitalizing their intrinsic motivation. This motivation stands out in the action and learner's agentic engagement in learning activities and tasks become apparent (Molinari and Marnelli, 2018; Cohen et al., 2020).

Therefore, faculty, who support autonomy, can create a positive sense of self in students through addressing their basic needs. Such faculty promote a sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness in students by encouraging them to choose learning activities, listening to their ideas, accepting their criticism, and giving them a chance to reflect on important life issues, attitudes, values, and concerns. Within this learning environment, students perceive themselves as capable of attaining desired outcomes and reaching goals (perception of competence). They have a sense of independence in choosing learning activities and see a harmony between sources of intrinsic motivation and their activities (perception of autonomy). They experience a sense of being loved, valued and respected by others (perception of relatedness). Taken together, positive appraisal of

TABLE 2 | Model fit indices.

Fitness Index	X ² /df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Amount	2.50	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.05	0.30

**TABLE 3** | Direct, indirect and total effects in model.

Path		Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Explained Variance
To agentic engagement	From autonomy Support	—	0.31**	0.31**	51%
	From self-system processes	0.23*	0.32**	0.55**	
	From academic emotions	0.48**	—	0.48**	
To academic emotions	From autonomy support	—	0.26**	0.26**	39%
	From self-system processes	0.45**	—	0.45**	
To self-system processes	From autonomy support	0.36**	—	0.36**	13%

* $P < 0.05$ ** $P < 0.001$.

self leads to agentic engagement in activities (Matos et al., 2018; Jiang and Zhang, 2021).

Also the second path, *environment-self-emotion-agentic engagement*, was confirmed. This means that academic emotions are proximal antecedents of agentic engagement. The previous theories suggests that experiencing positive emotions can lead to disengagement. This is because when the individual experiences positive emotions, they feel that they are moving fast enough to meet their goals, and consequently, further engagement deems unnecessary for them (Carver et al., 1996). Or, the experience of positive emotions is a sign for them that everything is fine and there is no need to further engage in activities (Schwartz and Clore, 1996). However, Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014) are of the view that these theories have ignored various aspects of value and activation of academic emotions and also object of academic emotions. Activating emotions like hope, increase engagement and when the object of emotion is learning task, academic emotion is a facilitator and a proximal antecedent

of agentic engagement. Some have even called it a catalyst for engagement (King et al., 2015). The role of emotions in engagement have confirmed in studies (King et al., 2015; Zhen et al., 2017; Bordbar, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Carmona-Halty et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the experience of positive emotions in educational environments can generally expand thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2013). Experiencing positive emotions increases approach-oriented behaviors that lead to engagement in activities, while the experience of negative emotions during the task limits thought-action repertoires. When learners' mindsets are limited to avoidant behavior, agentic engagement is seriously challenged. Expansion of thought-action repertoires while experiencing positive emotions has another important function that is building personal resources. These resources can be used in subsequent activities. Indeed, agentic engagement is considered as a kind of personal resource that can facilitate further learning in the environment. Therefore, the

experience of positive emotions not only facilitates momentary agentic engagement, but also plays an effective and positive role in the learner's subsequent engagements in learning tasks and activities.

Experiencing positive academic emotions such as curiosity can effectively maintain students' focus on assignments and leads to knowledge-seeking behaviors and promotes agentic engagement in learning settings (Vracheva et al., 2020). Experiencing activating positive emotions like hope will create a positive sense of future academic accomplishments (Tomás et al., 2020). With such a sense of hope, the students constructively engaged in the learning environment and can make their way toward achievements and goals through agentic actions. Also, learning in educational settings is an interactive process and engagement means the interaction of individual characteristics with environmental characteristics. Indeed, empathetic relationships and the experience of social emotions like empathy throughout the learning activity create a motivational force driving students toward more agentic engagement in the environment (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012).

On the other hand, the role of the environment and self-appraisals in emotional experiences has been highlighted in theories (Lazarus, 1994). Broadly speaking, environmental features determine emotional experiences through self-appraisals. These appraisals of environment based on personal motivations (intrinsic or acquired) lead to emotion. When personal motivations are given due attention in the environment, emotions emerge.

Also according to the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017), supportive learning environment can yield positive emotion outcomes for learners. This association is such that the characteristics of supportive learning environment through interactions with the inherent psychological needs of the students create a psychological power in them which is their positive appraisal and perception of competence, autonomy and relatedness. This power can create positive emotions. Ultimately, the positive emotions push students to express their interests and needs, ask questions, seek clarification and elaboration and offer suggestions to their teachers for better learning. More specifically, they should play a constructive role in changing their learning environment.

Theoretically, the present study was a significant contribution to *Self-System Model of Motivational Development* (Connell and Wellborn, 1991) as emotional experiences were introduced. This study highlighted the role of academic emotions, which are an integral part of learning environments. In light of the

findings, the study has some educational implications. Faculty should focus on a university environment which gives support to autonomy and they can set the stage for the students to choose their course content, to criticize, to evaluate their goals, values and interests. This helps students engage more constructively in activities. Teachers should pay attention to students' self-system processes, which is their perception of competence, autonomy and relatedness as significant factors in academic engagement. They should assess students' perception of self and should design interventions to promote these perceptions. They should also focus on students' academic emotions throughout the learning activities as they are proximal antecedents and predicting of agentic engagement. Ignoring students' experience of emotions can lead waste to teachers' efforts to strengthen their students' motivations (self-appraisals). This is because positive academic emotions can provide the ground for students' engagement, and consequently, their accomplishments at university.

Given that the present research was quantitative, it is suggested that future studies examine the proposed model in a mixed-methods research design. The use of the embedded research design wherein the researcher embeds a qualitative component or data within quantitative research to examine the underlying mechanisms relevant to research variables is recommended. This should be noted that the research was a cross-sectional study and future studies are recommended to examine research variables in a longitudinal design throughout a semester (at beginning, middle and end of the semester). In the longitudinal design, transpositions and interactions between variables can be analyzed in detail.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study involves human participants. They were assured that their information would be confidential and the participation was entirely voluntary. They provided their written informed consent to participate in the study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Teachers' Dispositions Toward Mindfulness in EFL/ESL Classrooms in Teacher-Student Interpersonal Relationships

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The psychological factors of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) teachers have significant roles in any language learning context. Previous studies in the related literature have shown that L2 learners' learning, psychological factors, and emotional factors are closely related to teachers' psychological factors. Mindfulness as one of the psychological attributes of L2 teachers and as a complex and multi-faceted construct influences L2 teachers' professional development. Hence, this study aims to review the notion of mindfulness and its role in L2 teaching as a profession and pave a way for further research, highlighting its indispensable role in teacher-student relationships. To achieve this goal, this study has reviewed the theoretical perspectives of mindfulness, the construct of mindful L2 teaching education, and mindfulness as a closely related concept to teacher wellbeing. Based on the findings, some pedagogical implications for the policymakers, teacher trainers, materials developers, L2 teachers, and learners are provided. Finally, directions for future research are suggested to the interested L2 researchers.

Keywords: psychological factors, English as a foreign language, English as a second language, mindfulness, emotional factors

INTRODUCTION

The psychological factors of L2 teachers have significant roles in any L2 learning context and affect language teaching as a profession. Hence, L2 learners' learning, psychological factors including affective and emotional factors are closely related to teachers' psychological factors. Teaching has been considered a stressful and challenging profession that bears responsibility on teachers' shoulders. To tackle these psychological barriers, teachers need to be empowered with influential psychological factors. Positive psychology as a new area of psychology emerged to conceptualize the positive side of psychological factors (Dewaele et al., 2019), including but not limited to emotions, care, wellbeing, credibility, resilience, and mindfulness of teachers. Instead of focusing on negative psychological factors, positive psychology has focused on the positive sides of psychological factors which have been considered as a paradigm shift from learner-centered pedagogy (Seligman et al., 2006; MacIntyre et al., 2016). Positive psychology has rooted in the humanistic approach of psychology and its aim is to investigate the effect of emotions and feelings on peoples' quality of life. Oxford (2016) argued that while the focus of positive psychology is on the wellbeing and positive sides of human psychological factors,

it does not neglect abnormalities and adversities of human psychological factors. In the domain of positive psychology, although there have been potential advantages of mindfulness, little attention has been dedicated to teachers' mindfulness as one of the components of teachers' wellbeing (Yuan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Little attention has been paid to the influence of mindfulness, as a complex and multi-faceted construct, on L2 teachers' professional development and teacher-student interpersonal factors (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Hence, this study aims to review the notion of mindfulness and its role in L2 teaching as a profession and pave a way for further research.

MINDFULNESS: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Over the past decades, mindfulness has emerged in educational psychology and teacher education followed by the flourishing body of research. Although the interest in mindfulness has grown recently, there is no consensus on the definition of the term. Even one problem with the research studies on mindfulness relates to the issue that there have been some studies (e.g., Jennings et al., 2011) that explained to practice mindfulness but failed to give an explicit definition for that. Mindfulness has been viewed by researchers (Langer, 1997; Li, 2021) as a conscious awareness of instant comprehensible experience. Langer (1997) represented mindfulness as a process involving understanding problems and solutions of daily life experience. In this sense, one can focus on a specific mental state instantly while gaining a deeper perspective on what is happening. As a pioneer of the mindfulness field, Kabat-Zinn (2003, p. 145) defines mindfulness as "a state or quality of mind that arises through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment." Mindfulness can be considered as a process rather than a product of activity; it is dynamic rather than static since it focuses on ongoing life experiences. Awareness of moment-to-moment experiences without making a judgment about these experiences is a key concept in the definitions of mindfulness. Brown and Ryan (2003) consider mindfulness awareness of present events and experiences which can be received by attention. Mindfulness, as a complex and idiosyncratic construct, can be considered a concept consisting of several elements. It includes personal and professional features which help teachers to connect with different features of life experiences (Yuan et al., 2020). Yuan et al. (2020) found some critical dimensions constructed to the concept of mindfulness including time, change, self, teaching and learning practices, professional development, and the context of L2 teaching. In summary, based on the above definitions, we can conceptualize mindfulness as conscious awareness of moment-to-moment life experiences, which is purposeful, focused, and non-judgmental.

MINDFUL L2 TEACHING EDUCATION

L2 teacher education has been designed to grow L2 teachers' professional development. Johnson and Golombek (2016) in their

insightful book *Mindful L2 Teacher Education* looking at the teachers' professional development *via* a sociocultural perspective argued that L2 teacher education embeds culturally and socially educational practices. To be mindful, teachers need to know themselves, their affective and cognitive factors, and their desired utopia. Mindful L2 teacher education as a process involves teachers focus on the learning experiences, the nature of mediation between teacher and teacher trainer, shaping a new understanding, and teachers' attentive interactions with learners. Furthermore, "teachers need to be mindful of the consequences of our pedagogy on how teachers come to understand both the scope and impact of their teaching" (Johnson and Golombek, 2016, p. 164). In other words, teachers need to be conscious about their motivation, orientations, and intentions when practicing their pedagogy. Mindfulness is also a paradigm shift against dualistic thinking which has been the dominant philosophy in the Aristotelian school of thought (Johnson and Golombek, 2016). The concentration of this philosophy is on dualisms, such as mind and body, theory and practice, and expert and inexperienced. In contrast, dialectic thinking focuses on the connections and interrelationships of these constructs, process, dynamicity, and change which is in line with the mindfulness training movement. In this sense, as Johnson and Golombek (2016) stated, mindfulness helps teacher to think dialectically so they can reflect on their future based on their present and past. On the other hand, there have been some efforts to move mindfulness away from L2 pedagogy. For instance, the pre-designed curriculum that needs teachers to be content-oriented tells to teachers what to do, what to say, and even what to contemplate regardless of the context of teaching. Mindful L2 teacher education has been considered a movement against this discourse in the sense that it focuses on the present moment while considering core values, purposes, and identities in pedagogy. In these cases, mindfulness may play a significant role in assisting learners and teachers to be positive when facing challenging situations to promote teachers' and learners' professional development.

Mindfulness can be taught and learned. Mindfulness training includes various activities expanding from daily practices to intensive training courses. Mindfulness training has been well established in clinical and health contexts (Brown and Ryan, 2003) and it has been shown that mindfulness training has a positive effect on affective and psychological factors, such as wellbeing, stress, mood, and attention (Baer et al., 2006; Lutz et al., 2008; Li, 2021). Sharp and Jennings (2016) argued that teachers' mindfulness helps to foster the formation of positive relationships with students, impact their psychological factors, and grow their professional development which may lead to student's higher achievement. Mindful practices can help learners to overcome their distractions and keep their focus on their surroundings. In the classroom context, mindfulness helps teachers to be aware of their inactive pedagogical capabilities so they can aware of what is happening around them. Furthermore, mindfulness practices also help teachers to enhance their understanding of the body (such as fatigue), mind (thinking capacity), and feeling (nervousness; Bernay, 2014). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argued that mindfulness helps teachers to be positive and strong in challenging situations which in turn lead to learners' academic achievement. Furthermore, Schussler et al. (2016) suggested that

practicing mindfulness increases teachers' professional performance. By practicing, mindfulness and making it a tangible habit and tangible and long-lasting advantages for learners and teachers can be ensured (Altan et al., 2019).

MINDFULNESS AND TEACHER WELLBEING

Wellbeing of teachers, as a rudimentary construct of positive psychology, has been defined as teachers' judgment and salinification levels of his/her mental and physical condition. A number of studies (e.g., Baer et al., 2006; Hue and Lau, 2015) show that mindfulness training activities are effective in improving teachers' psychological health (such as teachers' wellbeing) and decreasing teachers' stress and burnout, and these effects mostly have been investigated through subjective first-person measures. Hwang et al. (2017) considers teachers' wellbeing and their performance as the consequences of mindfulness training. Fathi and Derakhshan (2019) state that psychological wellbeing helps teachers to establish a positive relationship with their students which lead to higher academic performance. It is also a useful construct leading to higher job satisfaction (Kidger et al., 2016) and increased learners' performance. In a systematic review, Hwang et al. (2017) investigated 16 research conducted up to 2015 in mindfulness. The results suggested that few studies have been conducted to investigate mindfulness-based intervention, and many of those studies have focused on teachers' mindfulness and wellbeing and different interpretations of mindfulness and its influences were taken into account to describe mindfulness-based interventions. Furthermore, Chiesa et al. (2011) investigated the mindfulness and psychological wellbeing of teachers. The results showed that mindfulness training increased psychological capacities and regulation strategies which in turn lead to increased sustainability. Learners also are affected by mindfulness-based training reported that teachers' chronic stress and burnout may lead to learner-teacher relationships which negatively affect learners' performance. Furthermore, a number of studies have shown that mindfulness has positively related to learners' academic achievement, task performance, emotion regulation, and learning productivity (Kee and Liu, 2011; Flook et al., 2013; Rosenstreich and Margalit, 2015).

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of such a study which investigates teachers' psychological attributes (e.g., mindfulness) can boost the awareness of learners, teacher trainers, policymakers, material designers, and other researchers in the field. Derakhshan (2021) describes the implications for teachers to be with language teaching as a demanding profession that involves adversities, tension, and traumatic experiences. Teacher trainers also can enhance their knowledge of mindfulness-related strategies which in turn lead to competent teachers. Material developers also can be benefited in the sense that they should consider the psychological attributes of teachers which lead to a less stressful and defensive context of learning. Mindful teaching

also has some implications for students in a way that they can be aware of their responsibility in the learning process. In this sense, classroom tensions are removed and a relaxed classroom atmosphere can be created and learners' motivation and involvement can be enhanced. Finally, the results of mindfulness-based studies result are useful for policymakers so they can have a deeper understanding of teaching values and teacher psychological and affective factors.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Mindfulness-based training has recently got the interest of many educators in L2 learning and teaching. The review suggests that mindfulness-based training is capable of reducing learners' and teachers' anxiety, helping learners to be attentive learners, and be critical thinkers. Although most of the conducted studies in the related literature have focused on mindfulness and its positive effects on different psychological dimensions, the effect of implementing mindfulness techniques on the development of different language skills has rarely been investigated in the related literature. Furthermore, most of the conducted studies in the field of mindfulness have been explored by the use of quantitative cross-sectional studies. Conducting longitudinal mindful-based training studies which investigate the long-term effect of implementing such programs on teachers' and learners' performance and considers the dynamic aspect of the issue can be another avenue of further research. Moreover, conducting mixed-method research that looks at the concept of mindfulness from different qualitative and quantitative perspectives can deepen our understanding of the contributions of mindfulness and its dimensions on L2 teacher professional development. Needless to say, learners play a significant role in any L2 learning context. However, in comparison with the studies conducted on L2 teacher education and mindfulness, there have been few studies investigating mindful-based interventions on the side of language learners as well as the role of mindful learners and teachers in interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Since contextual, cultural, and demographic factors play an important role in any education setting in general and language learning in particular, conducting mindfulness-based training studies which take into account contextually oriented factors are of significant importance. It has been argued that learners' academic performance, motivation, and attitude all depend on teachers' affective factors, hence investigating the interplay of teacher mindfulness and learners' mindfulness can be fruitful in understanding the pedagogical benefits of mindfulness-based teaching and learning.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

XS drafted the first manuscript and XH revised the original version. Both of the two authors agreed on the order of the authors before they got this final draft ready for submission to *Frontiers in Psychology*. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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The Predictive Role of Chinese EFL Teachers' Individual Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy in Their Work Engagement

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Both teacher individual self-efficacy (TSE) and collective efficacy (TCE) are indispensable since they impact the amount to which teachers are engaged in their work. Although several studies have been carried out considering the referred points, it seems to be a must to conduct such studies among Chinese teachers to measure the link between these three variables. In this study, the author has made endeavors to scrutinize the interplay among TSE, TCE, and work engagement (WE), and also the significant role of self-efficacy and collective efficacy in WE. Participants were 346 university professors and middle school teachers, from 25 provinces of China. Results substantiate that TSE and TCE predict teachers' WE. In other words, the more efficacious a teacher is, the more he is engaged in his work. In the discussion part, the consistency between the current study and some other studies with the same topic is unpacked. Then, some limitations are discussed and further implications are suggested.

Keywords: self-efficacy, collective efficacy, work engagement, foreign language learning, Chinese EFL teachers

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INTRODUCTION

In the realm of teaching and learning, teachers have become the center of attention since when the teachers feel emotionally balanced and well-adjusted, the students will be positively affected, and it incredibly facilitates the process of learning, which is the reason behind this research. Nevertheless, the teacher-student interrelationships have received due attention on the part of researchers; however, surprisingly little attention has been focused on teachers' intrapersonal relationships. Regarding the above-mentioned points, teacher stress and teacher self-efficacy (TSE) have been said to predict the amount of engagement, emotional boredom, and the amount of motivation when leaving the profession of teaching (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2016). It was also revealed that the students' desirable academic outcomes can be facilitated by positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). It was also indicated that TSE and teacher collective efficacy (TCE) are positively linked to teachers' wellbeing (Fathi et al., 2020).

In order to tackle this issue, studies should have been conducted to address related variables relevant to teachers themselves, since their pivotal role in the learning context is not negligible (Jex and Bliese, 1999). Therefore, considering this point, this study was carried out to unravel

the relationship among three aspects of teachers' variables that are found to be efficacious in teachers' WE.

The central aim of the present study is to conduct more research on the paramount effect of Chinese EFL TSE and TCE in their WE. First of all, the following terms "teacher self-efficacy" and "collective self-efficacy" have been defined. Then, WE with its subfactors has been introduced. The methodology of the current study is what has been explained next. The results shown in different tables were discussed. In the end, the limitations of the study and further implications have been suggested. Steps have been taken to answer the following questions in this research:

1. Is there any link between Chinese EFL teachers' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and their work engagement?
2. How can teachers' work engagement be anticipated by Chinese EFL teachers' self-efficacy and collective efficacy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Individual Self-Efficacy and Collective Self-Efficacy

It was emphasized that TSE refers to the extent to which a teacher believes in his personal abilities which affect students' outcomes (Wheatley, 2005) although the conceptualization of this term differs from researcher to researcher (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007). The theoretical postulations of TSE have emanated from two orientations. Rotter's (1966) model highlighted the role of internal and external control; it has been said that teachers take the view that if students' accomplishments and behavior are positively impacted by education, their TSE dramatically increases (Guskey and Passaro, 1994). TSE has also been supposed to reduce if teachers are of the belief that external teaching factors, such as students' capabilities and family background, are of great importance in terms of students' learning a new language rather than the impact the teachers have (Goddard and Goddard, 2001). In the second model as opposed to this concept, it is highlighted by Bandura (1997) that self-efficacy, formally known as TCE is conceptualized as what teachers hold about their abilities to organize and conduct tasks, needed to reach given educational goals. In this regard, people are inclined to do the tasks that they think they have the capability to control, and in contrast, they stop doing the tasks that they suppose are beyond their abilities (Schwarzer, 1999; Garrido, 2000). It is not just teachers' WE but students' engagement is impacted by TSE and some other variables, like teachers' credibility, stroke, and success (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). It has also been mentioned that there is a positive and significant link between collective teacher efficacy and the amount of teachers' commitment to students (Lee et al., 2011).

Work Engagement

Engagement is described as a steady conative-affective state rather than a transient state. WE comprises three sub-constructs, vigor which is characterized by how energetic and resilient a

teacher is as working, the willingness to make attempts that is invested in working, and consistency when facing difficulties. Dedication is the second sub-construct of WE which refers to the level of involvement while working and gaining experience. The third sub-component of WE is absorption that refers to the full concentration and immersion when working (Maslach et al., 2001).

The Impacts of Teacher Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy on Students' Engagement

In an effort to illustrate the significance of TSE and TCE, it has been noted that efficacious teachers who trust in their own and their group's professional capacities have more inclination to implement new instructional methods and approaches which urge the students to take part in classroom activities (Papa, 2015). It has also been explicated that efficacious teachers positively affect the students which leads to them being more engaged in the classroom (Salanova et al., 2011). It has also been proposed that efficacious teachers commonly exhibit higher consistency and attempt, by which students are inspired to become engaged in the learning process (Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

In this study, the final 346 participants were from more than 50 cities from 25 provinces of China. As it is unraveled in **Table 1**, out of 25 provinces of China from which

TABLE 1 | Demographic information of the participants from each region.

Anhui	2
Beijing	12
Chongqing	6
Guangdong	2
Guangxi	1
Guizhou	10
Hainan	2
Hebei	2
Heilongjiang	2
Henan	223
Hubei	2
Hunan	1
Inner Mongolia	1
Jiangsu	12
Jilin	2
Liaoning	7
Ningxia	1
Shandong	5
Shanghai	4
Shanxi(山西)	37
Shanxi(陕西)	3
Tianjin	1
Xinjiang	2
Yunnan	5
Zhejiang	1

participants took part, 223 teachers were from Henan, Zhejiang, Tianjin, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Hunan, and Guangxi were among the provinces with just one participant. Most of them are university professors, and they were heterogeneous in terms of gender, with 69 male teachers and 277 female teachers, and teaching experience, between 1 year of teaching experience and above 25 years, and also age, ranging from 32 to 62. They were opted for based on random sampling.

Data Collection Procedure

The revised questionnaire consists of four sections and 54 items in total. To increase the credibility of the data, we translated the items into Chinese since the study is about Chinese EFL teachers and a questionnaire in the Chinese language seems friendlier to them. The Chinese version items were put into *Wenjuanxing*, a computer program for conducting an online survey in China, and an E-version questionnaire was generated.

The author sent the link of the questionnaire to English teachers via WeChat message, posted the questionnaire on WeChat moments, and extended an invitation to participate in WeChat groups. It began on July 22 and lasted for 5 days.

Instruments

TCE was evaluated by the scale designed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007). The scale consists of seven items and is a unidimensional scale. The items were concerned with motivation, instruction, addressing students' needs, controlling student behavior, and establishing a secure atmosphere. "Efficacy for instructional strategies, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for student engagement" are the sub-constructs of this conception. In previous studies, reliabilities for the full scale were from 0.92 to 0.95, and for the subscales from 0.86 to 0.90. A sample item is as follows: "As teachers of this school we can get even the most difficult students engaged in their schoolwork." Each item was a 5-point scale ranging from false (1) to true (5).

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) designed and validated by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) was employed to measure EFL teachers' sense of efficacy. TSES is one of the most frequently used scales measuring teachers' sense of efficacy. It has been reported to enjoy acceptable levels of reliability and validity (e.g., Klassen et al., 2009). This scale includes 24 items. Response options ranged from 1 (nothing) to 5 (a great deal). The item examples were from (1) "How much you can do to get through to the most difficult students?" to (24) "How well can you provide appropriate challenges for competent students" (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

The original Utrecht Work Engagement Scale with 17 items designed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) was also employed to estimate how much a teacher is engaged in his job. The frequency of all items was measured on a seven-point rating scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). A sample item is as follows: "At my job, I am very resilient, mentally."

RESULTS

For the normality of data distribution to be checked, the test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) was utilized. The consequences of the normality test are indicated in **Table 2**.

The KS test results demonstrated that there is a normal distribution across all variables and parametric statistics can be utilized. **Table 2** displays descriptive statistics of Chinese EFL teachers' WE, TSE, and TCE, including the number of participants, the mean, and the standard deviation.

As **Table 3** shows, 346 teachers participated in this study. Besides, it was identified that work engagement has a mean score of 90.10, TSE has a mean score of 89.54, and teachers' collective efficacy has a mean score of 26.35. **Table 4** concludes the information gathered from Cronbach alpha analyses.

As can be perceived, the employed questionnaires reached acceptable indexes of Cronbach alpha as a whole in addition to their subscales.

1. Is there any relationship between Chinese EFL teachers' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and their work engagement?

To reply to the first research question, Pearson Correlation was employed. **Table 5** demonstrates the consequences of Pearson Correlation between overall EFL teachers' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and their work engagement.

Table 5 presents that there is a positive huge connection between teachers' WE and TSE ($r=0.58, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$) and their collective efficacy ($r=0.52, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$). Moreover, overall teacher self-efficacy and their collective efficacy are positively linked ($r=0.68, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$).

Table 6 demonstrates the consequences of Pearson Correlation between all sub-constructs WE and overall collective efficacy.

As **Table 6** demonstrates, there are positive significant relationships between all sub-constructs WE and overall TCE: vigor ($r=0.50, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$), dedication ($r=0.53, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$), and absorption ($r=0.48, n=346, p=0.000, \alpha=0.01$).

TABLE 2 | The results of KS test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistics	df	Sig.
Work engagement	0.06	346	0.11
Self-efficacy	0.09	346	0.06
Collective efficacy	0.07	346	0.09

TABLE 3 | Descriptive statistics of the TSE, TCE, and WE.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Work engagement	346	17	119	90.10	11.06
Self-efficacy	346	27	120	89.54	10.34
Collective efficacy	346	7	35	26.35	4.77

TABLE 4 | Results of Cronbach alpha indexes.

Scale	Subscales	Cronbach alpha
Collective efficacy	–	0.89
Work engagement	Vigor	0.87
	Dedication	0.91
	Absorption	0.88
	Overall work engagement	0.95
	Efficacy for instructional strategies	0.89
Self-efficacy	Efficacy for classroom management	0.91
	Efficacy for student engagement	0.88
	Overall self-efficacy	0.94

TABLE 5 | Results of Pearson Correlation between overall EFL teachers' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and their work engagement.

		Work engagement	Self-efficacy	Collective efficacy
Work engagement	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (two-tailed)			
	N	346		
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	0.58**	1	
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000		
	N	346	346	
Collective efficacy	Pearson Correlation	0.52**	0.68**	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	346	346	346

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

Table 7 delineates the results of Pearson Correlation between all sub-components of WE and all sub-components of TSE.

As **Table 7** demonstrates, all WE sub-constructs and all self-efficacy sub-constructs are positively correlated: Among these variables, the highest relationship is ascribed to instructional strategies and vigor ($r=0.56$, $n=346$, $p=0.000$, $\alpha=0.01$), classroom management has the highest relationship with dedication ($r=0.49$, $n=346$, $p=0.000$, $\alpha=0.01$), and student engagement has the highest relationship with vigor ($r=0.53$, $n=346$, $p=0.000$, $\alpha=0.01$).

Finally, to respond to the second research question, SEM was employed through Amos 24. For the strengths of the causal relationships among the components to be checked, the causal interplays among the factors were checked, using the analysis of the standardized evaluations. **Figure 1** indicates the model of the interrelationships among TSE, TCE, and WE.

As indicated in **Figure 1**, both TCE ($\beta=0.23$, $p < 0.05$) and TSE ($\beta=0.42$, $p < 0.05$) are positive significant predictors of their WE. Finally, TCE correlated positively and significantly with TSE ($\beta=0.61$, $p < 0.05$).

TABLE 6 | Results of Pearson Correlation between all sub-constructs work engagement and overall collective efficacy.

	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Collective efficacy	0.50**	0.53**	0.48**

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

TABLE 7 | Results of Pearson Correlation between all sub-constructs work engagement and all sub-constructs of TSE.

	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Instructional strategies	0.56**	0.55**	0.53**
Classroom management	0.45**	0.49**	0.46**
Student engagement	0.53**	0.50**	0.49**

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

TABLE 8 | Goodness of fit indices.

	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08
Model	2.66	0.92	0.90	0.91	0.07

For the model fit to be checked, goodness of fit indices was utilized. Goodness of fit indices can be visible in **Table 8**. In this study, χ^2/df , GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were employed. In order to have a fit model, χ^2/df is required to be less than 3; GFI, CFI, and NFI are required to be above 0.90; and RMSEA is required to be less than 0.08.

Table 8 delineates that all the integrity of fit indices can run inside the satisfactory level. Thus, the model had a reasonable level of validity.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to test a predictive role of TCE and TSE in WE among Chinese EFL teachers. Some crucial findings were put forward through this research. First, as **Table 2** shows, the sig value for all the variables is higher than 0.05. Consequently, it can be summarized that there is a normal distribution across all three variables. As shown in **Table 3**, among the variables, WE has the highest mean ($M=90.10$, $SD=11.06$) while TCE obtained the lowest mean ($M=26.35$, $S=4.77$). **Table 4** demonstrates the correlation among three variables in this study. As it can be implied, the highest correlation is ascribed to TCE and TSE ($r=0.68$, $p=0.000$). The second highest correlation can be seen between WE and self-efficacy ($r=0.58$, $p=0.000$). The third highest correlation was obtained between WE and TCE. **Table 5** demonstrates that the relationship between all the sub-constructs of WE is positive and out of which dedication reached the highest ($r=0.53$, $p=0.000$). Considering all the subfactors in both TSE

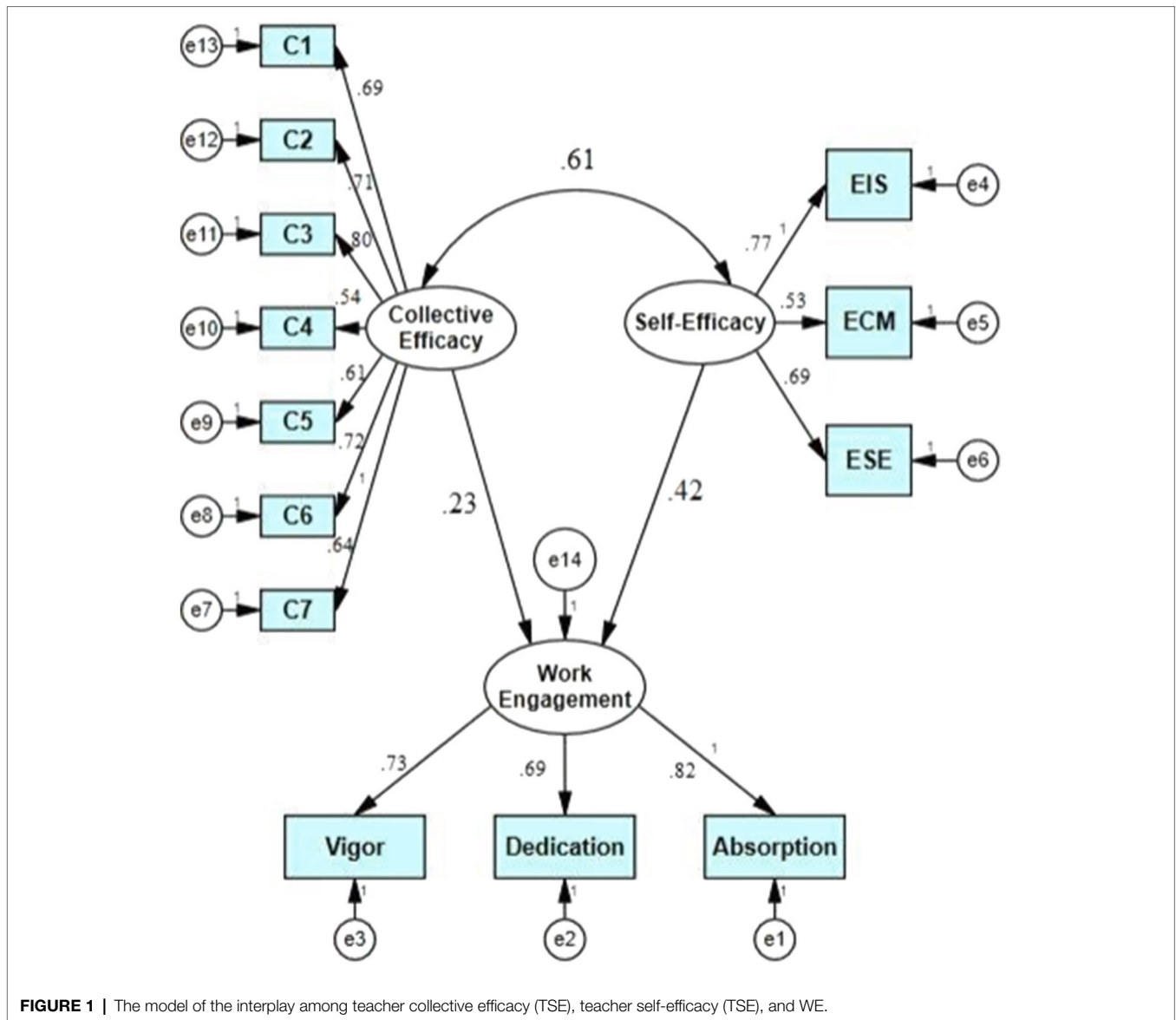


FIGURE 1 | The model of the interplay among teacher collective efficacy (TSE), teacher self-efficacy (TSE), and WE.

and WE, it can be perceived out of **Table 6** that all the sub-constructs of WE, including vigor, dedication, and the absorption, are positively correlated with the sub-constructs of TSE, including “instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement,” among which the highest relationship can be found between instructional strategies and vigor. It implies that when a teacher has physical and mental energy and is also strong-willed, he is more likely to implement educational materials, strategies, and programs. It can also be understood that classroom management has the highest relationship with dedication. In other words, the more dedicated a teacher is, the better he can manage the classroom. Last but not least, the highest relationship between student engagement and vigor can be identified. To put it simply, the more determined and the more mentally and physically energetic a teacher is, the more engaged students can get. This finding is somewhat consistent with the following findings: approximately a fourth of novice teachers do not continue working in their third

year and about a third give up their profession when it has been just 5 years from the moment they started teaching (Gold, 1996; Harris and Associates Inc., 1999). Studies have recommended that those who give up teaching are less efficacious than teachers continuing teaching (Glickman and Tamashiro, 1982). TSE has been said to be associated with stress that is experienced in teaching (Smylie, 1988). It is also in line with the findings of a study conducted by Greenier et al. (2021) that showed a significant positive correlation between emotion regulation and psychological wellbeing among a group of Iranian and British English teachers. It has also been found that there is a crucial link between TSE and emotion regulation (Fathi et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

One of the reasons behind this study is that more attention should be paid to teachers themselves, not just students since

the striking role of teachers in learners' achievements is extraordinarily crucial. Many studies were conducted to investigate the predictive role of TSE and TCE in students' engagement despite the fact that in this study, efforts have been made to find the interplay between the following variables: TSE, TCE, and WE. WE comprises three sub-constructs, vigor which is characterized by how energetic and resilient a teacher is as working, the willingness to make an effort that is invested in working, and consistency when facing difficulties. Dedication is the second sub-construct of WE which refers to the level of involvement while working and gaining experience about a sense of importance, passion, inspiration, pride, and challenge. The third sub-construct of WE is absorption that refers to the full concentration and immersion when working (Maslach et al., 2001).

Consequently, all the afore-mentioned factors of WE should be boosted in teachers in order for them to experience a relaxing atmosphere in their jobs. Regarding all the three variables in this study, it has been shown that the more efficacious a teacher is, the more engaged he is in his work; it simply means that he is more determined, dedicated, persistent, energetic, inspired, and enthusiastic to do his job.

This study is, nevertheless, limited to some extent. First, instead of an experimental study, avid researchers can conduct a longitudinal study through which a teacher's behavior would fully be analyzed, and then, the solution can be put forward so as to change teacher's way of thinking that causes a specific behavior in their way of teaching.

Secondly, the participants of this study were chosen out of some provinces in China, while it has been proposed that one's culture and region affects his teaching method; therefore, some other countries with different teachers can be the focus of future studies. That is, those participants from the cross-cultural contexts should be further investigated to generalize the research findings of the present study. Thirdly, from an institutional point of view, it is not enough to just conduct some studies regarding these issues which are of paramount significance; these studies should be implemented in the learning contexts to help teachers to build both TSE and TCE causing the main effect on their WE. Steps should be taken by the authorities to allow teachers to gain respect and feel more valued by providing them with the situation in which teachers are assisted to increase TSE. In this regard, attention will be drawn to teachers who are viewed as the most radical pillar in the learning contexts.

Further studies can be conducted in the future as well. A suggestion by which avid researchers can be intrigued is the

main role of TSE and TCE on the extent to which a teacher can develop a sense of flexibility or be well-adjusted in both his personal life and work life. Those well-adjusted teachers are found to encourage the students to reach their apex in the learning contexts. As for students, teachers themselves can take advantage of being emotionally healthy in their own lives since the more stable a person is, the wiser decisions can be made by him which have a significant role in their way of teaching. Being well-adjusted is also in line with the level of serenity that can be experienced by teachers. Therefore, it could be another recommendation for future studies. Lastly, as has been suggested by one of my previous studies concerning research methodology along positive psychology that longitudinal and cross-cultural studies can be conducted to find the dynamic interplay of the variables which are subsumed under the umbrella of positive psychology movement in foreign and second language education (Yang, 2021).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material; further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Ethics and Academic Committee of Henan University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Dampening Effects of Perceived Teacher Enthusiasm on Class-Related Boredom in College Students: Longitudinal Mediation Effects of Perceived Task Value

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This study aims to explore the longitudinal mediation effects of college students' perceived task value (PTV) between perceived teacher enthusiasm (PTE) and class-related boredom (CB). We conducted a longitudinal survey among college students from five colleges at the second (T1), sixth (T2), tenth (T3), and fourteenth week (T4) in a semester, and overall 1,371 students completed all the measurements. In the survey, a battery of questionnaires was used to measure the students' PTE, perception of task difficulty, perception of task value, and CB. At T1, boredom proneness was measured as a control variable. Analysis of the longitudinal data showed that after controlling for the effects of boredom proneness and perceived task difficulty, students' PTE was a significant predictor of CB, and students' PTV played a significant mediating role in this causation relationship. The study supported the importance of the control-value theory in explaining the mitigating effect of students' PTE on CB, especially highlighting the role of PTV.

Keywords: teacher enthusiasm, task value, class-related boredom, longitudinal mediation effects, dampening effects

INTRODUCTION

Although teacher enthusiasm is recognized as the core index of affecting the quality of teaching, teacher enthusiasm may play a more important role than what we have known, especially on students' academic emotions (Keller et al., 2014, 2016). Previous literature has shown that teacher enthusiasm is associated with low levels of students' class-related boredom (CB; Cui et al., 2017a, 2020; Wang et al., 2020) and students' perceived task value (PTV) may play an intermediary role between them (Cui et al., 2017b). To date, few longitudinal studies have examined the causal relationships among these variables. Compared with a cross-sectional design that cannot reveal causality, a longitudinal design is more rigorous in providing reliable evidence. This study intends to use a longitudinal research design to examine the predictive effect of students' perceived teacher

enthusiasm (PTE) on their classroom boredom and the mediating role of task value in this causality relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Class-Related Boredom

Boredom, a negative and low-arousal emotion that is widely experienced by individuals in many situations (Chan et al., 2018; Martz et al., 2018; Sharp et al., 2019; Schwartze et al., 2020; Tam et al., 2021), was once thought to be a human “plague” (Pekrun et al., 2010), explained by the expressions “boredom like hell” (Maher et al., 2018) and “bored to death” (Britton and Shipley, 2010). In teaching and learning situations, boredom is typically experienced in class, and can be referred to as CB, which has a significant negative impact on students’ learning processes and learning outcomes (Harris, 2000; Pekrun et al., 2010; Daschmann et al., 2011; Tze et al., 2012, 2016; Chan et al., 2018; Haager et al., 2018; Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Mata et al., 2021). For example, CB is also negatively correlated with intrinsic goal orientation, task value, learning self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, degree of effort, learning engagement, use of fine processing strategies, self-regulated learning, and academic performance (Frenzel et al., 2007; Goetz et al., 2007; Tze et al., 2016), and positively correlated with negative emotions and behavioral problems (Pekrun et al., 2010, 2014, 2017). Additionally, CB is suggested to be a major antecedent of later learning weariness and dropping out of school (Sulea et al., 2015). Overall, CB is an important topic worthy of attention from researchers and educators. Additionally, in research on CB, boredom proneness can be considered as a control variable to exclude the individual difference on personality (Wang et al., 2020).

Effects of Teacher Enthusiasm on CB

Teacher enthusiasm refers to the teachers’ liking for the subject/teaching and the enthusiasm shown in the teaching process; teacher enthusiasm perceived by students is the degree of such positive emotions and display perceived by individual students at the social cognitive level (Keller et al., 2014, 2016). According to the emotional contagion theory (Hatfield et al., 1994), students who experience higher positive emotions from a teacher in class also experience higher levels of positive emotions in classroom learning. Correspondingly, teacher boredom in class, the opposite of teacher enthusiasm, also affects students’ boredom in class (Tam et al., 2020). Kunter et al. (2008) found that teachers who reported higher enthusiasm for mathematics and teaching could provide students with higher levels of cognitive autonomous support, social support, and classroom management. It could be concluded that a high level of enthusiasm for a teacher is associated with some aspects of good teaching quality (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007, 2010). Additionally, teacher enthusiasm is associated with students’ CB (Cui et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, teachers’ enthusiasm may be an important factor in reducing students’ boredom in class. Based on the previous literature, our first hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1: Students’ perceived teacher enthusiasm can negatively predict class-related boredom, after controlling for boredom proneness.

Mediation Effects of Task Value

Students’ PTV may play an intermediary role between their perceived teachers’ enthusiasm and CB. According to the control-value theory, regarding achievement emotion, the external environment may reduce students’ CB through the mediating effect of perceived control and value (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007). The perception of control and value can be indicated by the students’ perceived task difficulty and task value, respectively. Feelings of worthlessness perceived by students in the learning process represent a significant barrier to their learning success and a major source of negative emotions (Pekrun, 2006). Empirical results show that students’ PTV has a strong predictive effect on their boredom (Pekrun et al., 2010). Bieg et al. (2013) also showed that students’ perceived value is significantly negatively correlated with CB.

Teacher enthusiasm may induce students’ PTV. Teacher enthusiasm can also induce students’ learning value through emotional infection and observation of learning, which is an important means of value induction (Pekrun, 2006). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Frenzel et al., 2007) and the trend of social construction (Wild et al., 1992, 1997) also posit that students’ perceived or observed teacher enthusiasm may affect students’ perception and evaluation of the subject and its task value. Empirical evidence exists that students’ PTE is significantly related to their interest in mathematics (Frenzel et al., 2010), which further predicts individual interest in learning and improves their learning value (Keller et al., 2014). As such, PTE may reduce CB through the mediating effect of students’ PTV. In addition to task value, according to the control-value theory and related empirical research, task difficulty may also affect the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and class boredom (Pekrun, 2006; Cui et al., 2020). Considering the research focus of the present study (i.e., to examine the mediating effect of task value), the influence of task difficulty should be accounted for in the examination. Based on the previous literature, our second hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: Students’ perceived task value can mediate the effects of perceived teacher enthusiasm on class-related boredom, after controlling for perceived task difficulty.

Notably, the majority of previous studies have been based on cross-sectional data and could not conclude any causality. The present study intended to collect longitudinal data to explore the mediating mechanism of students’ PTE in alleviating their CB. Longitudinal data can provide a cause-and-effect conclusion with definite direction across time points between variables, and the mediating effect analysis in longitudinal data controls the autoregressive effect of variables, which can provide real-world and reliable research results (Maxwell and Cole, 2007). The longitudinal research design also overcomes the methodological defects of the cross-sectional design in the exploration of causal relations between variables and directional verification of complex mediating mechanisms, thereby compensating for the shortcomings of cross-sectional data at a single time point (being

easily affected by the test time and the physical and mental states of college students during testing).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Beijing Normal University. The participants of this study were first-, second-, and third-year undergraduate students from five colleges in Henan and Shanxi Provinces, China. Originally, 1,729 students completed the survey at the first measurement, but a number of them were dropped out in the process. Overall, data of 1,371 students were included in the analysis (1,050 female, with an average age of 20 years, $SD = 1.19$).

Measures

Class-Related Boredom (Dependent Variable)

The CB scale from the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire was utilized in the present study (Pekrun et al., 2005; Cui et al., 2017a,b, 2020). The tool contains 11 items, such as “I get bored” and “I find this class fairly dull.” We asked the students to evaluate their experience in the current classroom using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A higher aggregated score indicated higher levels of CB. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.93.

Perceived Teacher Enthusiasm (Independent Variable)

We used a three-item instrument to measure PTE, which was used in the study by Keller et al. (2014). These items are the following: “Our teacher in this class teaches with enthusiasm,” “Our teacher in this subject enjoys teaching compared with other courses,” and “Our teacher in this class tries to inspire students about the subject.” The items required the students to evaluate their classroom experience during the day of the survey on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A higher aggregate score indicates a higher level of PTE. The Cronbach’s alpha for this instrument was 0.90.

Perceived Task Value (Mediating Variable)

We assessed students’ PTV using two items: “What I learned in today’s class was useful” and “Compared with what I studied in other courses, what I studied in today’s class was useful” (Tanaka and Murayama, 2014; Cui et al., 2017b). Responses were indicated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all true of me to 5 = very true of me. A higher aggregate score indicates a higher level of PTV. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.81.

Boredom Proneness (Control Variable)

We adapted the 12-item Boredom Proneness Scale-Short Form to measure boredom proneness (Vodanovich et al., 2005). Consistent with previous research (Cui et al., 2017a,b, 2020), we deleted two items to adapt the scale to Chinese culture (i.e., “I find it easy to entertain myself” and “It seems that the same old things are on television or the movies all the time; it’s getting

old”). Ten items were maintained, such as “Many things I have to do are repetitive and monotonous.” Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, which is consistent with the original scale. A higher aggregate score indicates a higher level of boredom proneness. The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.69 for this measure in the present study.

Perceived Task Difficulty (Control Variable)

Consistent with previous research, two items were used to assess students’ perceived task difficulty: “Today’s class was hard for me” and “Compared with other courses, today’s class was hard for me” (Tanaka and Murayama, 2014). The participants responded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all true of me to 5 = very true of me. A higher aggregate score indicates a higher level of perceived task difficulty. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.82.

All the above measure instruments were originally developed in English and translated into Chinese in the present study. The translated version of the scales/items have been used and tested in previous studies (e.g., Cui et al., 2017a; Wang et al., 2020).

Procedure

The researchers went to the classrooms of various disciplines in these colleges four times, that is, at the second, sixth, tenth, and fourteenth week in a semester (referred to as T1, T2, T3, and T4) to hand out the questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants at T1. In each measurement at T1–T4, participants completed the questionnaires approximately 10 min before the end of the class. Overall, 1,371 students completed all the measurements. The missing rate and analysis at T2–T4 was detailed in Section 4.1.

Data Analysis

We examined the descriptive statistics (mean and SD) and intercorrelations of the variables using PASW statistics for Windows (Version 18, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, United States). Subsequently, we tested the longitudinal mediation effects of PTE on CB through PTV using a one-way lag model on Mplus 7.0. In the test, perceived task difficulty and boredom proneness were controlled for.

RESULTS

Dropout Participants

For the participants, the dropout rate was 7.5% at T2 ($n = 130/1,729$), 8.7% at T3 ($n = 140/1,599$), and 6.0% at T4 ($n = 88/1,459$). The dropout and remaining participants were not significantly different in gender or age. To further test their potential differences on the study variables, independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare the scores of boredom proneness, perceived task difficulty, PTE, CB, and task value in the first round of survey (T1). As shown in **Table 1**, compared with the participants who completed the whole study, the dropout participants scored significantly higher for the CB and lower for the PTV at the beginning of the study. This result indicated that

TABLE 1 | Differences between the dropout and full-study participants.

Measurement at T1 (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	Dropout participants (<i>N</i> = 358)	Full-study participants (<i>N</i> = 1,371)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Boredom proneness	3.73 ± 0.79	3.64 ± 0.75	1.870	0.062
Perceived task difficulty	2.78 ± 1.01	2.67 ± 1.06	1.724	0.085
Perceived teacher enthusiasm	3.79 ± 0.95	3.85 ± 1.05	-1.155	0.278
Class-related boredom	2.13 ± 0.71	1.92 ± 0.75	4.829	0.000
Perceived task value	3.35 ± 0.95	3.57 ± 0.97	-3.902	0.000

TABLE 2 | Participants' scores for various variables in the four measurements (*N* = 1,371).

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Perceived teacher enthusiasm (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	3.85 ± 1.05	3.78 ± 0.97	3.77 ± 0.93	3.70 ± 1.00
Class-related boredom (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	1.92 ± 0.75	2.03 ± 0.78	2.01 ± 0.80	1.96 ± 0.82
Perceived task value (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	3.57 ± 0.97	3.61 ± 0.88	3.66 ± 0.85	3.62 ± 0.94

the dropout of these participants were not completed random. Considering the low rate of dropout participants and the bias to impute the missing data in the longitudinal analysis, only those who completed the whole study were included in the following data analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (i.e., the mean and standard deviation) of the measured variables at T1, T2, T3, and T4 are presented in **Table 2**. The statistics indicate an increasing tendency of teacher enthusiasm, CB, and task value perceived by students over time.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 lists the correlation coefficients between the variables at the time points of the four measurements. CB at each time point was significantly correlated with PTE and task value, which provided a basis for further analysis of the causation and mediation effects of these variables.

Longitudinal Predictive Effect of PTE on CB

A one-way lag model was utilized to explore the predictive effect of students' PTE on their CB. First, we hypothesized that students' PTE would have a significant predictive effect on CB across time points (see **Figure 1**). Second, the influence of statistical variables on CB was controlled for by statistical methods (the

control variables are not shown in the figure, but the pathways were estimated). This design was expected to exclude the possible effects of a third variable.

As shown in **Figure 2**, in the final model, PTE at T1 significantly predicted the PTE at T2 and T3. PTE-T2 significantly predicted the PTE-T3 and PTE-T4 levels. After controlling for the influence of boredom proneness and perceived task difficulty, we found that students' PTE at a measuring time point significantly predicted PTE at two time points (except for the predictive effect of T3 on T4), whereas CB at a previous measuring time point significantly predicted CB at two subsequent time points. For the prediction of students' PTE with respect to their CB across time points, PTE-T1 significantly predicted CB at T2 ($\text{Beta} = -0.08, p < 0.01$), PTE-T2 significantly predicted CB-T3 ($\text{Beta} = -0.12, p < 0.001$), and PTE-T3 significantly predicted CB-T4 ($\text{Beta} = -0.07, p < 0.01$). The fitting indices of the model were as follows: CFI = 0.967, TLI = 0.923, RMSEA (90% CI) = 0.046 [0.033, 0.059], and SRMR = 0.033. The fitting index of this model was acceptable. The model's path analysis results showed that students' PTE predicted their experience of CB across time points.

Mediating Effect Test

Based on the above statistical analysis, we again used a one-way lag model to explore the mediating effect of students' PTE on their CB through PTV. First, we hypothesized that students' PTV would have a significant predictive effect across time points (see **Figure 3**). Second, the influence of statistical variables on CB was controlled by statistical methods (the control variables are not shown in the figure, but these paths were estimated). This design was expected to exclude the possible effects of a third variable.

In the final model (see **Figure 4**), the model was adjusted according to the fit indices of the data and the hypothesis model. **Figure 4** depicts the prediction model of teacher enthusiasm perceived by how students affect experienced classroom boredom through the mediation of PTV and its standardization coefficient.

The change in the model diagram shown in **Figure 3** is as follows: PTE-T1 could significantly predict PTE-T2 and PTE-T3, PTE-T2 could significantly predict PTE-T3 and PTE-T4, PTV at T2 could significantly predict PTV-T3 and PTV-T4, and CB-T2 could significantly predict CB-T3 and CB-T4.

The mediating model and its standardized path coefficient of teacher enthusiasm and classroom boredom perceived by students as task values are shown in **Figure 4**. Individual boredom tendency and task difficulty are important factors that influence students' CB. To reduce research errors, we controlled for the above two variables (not shown in the model diagram). After controlling for the influence of boredom tendency and task difficulty, we generated the following fitting index of the mediation model: CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.925, RMSEA (90% CI) = 0.051 [0.043, 0.060], SRMR = 0.050. The model fit was deemed acceptable.

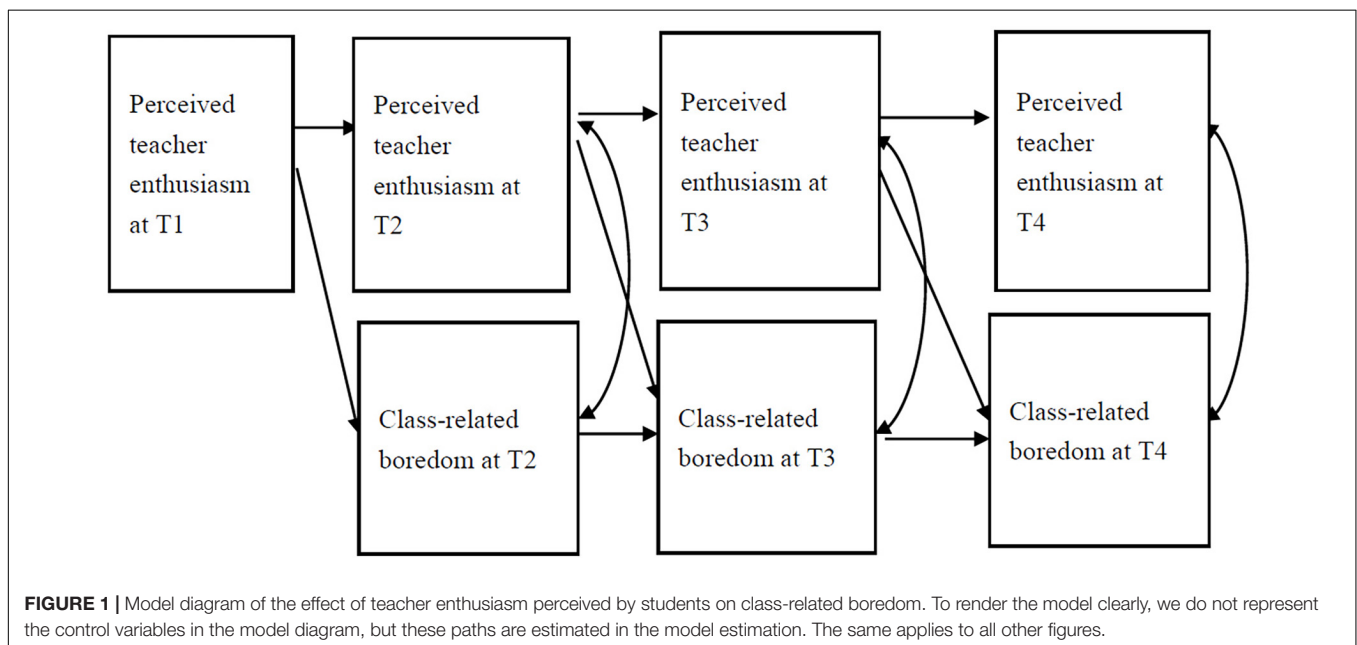
As shown in **Figure 4**, the prediction of CB-T3 by PTE-T1 was through the complete and significant mediating effect of PTV-T2 ($p < 0.05$). The mediating effect of PTE-T2 on CB-T4 through PTV-T3 was not significant ($p > 0.05$). Based on the significance of the path coefficient in **Figure 4**, we tested the paths

TABLE 3 | Correlation between variables across the four time points (T1–T4).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. PTE-T1	1											
2. PTE-T2	0.23**	1										
3. PTE-T3	0.19**	0.26**	1									
4. PTE-T4	0.11**	0.24**	0.25**	1								
5. CB-T1	-0.18**	-0.15**	-0.20**	-0.10**	1							
6. CB-T2	-0.12**	-0.24**	-0.21**	-0.13**	0.43**	1						
7. CB-T3	-0.09**	-0.20**	-0.30**	-0.16**	0.29**	0.36**	1					
8. CB-T4	-0.05	-0.14**	-0.20**	-0.27**	0.28**	0.31**	0.42**	1				
9. PTV-T1	0.45**	0.15**	0.15**	0.07*	-0.28**	-0.20**	-0.18**	-0.15**	1			
10. PTV-T2	0.15**	0.53**	0.18**	0.21**	-0.19**	-0.29**	-0.20**	-0.19**	0.20**	1		
11. PTV-T3	0.15**	0.19**	0.52**	0.22**	-0.20**	-0.23**	-0.35**	-0.23**	0.23**	0.29**	1	
12. PTV-T4	0.07**	0.16**	0.16**	0.60**	-0.10**	-0.12**	-0.15**	-0.25**	0.08**	0.27**	0.25**	1

PTE, perceived teacher enthusiasm; CB, class-related boredom; PTV, perceived task value.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.



of possible indirect effects and analyzed the indirect effects using a bootstrapping test with deviation correction.

Table 4 presents the results of the bootstrapping tests. The indirect effect of PTE-T1 through PTV-T2 on CB-T3 was significant (-0.010 , $p < 0.05$, 95% CI: $[-0.016, -0.003]$). The indirect effects of PTE-T1 through PTV-T2 and CB-T3 on CB-T4 were significant (-0.003 , $p < 0.05$, 95% CI: $[-0.005, -0.001]$). The total effects of PTE-T1 on CB-T4 were significant (-0.005 , $p < 0.05$, 95% CI: $[-0.008, -0.002]$).

DISCUSSION

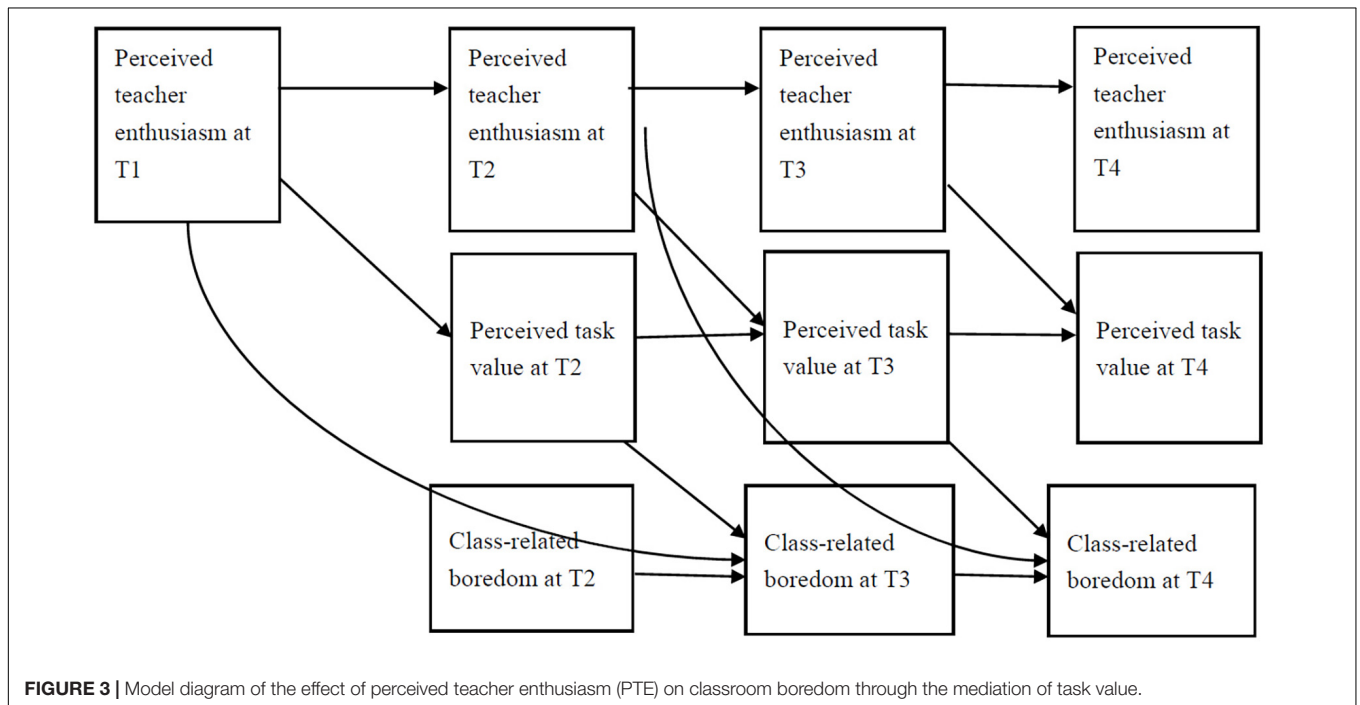
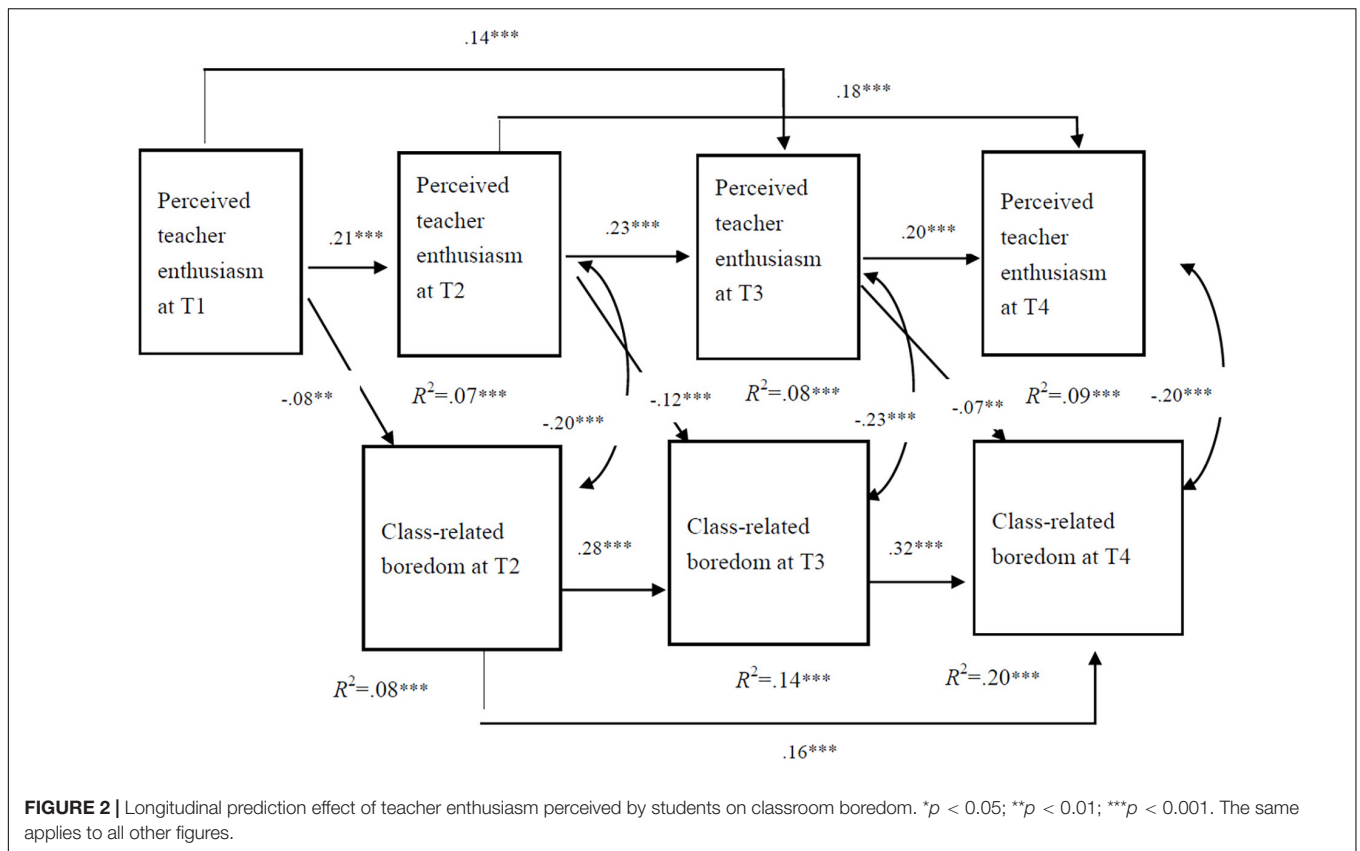
Based on the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007), we used longitudinal data to explore the predictive effect of teachers' enthusiasm on college students' CB and the mediating effect of students' PTV. The results shed light on the relationship

between teachers' enthusiasm and students' CB, as well as on the role of teachers' enthusiasm and the appropriate means to reduce students' CB. The two hypotheses have been supported.

Students' PTE Predicts Their CB

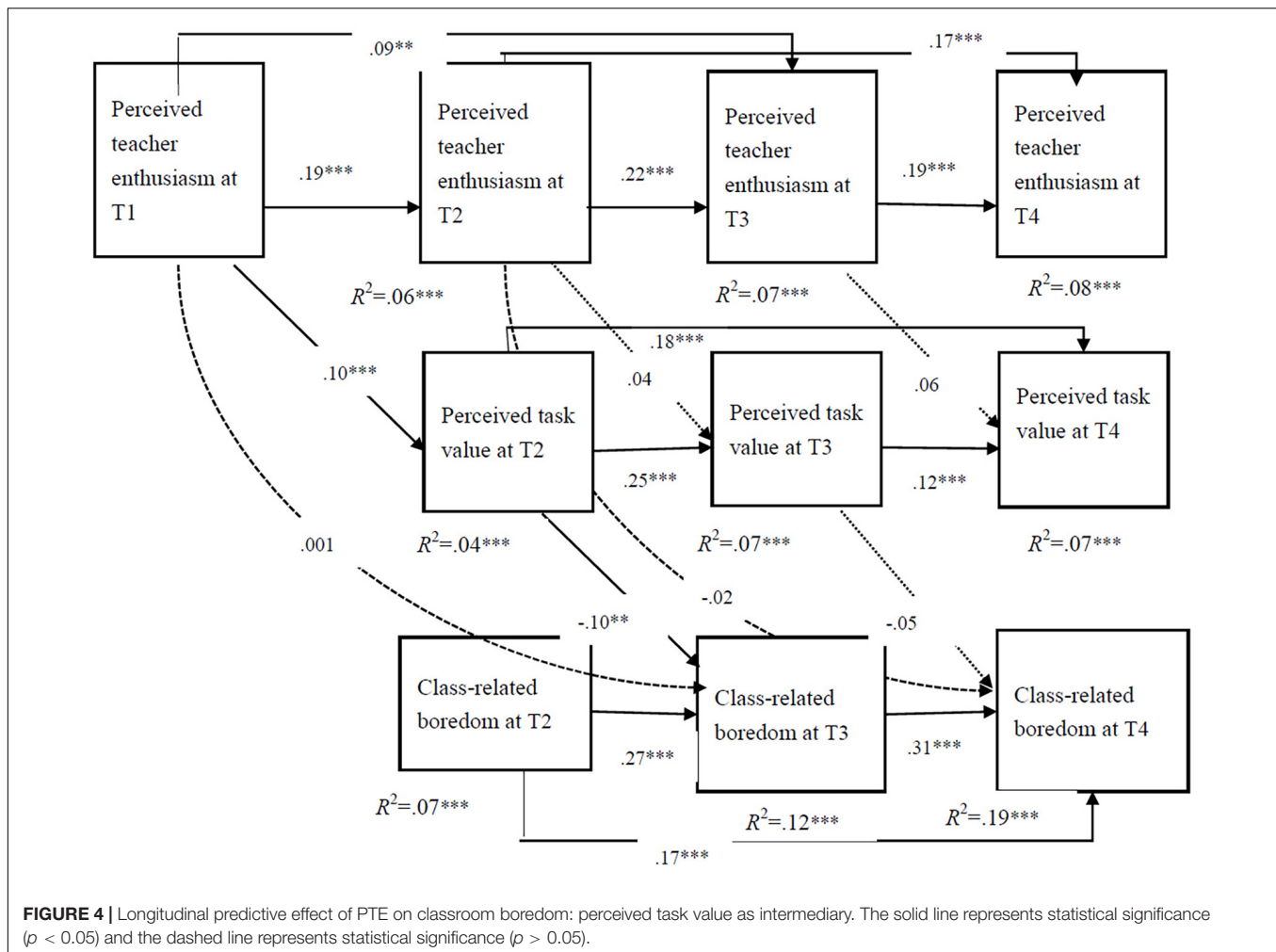
In this study, college students from five universities were measured four times during a semester. The following results supported our first hypothesis: PTE-T1 significantly predicted CB-T2, PTE-T2 significantly predicted CB-T3, and PTE-T3 significantly predicted CB-T4. The students' PTE in the previous month significantly negatively predicted their CB in the following month; that is, college students' PTE played a role in reducing their CB, which confirmed the research hypothesis that college students' PTE could reduce their CB across time points.

After controlling for the effects of auto regression and other factors on college students' CB, we found that college



students' PTE in the preceding month could predict their CB significantly and negatively in the succeeding month, confirming that college students' PTE played an important role

in reducing their CB. Our results are consistent with those of previous studies (Goetz et al., 2006; Keller et al., 2014; Kim and Schallert, 2014). Goetz et al. (2006) considered PTE



as an important teaching variable in Latin class in order to investigate the relationship between it and students' classroom emotion; their results showed a high correlation between PTE and students' boredom.

Mediating Role of PTV

The results show that college students' PTV played a significant longitudinal mediating role between their PTE and CB, supporting the second hypothesis. The participants who perceived higher teacher enthusiasm in the first month also perceived higher task value in the second month and experienced lower CB in the third month. Thus, college students' PTE may play a role in improving students' PTV and reducing their CB. The participants' PTE in the second month could not predict their CB in the fourth month through the mediating effect of the task value perceived in the third month. Students' PTE at the beginning of the semester (the first month) had a more significant longitudinal predictive effect on their PTV and CB, compared with the middle and end of the semester. One possible reason is that with the approaching final examination, college students perceived a high level of task value and a lower level of CB in the fourth month (see **Figure 4** and **Table 2**).

The longitudinal mediating effect of students' PTV between their PTE and CB revealed in this study can be explained by previous theories and empirical studies. Pekrun (2006) stated that value induction can propel students' perceived value to a higher level, and that promoting teachers' enthusiasm is an important way to induce value. Pekrun (2006) further found that the most important reason for students' CB is the perception that their learning tasks are worthless. Therefore, teacher enthusiasm can play the role of value induction to enhance the value of tasks and reduce students' CB. Similar studies have found a significant predictive role of perceived value on boredom (Ekatushabe et al., 2021; Forsblom et al., 2021).

Implications

Using longitudinal data at four time points, this study confirmed that teacher enthusiasm can help reduce students' CB through the mediation of students' PTV. The present results showed that college students perceived more task value from lessons with high teacher enthusiasm, and ultimately experienced reduced CB. Researchers and primary educators should recognize that teachers' enthusiasm plays an important role in reducing students' CB. In terms of practical implications, our study

TABLE 4 | Indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals of the mediating model.

Influence path	Effect size	95% CI
PTE-T1 → PTV-T2 → CB-T3	$0.10 \times (-0.10) = (-0.010)^*$	$[-0.016, -0.003]$
PTE-T1 → PTV-T2 → CB-T3 → CB-T4	$0.10 \times (-0.10) \times 0.31 = (-0.003)^*$	$[-0.005, -0.001]$
PTE-T1 → CB-T4 (Total)	-0.005^*	$[-0.008, -0.002]$

identified a new path for reducing college students' CB. Regardless of course variation and quality of teaching, as long as teachers have high enthusiasm for teaching, as well as for the subjects and students, which can be perceived by students, then CB can be reduced because the students can perceive more task value in the class. The path of increasing the value of tasks through teachers' enthusiasm, thereby reducing students' CB, is simple, efficient, and has multiple effects. Education researchers and practitioners need to pay attention to promoting teachers' enthusiasm for the subjects and teaching.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study had some limitations. Firstly, although we adopted a longitudinal study design to explore the causal relations among the variables, such causal relations could not be deduced in a strict sense (i.e., no mediation between T2 enthusiasm and T4 boredom). In our longitudinal design, the measurement was conducted four times within a semester. At T4, the occasion was very close to the end of the semester and students were in a state quite different from that in the normal time. College students had pressure to pass their final examinations and their academic emotion might on a special level. In the future, the time points of measurements should be carefully selected and experimental studies, intervention studies, and other paradigms could be used to further test the results of our study.

Secondly, the non-random dropout participants might lead to bias and we should take caution to generalize the results. Specifically, our survey was taken place 10 min before the end of the students' learning of a class, and hence students would miss the survey if they did not attend the class. In other words, students who had a high rate of absenteeism in a class, who usually experienced much boredom and little value in class, tend to drop out from the present study. Therefore, the findings of the present study might not be able to generalize to these students.

Thirdly, the participants were from various disciplines in five colleges, but we did not measured information of their classes and analyzed data of different classes/colleges together. Theoretically, it will be ideal to construct a multilevel model when the differences among different classes are significant. However, previous research based on cross-sectional designs had supported the universal mediating effects of task value between teacher enthusiasm and CB cross different universities and classes (e.g., Wang et al., 2020). This means that the analysis on the whole sample would rarely bias the results, whereas future research can improve sampling strategies and utilize multilevel models in analysis.

Finally, according to the control-value theory, in addition to PTE, task value and task difficulty, teaching quality, students' achievement goals, and academic performance may play a role in reducing students' CB (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007). These additional variables were not included in our study and should be considered in future studies to provide a clearer picture of the effects of teachers' enthusiasm on student learning. As to task difficulty, considering the research aim, it was controlled for in the present study to ease the data analysis and interpretation. In future research, the effect of task difficulty could be further explored.

CONCLUSION

Our study expands upon existing knowledge regarding the longitudinal relationship among teacher enthusiasm, task value, and CB. Our findings are novel and insightful, both theoretically and practically. We not only clarify that college students' PTE negatively predicted their CB across time points but also provide evidence on the role of students' PTV as a longitudinal mediator in this relationship. Our results suggest that college students' PTV mediated the dampening effect of PTE on CB across time points. To this end, the present study offers an important foundation for future research in this area.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The Research Ethics Committee of School of Psychology, Beijing Normal University. The Ethics Committee waived the requirement of written informed consent for participation. Students' return of the completed questionnaire at T1 was accepted as an indication of their consent to participate in the present study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

G-yC, CW, and Y-jH contributed to the conception construction, design of the study, analysis, and interpretation of the data. J-yC, CZ, and XZ contributed to the collection of the data. G-yC and Y-jH wrote the original manuscript. CW made critical revisions. All authors approved the final manuscript for publication.

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Reflection on Loving Pedagogy and Students' Engagement in EFL/ESL Classrooms

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The role of positive emotions in language education has been exponentially approved in the literature. One such emotion which has been mostly neglected in EFL/ESL contexts due to irrational ethical and professional sensitivities is the concept of love. Although love in education highlights a caring environment and relationship which is oriented toward students' feelings and needs, little (if any) research has been done on a loving pedagogy in the context of EFL/ESL. Trying to shed some light on this novel construct, this review article presents the theoretical underpinnings of love, its definitions, dimensions, and positive outcomes in language learning. Moreover, two trends of positive psychology and affective pedagogy are described. Finally, the study presents the possible implications of this line of research for different stakeholders in EFL/ESL domains along with a number of research gaps and future directions for avid scholars in this area.

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INTRODUCTION

Language teaching and learning are entangled with one's affects and emotional states (Dewaele and Li, 2020). Emotions play a critical role in academia whose penultimate purpose is to step beyond one's academic performance. This affective turn in education has flourished with novel ideas pinpointed in *Positive Psychology* (PP) which highlights the significance of positive emotions and the way one can thrive (Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda, 2016; Seligman, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Budzińska and Majchrzak, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). One of such positive emotions that is believed to be a basic human need is love (Maslow, 2013). It is a natural desire which affects students' social and emotional development (Dowling, 2014). It also has the power to motivate learners to pursue knowledge, unite them with teachers, and push the existing level of knowledge forwards (Cho, 2005). Love is the cornerstone of meaningful and successful instruction and its absence makes education a simple *training*.

Although love has been sufficiently written about in psychology and philosophy since sixteenth century, its application to education, in general, and language teaching, in particular, has recently gained momentum (Wilkinson and Kaukko, 2020). Love manifests itself through a caring environment, mutual rapport between the teacher and students, and classroom practices. Hence, it can influence students' motivation, well-being, engagement, achievement, and interpersonal communication skills. Nevertheless, the nexus of love and pedagogy has long been a discomfort venue among L2 practitioners as they fear trespassing ethical and professional boundaries in education. Trying to break the ice, in the new millennium, some scholars proposed concepts of

pedagogical love and a *loving pedagogy* in language education (Loreman, 2011; Yin et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Simply, the notions refer to the care, sensitivity, and empathy that teachers have toward their students' needs, learning experiences, and development (Yin et al., 2019).

Research corroborates that adopting a loving pedagogy increases learners' autonomy, learning motivation, agency, self-esteem, critical-thinking, positive interpersonal behaviors, and academic performance (Grimmer, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). However, in EFL contexts, the role of loving pedagogy in promoting students' level of engagement in the classroom and task accomplishment has largely been kept under the carpet. Against this backdrop, the present study aimed to reflect on the possible contributions of loving pedagogy as a novel concept in L2 education to EFL students' engagement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Positive Psychology and Affective Pedagogy

As cognitive perspectives gave momentum to the emotional aspects of L2 education, the linkage of emotions and inner states to success and achievement witnessed a scholarly boom (Prior, 2019). The centrality of emotions in education is best addressed in *positive psychology* (PP) school. PP underscores how people can thrive and have happier lives (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Instead of dwelling on negative emotions, PP inspires the practitioners to capitalize on the power of positive emotions like joy, interest, passion, resilience, optimism, and the like to inhibit the negative stressors. PP examines how individuals can flourish and be happier by focusing on positive emotions like joy, hope, passion, love, resilience, optimism, enjoyment, and the like instead of negative feelings (Seligman, 2007; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). According to MacIntyre and Mercer (2014), PP rests on three pillars of *positive subjective experience* (emotions), *positive individual traits* (individual characteristics), and *positive institutions* (contexts).

On the other hand, affective pedagogy (AP) is a way of teaching designed to arouse certain emotional states (Ainsworth and Bell, 2020). It is a part of a wider paradigmatic shift in education called *the affective turn* (Clough, 2007), which highlights the prominence of affective experiences and states in learning. AP foregrounds the development of psychopedagogies to increase students' inner states which are preconditions for their academic achievement (Williamson, 2016). It concerns both emotions and learning outcomes and is characterized by intimacy and 'dramatic friendships' between the teacher and students (Patience, 2008).

Conceptualizations of Love and a Loving Pedagogy

Pedagogical love has an influential role in developing students' emotional status, social ability, personality, and mental health (Yin et al., 2019). It has been conceptualized differently since sixteenth century. Love is a multi-faceted concept that is considered as a strong learning motivator, a quality of good

education, the basis of classroom interactions, and a natural need (Loreman, 2011). Moreover, it has been defined through psychological, religious, and philosophical perspectives. In a triangular theory of love, Sternberg (1986) conceptualized love to include three elements; *intimacy*, *passion*, and *decision/commitment*. A perfect relationship in education, then, is one in which these three elements align together. Religious views, however, come at love differently. They mostly regard love as divine and a feature of God. It is a vital ingredient in the rapport between the teacher and students which makes learning worthy (Loreman, 2011). Philosophically, love has been described by Plato and Aristotle as a search for beauty which can be *eros* (sexual, passionate love), *philia* (love of friends and equals), or *agape* (love of mankind).

In education, love is represented via "loving pedagogy," a recent term developed by Loreman (2011) and Wang et al. (2021). It is a positive learning experience which is momentous for practitioners. It includes 9 emotional concepts of *passion*, *kindness*, *empathy*, *intimacy*, *bonding*, *sacrifice*, *forgiveness*, *acceptance*, and *community*. Such education is characterized by a caring contexts sensitive toward students' needs, expectations, and emotions. A loving pedagogy is an amalgamation of the mentioned concepts between the teacher and students and is external to us but influences our spirit (Loreman, 2011). It must be the main goal of education as it can nourish students' socio-emotional states, achievement, involvement, and interpersonal skills.

Student's Engagement in L2 Education

Student engagement is a significant concept in all educational systems as it can generate energy, investment, and success in academia (Eccles, 2016). It refers to students' amount of involvement in the classroom during instructional activities (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). It is a dynamic variable that is affected by many internal and external factors (Guilloteaux, 2016). Engagement is an explicit sign of intrinsic motivation which has been given different conceptualizations. However, it is substantiated that the concept is multi-dimensional including behavioral, emotional (or affective), cognitive, agentic, academic, and social dimensions (Reschly and Christenson, 2012; Hiver et al., 2020, 2021). *Behavioral engagement* concerns students' active involvement in the classroom activities (e.g., listening, doing tasks, asking questions, and doing the assignments), while *emotional engagement* highlights students' internal states and their affective reactions. Moreover, *cognitive engagement* refers to students' psychological investment in learning and employing complicated learning strategies during a task. *Agentic engagement* is related to students' contribution to learning-teaching quality enhancement. Likewise, *academic engagement* is a student's psychological and behavioral efforts to acquire the knowledge and skills of an academic work. Finally, *social engagement* concerns students' involvement in a range of tasks intended to stimulate their social interaction and problem-solving (DeVito, 2016).

Research reveals that student's engagement can strongly predict different academic outcomes including achievement, psycho-social adjustment, resilience, effective learning,

and academic success and can be taught and improved (Eccles, 2016; Jang et al., 2016). Due to its malleable nature, student's engagement is influenced by *phenomenological factors* (task type/difficulty/value, ability level, and culture), *demographic factors* (e.g., age, gender, background, and academic level), and *instructional factors* (e.g., teachers' practices, behaviors, motivation to teach, expertise, and teaching style) (Guilloteaux, 2016). Furthermore, as put by Quin (2017), the teacher-student rapport and classroom climate directly affect students' engagement. Hence, EFL teachers' caring behaviors and the adoption of a pedagogy of love play a critical role in producing, maintaining, and improving engagement among their students (DeVito, 2016).

IMPLICATIONS, GAPS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review article can bring about valuable insights for EFL/ESL teachers, students, teacher educators, materials developers, and L2 researchers. It is deemed significant for EFL/ESL teachers in that they can identify the criticality and power of a caring, friendly, and love-induced educational context in improving many aspects of teaching and learning processes. Teaching is by no means an emotion-free profession but laden with psychological and emotional states which considerably affect the teaching-learning cycle. As love is a meta-construct including at least 9 interrelated concepts mentioned earlier, by establishing a pedagogy of love, teachers can cause many positive outcomes in L2 education. As for students, this study can cast more light on the role of emotions and classroom rapport on students' motivation, engagement, and academic success. When it comes to EFL teaching context in China, it seems that only passing knowledge onto students is far from sufficient for EFL teachers in their language education classes, and they should also try their best to establish teacher-student rapport so that a harmonious class environment can be realized. Also, Chinese EFL teachers in their teaching practice of Higher learning should not only leave their classes without any further emotional contact with their students. For example, some freshers have just stepped into universities from their senior high schools. In most cases, they cannot get used to the new learning environment and they may be encountered with a variety of learning problems, such as learning strategies, learning resources as well as learning methods. When they have such problems, they may suffer from language learning anxiety. Another fact that needs to be noted is that students come from different provinces and they are assessed by different measures. For instance, some students may not have been tested listening competence although all of them need to take Gaokao (College Entrance Examination in China) before they are admitted into institutes of higher learning. However, due to the washback effect of tests on teaching syllabus, the majority of the stakeholders may not take listening instruction seriously. That is, listening competence is not tested, so it will not be trained and those coming from these provinces may have listening anxiety. If those students'

EFL teachers can communicate with them, listen to their voices and provide them some constructive suggestions, those students faced with listening difficulties may feel less anxious while they are having their English classes. Finally, successful learning can take place. Hence, EFL/ESL students can work toward an education that goes beyond the simple pursue of learning outcomes and make efforts to constitute an environment based on love and respect.

Teacher trainers can work on teachers' abilities and skills to deal with students' emotions and teach them practical strategies to establish a pedagogy of love *via* workshops and training programs. Likewise, materials developers can use this review to design tasks and textbooks in which students' emotions are reflected along with pedagogical objectives. There must be a place for love in materials so that teachers and students get involved in the books and their activities. Finally, researchers can benefit from this study in that they can run similar studies on the construct of loving pedagogy and fill the existing gaps in this area. As empirical studies on loving pedagogy are rare, L2 researchers can conduct studies on this notion in light of interpersonal communication factors like care, clarity, credibility, immediacy, and confirmation. They can also cross-culturally compare the dimensions of love in different cultures to see if there can be added other dimensions or not. Correlational studies on PP factors such as resilience, enjoyment, success, buoyancy, optimism and the like are also suggested. Moreover, future scholars can use case and longitudinal studies to unpack the developmental trajectories of a loving pedagogy in different contexts and their possible outcomes for different stakeholders. Finally, owing to its dynamism, love can be measured through different research instruments. Hence, avid researchers are recommended to design and validate questionnaires and surveys which can best measure this influential factor in language education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SZ: conceptualizing and writing up the first draft. ML: revising and editing the language. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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The Role of EFL Teachers' Self-Disclosure as Predictors of Student's Willingness to Communicate and Their Engagement

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This study aims to delve into the role of teachers' self-disclosure on developing students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and students' engagement. First of all, a definition of willingness to communicate is proposed, then the concept of teachers' disclosure is explained. Moreover, the definition of engagement and its facilitators are mentioned. The interpersonal relationship between students and teachers with regard to some examples is discussed then. Finally, the significant effect of what has been disclosed by the teachers in both students' willingness to communicate and engagement is discussed. Some limitations in this line of study and pedagogical implications are proposed for avid researchers.

Keywords: self-disclosure, willingness to communicate, engagement, second language (L2), pedagogical implications

INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a pivotal role in language learning (Dewaele, 2015). When we look at the second language through the lens of willingness to communicate, many concepts can be highlighted, for instance, teachers' self-disclosure (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Languages are learned by people whose motivations, emotions, and relationships are integrated into every step of the learning and communicating process. The interpersonal relationship in which both teachers and students are involved is what has attracted attention in recent studies since students' engagement and academic outcomes in all activities and all aspects throughout the class are highly impacted by teachers' behavior. Seven examples of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors such as "teacher care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, and confirmation" and its impact on students' academic outcomes, for instance, the amount of motivation, the amount of engagement, learning process, their willingness to communicate, their accomplishments, and the amount of success (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). This study is a review of the role of teachers' self-closure on both students' willingness to communicate and students' engagement. First and foremost, the term "willingness to communicate" has been defined. Then self-disclosure has been discussed from different aspects. Then, the interpersonal relationship between students and teachers which is of paramount importance has been dealt with. Last but not least, the crucial role of teachers' disclosing information on students' participation in activities and willingness to communicate has been analyzed.

BACKGROUND

Willingness to Communicate

The concept of willingness to communicate and its relevance to the first language was first introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985), and its nature has been said to be situation-dependent. Then L2 WTC was defined by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (p. 547). It was claimed that willingness to communicate will be enhanced if the learners should risk giving up their safety zone, for instance, they may have difficulty starting a conversation with others, using L2 (Zarrinabadi and Pawlak, 2021). A model, **Figure 1**, was put forward by MacIntyre et al. (1998). There are 6 layers in this pyramid that affect the willingness to communicate. The top three layers are said to be context-specific and have a temporary effect on WTC, while the lower three layers are believed to be very practical and have a long-lasting impact on WTC. Layer 6 indicates that WTC is affected by learners’ characteristics and the relationships between language groups and there can be seen a slow change in both factors (MacIntyre, 2020). Personality traits such as extraversion impact on WTC. The more extroverted people are, the more willing they are to communicate (Fatima et al., 2020). Layers 4 and 5 show that WTC is also affected by interpersonal, intrapersonal, social, and contextual factors. As a brief example, having optimistic attitudes toward both the language and people speaking it are found to heightened WTC (Ghonsooly et al., 2012). Or about the classroom contexts, the more positive and supportive the relationship between the teachers and students are, the higher WTC would be (Cao, 2011). Layer 3 of this model comprises the passion to communicate with a specific person and confidence which is raised due to putting in such a situation. In layer 2, there is only one component willingness to communicate. As a result, there might be fluctuations in using L2 (MacIntyre, 2007). Students are reluctant to speak a second language unless they are willing to communicate.

Teachers’ Self-Disclosure

This term has been defined by Cosby (1991) as information that one discloses or reveals about himself. Self-disclosure aids people in building new bounds and keeping the ones that they have already had (Collins and Miller, 1994). Learners and teachers sometimes discuss their personal problems in the classroom. Some personal stories and experiences are shared by the teachers in their classes while teaching the subject-matter (Nussbaum et al., 1987). This type of communication is known as teacher self-disclosure, described as “conscious and deliberate disclosures about one’s self, aspects of one’s professional practice, world or personal views, personal history, and responses to ongoing classroom events” (Rasmussen and Mishna, 2008). It has also been proposed by Lannutti and Strauman (2006) that self-disclosure varies from context to context, for example, the communication that is shared by teachers through the class is really different from the one which is pleasurable in personal relationships since the latter one needs to be illustrative rather

than revealing. Furthermore, in education, a teacher’s self-disclosure is perceived as the sentences that a teacher says about himself which may not be pertinent to the subject that is the focus of the class (Sorensen, 1989). Teachers’ self-disclosure is related to a number of positive learning results (Cayanus and Martin, 2016; Henry and Thorsen, 2021). Teachers who talk about their behaviors, share some stories about their personal lives and experiences and also their personal beliefs and values, have been found to increase the students’ perception of subject knowledge (Wambach and Brothen, 1997), and students’ passion about the learning (Sorensen, 1989). In addition, Teachers’ self-disclosures are associated with students’ motivation and engagement (Cayanus and Martin, 2016). Students are more inclined to become engaged in the activities when teachers share their own stories (Zhang et al., 2008), it also maximizes the levels of engagement, and boosts students’ interest in the subjects they are going to learn, the students’ motives for communication additionally enhances (Cayanus and Martin, 2008).

Engagement Facilitator

How actively learners participate in the activities is called engagement. It is highly unlikely to attain meaningful learning without being engaged. Engagement has been said to be context-based, for example, learners’ culture, family, school, peers affect their engagement (Hiver et al., 2021). Six items are found to facilitate the engagement. The first facilitator is authenticity, for authenticity to be met in learning contexts, teachers should know their students’ needs and interests to choose the tasks that meet the students’ requirements. The second facilitator of engagement is social interaction. The word “social” here refers to the interaction between a well-educated interlocutor who can provide the learners with productive, creative feedback, and the students. Additionally, here the focus is shifted to both competitions and collaboration depending on what works in that specific learning context. The third facilitator is learning support. The students are highly likely to be engaged in the tasks when they know that they are supported. This support is mostly teacher-based even though it can be given by peers and experts. Support can be seen in the form of obvious, attainable goals, available resources, enough time, and support that are supposed to be shared. Another facilitator is students’ interest. In terms of students’ interests, what can be stressed is individual differences. Some students are interested in writing a paragraph, while others are keen on making posters to learn new items. Autonomy is said to be another facilitator which means the learner has control over the learning aspects that he needs. Last but not least, the level of difficulty of a task or challenge in a task is seen as another facilitator for language learners. If students face the insufficient challenge, they may feel absolutely tired. As opposed to what has been said, if they encounter too much challenge, it maximizes a lack of confidence or a sense of frustration. All the six factors facilitating the engagement in the classroom are among the interpersonal factors (Egbert, 2020). Needless to say, engagement is an indispensable part of the process of learning and a multifold phenomenon. It has been categorized into different classifications: Behavioral engagement such as the amount of effort and the voluntary involvement in

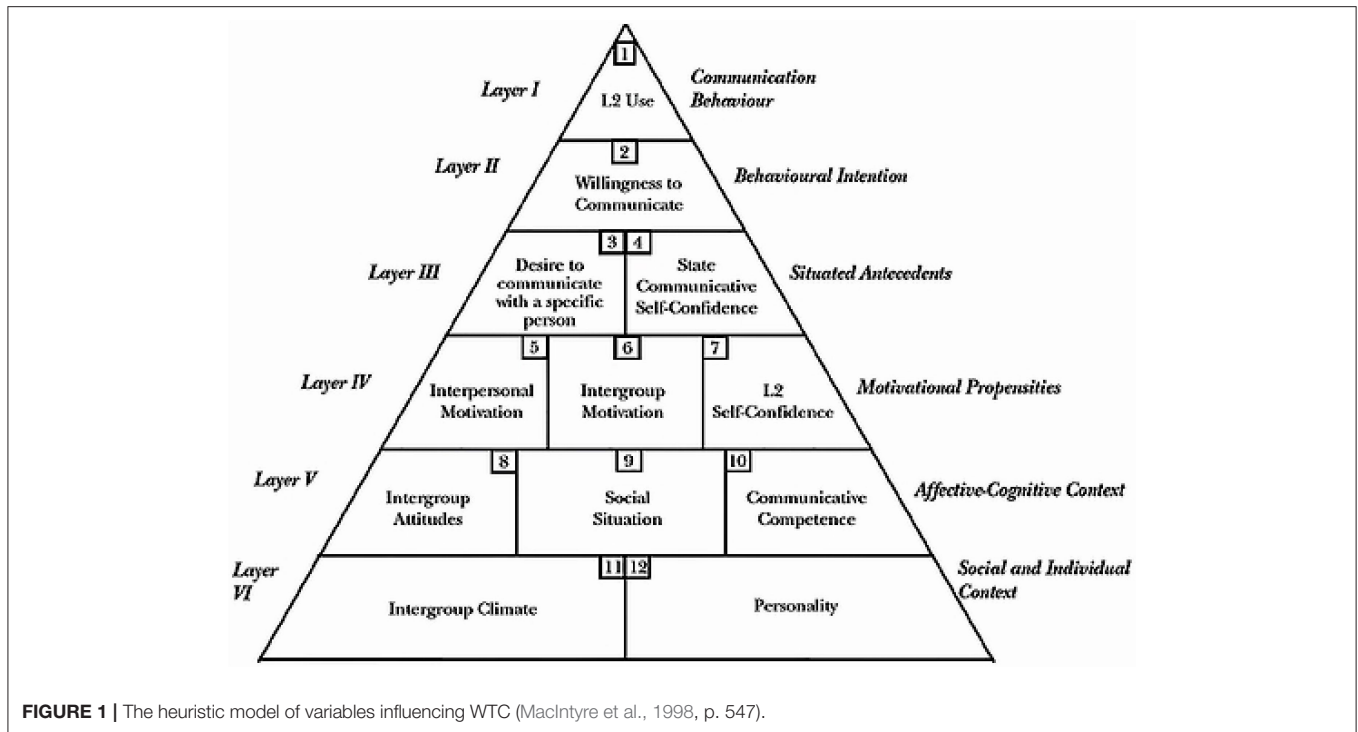


FIGURE 1 | The heuristic model of variables influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547).

speaking; emotional engagement such as positive feelings and autonomous approach to learning; cognitive engagement such as non-verbal cues like body language, facial expression, and eye contact; social engagement such as collaborative activities with others (Hiver et al., 2021).

Teacher-Student Interrelationship

According to Wang et al. (2021), the impact of students' optimism on their development is considered important and it needs to be taken into consideration. Moreover, seven examples of positive psychology variables have been mentioned which go as follows: "academic engagement, emotion regulation, enjoyment, grit, loving pedagogy, resilience, and well-being." These are said to widely impact on experiencing productive L2 learning.

The interpersonal relationship between the teachers and students have been gaining much attention due to the fact that it helps learners to cope with their stress and take risks in the learning process such as starting to communicate in the second language, as well as developing socially and emotionally through practicing a new language, and also acts as a companionship in shared tasks (Martin et al., 2009; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Teachers play a paramount role in students' academic and non-academic development. It has been revealed by the students that when teachers care for their students, the students can learn more since they feel valued. When students feel that they are accepted by their teachers, their positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are dramatically enhanced (Connell and Wellborn, 1991). Teachers encourage students to be autonomous and develop a sense of motivation in their students as well. A healthy emotional, social, and intellectual function, in addition

to the positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem are fostered by positive interpersonal relationships between both teachers and students (Martin and Dowson, 2009).

The Effect of Teachers' Self-Disclosure in Willingness to Communicate and Students' Participation

It was pinpointed that both teachers' self-disclosure and students' social desire to their teachers are positively correlated. When learners see the self-closure in their teacher, they feel more motivated to make progress and find the class atmosphere more productive (Cayanus and Martin, 2008). According to Goldstein and Benassi (1994), the more the amount of teacher self-disclosure, the more the amount of students' classroom engagement would be. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn out of the afore-mentioned points is that a teacher disclosing his ideas, builds trust, and thus, entice the students to participate in classroom discussion. This result is in line with the consequences that have been found by Cayanus et al. (2009) recommending that teacher self-disclosure impacted the relationship between the teachers and students positively, and also communication through the class, and makes learners able to participate more in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors are of central importance in the context of learning and teaching. In the present study, the role of teachers' self-disclosure -TDS- in both

students' willingness to communicate and students' engagement has been examined. Although many studies have been conducted to consider the significant role of TDS, little attention was laid on its details and impacts from different viewpoints. Teachers' self-disclosure deserves more attention from different aspects, leading to better academic outcomes that can be the focus of other future studies. For instance, the effect of teacher self-disclosure in students' bravery to make mistakes in the learning context would be a new research line for avaricious people. As it was studied, making mistakes is an inseparable part of learning a new language and without which the ability to speak a new language cannot be strengthened (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). It inevitably happens when learning a new language and those mistakes had better be embraced and welcomed with open arms so as to allow learners to enjoy the complete process of learning. As to my own teaching context, I have been teaching those who major in Soprts Education, Fine Arts and Musicology in my university, whose English proficiency cannot be compared with those who study other majors. However, I have attempted to build up peace and harmonious interpersonal relations with them, so they are more willing to express their ideas in the classrooms. In other words, with regard to self-disclosure, the more teachers' experiences

about their own process of learning a new language is shared, the more willing the students may become to accept their mistakes, which is a big part of learning. As a consequence, a qualitative in-depth study should be done to find the correlation between these two important factors.

Form a pedagogical point of view, teachers' awareness should be raised to enhance students' interests in the process of learning and being engaged in the activities, leading to a better educational system that enables the students to enjoy the learning process more and causes the teachers to be fully aware of students' needs, wants, and interests. So far, little attention has been focused to conduct studies, considering qualitative research in which educating teachers is the first priority and its effects on students' academic outcomes will be identified. In doing so, a longitudinal study could be carried out which even deepens the accuracy of the study to scrutinize the above-mentioned points.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

XL drafted the first manuscript and LZ revised the layout and analyzed the figure. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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The Role of Nested Systems in EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and Engagement

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Language learning is a complex process with many intrapersonal and interpersonal processes which are nested within smaller systems, themselves. Willingness to communicate (WTC) and engagement of students are two of the many complicated, multifaceted, and dynamic variables in L2 learning that have mostly been explored *via* quantitative, correlational, and one-shot methodologies. However, such a research trend provided only a snapshot of variables of second language acquisition (SLA) nature and dynamism. Against this shortcoming, this study aims to present the conceptualizations, applications, and implications of complexity dynamic system theory for investigating L2 earner-psychology variables, especially WTC and engagement. In doing so, the definitions, dimensions, and key properties of the two constructs were explained. In the end, a series of research gaps, implications, and future directions are suggested for future researchers in this territory.

Keywords: complexity dynamic system theory, willingness to communicate, student's engagement, EFL, nested system

INTRODUCTION

Language learning is widely recognized as a complex process that involves various cognitive and linguistic skills to occur (Freeman and Cameron, 2008). This complexity multiplies when it is coupled with psychology, emotions, and interpersonal skills. This is because most language learning variables, especially those related to effect and psychology of learner, are highly connected and nested in other variables. The story becomes more convoluted as most language learning factors develop and fluctuate across time and contexts (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Consequently, studying language learning constructs is an arduous task to be done solely by traditional approaches. However, a bulk of existing studies on psychological traits in language learning has used quantitative and correlational designs because of their focus on generalizability (Nematizadeh and Wood, 2019). Likewise, researching willingness to communicate (WTC), which developed from the concept of unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), has been limited to quantitative and associational techniques that perceived the construct as a fixed, trait-like feature that may not change across time and situations. This numerical orientation is observable in many scholarly works.

This simplistic outlook examined only the external correlates of WTC at the expense of its underlying, nested layers. This runs contrary to the groundbreaking study of MacIntyre et al. (1998), which unfolded the multilayered and dynamic nature of WTC for the first time.

They also urged researchers to scrutinize the dynamism of many L2 constructs *via* complexity dynamic system theory (CDST). CDST is a meta-theory that highlights the underlying systems and subsystems of a phenomenon to reveal its dynamic interactions and developments (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Amerstorfer, 2020). Based on this theory, many behaviors and events are unpredictable, dynamic, nested, and in an interactive relationship with other factors (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). These properties perfectly fit with language learning, in general, and L2 communication competencies, in particular, due to their remarkable fluidity, dynamism, and unpredictability. Another variable largely left to be examined through CDST is an engagement of the student which is multidimensional and affected by several internal and external factors (Guilloteaux, 2016). The concept concerns the degree of involvement of students in classroom activities (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). The developmental nature of engagement sufficiently endorses the application of this new perspective.

In the pertinent literature, there exist some studies on different L2 psychology constructs such as anxiety, (de)motivation, agency, self-efficacy, identity, and enjoyment using CDST perspectives (Kaplan and Garner, 2017; Almutlaq and Etherington, 2018; Boudreau et al., 2018; Hiver and Papi, 2019; Larsen-Freeman, 2019). However, few studies (if any) have explored the constructs of WTC and engagement in English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL) contexts *via* this meta-theory. This justifies an urgent need for running more studies on these crucial variables in different cultural contexts using CDST methodologies to unpack their nature, developmental trajectories, and inherent dynamism. To this end, this study discusses the applications of CDST to WTC and engagement.

BACKGROUND

Complexity Dynamic System Theory

Complexity dynamic system theory is a theory that originated from hard sciences to study change, dynamism, and evolution of complex systems and subsystems of a phenomenon (Nematizadeh and Wood, 2019; Yang, 2021). It explores the underlying processes and factors involved in the performance of a variable and its related variables that dynamically interact to cause an event (Amerstorfer, 2020). Instead of a macroscopic approach, CDST takes a holistic approach to examine complex systems by focusing and engaging in a deeper observation of the phenomenon. It also maintains that the complexity of a system increases when it comprises different, interrelated elements, and such elements, themselves, function as complex systems (Hilpert and Marchand, 2018). Hence, the interdependence and incessant coaction of constituent components of a system mark the milestone of CDST and its dynamic nature (Overton, 2015).

In this theoretical lens, events are no longer considered as predictable, fixed, isolated, and in a simple linear relationship (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). The theory suits SLA as many of its tenets are mirrored in language as a system wherein several factors continuously interact and the overall performance is the upshot of individual, interweaved elements. Based on this

theory, language learning is a complex system with many other nested subsystems that reciprocally and unpredictably influence each other (de Bot et al., 2007). To put it differently, language learning is the outcome of a network of personal, cultural, social, psychological, and contextual factors which are in a coadaptive association with unclear boundaries (Mercer, 2016). Consequently, a small fluctuation in one of its underlying elements can significantly affect the performance of the whole system and the results.

Features and Contributions of CDST

Many key properties have been proposed for CDST in the literature. However, de Bot et al. (2007) classified such features into four properties including (1) *sensitive dependence on initial conditions*, (2) *variation/change in and among elements*, (3) *the interconnectedness of subsystems*, and (4) *the presence of attractor states*. The first characteristic that is also known as *the butterfly effect* suggests that small variations in the initial (sub)system can significantly affect its subsequent performance. Therefore, tiny initial variations between two EFL students (e.g., age, proficiency) may trigger drastic variations in other aspects of their language learning journey. This substantiates the application of CDST to study WTC and engagement as the initial WTC level of a student and engagement can potentially affect his/her later academic performance. The second feature is change (variation, dynamism) which is central to CDST. It is represented *via* three other concepts of *non-linearity* (the relationship between two factors in language learning is not always linear and straightforward); *self-organization* or *reorganization* (systems and subsystems do not follow a predetermined blueprint, instead they are naturally prone to organize themselves and illustrate coherent patterns); and *idiosyncrasy* (trajectories of change and development of a system operate in distinctive manners). These reflect the uniqueness of learning and psychological variables (WTC, engagement) of the system of learners as they are unique to an individual, constantly changing their states, and in a non-linear relationship with other factors that make their measurement challenging for researchers.

Interconnectedness is another characteristic of CDST, which argues that dynamic systems include interconnected subsystems, which are made up of smaller subsystems that interact in their own groups and at various layers. The fourth feature is *the presence of attractor states* which refers to the tendency of a system to be in a specific state at a specific moment. This is the opposite of *repeller state* which the system avoids being in. Furthermore, there are other features for CDST in the literature as illustrated in **Table 1**.

The Concept of WTC

The concept of WTC is now an essential component of any successful L2 education that creates willing communicators. It was developed from the notion of *unwillingness to communicate* and in relation to L1 performance. This led to perceiving WTC as a fixed, trait-like, and individual-based construct. However, research approved that L2 WTC is beyond that of L1 as it has situational dynamicity and is the offshoot of an interplay of numerous sociocultural, motivational, political, identity, and

TABLE 1 | Additional features of CDST.

Feature	Description
Timescales	The effects of time on a process or attribute. Attributes may reveal themselves in short-run, long-run, or even moment-by-moment. Timescales are nested in each other as seconds in minutes, minutes in hours, hours in days, days in weeks, weeks in months, months in years Freeman and Cameron, 2008.
Openness	The effect of unpredicted sources on a process or construct which elucidate its dynamics and disclose its nature.
Unpredictability	Unlikelihood to predict a forthcoming event or process even by knowing the whole system and its interactions.
Stability	The relatively constant state of the overall system, for a period of time, despite the present variations.
Variability	The current state of a system is the outcome of variations to a previous state.
Emergence	The overall state of a system is greater than sum of its interacting elements.
Soft assembly	The underlying elements of a system can be re-configured into clear patterns as systems self-organize.
Fractalization	A system's ability to demonstrate and predict self-similar patterns/behaviors across different levels and timescales.

pedagogical factors (MacIntyre and Legatto, 2011). By definition, WTC refers to the readiness of the interlocutor to enter into interaction by choosing to initiate the communication (MacIntyre, 2020). It is the probability that a person may start an L2 conversation without fear. Like anxiety, WTC can either be trait or situational. Trait WTC is a constant tendency to initiate a conversation, while situational WTC emerges from a specific situation (Nematizadeh and Wood, 2019).

Nowadays, the concept is regarded as dynamic and multidimensional that varies across individuals, contexts, and times after the seminal studies of MacIntyre and other leading figures. Moreover, empirical studies indicated that WTC is affected/predicted by an array of learner-psychology factors including personality, age, gender, motivation, attitudes, self-esteem, engagement, self-confidence, and cultural orientation (Saidi, 2018). These correlate variables confirm the complexity of WTC in that these subsystems can determine the decision of an individual to initiate interaction. Likewise, WTC is dynamic in that its sublayers can change, hence WTC level of an individual may increase/change, too. Therefore, the conceptualization and analysis of WTC by CDST is unquestionably plausible in EFL contexts.

Engagement of Students: Definitions and Dimensions

Engagement of a student refers to his/her degree of involvement in classroom activities (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). It is vital for shaping human competencies and it is a holy grail for language learning scholars (Sinatra et al., 2015). Moreover, it is a dynamic construct that is influenced by several internal and external factors (Guilloteaux, 2016). Like WTC, engagement is multidimensional and comprises behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, academic, motivational, and social dimensions (DeVito, 2016). They all interact at the moment to produce engagement in students. When accomplishing a task/activity, students experience different sideline emotions, thoughts, behaviors that influence their engagement level. These components constantly change and interact with each other making the construct complex and dynamic.

Research reveals that the engagement of the student can predict different academic outcomes such as achievement,

psychosocial adjustment, resilience, effective learning, and academic success (Jang et al., 2016). Furthermore, due to its flexibility, engagement is affected by different phenomenological, demographic, and instructional factors (Guilloteaux, 2016). From a CDST perspective, the dimensions and underlying components of engagement and their subcomponents can have part-to-part, part-to-whole, and whole-to-part coactions that generate the overall engagement of the student in the class (Symonds et al., 2021).

Implications, Gaps, and Future Directions

In this mini review article, it was pinpointed that many SLA constructs including WTC and engagement are multifaceted, dynamic, and nested within their own smaller sublayers. Hence, it is feasible to apply CDST perspective to many learner-psychology variables to unfold their nature and behaviors. Consequently, this article can afford precious implications for EFL teachers, students, teacher trainers, and researchers. More particularly, the results are beneficial for EFL teachers in which they can increase knowledge and awareness of teachers of the nature and dynamism of WTC and engagement as two momentous variables in L2 education. Both variables are complicated, multilayered, and dynamic (Liu and Song, 2021). So, EFL teachers can use suitable classroom tasks which enrich WTC and classroom engagement of students. Likewise, students can use the ideas of this study in which they can identify that their language learning process is complex with numerous nested variables which have smaller sublayers. Therefore, they invest more time and effort in developing their psychological traits as preconditions for language development. The results are valuable for teacher trainers in that they can conduct workshops and training programs on the dynamic, developmental trajectories of essential variables to language learning (e.g., WTC, engagement) by teaching teachers appropriate methods and techniques that tap into the nested, complicated, and dynamic nature of psychological variables of SLA. Finally, L2 researchers can use the propositions made in this study and make attempts to locate and bridge the gaps in this area. As mentioned earlier, a huge body of research on WTC and engagement has been quantitative, correlational, and cross-sectional capturing a snapshot of the

developmental process of such complicated variables. Hence, avid researchers are suggested to employ dynamically informed methodologies to uncover the complexity and dynamism of SLA constructs. Focusing on the dynamic nature of WTC, researchers can also examine the effect of different language skills on the level of WTC of EFL students. Another line of research can be conducting longitudinal research on WTC, engagement, and other SLA constructs adopting both micro and macro timescales to navigate their fluctuations since they mostly occur in a long run. Moreover, WTC can be studied in relation to different positive psychology constructs (e.g., resilience, enjoyment, optimism, love, and hope; Wang et al., 2021) as well as negative emotions such as boredom, doubt, anxiety, demotivation, and so forth. Furthermore, WTC can be scrutinized from the

lens of teacher-student interpersonal communication behaviors, such as teacher care, clarity, credibility, rapport, stroke, immediacy, confirmation to see how they can impact WTC of students, engagement, success, and achievement (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Furthermore, WTC and the engagement of students in online education can be a striking line of inquiry. Finally, cross-cultural studies on WTC and engagement are also recommended.

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Both authors have directly and substantially contributed to this manuscript and have approved its submission to *Frontiers in Psychology*.

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EFL/ESL Students' Perceptions of Distributive, Procedural, and Interactional Justice: The Impact of Positive Teacher-Student Relation

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The correlation between teacher-student interpersonal relationships and students' perception of different dimensions of justice using in the learning context has been found absolutely important since it can provide a nice learning environment for students in which they can comfortably learn a new language. Even though several studies have been carried out regarding the above-mentioned points, a review paper that focuses on the importance between these two variables by which students' learning is influenced seems of great interest. In this study, the author has strived hard to highlight the interplay between the aforementioned variables. First of all, Justice and its dimensions including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are described in the learning context. Then the effect of the positive relationship between teachers and students is accentuated. Following it, different types of characteristics that are crucially noticeable considering teacher-student interpersonal relationship including "teachers care," "teacher clarity," "teacher confirmation," "teacher credibility," "teacher immediacy," "teacher stroke," "teacher-student rapport" are discussed. The term "positive psychology" accompanied by its factors is defined then. What is discussed then is classroom justice as a teacher-student interpersonal factor. Finally, it is concluded with implications and suggestions for future studies.

Keywords: teacher-student interpersonal communication, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, teacher-student relation

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INTRODUCTION

The interpersonal relationship between teachers and students has always been highlighted in different studies in that it is a mutual relationship, and it has been proposed that care should be given to enhance such a relationship between teachers and students; as a consequence, with regard to the positive psychology, diverse types of characteristics in teachers should be stressed and enhanced if needed to take advantage of the learning context (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Moreover, varied dimensions of justice have been highlighted in some studies since for a just educational context, it seems worthwhile (Estaji and Zhaleh, 2021). The factors of positive psychology such as well-being and emotion regulation have been mentioned in some studies to help teachers enhance their mood and have a better understanding of how they should act during the class which enables them to be better versions of themselves (Wang et al., 2021). In this study review, information was collected to emphasize the impact of students' perception of various

dimensions of justice including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, in association with the teacher-student interpersonal relationship. Firstly, justice and its dimensions including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice have been defined in the learning context. Then, the impact of the positive relationship between teachers and students has been highlighted. Following it, different types of characteristics that are crucially important regarding teacher-student interpersonal relationships have been discussed. The term “positive psychology” accompanied by its factors has been conceptualized then. Classroom justice as a teacher-student interpersonal factor has been taken into consideration. Finally, it has been concluded with implications and suggestions for future studies.

BACKGROUND

EFL/ESL Students’ Perceptions of Different Types of Justice

Justice is essentially important in everyone’s life; it is applied in society both politically and socially and it can also be seen in organizational behavior. It is viewed as a value since many other factors depend on it in society (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997). Social psychology theory of justice has been established in the learning context by some key figures. It has been found that many student variables are influenced by students’ understanding of classroom justice such as the student’ being motivated, achieving academic goals, engagement, the relationship between teachers, and students, reactions which are behavioral or emotional, showing interest in the subjects that are shared through the class, the amount of willingness to talk, feeling about the teacher, and learning cognitively (Estaji and Zhaleh, 2021).

Distributive Justice

Organizational justice is defined as the evaluation of one’s fairness in the organizational processes, consequences, and communications (Kazemi et al., 2015). This type of justice can be classified into three categories: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Distributive justice is conceptualized as an understanding of fairness considering distributing outcomes. Three following principles can clarify this type of justice more: need (how the outcome is distributed when one expects or needs something), equity (how the outcome is distributed according to one’s perseverance, contribution, and performance), and equality (how equally outcome among people are distributed) (Deutsch, 1975).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the understanding of fairness in terms of utilized measures and policies so as to make allocation decisions. This justice is viewed to be kept when the measures are judged to be fair such as “bias dominance principle,” recognized on satisfactory and accurate information such as “accuracy principle,” engaged regularly across time and individuals such as “consistency principle,” adaptable such as “correctability principle,” considering all individuals’ concerns who are engaged

such as “voice principle,” resting on the predominant ethical and moral values such as “ethicality principle,” enacted clearly and with clarity such as “transparency principle,” and are rational “reasonableness principle” (Leventhal, 1980; Kazemi and Törnblom, 2008; Rasooli et al., 2019).

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice, the third classification of organizational justice, relates to the understanding of fairness in conveying information and interpersonal relationships when individuals perceive to be in a friendly atmosphere such as “caring principle,” behaved reverentially such as respect principle, and with dignity such as “propriety principle,” and when information is transferred to them in an appropriate manner such as “timeliness principle,” sincerely such as “truthfulness principle,” and according to sufficient and rational clarifications such as “adequacy/justification principle,” (Greenberg, 1993; Colquitt, 2001; Rasooli et al., 2019). Out of the three dimensions, distributive justice is the most crucially important from teacher’s point of view which can be seen in different forms, from grading, giving feedback to praising, and providing students with opportunities (Ciuladien and Račelyte, 2016). The distributive justice has been said to be the most important since in the next two classifications of justice, the focus is shifted to students themselves: procedural justice including how students’ homework is evaluated, what methods are used by the teacher to manipulate the class, and the strategies applied in the class to control students’ behavior, and instructional justice that is concerned with how much students are treated reverently and politely by the teachers, and if the information can be clearly conveyed to the students by the teacher (Ciuladien and Račelyte, 2016). Distributive justice concentrates on the grades which students receive and on students who stand out enough to be noticed by the teacher and attract teachers’ attention (Chory-Assad and Paulsel, 2004).

The Importance of Positive Teacher-Student Relation

Before, the relationship between some negative factors such as anxiety and the teaching-learning context has been discussed (Seifalian and Derakhshan, 2018). Much attention has been focused on positive psychology in the pedagogical contexts for the last two decades. Positive behaviors between EFL teachers and students are perceived to have a paramount impact on students’ achievements. Such behaviors can be considered either negative or positive. According to Xie and Derakhshan (2021) “teacher care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, and confirmation” expound how teachers positively anticipate the academic outcomes such as “motivation, learning, engagement, involvement, class attendance, willingness to communicate, performance, and success, p. 1” in students. Therefore, the above-mentioned factors in teachers can be viewed as positive which causes students to feel fulfilled and allow their wants and needs to be met (Frymier, 2016; Goldman et al., 2017). As the name suggests, positive psychology made a shift from a regular approach to life to a more open-minded outlook on life; as a result, positive emotions have been fostered in

students if there is a positive, productive relationship between the teachers and students (Wang et al., 2021). It has been corroborated that students are more likely to think of their teachers as just if they have been provided with supportive interactions in the classroom in which the students' needs can be met (Gasser et al., 2018). Teacher care was first introduced by Noddings (1984) which refers to the amount of empathy shared and the openness in face of other people's needs. Likewise, the same goes for the educational contexts (Gasser et al., 2018). It is claimed that when students are conscious of teachers' care toward themselves during the class, they are more likely to feel secure (Noddings, 2006). Students' well-being, feeling revered, the amount of being engaged during the class, the level of self-esteem, and their performance are stimulated when teachers show care (Derakhshan et al., 2019).

When people try to convey their meaning and information more understandable, it is where we consider clarity and transparency (Myers et al., 2014). From an institutional point of view, it refers to teachers when they try to clarify something by giving more examples, using visual aids, utilizing verbal language, and repeating something (Violanti et al., 2018). Teacher clarity leads to students processing and retrieving what they have been taught in a better way since when they are taught, the students make an endeavor to transfer the information from the working memory to the long-term memory (Bolkan, 2017). Confirming communications make students feel heard, recognized, and valued (Ellis, 2000; Burns et al., 2018). When students are provided with feedback, it increases their enthusiasm about learning and it is what makes the learning contexts much more enjoyable and causes an excellent rapport to be shaped between teachers and students (Ellis, 2000; Goldman et al., 2014). It has been told that students feel more satisfied and their level of willingness to talk will raise if they are given confirming answers or feedback by their teachers (Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010). In the education domain, teacher credibility refers to the extent to which a teacher is credible or trustworthy (Teven and McCroskey, 1997). It has been unraveled that students' willingness to attend the class increases when the students trust in their teachers (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Within the instructional context, teacher immediacy is concerned with verbal and non-verbal prompts diminishing the psychological or physical distance between teachers and students (Estep and Roberts, 2015). Verbal immediacy can be exemplified in this way: when students are asked about their ideas, they are asked to be involved in a friendly conversation, and teachers use a great sense of humor. Non-verbal immediacy, on the other hand, refers to teachers smiling, making eye contact, and using relaxing postures (Wendt and Courduff, 2018).

Strokes can be classified into six groups: positive such as "what nice clothes," negative such as "I loathe you," verbal such as "how are you?," non-verbal such as smiling, conditional such as "you are a nice person," or unconditional such as "I love you." It has been indicated that there is a positive association between teacher stroke and teacher factors such as teacher success, credibility (Pishghadam et al., 2021), care, and conceptions of intelligence (Derakhshan et al., 2019). Rapport is the relationship between teachers and students which is

characterized by reverence, enjoyment, and shared trust (Frisby and Martin, 2010; Frisby and Housley Gaffney, 2015). Rapport can be seen in the following forms throughout the classroom: when humor is used by teachers, when appropriate feedback is provided, when students' attitudes are revered, and when enthusiasm is expressed in students' learning (Weimer, 2010).

Positive Psychology Factors

Positive psychology has increasingly been growing in L2 education and in 2016, two books were written by MacIntyre et al. (2016) and Gabrys-Barker and Galajda (2016) which put more emphasis on this great line of research. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) conceptualized foreign language enjoyment that is defined as positive emotion arising after a goal has been achieved. It leads to students broadening their horizons, being more engaged in the learning process, and achieving better academic results (Pekrun, 2006). It is regarded as a feeling of pleasure when one completes a task successfully and appreciates the content of learning. Not only does it have a good impact on the students but it also affects teachers in a way that it causes them to overcome anxiety (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020). Research shows that factors related to teachers play a more crucial role than factors which are related to learners. Hence, variables such as being supported by the teachers, using a great sense of humor, being friendly with the students, respecting students, using a nice tone, and sharing positive moods are amongst the positive variables relevant to teachers that can increase enjoyment.

Another factor relevant to positive psychology is well-being (Oxford, 2016). Well-being is described as how satisfied a person is with his mental health, life, and work (Garg et al., 2014). Ryff (1989) mentioned that well-being is associated with accepting oneself, growing personally, having aims in life, being autonomous, and having environmental mastery.

Resilience is another intrapersonal factor that should be kept in mind in that it enhances one's productivity when confronting with difficult circumstances on a daily basis. It is defined as the capacity to adapt to unpleasant situations with which they are faced (Bobek, 2002). Resilience is linked to various L2 educational consequences such as motivation for learning, teaching satisfaction, and well-being.

The fourth factor in the field of positive psychology is emotion regulation that is described as extrinsic and intrinsic processes that one faces to assess, adjust, or control his emotions to achieve particular goals in life (Proietti Ergün and Dewaele, 2021). When teachers or students know how to regulate their emotions either positive or negative skillfully in the classroom, it highly affects the relationship between teachers and students, what students gain through the learning process, and teachers' success (Ghanizadeh and Moafian, 2010; Teng and Zhang, 2016).

The last factor in the realm of positive psychology is academic engagement that is conceptualized as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Behavioral engagement pertains to learners' authentic tendency to partake in the activities or tasks (Mercer, 2019). Cognitive engagement occurs when a person is sufficiently and mentally challenged and immersed in one's work. Emotional engagement is perceived as students' feelings of dedication and attachment

to a task (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). According to the studies conducted so far, students' L2 engagement was discovered to be positively associated with teacher care, rapport, non-verbal immediacy, and credibility behaviors (Derakhshan, 2021), emotions, grit (Khajavy, 2021), enjoyment (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020), willingness to communicate and bilingual learning (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021).

Grit as another factor that is concerned with perseverance, desire, and energy for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). One of the attributes of grit is malleability, meaning that it can be boosted through involvement and education in the instructional context (Clark and Malecki, 2019). In the classroom, using malleability of grit, learners can be prepared for the possible difficulties and challenges when learning a new language. It has been said that there is a positive association between academic results, willingness to communicate, and enjoyment (Akos and Kretchmar, 2017).

In terms of educational context, love is defined as a learning experience that is meaningful and positive. Learners' emotional and social development is greatly affected by love (Loreman, 2011). It has been asserted that successful learning occurs when there is a loving, friendly context (Yin et al., 2019). Love has also been emphasized in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. Self-actualization, which puts on top of the pyramid, is achieved when the need for love is fulfilled. So in the realm of learning, only when students' needs are met, does success happen. To this end, students should be respected, supported, and understood by their teachers. A loving teacher is capable to boost students' functioning. It should be taken into consideration that efficacious coping mechanisms can be created and students can feel motivated when love exists (Pavelescu and Petrić, 2018).

Classroom Justice as a Teacher-Student Interpersonal Factor

In terms of instructional context, classroom justice is defined as how students evaluate the fairness of outcomes and processes (Chory-Assad and Paulsel, 2004). When it comes to distributive justice, "outcome" pertains to the grades which are received by the students. Students' perception of interactional justice is highly correlated with the respect they receive from their teachers and the amount of openness toward their opinions which is interpreted as teacher care or teacher stroke contributing to better well-being in both students and teachers (Chory, 2007). Students consider those teachers who do not admit their ideas and hurt their feelings by giving negative feedback about their performance as unfair. It was claimed that the teacher-student rapport and teacher confirmation have played a crucial role in students' perception of justice so far. Ashworth et al. (1997) on the qualitative research methods course unit discovered that students' understanding is affected by the way they are graded by their professors for example for group work. According to a study conducted by Chory et al. (2014) teachers are highly likely to be viewed as unfair by the students when the students are treated badly about their concerning grades. The better the students are treated by the teachers and the more productive the feedback is, the more the teachers can be viewed as trustworthy that

has been mentioned earlier, teacher credibility. It was said that more than half of the unjust behaviors reported by the students were relevant to grades. Additionally, opposition to authority, which was followed by verbal hostility and disengagement was also of paramount importance. It was additionally predicted the relationship between students' understanding of teachers' unfairness and their behavioral responses is mediated by students' emotional responses to unfairness. The way injustice is perceived by the students can cause an increase in caustic behavior, fight, dishonesty, anger, and conflict in the classroom which blemishes the relationship between teachers and students and also gives rise to a deep hatred toward teachers (Ciuladien and Račelyte, 2016).

A study carried out by Estaji and Zhaleh (2021) indicated that in terms of distributive justice, students believe that students' affective and cognitive and learning are directly impacted by justice. Additionally, teachers play a tremendous role in students' learning. Thus, had teachers been more careful about justice, the students would not have felt upset, demotivated, and discouraged leading to students distrusting their teachers. Students also claimed that students should be treated equally and the learning opportunities should equally be provided by fair teachers. To put it simply, it makes a bond of trust and understanding between teachers and students. Based on what students put forward, another factor which makes a teacher fair was that they make eye contact from time to time with students that can be described as teacher immediacy and teacher stroke. On the exam day, what attracts attention is that fair teachers should give help to all the students equally and the same amount of feedback should be given to students. Individual differences are what should be taken into consideration and as a result, the way the subject-matter is taught by the teachers should vary from learner to learner due to the fact that they have various learning styles. In terms of homework assignments, students should be provided with different types of homework based on their abilities. Depending on students' character, being extroverted or introverted, they are expected to behave in a different way and as result, the students are treated differently by the teachers that can be perceived as positive or negative and it may boost or spoils the intrapersonal relationship between students and teachers. It was also claimed by the students that some students are well-behaved and grateful that causes a good rapport to be built up with the teachers, whereas other students do not revere the rules of the class and its value. Accordingly, should teachers behave the students in this way, it may reinforce negative behaviors. In terms of procedural justice, a fair teacher is not impartial when a student is absent and is not strict toward another one. There should be no differentiation among students when a rule is broken. As it has been mentioned above, teacher confirmation either negative or positive highly affect students' learning. Another feature for fair teachers is that students' ideas are of great importance when a date should be fixed for taking a test and a topic should be determined for discussion, for instance. Standards and rubrics are planned by fair teachers so that students perceive what they are expected to do throughout the class, leading to students having a better image of their teachers. In terms of Interactional justice, students are treated in a friendly way by just teachers that

can be shown in term “teacher stroke or teacher immediacy.” A positive, safe, friendly atmosphere is created by just teachers in the classroom. Similarly, students’ poor performance is not belittled and humiliated by just teachers that completely ruins the relationship between the students and teachers. Consequently, the students are addressed respectfully by just teachers.

IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

Studies that have been carried out considering students’ perception of justice and positive interactional teacher-learner relationships are countless. It is of great importance to analyze how students feel about the realm of learning education and how the class and every single detail of it can be interpreted in their minds since learners are claimed to play a paramount role in the learning context. The more the students are satisfied with the learning context, the more valued teachers feel and as a result, a loving, friendly atmosphere can be created so that students can achieve their goals. Regarding the above-mentioned points, the focus of this study was the students’ perception of different types of justice within the interpersonal teacher-learner relationship. Despite the fact that positive psychology has attracted much attention to itself over the last two decades, some topics such as the one studied in this research needs to be given more attention since students’ interpretation of the classroom is of crucial significance. Further studies that can be done by avid researchers are classified into five categories: first and for most, one of the components of positive psychology is loving pedagogy; therefore, studies should be done so as to find the correlation between students’ perception of various types of justice and a loving learning context to see how they affect each other. Secondly, even though students’ perception is found to be the most important of all, teachers’ perception is also extremely crucial since they are supposed to manage the class and take control of their feelings in order to allow students to enjoy a friendly atmosphere of the class and subject-matter. Thirdly, a longitudinal study should be conducted in which different types of justice can be explicated for the students and their effect on the learning process can be studied since the only way through which the infrastructures for academic standards can be strengthened is trying to build a

learning atmosphere in which students are treated in just manner. Amongst the three dimensions of justice, the most significant one is distributive justice in the teachers’ perceptions. Because it is a necessity for teachers to be cognizant of grading the students, rewarding the students, giving feedback to all students, praising the students, giving equal opportunities to students fairly. However, the least accentuated justice was interactional justice out of the three dimensions of justice. It can clarify it for teachers that being fair in interacting and conveying the meaning to students is not as significant as being just in interactions and being fair when outcomes are distributed and applying class procedures. Fourthly, variables such as age can play a paramount role in the way teachers perceive different conceptions like justice; consequently, this variable can be controlled in further studies to see the difference in how justice is conceived by teachers from different age groups. finally, in the field of positive psychology, a point which is regarded as encouraging is that applying such studies in real learning contexts can help the educational domain no end in that students’ engagement and performance can be enhanced and high educational standards can be exploited that help both teachers and learners to enjoy the teaching and learning contexts respectively.

It should be concluded that different types of people can take advantage of the current review study and needless to say, the authorities, teachers, and students are not exceptions. One of the characteristics of quality teachers is putting justice into practice in their classes and it is said that it would be considered their responsibility to apply justice practices in their classes. Consequently, teachers can be enticed by policymakers to ameliorate the way they use justice in their teaching methods and their behaviors. Another point that is of pivotal importance for policymakers from an institutional point of view is that teachers’ characteristics are changeable regarding a better educational system, so in an effort to modify their attributes, teachers should be trained how to develop a sense of responsibility and confidence in themselves to heighten their performance in the classroom.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Exploring Effective Teacher-Student Interpersonal Interaction Strategies in English as a Foreign Language Listening and Speaking Class

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The main purpose of English learning is to communicate and interact in global contexts. However, in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts as in China, most of the students have limited interactional competence in contrast to their grammatical and structural competence. The reason is that Chinese classrooms mostly lack an interactional climate. This calls for an urgent need to develop interpersonal interaction skills by EFL teachers via appropriate strategies. To this end, this article presents an overview of nine interpersonal communication skills/strategies which are pivotal in L2 education. It also describes their definitions and related theories. Moreover, the outcomes of such strategies in aural skills are also explained. Finally, implications, research gaps, and future avenues for research are provided.

Keywords: interpersonal interaction skills/strategies, listening, speaking, EFL, L2 communication

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades, the educational context of China has made strident advancing steps regarding English language teaching and learning (Li et al., 2019). While China has the largest English as a foreign language (EFL) community, L2 students' interactional skills lag behind their literacy skills (Zheng, 2019). They read and write well, but their aural skills (i.e., speaking and listening) are not as fluent as they should be. The reason for this deficiency is the classroom context and teacher-student interactions. The classroom environment is the focal venue for EFL students to develop their language competencies; hence, teachers are obliged to provide an interactive classroom setting that boots students' meaning generation and negotiation. This calls for a shift of role on the part of the teachers in that they are no longer mere knowledge transmitters, but learning facilitators who set the scene for the development of interactional skills in their pupils (Littlewood, 2014). Another critical factor in determining L2 success interaction among teachers and students in the class. As natural and real-life encounters are usually scarce in EFL contexts, their burden is placed upon teachers and students to devise an interactional milieu that resembles and mirrors that of real life.

One of the most important tasks to be accomplished by L2 teachers and students in EFL settings, like China, is establishing a classroom climate based on positive interpersonal interaction skills. This necessitates a friendly rapport between the teacher and his/her students. Teachers must take into account the emotions and interests of their pupils in the class (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). With this, they can create an interactive class where the students feel

free to take part in L2 communication (Zheng, 2021). For a long time, this positive interpersonal kinship in the classroom has been confirmed to cause numerous positive outcomes in L2 education including achievement, well-being, engagement, learning, motivation, hope, and success, among others (Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Havik and Westergård, 2019). This approves that teaching is a relational job and the responsibility of learning is shared between the teacher and learners.

Now the intention of EFL classes is way beyond the simple presentation of linguistic information, but a place where social, psychological, and emotional interactions are provoked (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). It is believed that an improved interpersonal interaction will create positive rapport in the class and removes negative stressors like distrust, doubt, anxiety, boredom, suspicion, and so forth. The reverse is also the case in which a positive learning environment generates interaction and communication among its parties. As pinpointed by Habash (2010), the quality of teaching in EFL contexts improves if teachers employ different interactional strategies that stimulate communication among learners. In their seminal papers, Gao (2021) and Xie and Derakhshan (2021) numerated nine key positive interpersonal communication skills/strategies including care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, confirmation, humor, and praise which will be explained later. Together with these, approximation, interpretability, discourse management, emotional expression, and interpersonal control are also known as effective interactional strategies (Gallois et al., 2005). Although many studies have been done on these strategies in different contexts pointing to their positive outcomes in academia, they have rarely been explored concerning aural skills in an EFL context. To fill this gap, the present mini-review article intended to define and explicate the concept of interpersonal communication/interaction, various strategies to improve it, related theories, and existing gaps and future trends in this line of inquiry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Interpersonal Communication/Interaction

Interpersonal communication which is at the core of the classroom process refers to communication that happens between people and forms a personal tie between them (Solomon and Theiss, 2013). In simple words, it is the exchange of information between two or more people sending and receiving the messages. Interpersonal communication is a unique kind of interaction among people as it highlights what occurs among them regardless of their place and presence (Wood, 2015). Going even further, McCornack (2010) and DeVito (2013) regarded the concept as a dynamic form of verbal and non-verbal interaction between people through which thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are conveyed. In the context of language teaching, interpersonal communication refers to the interaction (*verbal*, *non-verbal* = body language, and *para-verbal* = tone, intonation) that occurs among students and their teachers, which seeks to convey meaning, perform academic tasks, and establish

relationships (Tranca and Neagoe, 2018). The type and degree of interaction in the classroom as a micro-social context varies across cultures, individuals, and subjects. Language education by nature calls for more interaction in comparison to hard sciences.

Communication Accommodation Theory

As one of the most popular theories behind interpersonal interaction, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), grew out of Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) proposed by Giles (1973). According to this theory, language speakers intentionally or unintentionally fine-tune their verbal and non-verbal behaviors to accommodate each other. This adjustment is done for arousing social approval, improving the effectiveness of communication, and maintaining a positive social identity (Beebe and Giles, 1984). The key strategies in CAT are *convergence* and *divergence* between interlocutors' communication. People use convergence to adjust their communicative behaviors (verbal and non-verbal) to display similarity, get approval from the listener, or develop the conversation (Giles and Ogay, 2007). Convergence strategies include both verbal behaviors (e.g., repetition, praise, adjusting pronunciation, the speech rate, pause, the use of words and sentences, explanation, and even code-switching) and non-verbal behaviors (e.g., gestures, postures, smiling, and the like). On the contrary, divergence is a communication strategy employed by interlocutors to underscore the verbal or non-verbal difference between themselves and others. According to CAT, people manifest different social identities by using different language styles in terms of pronunciation, lexical differences, dialect, and other non-verbal behaviors. These strategies are of paramount importance in aural skills classes in that speaking and listening are quintessential samples of real-world communication where people aim to convey a message and understand it.

The Attachment Theory

The attachment theory (AT) was proposed by British psychiatrist Bowlby (1969) to explain relational patterns among people. It maintains that human beings are born with an inherent need to establish a close emotional bond with others. It is at the core of children's developmental psychology and maturation and argues that the attachment of a child to a caregiver produces a type of behavior that can later become autonomous (Zheng, 2021). Attachment is believed to be an emotional link among people which can influence their relationships, experiences, and task/work involvement. The theory is grounded on three main tenets including (1) bonding is an intrinsic human need, (2) the regulation of emotion and fear is done to increase vitality, and (3) attachment behaviors improve adaptiveness and development (Johnson, 2019). This theory is pertinent to L2 education in the sense that EFL students form emotional attachments with their instructors and peers. As posited in AT, EFL students who establish a strong affective attachment with their teachers have more tranquility to make discoveries and to socialize (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). Similarly, this emotional bond between students and the teacher increases EFL students' courage and resilience when facing challenges. Hence, they are not afraid of failure and are intrinsically motivated and involved in classroom interactions (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). In a friendly environment as such,

the level of classroom rapport is high and if a student does not know something, he/she will not freak out. In speaking and listening courses, teachers have to form secure attachments with their pupils to facilitate the ground for them to interact, cooperate, progress, and succeed. In EFL contexts, this sense of closeness is of utmost significance in that L2 education is full of linguistic, cultural, and social adversities that may preclude EFL learners' interpersonal communication skills. Hence, this theory can pave the way for aural skills to develop in a democratic classroom climate.

Nine Key Interpersonal Communication Skills/Strategies

Many interactional strategies may exist in English communication owing to its dynamic nature.

However, the most popular and well-documented ones suitable for EFL classes are those proposed by Gao (2021) and Xie and Derakhshan (2021) who proposed nine key positive interpersonal communication skills/strategies, namely *care, clarity, credibility, rapport with students, stroke, immediacy, confirmation, humor, and praise*. The concept of care was first proposed by Noddings (1984) to refer to a composite sense of compassion, openness to others' needs, empathy in interactions, and closeness of a caregiver with a person as the receiver of the care. In the EFL context, teacher care concerns the delivery of genuine support to students, showing interest in their learning, and being empathetic toward them (Gabryś-Barker, 2016). The purpose of care is to fulfill students' psycho-emotional needs via a positive and supportive environment (Laletas and Reupert, 2016). Next, clarity as an offshoot of a caring classroom refers to different strategies and approaches that EFL teachers and students utilize to ensure that their messages and ideas have been successfully understood by other parties (Bolkan, 2017). In interactive courses where students and teachers jointly construct the learning process, having clarity in talks and explanations is very important. Furthermore, credibility here means the degree of the believability of an interlocutor or the attitude of students toward their teachers regarding his/her competence, care, and trustworthiness (McCroskey and Young, 1981). Additionally, rapport is the harmonious teacher-student relationship characterized by joy, respect, and trust (Delos Reyes and Torio, 2020).

The concept of stroke concerns one's natural expectation of recognition by others. In the EFL classroom, teachers are the strokers and learners are strokees. By nature, students search for teachers' stroke or recognition and when it is absent, they feel deprived in the learning process (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). As an interpersonal strategy highly related to rapport, immediacy concerns the proximity, closeness, and approachability of the teacher and students. In this case, their physical and effective distance is reduced. Moreover, confirmation refers to various communicative attempts to show students that they are valuable (Burns et al., 2017). It manifests itself in answering students' questions and providing feedback, displaying passion in students' learning, and involving in an interactive teaching style (Ellis, 2000). Students inherently seek

teachers' confirmation of their thoughts, feelings, and attempts in the class. Another interpersonal interaction strategy is humor which changes and enlightens the atmosphere of the class and affects its emotional climate making it appropriate for learning. Finally, teacher's praise refers to the positive response to students' behaviors and performances which go beyond simple feedbacks but confirmations or approval of learners' efforts which increases their motivation and interaction in the class (Figure 1).

The Application of Interactional Strategies to English as a Foreign Language Speaking and Listening

The mentioned nine fundamental interpersonal communication strategies and other linguistic strategies apply to speaking and listening skills in that they can encourage learners to cooperate, engage in the class, and form a positive rapport that facilitates interactions. In aural skills which are more demanding for EFL students, immediacy, care, and clarity put learners at ease and inspire them to speak out without fear of being wrong. Similarly, these interpersonal strategies allow learners to make interpretations about listening tasks in a friendly atmosphere that gives positive feedback. As aural skills are full of hesitation, pauses, informal phrases, hedges, and redundancies, EFL students usually feel dubious to initiate an interaction of making interpretations. Consequently, these positive interpersonal interaction strategies can soothe the tension and help learners decode and encode language with great panache. Moreover, these strategies generate motivation, enthusiasm, interest, and willingness to engage in speaking and listening activities.

In a global context, studies have been carried out on interactional strategies in the EFL setting, especially from the perspective of learners and teachers. Cohen et al. (1996) emulated the impact of strategies-based instruction on speaking a foreign language. As stated by Mufanti (2014), there exists a connection between low-level speaking proficiency and inappropriate social strategies. Bahadori and Tabatabaei (2016) investigated the

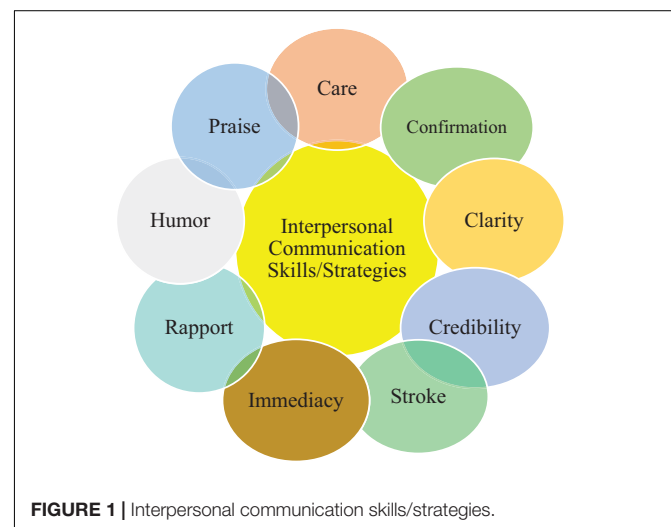


FIGURE 1 | Interpersonal communication skills/strategies.

effectiveness of interactional strategies on speaking accuracy and fluency of EFL learners based on gender. Astutik (2017) showed his concerns about lower learner's interactional strategies in a public speaking class setting. Forbes and Fisher (2018) depicted the impact of students' use of metacognitive learning strategies on confidence and proficiency in foreign language speaking skills.

The appropriate and purposed use of effective interactional strategies in teaching contributes to successful interaction and pedagogic qualities of competent teachers (Chiang, 2006; Garton, 2012; Astutik, 2016). Besides learners and instructors, the interface and media have been observed and revisited. The function of content and technologies in interaction is the newly discussed topic. The interaction between learners and peers is also concerned by scholars. Gómez-Rodríguez (2010) has analyzed how English textbooks help learners in EFL setting to develop their communicative competence. Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011) proposed web blogs as a tool for EFL interaction. York and Richardson (2012) explored the influential factors about interpersonal interaction in the online courses through a phenomenological study. Sun and Lee (2017) investigated the network-assisted learning environment of three countries' EFL learners to show the compensation for the lack of linguistic competence with online interactional practice. Van Batenburg et al. (2019) was concerned with the prescribed interaction tasks on the textbook and learning material. Mehall (2020) explored the purposeful interpersonal interaction in the online course. Dao (2020) investigated the effect of interactional strategies instruction on learners' engagement in peer reaction.

In EFL speaking or listening setting, effective engagement is the premise of interaction. It becomes the focus to motivate and guide low-level learners' engagement through various communication strategies (Bejarano et al., 1997). Furthermore, scholars are also aware of the impact of cognitive factors, social environment, language policy, and media technology on EFL interaction. The concept of scaffolding in teacher-student interaction has received a great deal of attention in EFL educational research over the past few decades. Scaffolding is closely connected with the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky. The effectiveness of interactional scaffolding has been examined and diagnosed. Scaffolding instruction intends to help learners maximize their needs and improve learners' abilities to overcome the pre-problem and extend the scope of new competence in aid of various patterns of scaffolding. No matter in an authentic classroom setting or a network-based setting in EFL, interaction is a complicated but indispensable part of EFL speaking and listening class. There is an increasing tendency in class size, attendance number, the type of course in EFL speaking and listening setting. Are there essential distinctive features or real standards to examine and evaluate the interaction degree in regard to the effect, the acceptance and the prospect? The learners' personal feeling of the perception of different interaction strategies is real and full of emotion. As a case study, it is characteristic and referential. The analysis of interactional strategies effects data and structure types helps to describe and analyze the research object more objectively.

The current teaching technologies and social demands of language learning provide learners or instructors to reexamine and reflect the relationship between learners and instructors. With the aid of current various multi-media, EFL interaction typologies extend to learner-learner, learner-instructor, and learner-media-instructor style. Especially due to the severe spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the global area, the flipped classroom or online teaching and learning becomes essential and presents a new tendency of knowledge inquiry and interpersonal interaction. Even though online teaching endows participants with more freedom and flexibility, it challenges effective interpersonal interaction. The purposed interpersonal interaction strategies illustrate the new technology-self and information-self to build a new balanced and rapport relationship to gain knowledge. Effective interpersonal communication skills are impellers of EFL practices. It seems new media and technologies provide other interaction patterns, besides learners-learners and learners-instructors. The learning materials and assistant technology have become part of the media of interaction. Thereby, another interactional pattern emerges, learner-media-instructor style, especially in an AI intelligent age and mask-wearing social interactions. Online learning or interaction in EFL becomes appropriate and necessary currently.

Implications, Research Gaps, and Future Directions

In light of this review article, it can be argued that the use of effective interpersonal communication skills/strategies has implications for EFL teachers, students, teacher educators, and researchers. From the EFL teaching evaluation level, the judgment and evaluation of effective interactional strategies in the EFL setting lead to further reflection and exploration about the process of teaching and learning agents, processes and effects. The nine communicative strategies just provide more facets to conceptualize the effect of the interactional practice. EFL teachers can use the results to create a positive classroom climate in which these nine strategies are employed in the class, especially in aural skills courses. Moreover, their knowledge of the emotional aspects of L2 education will increase. Likewise, EFL students can play their part in forming a positive rapport in the class that encompasses the rest of interpersonal skills. From the teaching training or self-development aspect, teacher educators can run workshops and training courses on teaching interpersonal interaction strategies to pre-service and in-service EFL teachers offering practical techniques regarding each skill. L2 researchers can use the idea proposed in this article and run cross-cultural studies to see if such strategies vary across different level learners or contexts. From the research content and methods, there are various meaningful perspectives to be mentioned and focused on in learning and instruction of EFL settings. The emotional effect of interactional strategies is worthwhile to be further discussed, especially in the flipped or blending EFL setting. Due to the appearance of the new interactional facilities, personal communicative software and interactional platforms extend the manner and the content of

the interaction. The compensation and scaffolding function of interactional strategies in media-assisted EFL settings extend the scope and content of effective teacher-student interaction. Most studies on these constructs have been quantitative and one-shot; hence, scholars can conduct qualitative, mixed-methods, and longitudinal studies. EFL teachers' and students' perceptions and practices of these strategies are also recommended to future researchers. The comparative studies and field researches of intercultural communication in EFL online learning about different learners, contents, and manners can be further explored. Finally, experimental studies can be done on teaching these nine interpersonal interaction skills in China and other contexts to see if they can be improved by appropriate intervention.

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The Role of Classroom Culture and Psychological Safety in EFL Students' Engagement

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Language learning is a complex phenomenon that is the outcome of an interplay of numerous inter/intra-personal variables. Out of these factors, emotions play a critical role in the whole process of learning. Research approves that positive emotions lead to positive outcomes. This is only obtainable in a positive classroom culture where students feel psychologically safe. If so, they actively engage in the classroom activities for a longer period. However, the macro-effect of classroom culture in EFL/ESL contexts has been limitedly explored. Against this shortcoming, the present article provides a brief account of the definition and conceptualization of classroom culture and its impact on two learner psychology variables (i.e., psychological safety, engagement). Moreover, the dimensions and factors influencing these variables are discussed. Finally, the study offers some implications for different stakeholders in EFL/ESL contexts and enumerates a number of research gaps and future directions for future scholars in this line of inquiry.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a complex phenomenon that is by far more than simple scores on tests. It is about knowledge, understanding, and empowering people to move communities and societies forward (Zulfiquar and Zamir, 2015). For an educational program to be successful, we may present a network of factors related to the teacher, learners, materials, and environment. These elements along with linguistic disparities add to the complexity of second/foreign language education. Among numerous interacting factors in L2 education, classroom culture is the core and a macro element due to its power to influence other constituent components and almost all aspects of language learning (Altun, 2013). It is a broad term referring to the common behaviors, value systems, beliefs, unwritten rules, teaching and learning methods, and relationships in a classroom (Cakiroglu et al., 2012). Moreover, a classroom's culture comprises: (1) its physical environment and location, (2) teacher's ability, teaching style, methodology, and personality, (3) students' engagement and participation, (4) instructional materials, and (5) classroom facilities, sitting arrangements, and space in the classroom (Zulfiquar and Zamir, 2015). Language learning best occurs in a positive classroom culture that cares for students' emotions, agency, autonomy, well-being, active participation, and many other learner-psychology factors.

In such a democratic culture which is context-specific in that each classroom has its own culture, learners' academic achievement boosts exponentially as they feel psychologically safe in a classroom that respects their individuality and preferences (Norton, 2008). Hence, the construct of psychological safety has also a critical role in students' language development. It is originally

related to organizational change/learning (Edmondson and Lei, 2014). In SLA, it refers to the protection of students/teachers against academic threats to cause positive growth and mental health during instructional interactions (Kaila, 2020). This highlights the criticality of contexts and classroom culture in education, especially L2 learning which is a venue of numerous interrelated, nested, interacting, and dynamic variables that develop optimally in a milieu that is positive and psychologically safe for students and teachers. Research shows that classroom culture and students' psychological safety meaningfully increase engagement in instructional activities (Kaila, 2020). Engagement is a multi-faceted concept rooted in positive psychology (Wang et al., 2021) that concerns students' degree of involvement in the class. It is affected by many internal and external factors (Guilloteaux, 2016). Two of such factors are undoubtedly classroom culture which needs to be democratic and positive and students' high level of psychological safety. Nevertheless, no study, to date, has explored these three pivotal constructs together in EFL contexts. To do so, this article presented a conceptual review of these learner-psychology variables and offers some future directions.

BACKGROUND

The Concept of Classroom Culture

Classroom culture is a macro-construct that includes almost all aspects of an educational setting and stakeholders' behaviors, beliefs, and practices. As put by Zulfiquar and Zamir (2015), classroom culture refers to the physical environment; teacher's ability, teaching style, methodology, and personality; students' engagement; instructional materials; and classroom facilities. It differs from *classroom climate* in that climate concerns the social-ecological context in which learners operate which can influence their attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, moods, performance, self-concept, and well-being (Moos, 1979). In other words, climate is the overall feeling of stakeholders regarding classroom interactions, involvement, and academic experience (Gabryś-Barker, 2016). On the other hand, classroom culture refers to the shared values, rules, traditions, belief patterns, behaviors, and relationships in a class (Cakiroglu et al., 2012). It is broader and may change only over a long period of time (Gruenert, 2008). Hence, climate can be regarded as "the attitude and mood" of stakeholders about a class, while culture is "the values and belief systems" of a class (Gruenert, 2008).

Factors Influencing Classroom Culture

Several factors can affect a classroom's culture including learner, teacher, classroom, materials, environment, and relationships. Learner-related factors are their demographic factors, perceptions, and images of others, classroom participation, and first language. Factors related to the teacher are background information, teaching knowledge, expertise, and style. Classroom-related factors include seating, size, equipment, and attractiveness. Moreover, the type and quality of materials used in a class can influence its macro culture. Factors related to the environment include its location, appearance, and being peaceful and silent for better concentration. Finally,

teacher-student and student-student relationships in the class can considerably influence its culture (Hussein, 2016).

Characteristics of a Positive Classroom Culture

A positive classroom culture which can produce many positive academic outcomes has a number of features. It is based on respect and belief in learners' ability; the curriculum and syllabus are real-life, negotiated, and based on learners' needs and wants; the responsibility of learning is shared by all; students have voice, agency, and autonomy; the teacher is the role model, facilitator, feedback-provider, and supporter of students; and the classroom environment is peaceful and democratic helping students and teachers perform their best (Hussein, 2016).

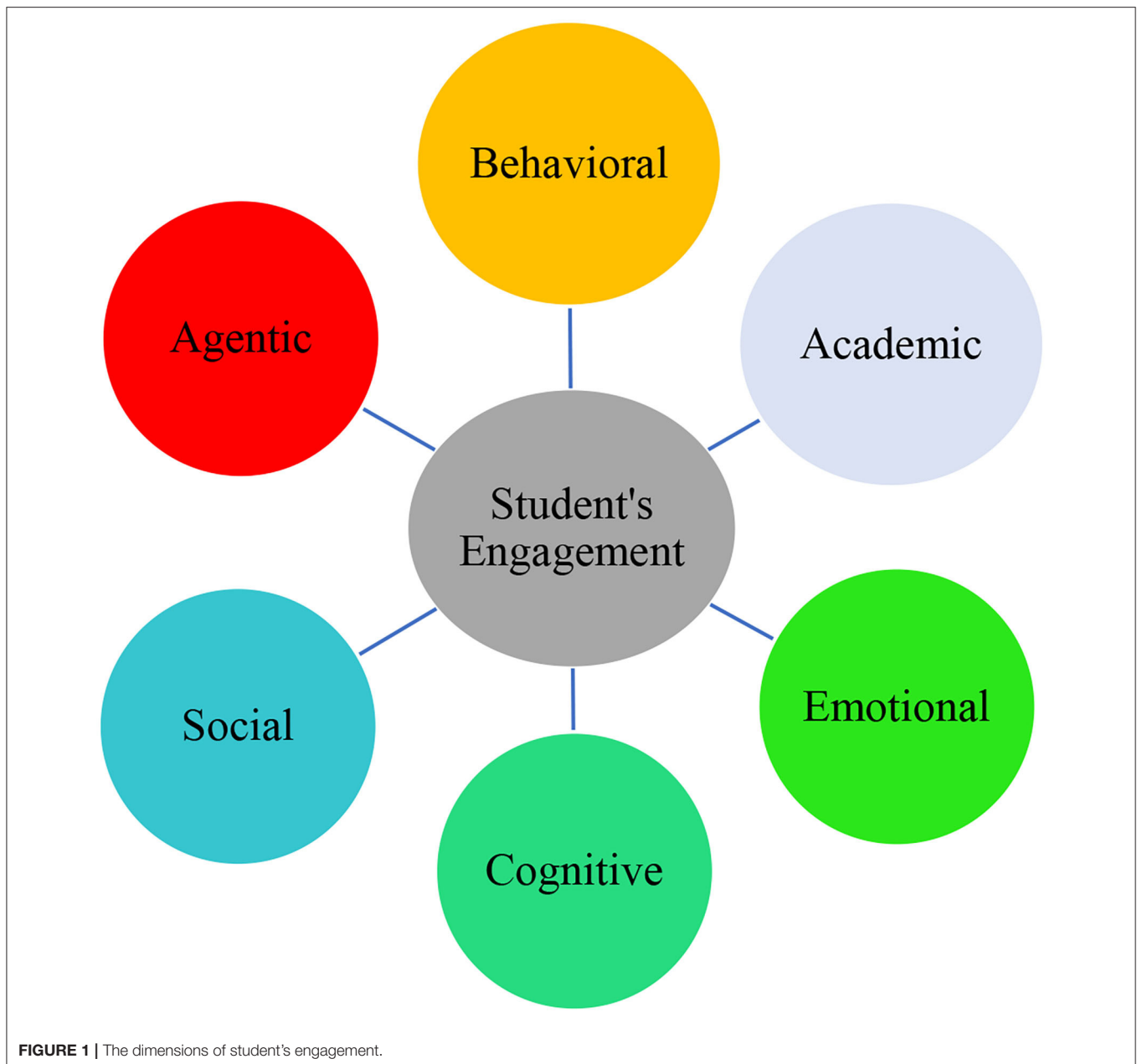
The Notion of Psychological Safety

The concept of psychological safety has originally been proposed by Kahn (1990) and Schein (1993) for workplace culture and organizational learning. Later, it was popularized and defined by Edmondson and Lei (2014) as a common belief among members of a team/community that it is safe for group members to take interpersonal risks. It concerns the removal of fear from human interactions and bases them on respect and permission (Clark, 2020). In such a context, people feel included, belonged, and safe to learn, contribute, and challenge the current condition without fear (Clark, 2020). Therefore, it plays a significant role in workplace effectiveness, engagement, innovation, cohesiveness, and cooperation (Newman et al., 2017).

The concept is new to SLA referring to the safety that students and teachers feel in the classroom context for taking initiative, interact, and speak out their ideas without being embarrassed, humiliated, and punished. Owing to the complex dynamics of L2 learning, a classroom culture that entails and generates psychological safety for students produces more outstanding and positive outcomes such as learning, cooperation, engagement, motivation, and improved interpersonal communication skills among students. This construct has a macro-effect on EFL/ESL students' academic performance and engagement. It is similar to constructs like academic resilience, immunity, and buoyancy which concern students' and teachers' protections against threats and conflicts in academia. In sum, the concept of psychological safety is the by-product of positive, democratic classroom culture and school climate which are responsible for its establishment, maintenance, and development.

Student's Engagement: Conceptualizations and Dimensions

Student engagement is a multi-faceted construct that is a critical issue in academia throughout the world (Kraft and Dougherty, 2013). It has recently come into vogue by positive psychology researchers who focus on the role of positive emotions in education to their positive outcomes (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). According to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), engagement refers to the degree and quality of students' involvement in classroom activities. It is a direct reflection of intrinsic motivation in students (Elliott and Tudge, 2012). Different researchers have had different conceptualizations of this



concept; however, they unanimously confirm that engagement is multi-dimensional and a meta-construct that develops through time and in a positive environment. The dimensions of engagement include behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, academic, and social as illustrated in **Figure 1** (Oga-Baldwin, 2019).

By definition, *behavioral engagement* refers to students' obedience and active involvement in the activities by paying attention, participating in the class, involving in tasks, and doing assignment, while *emotional or affective engagement* is about students' inner states and affective reactions in learning such as anxiety, stress, interest, enjoyment, fun, and happiness and so on. Moreover, *cognitive engagement* points to learners'

psychological investment in learning and employing complex learning strategies when doing a task. *Agentic engagement* has do to with learners' contribution to the improvement of learning and teaching. Likewise, *academic engagement* refers to one's psychological and behavioral attempts to master academic knowledge and skills (Fredricks et al., 2004). Lastly, *social engagement* concerns students' involvement in a set of classroom tasks that are aimed at arousing students' social interaction and problem-solving (DeVito, 2016).

All of these components are dynamic, teachable, and promotable by teachers' positive instructional practices and a positive, democratic classroom culture that secures students' psychological safety (Quin, 2017). Research shows that students'

engagement has different positive academic outcomes (Eccles, 2016). It is correlated with students' achievement, motivation, interpersonal skills, psychosocial adjustment, effective learning, and success (Chase et al., 2015; Jang et al., 2016; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Factors Affecting Students' Engagement

Like many other dynamic and multi-faceted variables in SLA, engagement is affected by several factors (Collins, 2014). The factors can be divided into *phenomenological*, *individual-demographic*, and *instructional* factors. Phenomenological factors include task difficulty, ability, culture, task type, and task value, while individual-demographic factors comprise age, gender, and academic grade. Finally, instructional factors refer to teachers' actions, behaviors, motivation to teach, ability, and instructional style. What is missing among these factors is the impact of classroom culture as a macro-factor that can influence each and every aspect of education. Undoubtedly, this reflects the importance of environmental factors as well. As engagement is dynamic, there also exist other variables which can affect it such as personality traits, time, motivation, orientation, attitude, self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, interest, and other positive emotion variables.

IMPLICATIONS, RESEARCH GAPS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this review article, it was pinpointed that second/foreign language learning does not happen in a vacuum but via a network of interacting variables. This dynamic and nested system has made language teaching and learning a complex phenomenon. For learning to occur, there must exist a positive, friendly, democratic, and supportive instructional environment for learners to feel psychologically safe in the face of adversities and perform best in academia. This is only achievable through a classroom culture that cares for and respects students' emotions and inner states. Therefore, this line of research can have precious implications for EFL/ESL students, teachers, teacher-trainers, materials developers, school principals, and L2 researchers. Considering students, this study can be helpful in that they can become aware of the role of classroom culture in education which is the outcome of many factors including students' actions and rapport with the teacher. Definitely, when they form a friendly rapport with their teachers and peers a positive environment is established that facilitates learning. Similarly, teachers can use the ideas in this mini review to use appropriate techniques, methods, and tools in the classroom which foster the creation of a democratic atmosphere in which their students feel psychologically safe and actively engage in the classroom activities.

Moreover, this study is beneficial for teacher educators in that they can run training courses in which they teach novice teachers

macro issues such as how to establish a positive classroom culture and actively involve learners. They can offer proper techniques and strategies which foster the achievement of these objectives. Furthermore, materials developers can utilize this study to develop tasks and activities which promote EFL/ESL students' degree of engagement and psychological safety. School principals can also benefit from this review in that they can help teachers and students in creating a caring and positive culture in the classroom and the school by providing support and required facilities. Finally, L2 researchers can use the propositions made in this research and conduct similar studies on related concepts and in different contexts. In this domain, most of the studies have focused on learner or teacher-related positive emotions and variables and constructs at the macro level have been overlooked. Hence, one area for future research can be studying factors related to school, policy, and planning.

CONCLUSION

Similar studies can be done on the correlation of classroom culture/climate and other interpersonal variables (e.g., resilience, mindfulness, care, clarity, rapport, immediacy, self-efficacy, etc.). Qualitative studies are also recommended on EFL students' psychological safety to unpack their views on the factors, antecedents, and outcomes of this variable in their education. Additionally, culture as a mega-construct that affects everything can be examined in this area by running cross-cultural studies on classroom culture and psychological safety. Another gap that needs to fill is that most studies on intra-psychic factors are about learners and teachers' views are less explored. Hence, studying teachers' perceptions and perspectives about the role of classroom culture in SLA is suggested. Furthermore, the mediating role of demographic factors and time in this strand has caught inadequate attention. Consequently, running longitudinal studies in light of demographic variables can add fresh insights about the developmental trajectories of the three variables discussed in this article. These backdrops confirm that this area is still fresh and needs more research.

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EFL Teachers' Apprehension and L2 Students' Classroom Engagement

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Teachers' apprehension is an indispensable part of the educational context since it impacts the amount to which students are engaged in class activities. Although several studies have been carried out considering the role of students' stress in their engagement, it seems extremely vital to conduct such studies among teachers to measure the link between these two variables. In this study, the author has made endeavors to define one of the apprehension's categories named communication apprehension and the antecedents of teachers' apprehension. Then classroom engagement is discussed. Following that, the relevance between the two variables of this research is discussed. Finally, both implications and suggestions for further studies are dealt with.

Keywords: apprehension, classroom engagement, English as a Foreign language, communication apprehension, class activities

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INTRODUCTION

Since teachers play a vital role in both students' classroom engagement and academic achievements, studies with such topics are of great importance. Prior studies have mostly highlighted the impact of Positive Psychology on students' engagement (Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021) or the role of students' stress on their engagement (Gallagher, 2013). The aim of this study is to review the relationship between teachers' apprehension and students' classroom management. To this end, first of all, communication apprehension has been defined along with the reasons for teachers' apprehension. Then classroom engagement as well as its relationship with teachers' apprehension has been discussed, and finally further recommendations for future studies have been put forward.

BACKGROUND

Teachers' Apprehension

The Definition of Apprehension and Its Types

Apprehension is conceptualized as the context-specific anxiety about the future, especially about handling something nasty or tough (Kyriacou, 2001). One of the features of apprehension is anticipating unpleasant or negative events. Another distinctive attribute of apprehension is that it is highly linked with fear or anxiety about communication.

Stress has always been viewed as a negative experience by which both teachers' self-esteem and well-being are threatened and it also impedes the learning process (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978). There are many stressors that are experienced in the educational arena, for instance, internal stressors. When a teacher is not good at communicative skills, when a teacher feels alone without being supported by his colleagues, and when a teacher is observed by the supervisors, the internal stressor is augmented. External stressors are triggered when a teacher is worried about

establishing a good rapport with the students, when a teacher is not up-to-date with the latest teaching materials and also teaching tools, when a teacher has to deal with the lack of time for covering the subject-matter, taking a rest in break times, when a teacher has a hectic schedule and too much work to be done, and when he has to struggle with the students who are not motivated enough or they were absent (Kyriacou, 2001). One of the apprehension types that affects language learning is communication apprehension which is conceptualized as a type of shyness considered as fear of or anxiety about communication with people. Having trouble speaking in groups (oral communication anxiety) or in listening to or learning a spoken message are all indicators of communication apprehension. As it was proposed, communication apprehension has a detrimental impact on the process of language learning. Because language anxiety is one of the radical factors that controls the level of comprehensible input which is received by students, it has undeniably developed into a noticeable factor in determining how successful second language learning is (Horwitz et al., 1986). A scale to estimate teachers' apprehension (STAS) including 33 items, categorized into four groups: attitudinal factors, organizational factors, L2-related factors, and classroom management factors, were designed by Ghanizadeh et al. (2020) that revealed that the amount of apprehension experienced by a teacher is strongly correlated with teachers' identity and self-esteem they build for themselves. Some of the items of the above-mentioned scale are as follows: teachers feel worried when they feel pressurized before attending the class, teachers are afraid that they are regarded as incompetent English teachers by their students, teachers feel apprehensive when the students have trouble doing the tasks, teachers feel anxious when they make spelling errors, and teachers feel apprehensive when they are not acclaimed by the students.

Antecedents of Teachers' Apprehension

Because teachers' well-being seems of utmost importance, a model for the antecedents of teachers' apprehension was raised by Goldast et al. (2021) that indicated that teachers' apprehension can be classified into four classifications that have been shown in **Figure 1**.

As can be seen in the raised model, antecedents of teachers' apprehension have been classified into four categories: organizational factors including the following examples, when a teacher is supervised by a mentor or supervisor, when a teacher ought to obey institutional discipline, when a teacher has difficulty using the facilities or institutional tools, and when a teacher is observed by his colleagues. The second category is attitudinal factors that can be exemplified in this way: when teachers suffer from low self-esteem, when students do not show much interest in the subject-matter, and when students feel demotivated to be engaged in the class activities. The third factor is L2-related factors including linguistic factors such as the level of difficulty, cultural differences that cause trouble learning a language, and perfectionism which is viewed as negative in this context since one will not start a task if they have had perfect ideas to complete a task comprehensively. Finally, the last category is classroom management including the following examples, when

a teacher is pressurized by time limitation that should be allocated in teaching or by the syllabus that should be covered every single session, how students' errors are treated by the teachers, students' level of proficiency is what puts a strain on teachers in that the higher the level, the more apprehensive a teacher may feel to deal with their questions, and students' feeling behavioral, cognitive, emotional disengaged in the activities. This model clearly shows the important role of teachers' apprehension in all aspects of a learning context.

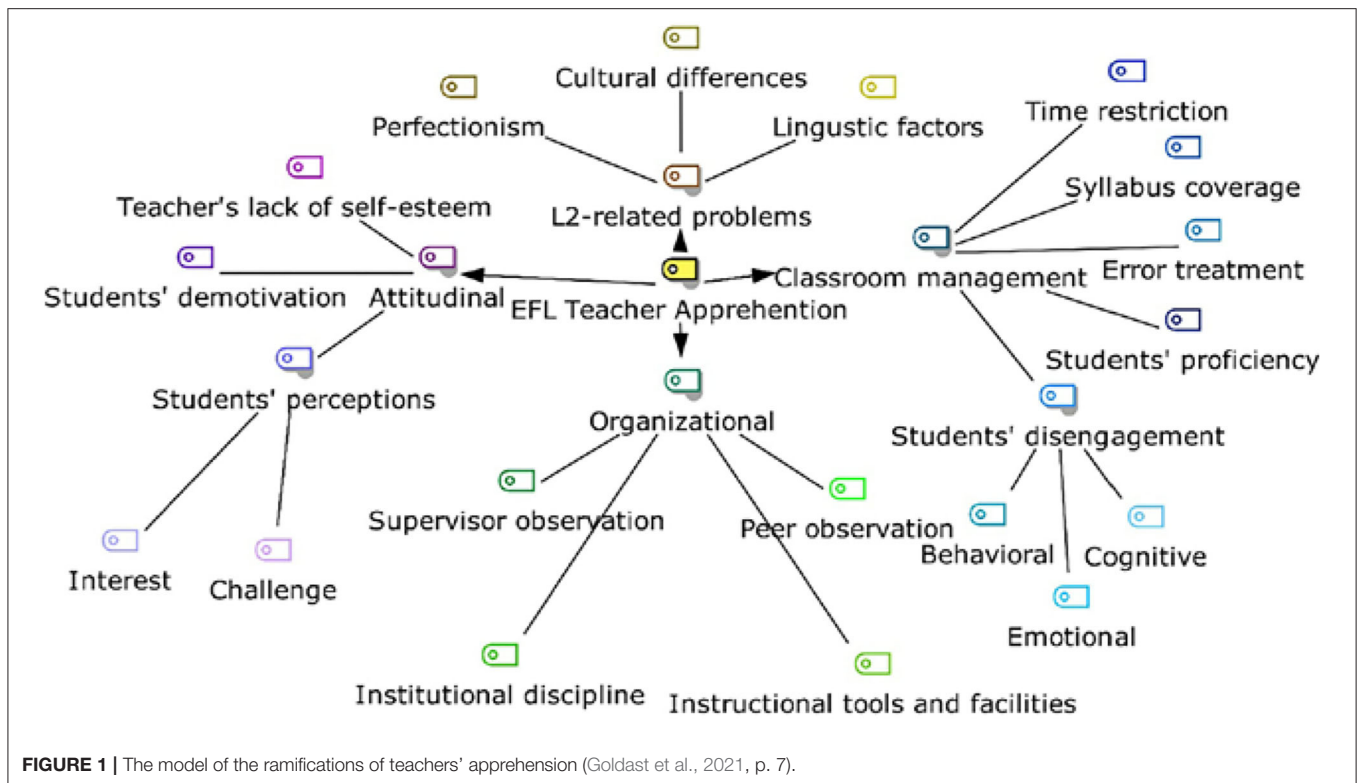
Classroom Engagement

Engagement is an inseparable part of the learning process and a multifold phenomenon. It has been categorized into different classifications: Behavioral engagement such as the effort; emotional engagement such as high levels of enthusiasm which is linked with low levels of anxiety and boredom; cognitive engagement such as the usage of learning strategy and self-regulation; agentic engagement such as the amount of conscious effort so that the learning experience would be enriched (Veiga et al., 2014; Hiver et al., 2021). Amongst the aforementioned categories, the one which is strongly important in the learning process is behavioral engagement in that it is relevant to the actual recognition of an individual's learning talents (Dörnyei, 2019).

Another possibility that can be viewed is to consider engagement from two other aspects, internal and external. The former implies how much time and effort is allocated to the process of the learning while the latter entails the measures that are taken at the institutional level so that the resources would be dealt with along with other options of learning and services for support which encourage the involvement in activities leading to the possible outcomes such as consistency and satisfaction (Harper and Quayle, 2009). Much attention is deserved to be paid to engagement since it is perceived as a behavioral means with which students' motivation can be realized and as a result, development through the learning process can occur (Jang et al., 2010). Active involvement should be strengthened in L2 classes to prevent disruptive behaviors and diminish the valence of emotions that are negative such as feeling anxious, frustrated, and bored.

It has been claimed by some writers (Skinner, 2016) that disengagement itself does not happen frequently in educational settings due largely to the fact that it is related to extreme behaviors, and it is when another phrase disaffection can be considered significant. Disaffection is characterized by disinterest, aversion, resignation, and reduced effort. Therefore, our perception of boredom as a complex emotion can be enhanced, and it can be dealt with more systematically if boredom is viewed through the following factors, disengagement, and disaffection (Derakhshan et al., 2021). In language learning context and use, engagement with learning a language is a cognitive, affective, and/or social process where the learner is viewed as the agent and language is regarded as the object. The learner is engaged:

- "Cognitively: the engaged individual is alert, complete attention is focused, and their own knowledge is constructed.



- Affectively: the engaged individual has a positive, intentional, willing, and independent approach toward the language and/or what it represents.
- Socially: the engaged individual is interactive and initiating" (Svalberg, 2009, p. 247).

The Relationship Between Teachers' Apprehension and Classroom Engagement

As it has been believed both teachers' positive attributes and negative attributes can have an effect on students' engagement (Greenier et al., 2021). However, detrimental effects are the only impacts that are left when teachers feel apprehensive and solicitous. Irreparable damage is caused by teachers' apprehension since they cannot provide students with opportunities to express themselves and to reach their pinnacle with regard to the learning process. To be precise, a closer look can be taken through the items of teachers' apprehension scale and the way they impact students' engagement (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020). The first item which falls under the category of L2-related factors is: I am anxious when I have to deal with unfamiliar idioms or expressions in English; when the teacher himself could not leave his comfort zone and struggle to learn new words, how students are supposed not to be terrified by making mistakes and learning materials through trial and error. Item 26 of the STAS is: I feel anxious when words escape me. Forgetting and making mistakes are inseparable parts of learning a new language and they inevitably happen when one is making endeavors to learn a new language. When teachers feel so, students cannot have the bravery to show themselves and continue talking when they

forget a word and they feel embarrassed, so as a consequence, they are less likely to be engaged in the activity. The third item which falls under the category of attitudinal factors is: I am not confident in speaking English. To speak a language, confidence needs to be built and it takes high self-esteem when one intends to start speaking a new language. Therefore, when teachers themselves are not confident enough to speak a new language, how their students can be encouraged to overcome language barriers and start speaking a new language without feeling shy and it undoubtedly causes a decrease in the amount they are willing to engage in the classroom activities. Item 25 which falls under the category of organizational factors in this scale is: When my students do not actively participate in class activities, I feel apprehensive. Students' not participating in the activities shows that there might be something wrong with teachers' teaching methods, teachers' stroke, teachers' credibility, teachers' care, teachers' immediacy or students' mental or physical health (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). What aggravates the situation in this context is that the more apprehensive a teacher feel, the less engaged students are to take part in class activities. The last item of STAS, number 33 is: I feel anxious when I am not praised by the students. It has been told that a teacher should be intrinsically motivated so as not to need someone's acclaim. When the teachers are required to be praised by their students to feel better about their jobs, students are not expected to rely on such teachers and be willing to engage in the class activities. The conclusion that can be drawn out of the above-mentioned points is that teachers' apprehension and students' classroom engagement are negatively correlated.

IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

This study aimed to highlight the role of teachers' apprehension in students' engagement since it is the students' engagement that results in successful academic achievements. Teachers' negative feelings such as stress, anxiety, and apprehension are said to affect students' engagement negatively as they are psychological mind-body problems in that one's body is highly affected by some mental issues like depression and apprehension. Teachers' apprehension causes one to feel weak, humiliated, and threatened. It is the reason why this issue is of great value. The more stressed, anxious, and apprehensive a teacher feels, the less engaged the students are in class. In prior studies what has been stressed is the role of students' feelings on students' engagement throughout the class, despite the fact that teachers may have a more crucial impact on students' involvement, particularly those who do not have an outgoing personality. To fill this gap, this study has been done to delve into more details about the relationship between these two variables. It goes without saying that there are some limitations considering this subject. First and foremost, there should be a study to recognize the differentiation between teachers' apprehension and teachers' anxiety even though they might seem the same in the educational context. Secondly, voracious researchers should put effort into practice to address the issue of teachers' apprehension and some solutions should be put forward to resolve it and provide teachers with better well-being since it is not enough to

raise a topic and consider it from different aspects. What seems necessary is that teachers' apprehension should be mitigated to see students be more engaged in the classroom activities. Last but not least, the relevance between teachers' apprehension and introverted or extroverted students' engagement can be studied to discover which groups will be more affected by teachers' feeling apprehensive and it will assuredly pave the way for students to know themselves better when it comes to the educational area and they may be motivated to rebuild a new personality by which both their learning process and their personal life is influenced.

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The Predictability of Chinese English as a Foreign Language Students' Willingness to Communicate Through Teachers' Immediacy and Teacher–Student Rapport

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The teacher–learner relationship is not just a simple action and reaction on both sides of the relationship but a complete exchange that takes shape in the context of the factors that affect it. To understand the factors affecting this relationship, the present study investigated the predictability of Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' willingness to communicate (WTC) through teachers' immediacy and teacher–student rapport. To conduct the study, 858 EFL students from Xinyang Normal University in Henan province of China were invited to participate in the study. To collect the required data, the researcher employed the Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire, Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy Questionnaire, and Professor–Student Rapport Scale. Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data. Results revealed that there was a strong positive relationship between teacher immediacy and teacher–student rapport and learners' willingness to communicate. The findings also demonstrated that teachers' immediacy and teacher–student rapport were positive predictors of learners' willingness to communicate. The paper argues that teachers need to enhance their interpersonal relations with their students to make them willing to communicate in their classes.

Keywords: willingness to communicate, teachers' immediacy, teacher–student rapport, EFL, Chinese EFL context

INTRODUCTION

Language learners are social human beings, and making connections among them is one of the obvious needs (Al-Murtadha, 2019; Chen et al., 2019). When learners speak, they do not take words out of their mouths for any purpose. Their purpose is communication (Zhang et al., 2018; Dewaele, 2019). They enter the learning environment with different and sometimes conflicting cultures and subcultures (Lee and Lee, 2020). They do not just try to express themselves, but their goal is to influence their audience (Nkrumah, 2021). In other words, by talking, they want the audience to understand what they mean. Learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC), both in the educational environment and outside it, follows this framework; that is, the purpose of learners' relationship with each other whether through verbal or non-verbal

communication is to influence each other. The need for communication, which according to the self-determination theory is one of the basic psychological needs, refers to the desire for strong and stable interpersonal relationships, connection with others, acceptance by them, and a sense of belonging to them and society (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

With the expansion of the positive psychology movement in the last decade (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2016, 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021a; Wang et al., 2021), psychologists focus on the components of positive action, positive experiences, and adaptive human strengths, such as life satisfaction and hope, optimism, happiness, and well-being. Psychology and positive and negative emotions that are increasingly expanding now have attracted the special attention of psychologists (Pavot and Diener, 2008). Positive emotions are associated with extroverted personality traits, and negative emotions are associated with neuroticism (Kalokerinos et al., 2015). Positive emotions are associated with constant physical activity, adequate sleep, social interaction with close friends, and striving for goals; thus, positive emotions may increase during regular physical activity, having a good sleep pattern, having friendly relationships, and having valuable goals.

Teachers and students spend at least a quarter of their daily time in school, and effective communication between them improves their sense of events, processes related to the learning environment, and the quality of teaching and learning (Derakhshan, 2021). Giving importance to interpersonal relationships (teacher–student) and how to improve it might have a significant impact on the quality of second or foreign language teaching (Denies et al., 2015; Dewaele and Pavelescu, 2021). Teachers are one of the most important pillars of society, and in fact, the first adult other than parents who allow this supportive relationship to the students and from this point of view, the quality of communication with them is very important (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021).

Teachers in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational setting are one of the most important curriculum facilitators. Their logical (strategic) and psychological (moral) actions form the main elements of teaching. Logical or strategic actions include activities, such as defining, demonstrating, explaining, correcting, interpreting, and evaluating (Sato and Dussuel Lam, 2021). Psychological or moral actions include tasks, such as motivating, persuading, rewarding, punishing, and planning. In addition to logical and psychological actions, teachers also refer to ethical teaching actions in which the teachers demonstrate characteristics, such as honesty, courage, tolerance (Pishghadam et al., 2021b), compassion, respect, and fairness (Lee et al., 2019). Communication with teachers and the quality of their acceptance improve students' motivation in academic activities (Fallah, 2014), and their emotional and social performance (Henry and Thorsen, 2018). Conflict in this relationship, by creating a sense of insecurity and pressure, is considered an obstacle to its growth. On the other hand, a positive teacher–student relationship motivates the teacher to pursue student progress even by devoting too much time to the job (Hiver and Al-Hoorie, 2020).

The positive consequences of this interaction have been confirmed in several studies (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Fathi et al., 2021). Positive teacher–student relationship can be effective in an emotional and social relationship of the class (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), motivation to learn (Arens et al., 2015), attachment to the learning environment (Chow et al., 2018), academic achievement (Hussain et al., 2021), creativity (Henry and Thorsen, 2018), satisfaction (Hiver and Al-Hoorie, 2020), reduced bullying (Sato and Dussuel Lam, 2021), cooperation in class activities (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2018), learning engagement (Hiver and Al-Hoorie, 2020), hard work in the face of problems (Sato and Dussuel Lam, 2021), friendly help and support (Hiver et al., 2021), understanding of behavior between individualism (Munezane, 2015), creating responsibility (Lee et al., 2019), better behavior in the learning environment (Cao, 2014), freedom in learner work (Denies et al., 2015), and greater classroom attendance (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2018). In general, numerous evidences indicate that the positive teacher–student relationship changes the well-being of teacher and student and is a basis for the next social relationship of the student (Derakhshan et al., 2020).

These positive consequences are explained by relying on exchange theories and evolutionary systems that believe that the source of evolutionary change is the interaction of individuals and the context. Also, the analysis of student transformation is done in the context of different relationships that are exchanged with the student in different dimensions and sizes. As Cao (2014) stated, proximal processes such as the interaction that takes place between the student and the teacher over a period of time are considered to be the primary factor influencing the development of any individual. The teacher–students relationship is also called teacher–student rapport in many studies (Lee, 2020). Closely related to the notion of teacher–students' relationship or teacher–students' rapport is teachers' immediacy that has attracted the attention of EFL and ESL researchers. Researchers have considered immediacy as a set of behaviors that creates an understanding of the physical or mental closeness between teachers and students. They believe that the use of these behaviors increases the psychological distance between them. In general, these behaviors are classified into two categories, verbal and non-verbal. But most researchers have focused on the non-verbal one (Reid and Trofimovich, 2018). Many believe that teacher immediacy might improve EFL/ESL students' willingness to communicate and, in consequence, might improve their language achievements.

MacIntyre et al. (2011) see teachers' expectations of learners as an influencing factor in learners' academic achievement. Munezane (2015) points to the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and learners' achievement. In addition to teacher expectations and self-efficacy, teacher emotional and educational support for learners leads to teacher–student interaction that might affect their academic achievements and success. In fact, social relations within the classroom are considered as important aspects of the classroom due to their educational, behavioral, and social consequences, so emotions are an integral part of educational activities (Pawlak et al., 2016). Teachers can build

a deeper emotional connection with their learners and get to know them and engage them in their classroom activities and solve their problems in the academic and non-academic contexts (Peng, 2020).

According to Reid and Trofimovich (2018), teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy are a key part of successful teaching and learning. Obviously, EFL learners need their teachers' support in every learning environment. In other words, teachers are a safe haven for students against problems and a guide to discovering and experiencing the world around them. Yashima et al. (2018) also highlighted the quality of teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy in the classroom and its particular importance for the learners' success. In other words, students who have a warm and intimate relationship with their teachers might have high self-confidence (Zhang et al., 2018), interest in their teacher, more motivation to learn (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2018), a positive attitude toward school and enjoy the acceptance of their peers and classmates (Derakhshan et al., 2020). They have pointed out that positive teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy may protect learners from adverse learning environments, including negative and inappropriate teacher-students relationships. Therefore, teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy are non-stop and intricate processes in which the perspective and perceptions of the teachers as the main actor and a responsible factor play a key role. Teachers' personality, beliefs, characteristics, and even their perceptions of students influence what happens in their classrooms and in their interactions in the classrooms. Although the importance of the teachers' perspective has received little attention in research in this area, this partnership is essential to improve and protect a positive teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy. In this way, teachers can see themselves through the perspective of students in this mutual relationship and through a reflective look (Pawlak et al., 2016; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021).

Despite the significant function of communication in second and foreign language learning, many learners of EFL who are studying English around the world are often unable to communicate. Chinese EFL learners are no exception. Chinese language learners seem to be very sensitive to the judgment of teachers and classmates about their language abilities. As a result, they are less likely to engage in classroom communication (Wen and Clément, 2003). They also stated that the desire of Chinese teachers to play an authoritative role in educational environments could be another important factor in the inability to communicate between Chinese learners. Inability to communicate in EFL classrooms is considered a negative feature because it hinders the development of communication skills as well as learners' language achievements, especially in educational environments where the classroom is the only place to communicate in a foreign language. With all these descriptions, it can be argued that teacher-student rapport and teacher immediacy play a key role in learners' motivation, learning, and success. While many studies focused on the role of interactions between teachers and students in the classroom on academic achievement, there are still some points that remain unclear and questionable and focusing on this notion

seems necessary. In addition, interaction and communication in the classroom and any educational setting are often a reflection of the cultural, historical, and social context. Accordingly, there are various approaches to the study of teacher-student interaction that are directly related to the context in which teaching takes place. Therefore, the present study investigated the predictability of Chinese EFL students' willingness to communicate through teacher-student rapport and teachers' immediacy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teachers' Immediacy and Teacher-Student Rapport

The notion of teachers' immediacy that was developed by Mehrabian (1969) has received special attention in recent years. Classified teachers' immediacy as verbal and non-verbal activities, many researchers explored its importance in EFL and ESL contexts and found that it can affect different aspects of language teaching processes (Derakhshan, 2021). Verbal immediacy refers to any activity that teachers perform to enhance learners' engagement and motivation. Providing immediate feedback, conversation before and after class, and engagement in learners' conversations are among the examples of verbal immediacy. Non-verbal immediacy refers to any activity that teachers might perform to reduce their physical or psychological distances with their students. Body language, teacher gestures, and smiling are some of the non-verbal immediacy that might influence teacher-students relationships (Peng, 2020).

Teacher-student rapport is teachers' responsibility to create an interesting and motivating learning environment. Creating a positive learning environment that learners feel comfortable has a significant impact on learners' engagement and their willingness to communicate (Reid and Trofimovich, 2018). Many studies investigated the relationship among teacher immediacy, teacher-student rapport, and learners' motivation, learners' engagement, satisfaction, and their learning outcomes (Hsu, 2010). In recent years, some studies have focused on recognizing the teacher-student relationship as a contextual topic (Lee et al., 2019). Burke-Smalley (2018) argued that culture and context might impact teacher immediacy and teacher-student rapport and their willingness to communicate in EFL contexts.

Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to communicate is to have the choice to speak or to remain silent in a conversation as well as to be ready to enter the conversation at the desired time and with the intended person (Eysenck et al., 2007). Recently, due to the importance of willingness to communicate in improving language learners' communication ability, it has received special attention of many EFL researchers (Zhang et al., 2018). MacIntyre (2007) defines WTC as the probability of starting a communication, with the ability to choose and the opportunity to start or end it. In his view, conflicting processes are the driving forces and inhibitors of starting a communication. These processes can

motivate learners and lead them to effective learning or stop learning by engaging them in emotional factors such as anxiety. MacIntyre and Legato (2011) argue that at least six important variables can predict learners' WTC. The variables called "antecedents" are communication anxiety, communication competence, motivation, personality, context and culture, and gender and age. In another study, MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) investigated WTC in the French EFL context and found that learners' anxiety has a direct and significant impact on learners' WTC and subsequent engagement in classroom activities.

Joe et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of contextual factors and individual differences and argued that when teachers can satisfy learners' basic psychological needs, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness and when the learning environment atmosphere was encouraging, learners' WTC will increase significantly. They found that teachers' support and their respectful manner in the classroom are the key factors that influence learners' WTC. Khajavy et al. (2018) investigated the role of EFL learners' emotions of WTC and found that a positive classroom environment decreased learners' anxiety and enhanced WTC. In a similar study, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) found that the main predictor of WTC among Spanish, German, and French FL learners is classroom anxiety. In a meta-analysis study, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2019) found that EFL learners' communicative competence and motivations play a pivotal role in predicting Learners' WTC. Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021) highlighted the link between Foreign Language Enjoyment, Foreign Language Anxiety, and WTC in Romania. They found that emotions are the main predictors of FL learners' WTC. They argued that factors, such as anxiety, positive classroom climate, learners' personality, and contextual factors are factors that influence learners' emotions.

Empirical Studies in China

Wen and Clément (2003) investigated the impact of Chinese culture on FL learners' WTC and found that face concern and teachers' teaching methods are main factors that influence FL learners' perceptions and behavior in learning environments. Liu (2005) explored Chinese undergraduate students' silence in EFL classrooms. By conducting questionnaires, reflective journals, and classroom observation, they found that the main predictors of Chinese FL learners are self-confidence, language learning anxiety, fear of losing face, teachers' and learners' personality, and their cultural beliefs. In a parallel study, Peng (2007) focused on cultural variables that influence WTC and suggested that factors such as language learners' anxiety, learners' risk-taking ability, communication competence, positive classroom atmosphere, teacher support, and teachers' and learners' perceptions might affect FL learners' WTC. Liu and Jackson (2008) also conducted research on Chinese university learners' WTC and found that FL learners' anxiety and low proficiency level are among the most important predictors of learners' WTC.

In a large-scale exploration, Peng and Woodrow (2010) investigated 579 Chinese university learners' WTC. They found

that FL competence and anxiety can predict their motivation and self-confidence. Generally, they suggested that these four factors directly or indirectly influence Chinese FL learners' WTC. Considering ecological factors, Cao (2014) studied EFL Chinese and Korean language learners. In this study, he examined learners' class interactions. Findings of this study showed that emotions, self-confidence, personality, perceived opportunity to communicate, educational environment conditions, such as subject, students' homework, conversations, teacher, and the number of students are closely related to their ability to communicate. The impact of these factors on the WTC is highly variable. Fu et al. (2012) investigated different factors that might influence Chinese EFL learners' willingness to communicate. They highlighted the critical role of teachers in enhancing learners' WTC. They argued that EFL teachers should support learner and offer various learning opportunities for language learners. These opportunities can shape learners' perceptions, their learning climate, and their WTC capability. Shao et al. (2013) argued that EFL learners' anxiety is a major hindrance in improving their WTC ability. Recently, Liu (2017) investigated the impact of affective, cultural, and linguistic factors on ESL adult learners' WTC in China. She found that learners' anxiety level and length of stay in China in correlation with other factors such as intercultural communication competence and learners' proficiency level predict Chinese ESL learners' WTC.

Exploring the variables influencing WTC in English, the review of the literature reveals that numerous variables, such as teachers' and learners' socioeconomic status (Liu, 2017), academic self-concept, attitude (Dewaele and Pavelescu, 2021), learning environment's atmosphere (Heckel and Ringeisen, 2019), and teaching methods (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010) can affect learners' willingness to communicate. However, studies in the Chinese EFL contexts and EFL Chinese learners' WTC are still at an emerging stage. Besides, even though different variables have been investigated, teacher-student relationship, that might influence learners' WTC ability in EFL contexts, was not investigated in these studies. Therefore, the present study investigated the predictability of Chinese EFL students' willingness to communicate through teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport.

Research Questions

1. Are there any significant relationships between Chinese EFL teachers' immediacy, teacher-student rapport, and their EFL students' willingness to communicate?
2. Do Chinese EFL teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport significantly predict their EFL students' willingness to communicate?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Using convenience sampling, 858 EFL students from Xinyang Normal University in Henan province of China were invited to participate in the study. In the sample, there were 40 male

(4.7%) and 818 female (95.3%) students. Most of them are university students, majoring in English language, translation, and commercial English with ages ranging from 17 to 22. To distribute the questionnaires, we used Wenjuanxing, an online questionnaire platform popular in mainland China.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed in the current study to collect the required data:

Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire

The WTC Questionnaire is a 10-item scale that was adopted from McCroskey and Richmond (1987). The questionnaire was developed to measure the participants' disposition toward starting or ending communication. The items are Likert scale that starts from 1 (Definitely not willing) to 7 (Definitely willing). The reported Cronbach alpha coefficient index is 0.95 ($r=0.95$).

Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adopted from the already validated Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy Questionnaire developed by Gorham (1988). This questionnaire has 22 items that measure perceptions of teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediate behaviors on a five-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=occasionally, 4=often, and 5=very often). Seventeen items measure verbal immediacy and five items measure non-verbal immediacy. To check the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers conducted Cronbach alpha coefficient. The indexes of this test are presented in the result section ($r=0.93$).

Professor-Student Rapport Scale

The questionnaire was the already validated Professor-Student Rapport Scale developed by Wilson et al. (2010). It has 34 items that measure students' attitudes toward teachers and courses as well as perceptions of learning, and students' motivation. To check its reliability, the researchers used Cronbach alpha coefficient. The results showed a reliability index of 0.95 ($r=0.95$).

Procedure

To investigate the predictability of Chinese EFL students' willingness to communicate through teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport, the researcher distributed the Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire, Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy Questionnaire, and Professor-Student Rapport Scale to 1,000 EFL students from Xinyang Normal University in Henan province of China. To gather more valid questionnaires, I distributed my questionnaires in Chinese to help those participants have a better understanding of the question items. Out of 1,000 distributed questionnaires, only 858 were returned; therefore, the number of participants was 858 ($N=858$). The collected data were analyzed using the following statistics. The descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were used to answer the first research question

and to uncover the relationships among the variables. Then, employing structural equation modeling (SEM), the researcher explored the predictability of Chinese EFL students' willingness to communicate through teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport. Several fit indices were used to inspect the goodness of fit of the hypothesized model to the data. The indices were goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root mean square of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and normal fit index (NFI).

RESULTS

Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used test to check the normality of data distribution. The results of the normality test are presented in **Table 1**.

The presented value and the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirm the normal distribution of the data, so parametric statistics were utilized. The results of descriptive statistics of teacher-student rapport, teachers' immediacy, and EFL students' WTC are displayed in **Table 2**.

The results of **Table 2** show that 858 students took part in the current study. The results also indicate that the mean and SD of rapport ($M=134.47$, $SD=20.41$) was more than the mean values for immediacy ($M=55.58$, $SD=14.19$) and WTC ($M=48.43$, $SD=11.78$). The results of Cronbach alpha analyses are summarized in **Table 3**.

The results of **Table 3** represent that the employed questionnaires and their sub-scales have reasonable indexes of Cronbach alpha (more than 0.7).

Data Analysis for the First Research Question

The first research question raised in the study was:

1. Are there any significant relationships between Chinese EFL teachers' immediacy, teacher-student rapport, and their EFL students' willingness to communicate?

TABLE 1 | The results of K-S test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Immediacy	0.05	858	0.14
Rapport	0.08	858	0.06
Willingness to communicate	0.07	858	0.09

^aLilliefors significance correction.

TABLE 2 | Descriptive statistics of the variables of the study.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Immediacy	858	0	88	55.58	14.19
Rapport	858	66	170	134.47	20.41
WTC	858	10	70	48.43	11.78

TABLE 3 | Results of Cronbach Alpha indexes.

Scale	Sub-scales	Cronbach alpha
Immediacy	Verbal	0.93
	Non-verbal	0.70
	Overall scale	0.93
Rapport		0.96
WTC		0.95

To answer the first research question, the researchers employed Pearson correlation. The results of this analysis are presented in **Table 4**.

The relationships between Chinese EFL teachers' immediacy, teacher-student rapport, and EFL students' willingness to communicate were investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. To conduct the test, preliminary analyses were carried out to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity. The results of **Table 4** indicate that the null hypothesis was rejected and there is a positive significant relationship between overall immediacy and rapport ($r=0.52$, $n=858$, $p=0.000$, and $\alpha=0.01$), immediacy and WTC ($r=0.51$, $n=858$, $p=0.000$, and $\alpha=0.01$), and WTC and rapport ($r=0.40$, $n=858$, $p=0.000$, and $\alpha=0.01$).

The results of Pearson correlation between two sub-constructs of immediacy and overall teacher-student rapport and EFL students' WTC are presented in **Table 5**.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to investigate the relationship between two sub-constructs of immediacy and overall teacher-student rapport and EFL students' WTC. The results of **Table 5** reveal that there is a positive significant relationship between both sub-constructs of immediacy and overall rapport and WTC. The results also demonstrate that rapport has the highest correlation with verbal immediacy ($r=0.51$, $n=858$, $p=0.000$, and $\alpha=0.01$) and WTC has the highest correlation with verbal immediacy ($r=0.45$, $n=858$, $p=0.000$, and $\alpha=0.01$).

Data Analysis for the Second Research Question

The second research question raised in the study was:

- Do Chinese EFL teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport significantly predict their EFL students' willingness to communicate?

To answer the second research question, the researchers used SEM through Amos (version 24). To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the components, the standardized estimates were observed. The model of the interrelationships among the variables is presented in **Figure 1**.

The results in **Figure 1** demonstrate that both teacher-student rapport ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.05$) and teachers' immediacy ($\beta=0.41$, $p<0.05$) are positive predictors of students' WTC significantly. In addition, the results reveal that teachers' immediacy correlated positively and significantly with teacher-student rapport ($\beta=0.47$, $p<0.05$).

TABLE 4 | Results of Pearson correlation between overall teachers' immediacy, teacher-student rapport, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' willingness to communicate.

		Immediacy	Rapport	WTC
Immediacy	Pearson correlation	1		
	Sig. (two-tailed)			
	N	858		
Rapport	Pearson correlation	0.52**	1	
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000		
	N	858	858	
WTC	Pearson correlation	0.51**	0.40**	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	858	858	858

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

To check the model fit, goodness-of-fit indices were employed. Goodness-of-fit indices are presented in **Table 6**. In this study, χ^2/df , GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were employed. To have a fit model, χ^2/df should be less than 3, GFI CFI, and NFI should be above 0.90, and RMSEA should be less than 0.08.

The results of **Table 6** reveal that all the goodness-of-fit indices are within the reasonable range. Therefore, the model enjoyed acceptable validity.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the predictability of Chinese EFL students' willingness to communicate through teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport. The research findings first showed that the dimensions of teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport were directly positive predictors of the willingness to communicate. Second, both dimensions of teacher-students interaction are directly related to each other. The findings related to the first research question of the study indicated that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship among teachers' immediacy, teacher-students rapport, and their willingness to communicate. Although these findings were empirically and theoretically predictable, we must pay attention to this critical point that according to **Table 4** of the correlation matrix, the dimensions of the teacher-student interaction had a very strong correlation with the WTC. The findings also show that there is a stronger correlation between teachers' immediacy and WTC compared to the teacher-student rapport. It is therefore not surprising that these dimensions have predicted learners' WTC. Based on the correlation matrix, the variables studied in the present study have shown a logical relationship with each other and have shown their predictive power by being measured in the model. If we take a statistical look at these findings, we can conclude that the dimensions of teacher-student interaction have been influenced by strong predictors of teachers' immediacy and teacher-student rapport.

TABLE 5 | Results of Pearson correlation between two sub-constructs of immediacy and overall teacher–student rapport and EFL students’ willingness to communicate.

	Verbal	Non-verbal
Rapport	0.51**	0.50**
WTC	0.45**	0.44**

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

Although these findings are consistent with some studies, in relation to the significance of the dimension of teacher support and guidance and academic vitality, this finding can be justified in terms of intercultural differences. Numerous factors, such as economic and social status, individual differences, and the type of classes play a role in the interpersonal teacher–student relationship. Therefore, in classes with a large number of students, the opportunity for direct and supportive communication with the teacher is limited, which in turn can have adverse consequences. Students in a learning environment that provides students with a choice and is supported by a supportive principal or teacher show positive feelings, higher positive emotions, well-being, and constructive relationships. Conversely, it can be argued that whenever teacher–student interactions are fraught with uncertainty and confusion, such relationships are not expected to lead to academic achievement and students’ ability to deal constructively with classroom challenges.

These findings are consistent with the results of MacIntyre and Doucette (2010), Cao (2014), and Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021). In interpreting this finding, it can also be pointed out that the uncertain relationship between teacher and students may be associated with decreased social skills and increased behavioral problems such as aggression and less acceptance of students among peers (Zhang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, such interaction with uncertainty and dissatisfaction cannot lead students’ academic achievement and their adaptation to the problems. According to the correlation matrix, the dimension of teacher immediacy has a stronger relationship with WTC. This finding is consistent with the findings of other researchers (Khajavy et al., 2018; Reid and Trofimovich, 2018). Like Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), the participants answer to the questionnaire study that when the environment is more controlling, more negative emotions are created in students and the controlling conditions create apathy.

In confirming, Liu (2017) highlighted the vital role of the teacher in increasing students’ WTC. He considered that teacher abuse in the classroom is considered a factor in the decline of the student–teacher relationship. Explaining this finding, it can be said that the assertive and controlling behavior of teachers to control the classroom gives them less opportunity to communicate with students. The results of this study also showed that teachers’ social skills are among the important factors that can have a significant impact on students’ WTC (Peng, 2020). The positive relationship between this feature and the positive aspects of students’ learning is shown in the (Heckel and Ringeisen, 2019).

TABLE 6 | Goodness-of-Fit Indices.

	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08
Model	2.03	0.91	0.93	0.93	0.06

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated the relationship among teacher–students rapport, teachers’ immediacy, and their willness to communicate. In addition, the study tried to shed light on the predictability of these two factors on WTC. The finding demonstrated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables. The findings also confirm that teacher–students rapport and teachers’ immediacy can be a positive predictive of learners’ WTC.

Although many studies emphasize a close relationship between teacher and students, establishing a stable relationship is an intricate process. Generally, it requires working outside the educational environment. As Yashima et al. (2018) have shown, the quality of the teacher–student relationship is essential to understanding students’ WTC and their academic engagement. In a safe explanation, the teacher–student interaction can provide a supportive environment for students to become interested in class and education and to feel involved in classroom activities (Munezane 2015). This support and intimate relationship with the teachers gave them a positive academic attitude, which in turn leads to school satisfaction. Therefore, the students will feel confident and positive about the class and the learning environment. This feeling leads to further growth, academic motivation, and student learning. In other words, students’ involvement is a big step toward forming their will and skills (Pawlak et al., 2016).

Implications

Several factors are mentioned for teachers to improve their teacher–students relationships. Students’ personal characteristics have a great impact on their communication with the teacher. Therefore, teachers must identify the personal needs and unique characteristics of students and make decisions based on them. The first thing that teachers need to consider in creating a reliable platform for communication is the calmness of the classroom and the stress-free atmosphere. Teachers can solve many problems of the educational environment by using different ways of establishing teachers’ immediacy and teacher–student rapport friendship between teacher and student. Considering that the present study showed that psychological well-being and positive emotion have significant effects on students’ communication, it is recommended to use new methods of counseling, psychology, and training in educational and family settings to form a more appropriate educational environment for students. Efforts should be made to reduce their conflicts and ultimately facilitate their academic and social development. It is also suggested that the teaching of these skills start from teacher training programs to increase teachers’ level of creativity.

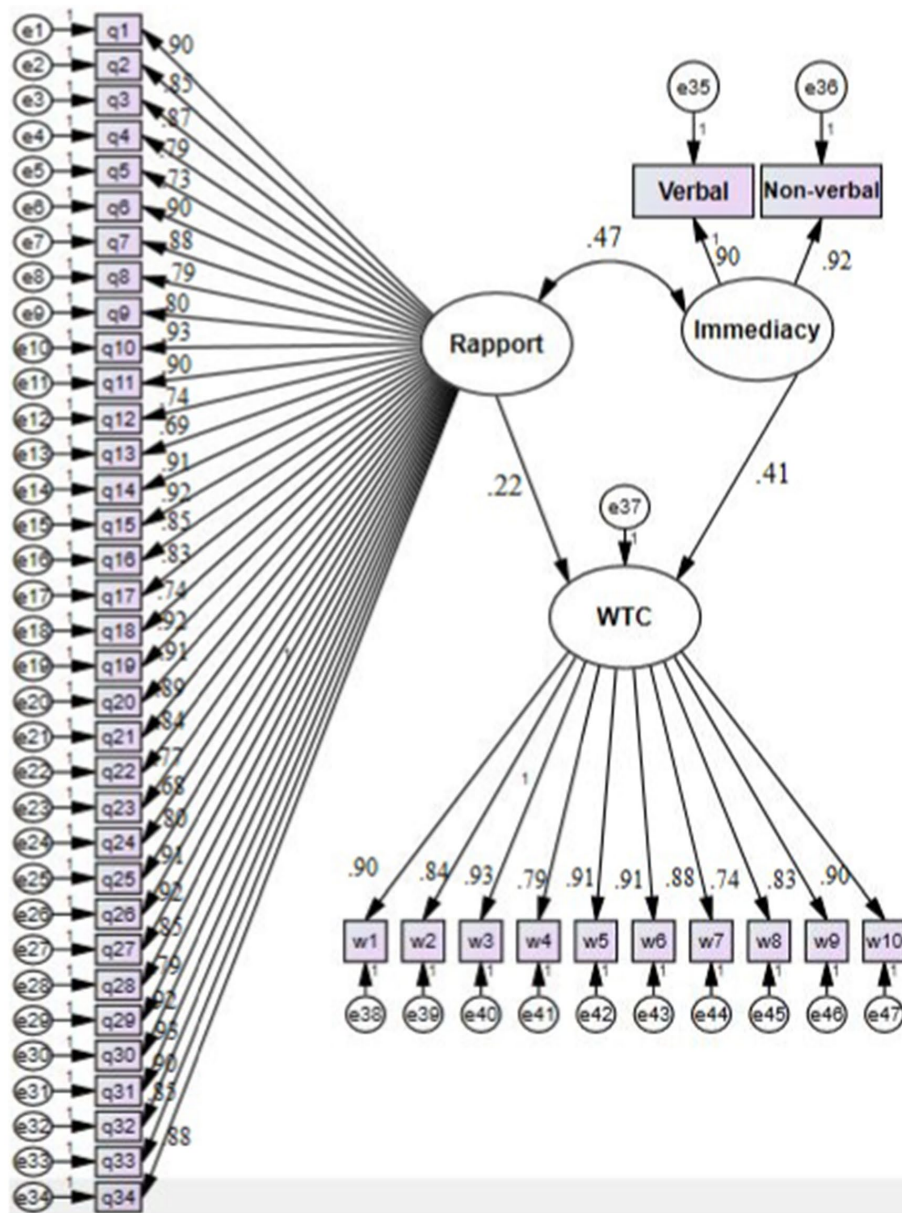


FIGURE 1 | The model of the interrelationships among the variables.

Limitations

The study has some limitations that should be controlled in future studies. The first limitation of the study was its instruments. All of the data were gathered through three questionnaires. In the future study, some interview protocols can be adopted to triangulate the data, which can enhance the quality of my present study. The second limitation is that the study did not consider many factors such as age, educational level, culture, and context, so it is advised to take these variables aforementioned into consideration. The third concern is about the data collection scope. The current study only collected the data from one of the normal universities in the central part of China, although the sample of the

current study is quite large. In the future study, the data can be collected from the cross-sectional education contexts to enhance the generalizability of the study.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The study can be replicated to explore other variables, such as age, sociocultural features, and educational level within the demographic information. The study can be replicated to investigate the same variables within contexts other than EFL contexts. Teachers have different perceptions of their professional freedom that could be highlighted in future studies. Future studies can investigate how EFL teachers develop a strong positive relationship with their students

that influence students' learning. More studies are required to know about how EFL teachers make a decision about the best educational task to increase teacher-students relationships and improve students' learning.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Xinyang College Research Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MC conceptualized, designed the current study, collected the data, and drafted the first manuscript.

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Using Assessment for Learning: Multi-Case Studies of Three Chinese University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers Engaging Students in Learning and Assessment

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Student engagement is an important issue in learning and teaching given its positive effects on students' learning outcomes. Assessment for Learning (AfL), an assessment and pedagogic innovation, if done well, can fully engage students in the learning and assessment process. Adopting a multi-case design, the present study explored how Chinese university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers used AfL to facilitate student engagement in their classrooms and what factors influenced their AfL practices. Three EFL teachers were recruited on a voluntary basis from two universities in Northwest China. Data collected from semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall interviews, and classroom observations suggested that teacher participants demonstrated differed assessment practices, representing Assessment of Learning (AoL), convergent, and divergent AfL, respectively. Three factors: teacher assessment literacy, teachers' beliefs about the relationship between goal orientation and motivation, as well as a trusting relationship between teachers and students, were identified as contributing to teachers' different assessment practices. Our study calls for teacher educators' efforts to equip teachers with necessary assessment-related knowledge and skills, encourage teachers to negotiate learning goals with students, and help teachers establish a trusting environment in their classrooms, if AfL is to be fully embedded in classroom instruction.

Keywords: student engagement, assessment for learning, teacher assessment literacy, goal orientation, trust

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement has no doubt become an important issue in learning and teaching across different education institutions in recent decades (Kahu, 2013; Lim, 2017; Bao et al., 2021; Harris and Leeming, 2021; Rahimi and Zhang, in press). Many studies have shown that student engagement is related to student satisfaction and experience, their learning outcomes and achievements (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Carini et al., 2006; Lei et al., 2018; Teng and Zhang, 2018, 2020; Gan et al., 2021). Despite the importance of engaging students in learning, it is a shared concern

that, in practice, engaging students is difficult at almost all educational stages (Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Taylor and Parsons, 2011; Corso et al., 2013; Bundick et al., 2014; Farr-Wharton et al., 2018). Assessment for Learning (AfL), a classroom-based assessment approach and a pedagogical initiative that acknowledges the central role of students, is a possible solution, since research has shown that AfL may well increase student engagement in learning and assessment (e.g., Stiggins, 2010; Swaffield, 2011; Jiang and Zhang, 2021).

In China, AfL has been introduced into university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in order to promote student-centered learning, which stresses students' agency, interest, active participation, and responsibilities (Fan et al., 2016). This indicates a paradigm shift in the EFL assessment system: Examinations used to play an important role in Chinese EFL teaching and students' language learning is mainly assessed by in-class examinations, finals, and the high-stakes College English Test (CET), a national large-scale criterion-referenced English test (Liu and Xu, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021). The advocacy of AfL in China has challenged the examinations-oriented assessment tradition; it required that teachers no longer treat students as recipients of English language examination results but rather work as assessors themselves and fully participate in the learning and assessment process [MoEC (Ministry of Education of China), 2017]. Given there is a paucity of empirical studies of AfL in Chinese EFL classrooms (c.f., Wu et al., 2021a,b), our study aims to investigate how Chinese EFL teachers use AfL to engage students in their classrooms and identify key influencing factors underpinning their AfL practices.

The rest of the article first reviews the relevant literature on student engagement, AfL, variations in teachers' AfL practices, and factors contributing to such variations. This is followed by a description of the context in which the present study took place and methods we used to collect and analyze the data. Finally, we present our interpretation of the data and discuss the implications of the study to research and practice.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Student Engagement and AfL

Engagement is defined as "the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution" (Trowler, 2010, p. 3). Previous literature has identified three dimensions of student engagement, namely, that of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Fredricks et al., 2005). Behavioral engagement captures student attendance, involvement, and participation; emotional engagement reflects affective outcomes such as interest, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging; cognitive engagement is demonstrated through students' investment in learning that goes beyond the minimum requirements (Bloom, 1956; Fredricks et al., 2005; Trowler, 2010).

One possible solution to engaging students behaviorally, emotionally, and motivationally in classrooms may be the implementation of AfL, which is not only an assessment but

also a pedagogic innovation that acknowledges the central role of students in teaching, learning, and assessment (Willms et al., 2009; Bennett, 2011; Taylor and Parsons, 2011; Gardner, 2012; Hawe and Dixon, 2017; Davison, 2019). Assessment for Learning is defined as "part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers, that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration, and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning" (Klenowski, 2009, p. 264). In contrast to Assessment of Learning (AoL) that usually occurs at the end of a learning cycle, serving primarily for the purpose of recording and evaluating students' achievement (Stiggins, 2002; Davison, 2019), AfL requires that teachers collect in-time information about student learning, and use it to inform targeted and specific feedback to guide student learning, and in doing so bring about improvement in students' academic performance and self-regulatory skills (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Panadero et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2021b). In addition, unlike AoL which enthrones teachers as authoritative assessors, AfL requires that teachers engage their students behaviorally, cognitively, and motivationally in classroom activities, and encourage them to work as assessors to make judgment of their own and their peers' learning (Andrade, 2010; Panadero et al., 2016).

Recent developments in AfL have identified five specific strategies, providing clear instruction as to how teachers can implement AfL to engage students in learning and assessment (William and Thompson, 2008; William, 2011). The first AfL strategy is concerned with understanding learning goals and criteria for success, which requires teachers not only to involve students in goal setting but also negotiate with, rather than tell, students what they are expected to learn and what desired performance should look like (Sadler, 1989; Carless, 2015). The second AfL strategy is related to collecting evidence of student learning. Teachers are encouraged to fully engage their students using open-ended questions and effective discussions, and in doing so provide students with opportunities to reveal their deep learning (Erickson, 2007; Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Heritage, 2013). Teacher feedback is the third AfL strategy. To encourage student engagement in feedback process, teachers should not deliver unidirectional teacher generated comments to their students, but rather involve students in teacher-student discussions when providing feedback (Carless, 2013; Ajjawi and Boud, 2018; Molloy et al., 2020). The last two strategies are peer- and self-assessment, which require teachers to empower students as assessors, who comment on their own and their peers' work and performance (see e.g., Panadero et al., 2018; Wu, 2020; Wu et al., 2021a,b).

Variations in Teachers' AfL Practice

Previous studies on AfL have revealed differences in how teachers used AfL to engage students in the learning and assessment process. Torrance and Pryor (1998), drawing on their observations of teachers' classroom assessment practices, identified two distinct ways by which teachers used AfL, which they termed "convergent" and "divergent" assessment respectively. Convergent assessment is the "assessment of the learner by the teacher," aiming to find out whether a student can do a predetermined task (Torrance and Pryor, 1998, p.

154). It is characterized by relatively closed questioning, strict observation of the curriculum, and teachers dominating the assessment process. Divergent assessment, on the other hand, is concerned with exploring what a learner understands and can do. It involves the use of open tasks, discussions, and questions to collect information to assess student learning. More importantly, students, to a great extent, are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, serving as not only recipients of assessment but also providers of assessment information, who are involved in assessment related decision making. In doing so, they are genuinely engaged in assessment and learning in terms of their behavior, cognition, and motivation.

Likewise, Marshall and Drummond (2006) explored how teachers implemented AfL in their classrooms by conducting classroom observations of 27 lessons. They found a great deal of differences existed between these lessons and used “spirit” and “letter” to describe the distinction. Only a small proportion of their teacher participants captured the “spirit” of AfL and genuinely engaged their students in learning and assessment activities in classrooms. The assessment practices of the rest teachers, by contrast, reflected the “letter” of AfL that merely conformed to the prescribed AfL procedures and strategies in a superficial way. Taken together, these studies have indicated that many teachers, in their teaching and assessment practices, may not use AfL in a proper and substantial way to engage students in learning and assessment.

Teacher Factors Influencing the Implementation of AfL

A variety of teacher factors have been found to influence the implementation of AfL at classroom level (e.g., Heitink et al., 2016; Davison, 2019). Some of these factors are intrapersonal factors, including, among other things, teachers’ understanding of the relationship between AfL and AoL (e.g., DeLuca et al., 2012), teachers’ agency (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015), and teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning (e.g., Marshall and Drummond, 2006; Earl and Timperley, 2014; Borg, 2015; Gao and Zhang, 2020; Sun and Zhang, 2021; Wang and Zhang, 2021).

One intrapersonal factor that has been repeatedly identified in the literature on AfL is teachers’ assessment literacy (Heitink et al., 2016). It, in general, refers to the knowledge and skills regarding assessment (Stiggins, 1995). Teacher assessment literacy encompasses the progressive stages from basic mastery of assessment knowledge and skills to the self-directed awareness of assessment processes and the role of assessors (Xu and Brown, 2016). When it comes to AfL, assessment-literate teachers need to understand, among other things, the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students in the assessment process and what the core AfL strategies are. They also need to have the skills and knowledge to use the core AfL strategies to genuinely engage their students in learning and assessment (Dixon and Hawe, 2018; Dixon et al., 2020). For example, assessment-literate teachers are expected to know how to construct open-ended questions to engage their student in teacher–student dialogue to gain rich information about student learning. Empirical evidence has shown that assessment-literate teachers tended to

be more flexible and have more techniques and tools to capture student conceptions and guide their learning when using AfL (Birenbaum et al., 2011; Smith, 2011; Gottheiner and Siegel, 2012), while lack of assessment literacy may lead to teachers’ incomplete and superficial implementation of AfL (Zhao et al., 2018).

The literature on AfL has also found an interpersonal factor, a trusting relationship between teachers and students, which is vital to the successful implementation of AfL (Carless, 2013; Panadero, 2016; Dixon and Hawe, 2017; Xu and Carless, 2017). According to Carless (2013), there are two important dimensions of trust: Competence trust and communication trust. Competence trust refers to the trust in a person’s ability to perform a task efficiently and effectively. Communication trust incorporates respect, empathy, benevolence, openness, and honesty, which is needed if students are to be fully engaged in assessment activities, especially when they are required to make their learning public in the feedback process. When a trusting relationship exists, students are willing to engage in learning-related tasks (Willis, 2011), take risks (Carless, 2013), and reveal their vulnerability and learning needs (Carless, 2013; Xu and Carless, 2017).

Previous studies have established the important role that teachers play in shaping the effectiveness of AfL and in influencing student engagement, motivation, and success. However, most of the empirical evidence comes from western context. Little is known about how Chinese language teachers use AfL in their classrooms to engage students and what teacher factors may influence their assessment practices (Wu et al., 2021b). Therefore, our exploratory study sets out to fill this research gap, and addresses the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do teachers implement AfL in Chinese university EFL classrooms to engage their students in learning and assessment?

RQ2: What teacher factors influence the way Chinese university EFL teachers use AfL in their classrooms?

METHODS

Participants

This qualitative exploratory study was part of a larger study which investigated the implementation of AfL in Chinese university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. In the larger study, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted first to elicit the frequency of AfL strategies used by teachers in classrooms as well as the values they ascribed to each of these strategies (Wu et al., 2021b). After that, teachers were recruited on a voluntary basis in the follow-up case studies, exploring in depth their classroom assessment practices. Six teachers indicated their willingness to participate by leaving their contact in the questionnaires. In order to explore the different ways in which Chinese EFL teachers use AfL to engage their students in depth, we chose participants for our qualitative study based on three criteria. The first was availability. As data collection in the qualitative phase was estimated to last for approximately 4 months, those who did not fit this time

schedule were not considered. The second was teachers' self-reported AfL practices. Teacher participants were chosen to reflect different frequencies of using AfL strategies in their classes based on their responses to the initial questionnaire. Therefore, the third was in consideration of the demographic range. To avoid homogeneity, we selected teacher participants to represent different age range, gender, years of teaching EFL courses, and courses taught. Three were selected out of the six teachers who were willing to participate in the qualitative study and they were given pseudonyms as Nancy, Luke, and Zack, respectively. Zack was an experienced EFL teacher who reported high frequency of adopting AfL and described AfL as having great importance to teaching. Luke and Nancy were two young teachers who reported limited usage of AfL and who failed to realize the values of AfL as indicated in their responses to the questionnaires. The three teachers' demographic information is presented in **Table 1** and detailed background information of the teacher participants is reported in the findings section.

Universities as Data Collection Sites

As indicated in **Table 1**, the three teacher participants came from two universities in Northwest China, which were both science and technology based universities enjoying similar positions in the QS World University Rankings. In the two universities, all the first- and second-year undergraduates whose major was not English needed to attend the College English course, a 2-year compulsory English course required by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Both two universities followed the national unified College English Syllabus and used the same English textbooks. In addition, they both offered selective English enhancement courses for second-year students who had passed the College English Test band 4 (CET-4 hereafter), a national large-scale English test used to check whether Chinese university EFL students have reached the requirements of the national syllabus in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation (Gu, 2018). Those students who had not passed this test were required to stay with the College English course. The two universities also adopted a similar school-level assessment policy for the College English course: The students were rated by both their daily performance and their final achievement tests. Students' daily performance, including their attendance, quality of assignments, and engagement in classroom activities, accounted for 30% of the overall assessment, and the final test scores accounted for 70%.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, we made initial contact with the participants selected and provided them with participation information sheets (PIS) and consent forms (CF) via e-mail. After they agreed to participate in the study by signing the CFs, each of the teachers was invited to choose one class they taught to be observed. In order to gain a complete picture of how Chinese university EFL teachers implemented AfL and engaged their students in the learning and assessment process, we drew on a variety of methods to collect data, including semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall accounts, and classroom observations, which are explained in the ensuing sections.

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview following predetermined interview protocols makes comparison of responses easy but also allows for explanation, clarification, and further enquiry of responses (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Because of this advantage, we arranged two half-hour semi-structure interviews for each teacher. The first interview with each teacher began with a 10-min discussion about their past EFL learning and teaching experiences to help us know the participant better and to develop a good researcher-participant rapport (Dörnyei, 2007). This was also an opportunity to assess the teacher's understanding of several terms regarding AfL, such as peer- and self-assessment. As some teacher participants were not familiar with these concepts, we briefly described these terms to minimize possible misunderstandings in the subsequent interviews. In the larger study, the pre-written questions (see **Appendix A**) were informed mainly by the framework of the five core AfL strategies, including goal setting, classroom assessment tasks used, teacher feedback, peer-, and self-assessment opportunities. With the permission of the teacher participants, all the interviews were audiotaped.

Classroom Observation

Classroom observation "records behavior as it is happening," and thus yields direct and first-hand information of the situation (Merriam, 1998). It can also be used in conjunction with other data sources to triangulate findings (Nunan and Bailey, 2009). In our study, classroom observations were used to confirm and complement the data from the participants' self-reported accounts and to understand teachers' practices in a natural setting. The foci of the classroom observations were on how

TABLE 1 | Demographic information of the three teacher participants.

Name	Nancy	Luke	Zack
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Age	30	27	47
Teaching experience	6 years	3 years	25 years
Academic credential	Master	Master	Master
Academic rank	Lecturer	Assistant Instructor	Associate Professor
Course taught	College English	College English	Advanced Audio-Visual Speaking
University	B	A	B

teachers utilized the core AfL strategies to engage their students in the learning and assessment process. Each of our teacher participant's class was observed four times in a non-participatory way to reduce the influence of the observer on the behaviors of the participants (Dörnyei, 2007), with one at the beginning of the term, two in the middle, and one at the end. Each classroom observation lasted for 1 h and a half. There were in total for 24 h classroom observations. Unfortunately, because the teacher participants sometimes refused our request to record their lectures, only part of the classroom observations were videotaped. We hence also made field notes to supplement videotaped data.

Stimulated Recall

With some visual and audio reminder, stimulated recall can help elicit more information about participants' mental process during a certain event (Gass and Mackey, 2000). Stimulated recall interviews were used in our study to identify the reasons for teachers' certain behaviors detected in the classroom observations. Each teacher participant was invited to take a 20-min stimulated recall interview 24 h after each classroom observation. Research suggests that data are more reliable if collected sooner after the event (Gass and Mackey, 2000). Therefore, the retrospective data were collected 1 day later, considering the fatigue of the participants and the time needed for us to set up equipment and determine the questions to be asked. For each stimulated recall, the teacher was invited first to watch and reflect on their assessment behaviors during the session that we had observed, and then asked to explain the reasons for their assessment activities.

Data Analysis

In the preparation stage, for each participant, the semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall accounts, and field notes were organized, formatted, and transcribed for later coding and analysis. Language mistakes, incoherent and incomplete sentences were corrected to make the meaning clear and straightforward. We then read thoroughly the interview data and excluded some unrelated information (e.g., Some teachers gave extensive explanation of the CET-4) from the follow-up data analysis. Meanwhile, we also watched the videotaped classroom observations repeatedly to identify, record, and transcribe the data in relation to teachers' assessment behaviors (e.g., goal setting, classroom assessment tasks, teacher feedback, peer-, and self-assessment) and how they engaged their students in the assessment process.

The data analysis began with holistic coding, namely, assigning a single code to a large unit of data to summarize the overall contents, as advised in Saldaña (2016). Guided by some important AfL literature (William and Thompson, 2008; William, 2010) as well as the results of instrument validation in the quantitative phase of the larger study (Wu et al., 2021b), four broad categories were predetermined. These included: *communicating goals to students*, *elicit information of student learning*, *teacher feedback*, and *peer-and self-feedback*. After reading the transcripts repeatedly, we applied these codes to related segments of data and highlighted them with different

colors to build a foundation for a more detailed coding. After that, detailed line-by-line coding was conducted under each broad category, and these codes were then subjected to further scrutiny to identify recurring patterns. For example, the analysis of Zack's interview data brought about dozens of codes under the predetermined broad category of *communicating goals to students*. The codes *pass finals and pass high-stakes examinations* were grouped together and were assigned a pattern code of *Learning English to pass examinations*. The codes such as *develop English abilities in working environment* and *improve communicative language abilities* were assigned a pattern code of *learning English to develop abilities* to unify them. These two pattern codes were then grouped together under the theme of *course learning goals advocated*. This theme surfacing from the line-by-line coding, together with other themes generated, seemed to have a different focus from that of the predetermined category *communicating goals to students*; we therefore adjusted the name of the predetermined category into *Course learning goals*.

In the same way, the initial predetermined categories *elicit information of student learning* and *peer-and self-feedback* were renamed as *classroom assessment tasks* and *empowerment of students as assessors*. The data related to teacher feedback were limited and focused mainly on the types of written feedback teachers provided to their students after class, which was beyond the scope of our current study concerned with teachers' use of AfL in classroom settings. The predetermined category *teacher feedback* was hence eliminated. **Appendix B** provides an example of how the data were analyzed by illustrating the major themes and codes assigned to Zack's data. After analyzed the data of each case, we adopted the replication strategy proposed by Yin (2011) and compared the three cases to identify underlying similarities and/or contradictions based on the major themes generated.

To ensure internal consistency in the coding process, intra-coder agreement was checked. The first author coded five pages of Luke's interview data, and a few days later, she repeated the coding process on the same data. The intra-coder agreement was 88%, within the recommended range of 85–90% for assuming internal consistency (Miles et al., 2015). In addition, peer debriefing was also used to ensure that the first author, who was mainly responsible for the data analysis and interpretation, did not use biased opinions (Dörnyei, 2007). After completing the coding of each case, a Ph.D. candidate from China whose research interest also included AfL was invited to work as a peer debriefer. The first author provided her with samples of raw data, a list of the operational definitions of codes, data display tables for each case and sought her comments on the initial codes assigned as well as the categories and themes generated. Only minor concerns were raised regarding the wording of some codes, which were refined after discussion with the debriefer.

The trustworthiness of our study was also ensured through the quality of translation. Before we wrote up the qualitative findings, the quotes from the interviews and classroom observations excerpts serving as supporting evidence were translated from Chinese to English. This work was done by an EFL teacher in China. A professional translator was then invited to evaluate the

translation by checking 20–30% of the translated data for each case. The results of the translation checks indicated overall high quality of translation; only several minor discrepancies occurred which were amended after discussion to reach consensus.

FINDINGS

The three teacher participants indicated usage of different assessment approaches to engage their students in the learning and assessment process. In this section, we first report the case of Nancy, who mainly relied on examinations and scores to assess and engage her students. We then move on to Luke, who tried to get rid of the influence of examinations in his classrooms yet failed to genuinely embrace AfL. Finally, we present the story of Zack, who were able to capture the spirit of AfL and fully engage students in assessment process.

Nancy

Nancy was a young teacher in her early-thirties, who has been working as a lecturer at a university in Northwest China for more than 6 years. When invited to this study, she was teaching College English to three classes. An important feature that distinguished Nancy from the other two teacher participants was her success in examinations. Nancy ranked in the top 10% among over 300,000 test-takers in her province in the University Entrance Examination to Higher Education. She was hence admitted to one of the most prestigious universities in China, majoring in English. Four years later, owing to her outstanding performance in the Graduate School Entrance Examination (GSEE), she entered the postgraduate school of the same university to pursue a master's degree, specializing in linguistics. When she participated in this study, she had just passed the Doctoral Candidate Entrance Examination and had been successfully admitted to a doctoral program in a top university in China. Nancy merely reported a 2-day pre-service training experience in the first month of her teaching career, which did not include any substantial assessment-related courses. She also shared that she never heard of AfL and knew almost nothing about this concept.

Nancy described her EFL teaching experience as “frustrating” (Nancy Int1) (Nancy Int1 means the data were from Nancy in her first interview). She shared that she felt “desperate” every time she started a lesson: “I had to hold my temper and take a deep breath before I entered the classroom” (Nancy Int1). According to Nancy, her extremely negative feelings resulted mainly from the “indifference” of her students, who she perceived as having low English proficiency, limited interest in, and a negative attitude toward learning English. She felt it “extremely difficult” to involve her students in her class, as she commented:

I have given my students opportunities [to take part in class activities]. What can I do if they do not take it? For those students who do not care about their learning, no matter how hard I try, it makes no difference. It was a complete waste of time and energy. (Nancy Int1)

Course Learning Goals: Learning English to Pass Examinations

According to Nancy, most of the students she taught “had low interest in English” and “only cared about passing examinations” (Nancy Int1). Nancy shared what she had observed:

Many of my students hate English. Most of the time, they either sleep or play with their mobile phones [during lessons]. But whenever you talk about examinations, they become fully focused ... If they do not see any connection between what you are teaching and the examinations, they will consider it as a waste of time to learn it. (Nancy Int1)

Therefore, Nancy felt “compelled” to cater to her students and hence related the College English course to examinations, which she believed was “the only way to stimulate [her] students’ enthusiasm and sustain their efforts to learn English” (Nancy Int1). For this reason, she stressed repeatedly in her classes how learning the College English course could help her students pass final examinations as well as the two high-stakes language tests, the CET-4 and CET-6. For instance, in the second session observed, Nancy and her students were working on reading passage A of Unit 2, which revolved around the impact of greenhouse gas emission on the marine environment. Nancy explained to her students how learning this passage could help them in the coming final examination:

It is possible you will need to write an essay about environmental protection in the final examination. Environmental protection is a hot topic. If you do not learn the passage well ... If you know nothing about the impact of greenhouse gas, how can you write a good essay and pass the final examination? (Nancy Obs2) (Nancy Obs2 means the data come from the second classroom observation of Nancy’s class)

Classroom Assessment Tasks: Examinations and Bonus Scores

Frequent examinations were observed in Nancy’s class. At the beginning of almost every session, Nancy carried out a word dictation to check her students’ spelling of the words they had learnt in the previous session. In addition, Nancy allocated 30 min for a written test once she finished a unit, focusing on the linguistic knowledge in the unit. In doing this, Nancy expected to help her student “find out the areas they needed to pay more attention to” (Nancy SR2) (Nancy SR2 means this quotation comes from Nancy in her second stimulated recall interview) and encourage students to “work hard in their English learning... because low examination scores is a salutary reminder of [their insufficient efforts in learning the English course]” (Nancy SR3).

In her instruction, Nancy also used multiple-choice questions, filling-in-the blank questions, sentence translation to identify words, and grammatical points with which her students had problems. Nancy was not satisfied with her students’ reactions to her questions as only a couple of students responded actively, while a large percentage of students “did not raise their hands for the whole term” (Nancy Int2). Sometimes, even when Nancy

addressed her questions directly to these quiet students, a few “merely stood up, keeping silent or uttering *I do not know*” (Nancy Int2). Nancy, therefore, employed what she called a “system of rewards and penalties” to promote her students’ engagement in questioning. Nancy divided her students into eight groups, and when a student provided a correct answer to Nancy’s question, they could earn their group one point. Each member of the group with the highest points was awarded “bonus scores” added to his/her final scores of the term, while each member of the group with the lowest points was required to write an essay as a punishment. Nancy considered “giving bonus scores” to be “the most effective tool” to engage her students, especially for students who had not realized the value of these activities in enhancing their language learning:

Most of my students do not take it (answering questions) as a learning opportunity I guess they even think that you are annoying if you keep on asking questions. But because their performance will be scored and added to the final scores, they have to be active. (Nancy SR2)

Nancy admitted that she seldom asked open questions, or organized discussions in her class, which she attributed to her students’ “poor language ability and thinking ability” (Nancy Int1). She gave an example of an unsuccessful attempt to involve her students in a discussion related to the differences between Chinese and American culture. First, she asked her students to brainstorm the areas where the differences might exist; her students were able to give simple answers, such as food, fashion, and education. However, when Nancy further asked them to describe the differences in detail and to explain how these differences came into being, her students “were baffled,” and “all kept silent” (Nancy Int1). Nancy then reduced the difficulty of the question by permitting her students to respond in Chinese, but the students still “wore a look of incomprehension” (Nancy Int1). Nancy concluded that her students “neither had enough vocabulary to express themselves nor had the ability to develop their ideas and analyze the problems” (Nancy Int1). Nancy, therefore, decided that it was “safer to ask questions that student could handle” and chose not to challenge her students to “avoid embarrassment” (Nancy Int1).

Empowerment of Students as Assessors: Peer- and Self-Assessment Giving Way to Examination Preparation

In all the four sessions observed, Nancy’s students were not given any opportunity to assess, or comment on, the work of their peers or their own. This is confirmed by the interview data, as Nancy described that she “did not provide many opportunities for [her] students to do peer- or self- assessment” (Nancy Int2).

When asked about the reasons for the rare occurrence of peer- and self-assessment in her class, Nancy responded that peer- and self-assessment would “take up a lot of teaching time” (Nancy Int2). Nancy considered it as her “first duty to finish the unified teaching plan” in the limited teaching hours because the final examination was designed based on this. Nancy worried that “[her] students would complain if [she] missed the content to

be tested in the final examination” (Nancy Int2). Peer- and self-assessment, hence, needed to give way to the content to be tested in the final examinations in her class.

Nancy also shared that peer- and self-assessment “[would] not work out” in her current class (Nancy Int2). She doubted her students’ ability in giving quality peer-feedback because of their low English proficiency. As she explained: “some students are bad in English. It is not easy for them to make themselves understood, and how could it possible for them to give feedback?” (Nancy Int2). Furthermore, Nancy was quite certain that her students could not be fully engaged in self- and peer-assessment based on her previous teaching experience. Nancy once experimented with group study and self-study in her class, but most of her student “either sat around, doing nothing or talked about celebrity gossips” owing to their “lack of self-control” and “low motivation and interest in learning English” (Nancy Int2).

Luke

Luke was in his late 20th and had been working as an assistant instructor at a university in Northwest China for 3 years. When he participated in the current study, he was teaching College English to three classes. What attracted us to Luke’s story most was his EFL learning experiences. Luke repeatedly stressed the great influence his English teachers had on his EFL learning. His EFL teacher in junior middle school “only taught [him] what would be tested” and “always pulled a long face when [he] got low scores,” which was so “discouraging” that he wanted to “give up on English” (Luke Int1). His EFL teacher in senior middle school, in contrast, “unlike most of [his] other English teachers who always stressed test scores,” drew Luke’s attention to the “improvement of pronunciation and English speaking and listening abilities” (Luke Int1). Because of this teacher, Luke’s interest in English increased greatly.

Luke reported that he did not receive much pre-service or in-service training regarding assessment. There were no assessment-related courses when he was at university; he also complained about the insufficient support provided by the university where he worked. As Luke shared:

I haven’t received any training [about assessment]. The university only requires publications from teachers or issues administrative regulations and requirements to manage teachers. It pays little attention to teaching.... Although there is a teacher development center, I have no idea what it is for. (Luke Int2)

Course Learning Goals: Learning English to Develop Abilities

Luke was fully aware of the negative impact of examinations on his students. Through observations and informal talks with his students, he found out that a large proportion of his students lacked confidence, interest, and motivation in learning English, which he attributed to their unsatisfying performance in the previous examinations in middle school. Luke conveyed how he felt about his students:

What almost all my students have in common is that they are not interested in English at all. The biggest reason is that their test

results were not good in middle school. They feel unfulfilled, so they naturally do not want to learn English anymore. (Luke Int1)

Although Luke was aware that most of his students took passing CET-4, CET-6 and final examinations as “their ultimate goal of learning the College English course,” he expected his students to focus more on the “improvement of their listening, speaking, and genuine language communicative abilities,” and to “utilize English as a tool to know about this world” (Luke Int1). Luke shared that from his EFL learning experiences, he had realized: “stressing test scores will not help students... If teachers make their students focus on the improvement of their language abilities, students will be more interested in English, and will naturally have good performance in examinations” (Luke Int1).

Luke was confident that focusing his students on the improvement of their abilities could “increase [his] students’ interest in English learning” and “activate them both in and out of class” (Luke Int1). Luke related how his previous students had changed their behaviors after their focus shifted in the College English course from test scores to the improvement of authentic English:

They started to listen to my lecture attentively and had more eye contact with me... More students opened their mouth and followed me to do practice... Some students told me they started to listen to English songs and watch English movies on their own initiatives... I felt it was helpful at least to some of my students. (Luke Int 1)

The observation data also provided clear evidence that Luke constantly stressed the importance of genuine English communicative capabilities in his class. For example, in the first session observed, Luke explained to his students that these abilities rather than high examination scores were the key to career success in an international company: “The most important thing is you can convince your boss and express your own opinions articulately and confidently in English. Nobody cares about your scores” (Luke Obs1).

Classroom Assessment Tasks: Closed Questions

Luke shared that he “was unwilling to test [his] students” because he was afraid that it would “make them feel stressed” and he wanted them to “focus on the improvement of their English communicative abilities” (Luke Int1). Luke said “I always tell my students I won’t prepare them for examinations I also do not want to give them a lot of examinations in my class” (Luke Int1). The observation data also confirmed what Luke said in the interview, with no examinations observed in all the four sessions.

The classroom observation data indicated that Luke asked questions to assess his students’ mastery of knowledge, and most of them were closed in nature. The following classroom observation extract provides a typical example, where Luke asked his students a series of questions concerning the word “backpack” after explaining the rule of pronunciation change of vowels in stressed and unstressed syllables. The dialogue is as follows:

Luke: “How many syllables? Tell me.”
Students gave no response.

Luke: “two syllables, right?”
Students: “Yes.”
Luke: “How many vowels in this word?”
Luke and Students: “Two.”
Luke: “Are the two vowels the same?”
Students: “Yes.”
Luke: “Do we pronounce them in the same way?”
Students: “No.”
Luke: “What is the difference?”
One student: “One is a stressed syllable. The other one is an unstressed syllable.”
Luke: “Which one is the stressed syllable?”
Students: “The first one.”
Luke: “How to pronounce this vowel in this stressed syllable?”
All students kept silent.

Luke was also observed to invite his students to participate in some other class activities. For instance, at the beginning of most sessions, he allocated 10–15 min for a student to do an oral presentation (Luke Obs 1, 2, and 4), and he also required his students to work in groups or pairs to provide captions for English movie clips (Luke Obs 2). These activities, however, according to Luke, were only “used occasionally” to “liven up the classroom atmosphere.”

Empowerment of Students as Assessors: Lacking Understanding of Students’ Active Roles in Assessment

Luke asserted that most of the assessment practices in his class were “teacher-led” (Luke Int2). The observation data only indicated a couple of superficial peers- and self- assessment practices. For example, Luke was observed to ask his students to compare their pronunciation of some words containing the consonant /v/ with a video clip, in which a native speaker modeled how to pronounce these words (Luke Obs2). He also required his students to check each other’s spellings after they finished an exercise in the textbook (Luke Obs3).

When asked about his understanding of peer- and self-assessment, Luke said he had “never heard of this concept” (Luke Int2). After being given detailed explanation and some examples of these student-led assessment practices, Luke reflected on his assessment behaviors, attributing his rare use of peer- and self-assessment to his deeply held belief in what he called “the hierarchical difference between the teacher and his students” (Luke Int2). Luke explained:

I felt like teachers was there [Luke pointed to the ceiling], and the students were here [Luke pointed to the floor]. Because it [the relationship of the teacher and his students] was like this... I thought teachers should definitely be the assessor... I never thought of asking my students to do assessment by themselves. In China, teachers and students have got used to it [teacher being the assessor] (Luke Int2).

Luke further commented that it was an “inspiring” idea to place students in the center of the assessment process and expressed a strong willingness to experiment this AfL strategy in his future teaching:

It is a pity I knew nothing about it [peer- and self-assessment]. It might be a good method. I will definitely use it, and I think my students will have a strong sense of accomplishments and their interest in learning English will grow. (Luke Int2)

Zack

Zack, who had been working as a university EFL teacher for 25 years, was the most experienced teacher among the three teacher participants. When he was recruited for this study, he was in his mid-forties and worked as an associate professor, being responsible for a College English Enrichment course, Advanced Audio-visual and Speaking. According to Zack, his research experience in the field of second language teaching and learning made him “open-minded about new concepts” (Zack Int 1). For example, Zack was the first in his department to experiment with project-based teaching, a pedagogic approach aiming to help students acquire deeper knowledge through authentic projects. Zack was also responsible for a teaching reform program funded by the province to help young EFL teachers gain skills and expertise to carry out this pedagogy in their classrooms.

Zack was the only teacher participant who “[had] heard of AfL” (Zack Int1). Zack shared that he had attended a seminar concerning AfL when selected by the university to participate in an EFL teacher training program in England. Zack was “amazed at” the research findings presented in a seminar on the effectiveness of AfL in promoting student learning, and was inspired to read further relevant literature to “find out how [he could] apply this idea in [his]classroom” (Zack Int1). Zack valued AfL and believed experimenting with this new assessment approach could help him create the “ideal class,” which he described using the following metaphor:

I hope my students can play a leading role in my class. They are actors and actresses on the stage, displaying their talents and abilities in English. I will take a supporting role, acting as a director off the stage, merely organizing some class activities and solving their problems when necessary. (Zack Int1)

Course Learning Goals: Learning English to Pass Examinations and to Develop Abilities

Zack believed that “[his] students differed greatly” in terms of “their motivations to learn English” (Zack Int1). Therefore, he advocated different course learning goals based on students’ individual situations. According to Zack, 10% students in his class were “study masters,” 20% were “study slackers,” and the rest were middle-level students (Zack Int1). The top 10% students, as described by Zack: “still [had] great enthusiasm for learning English and high expectations for themselves after passing the CET-4.” Moreover, “they also [had] good study methods and [knew] how to make use of different learning resources” (Zack Int1). Since these students were self-directed and had a strong motivation to learn English, Zack expected them to focus on the “improvement of their English language abilities” when learning the Advanced Audio-visual and Speaking course, which was “beneficial for their future career development” (Zack Int1).

As for the rest of his students, Zack felt they “[had] reduced their efforts in learning English after passing the CET-4.” Zack

deemed it necessary to encourage these students to sign up for the CET-6 or other Language tests such as the TOEIC or the IELTS to maintain their efforts in learning English: “you cannot emphasize the importance of examinations to them too much. These students only want to spend time on English when they need to pass examinations.” (Zack Int1) However, Zack believed that high-stakes testing “[could] not work as a sustained motivation,” and therefore, it was of ultimate importance for teachers to “gradually draw students’ attention to the development of authentic language use capabilities in the examination preparation process.” (Zack Int1). The classroom observation data also provided evidence that Zack advocated flexible course learning goals. Zack was observed to provide suggestions to students as to what examinations they could prepare for as well as what learning resources students could use for test preparation (Zack Obs 2). Meanwhile, he was also observed to focus his students on the improvement of their abilities by providing role models, telling them that some of his previous students had become successful in their careers owing to English communicative capabilities (Zack Obs3).

Classroom Assessment Tasks: Open Questions and Dialogue

According to Zack, the assessment method he used the most in his classroom was “asking questions” (Zack Int1). For each lesson, Zack would “deliberately prepare several key questions” which were “related to the teaching content” and “aligned with students’ average English level” (Zack Int1). Most of the questions he asked were open-ended and speculative in nature. For example, he raised questions requiring students to compare [e.g. “Does criticism do more harm than good to people?” (Zack Obs1)], to evaluate [e.g. “Is it a good idea to control population growth?” (Zack Obs4)], to analyze [e.g. “What are the main reasons for the air pollution in China?” (Zack Obs2)], and to solve [e.g., “How to solve plastic pollution?” (Zack, Obs2)].

Zack sometimes extended his planned key questions by asking improvised follow-up questions in English. He sequenced these questions strategically to facilitate teacher–student dialogues and hence making his students’ thinking explicit, which can be exemplified by the following excerpt from the third classroom observation. In that session, Zack and his students were working on unit three, *Work to Live or Live to Work*. After playing a videotaped interview of two men (Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown) talking about their work and life, Zack directed a pre-set question (“What is the value of work?”) to a girl seated in the first row in order to “find out what understanding of the interview she had gained” and “what she would express in English on this topic” (Zack SR3). The dialogue is presented as follows:

Zack: “In your opinion, what is the value of work?”

Student: “The value of work? . . . I do not know how to say . . .”

Zack: Ok. “Let me change a question. What is Mr. Smith’s attitude toward his work?”

Student: “I think he only works for money.”

Zack: “Then what is Mr. Brown’s attitude toward his work?”

Student: “He always chooses the work he likes.”

Zack: "Very good. If you must make a choice between two positions, one is well-paid but boring, while the other one makes you happy, yet the salary is low, which one will you take?"

Student: "I think I will choose the first one."

Zack: "Why?"

Student: "Because if I have money, I can have a good life. I can live comfortably."

Zack: "What else?"

Student: "I have family responsibilities. I am the only child in my family. My parents need me when they become old."

Zack: "Do you mean you need money to support your family?"

Student: "Yes. If they [are] sick, I need a work with high salary."

Zack: "All right. Now turn back to the first question: what is the value of work?"

Student: "I think the value of work is to bring a better life to your family."

Zack shared that he "prefer[red] open questions" because they challenged his students to "expand on their answers rather than merely saying a couple of words," and hence gave him rich information about what his students knew, understood and could do (Zack Int1). When asking questions, Zack would walk among his students, addressing a predetermined question to four to five students he chose randomly, because he aimed to "make sure most students can get the opportunity to answer [his] questions" (Zack SR2). Zack attached great value to this type of "teacher–student interaction" in English language learning, which he believed could "force [his] students to speak more" and "help them build their confidence in answering [his] questions" (Zack SR3).

Empowerment of Students as Assessors: Successful Experience of Implementation of Peer- and Self-Assessment

Zack shared with us in his interviews how he carried out frequent peer- and self-assessment in one of his previous English writing classes. He divided his students into 5 groups and appointed the one with the highest English level to be the leader of each group. Every time students finished their writing, they were first required to work in pairs to comment on each other's draft with regard to the content, organization, grammar accuracy, and lexical range based on the writing rubric used in the CET-4. Their work was then submitted to the group leader, who would provide further comments based on the same criteria. After that, students' work would be returned for revision and they were required to conduct self-reflection on how they could use the feedback from their peers to improve their work. During this process, students were encouraged to discuss the feedback with the feedback givers. Finally, the second draft, as well as the peer-feedback and students' written self-reflection, went to Zack, who gave feedback not only on students' work but also on the comments generated by their peers, for final review. During breaks between sessions, Zack made himself available for students to discuss with him their writing, and the feedback they received, as well as any problems in giving and interpreting feedback (Zack Int2).

The self- and peer-assessment practices lasted for a whole term and was a "big success" (Zack Int2). According to Zack, the writing ability of most of his students greatly improved, which was confirmed by the high scores they achieved in the writing module of the CET-4. Students' assessment skills and knowledge also increased, and their understanding of the writing rubric deepened. At the beginning of the term, students could only "find out grammatical or spelling mistakes," but gradually they could also "provide constructive comments on the structure of writing and the development of ideas" (Zack Int2). Furthermore, students' confidence was also enhanced. As reported by Zack, one of his students, who told him that they found that English writing was not as difficult as they had thought, started to write a diary and novels in English.

Both the observation and interview data, however, indicated that Zack provided almost no opportunity for his current students to work as assessors. According to Zack, it was because his current students had unsatisfactory English abilities and assessment expertise, which, he assumed, would exacerbate his workload. Zack commented through recollecting his previous experience of experimenting peer- and self-assessment:

The feedback given by my students had grammatical mistakes and sentences that did not make sense, so I spent a lot of time correcting their feedback... I can imagine how tiring it will be if I do it [peer- and self- assessment] in my current class (Zack, Int 2).

Besides, Zack believed "the time [to carry out peer- and self- assessment] [was] not yet ripe" in his current class because the class atmosphere was "not lively enough" and "the students [had] not been fully mobilized" (Zack Int2). Zack, from his experience, had realized that building up a trusting class atmosphere was conducive to student-centered assessment practices, as he put it:

If the teacher has emotional communications with his students and creates opportunities for students to make friends with each other, students will gradually feel relaxed and the classroom atmosphere will be active. Then the teacher should encourage his students to take the initiative (in the assessment process) (Zack Int2).

DISCUSSION

It has long been acknowledged that engaging students in learning behaviorally, cognitively, and motivationally is a prerequisite for students' academic success (Carini et al., 2006; Teng and Zhang, 2018, 2020; Harris and Leeming, 2021; Wu et al., 2021a). AfL, a classroom assessment approach which brings students to the forefront of learning and assessment, has provided a specific prescription as to how teachers can engage their students by using the five core AfL strategies (i.e., goal communication, effective in-class assessment tasks, teacher feedback, peer-, and self-assessment) (Wiliam and Thompson, 2008; Swaffield, 2011). Our study explored in depth how teachers used AfL in Chinese university EFL classrooms based on the data collected from classroom observations and interviews, with an intention to investigate the extent to which teachers engaged their students

in assessment and learning and identify teacher factors that influenced the implementation of AfL.

A major finding of our study is that teacher participants adopted different assessment approaches to engage their students. It seemed that Nancy dominated the assessment process, prioritized test preparation, and relied largely on AoL methods to keep students' motivation and efforts in learning English. Luke, although appeared to have got rid of AoL in his classroom, was confined to using mainly closed questions and tasks to engage his students in in-class activities. And as Nancy, Luke's students were not given substantial opportunities to work as assessors in the assessment process. Luke's engagement strategy represents what have been termed convergent assessment (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). Marshall and Drummond (2006) described this type of AfL practice as being implemented to the "letter" because Luke failed to genuinely and fully engage students in learning and assessment. Zack, unlike Luke and Nancy, used open questions strategically to increase his students' cognitive engagement; he also reported implementation of peer- and self-assessment in his previous writing class, which, according to him, had greatly improved students' motivation, confidence, self-efficacy, and learning efforts. Zack's case provided an example of how teachers could approach AfL in a divergent, and "spirit" way to engage students behaviorally, cognitively, and motivationally (Torrance and Pryor, 1998; Marshall and Drummond, 2006).

Our findings also suggest three important teacher factors which appeared to influence teachers' engagement strategies adopted in the assessment process (as summarized in **Table 2**). First, teachers' assessment literacy, an intrapersonal factor identified by plenty of previous studies of AfL (e.g., Birenbaum et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2018) see also, Zhang and Zhang, 2020; Harris and Leeming, 2021; Zhang, 2021, for the importance of teachers in the classroom and students' learning process), seemed to influence whether and to what extent teachers used AfL to engage their students in classroom settings. Some researchers argued that teachers need to be assessment literate to ensure high-quality AfL practices, which acknowledge students' agency and empowers them in the assessment process (Heitink et al., 2016; Davison, 2019; Xu, 2019). Assessment literate teachers in relation to AfL are supposed to understand what constitutes quality AfL practices and have adequate knowledge and skills to

implement the core AfL strategies (Dixon and Hawe, 2018). For instance, an important aspect of teacher assessment literacy in relation to AfL is the knowledge and skills of constructing and using open questions to engage students in dialogic conversations and discussions; in doing so teachers can elicit abundant in-the-moment information about student deep learning (Erickson, 2007; Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Heritage, 2013). It seemed that Zack, compared with the other two teacher participants, was more skilled in this aspect. Zack was capable of facilitating his students' engagement by asking students to reason and analyze as well as by flexibly reducing and increasing the cognitive demands of his questions on students. Nancy and Luke, however, failed to demonstrate such skills. Luke, for example, although was observed to successfully involved his students in a teacher-student dialogue by using hinge questions, students responses were limited to either "yes/no" or short phrases and they were hence not fully engaged in this dialogue cognitively. Given the fact that Luke and Nancy had limited training in relation to AfL in either their pre- or in-service teacher training courses while Zack had intensive research experience in this field, it seems reasonable to assume that the three teachers had different levels of AfL-related assessment literacy, bringing about different assessment practices to engage their students.

Another influencing factor surfaced from our study was teachers' beliefs about the relationship between goal orientation and motivation, an intrapersonal factor that is rarely discussed in the literature on AfL. Previous theoretical and empirical studies have identified two types of goal orientations: learning orientation and performance orientation (Pintrich, 2000). With a learning orientation, students' purpose in an achievement setting is to develop their understanding and improve their competence and skills. It has been found that students with a learning orientation is characterized by avoidance of not learning, positive affective reaction to failures, and strong motivation and continuous efforts to achieve their goals (Dweck, 1986, 2000; Pintrich, 2000; Dragoni, 2005; Elliot, 2005; Zhang and Zhang, 2018, 2019; Vandewalle et al., 2019). Students with performance orientation, on the contrary, focuses on documenting and demonstrating their abilities and besting others. They usually seek for positive judgments of their competence and try to avoid inferiority. As a result, they may display negative affect and give up their efforts in face of obstacles (Dweck, 2000; Pintrich, 2000;

TABLE 2 | Summary of the major findings.

	Assessment literacy	Goal orientation	Trust	Assessment approaches
Nancy	Lack of assessment literacy	Performance orientation	Mistrust	AoL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class examinations • No student-led activities
Luke	Lack of assessment literacy	Learning orientation		Convergent, and "letter" AfL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close-ended questions • Limited student-led activities
Zack	Assessment literate	Performance and Learning orientations	Mistrust	Divergent and "spirit" AfL in his previous class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open questions • Substantial student-led activities in previous writing classes but not in his current class

Elliot, 2005). Our study found that all the three teachers perceived that a large percentage of their students held a performance orientation, whose purpose of learning the English courses was to pass examinations instead of improving their English abilities.

However, the three teachers appeared to have differed beliefs about which type of goals might genuinely motivate their students to learn English, and they responded differently to their students' goal orientation, which further influenced their engagement strategies used in classrooms. For example, Nancy believed that advocating a performance orientation and linking the assessment activities to examinations would provide a strong motivation for students to learn the English course, hoping that the high-stakes examinations would compel her students to spend time and effort in learning English. Presumably because of this, Nancy's assessment practices were largely aligned with the AoL tradition; she conducted regular examinations and used bonus scores to ensure student engagement in assessment tasks. In addition, she also refused to implement peer- and self-assessment because she believed her students were more inclined to engage in activities that were closely related with the requirements of examinations. Luck, however, resisted AoL, and his stated reason was that focusing students on the improvement of their English abilities, a learning orientation, was a source of lasting motivation for students to learn English. Likewise, although Zack encouraged some of his students to sign up for examinations, he believed that learning orientation was more helpful in keeping students motivated, interested, and encouraging them to invest effort in English learning; probably for this reason, he also rarely used examinations in his assessment practices. These results send an important message: Teachers should develop a deeper understanding of the role that learning orientations play in engaging students in learning if they are to embrace AfL in their classrooms.

In addition to the previous two intrapersonal teacher factors, our study also affirmed the importance of an interpersonal factor, trust, in the implementation of AfL in Chinese university EFL classes. It seems that our teacher participants lacked competency trust in their students, namely, the confidence that others have the competence and abilities to handle a task (Carless, 2013). This is apparent in Nancy's case, who adopted mainly close-ended tasks, conducted teacher-controlled discourses, and refused to experiment with peer- and self-assessment in her class. This was partly because, as Nancy shared, she doubted her students' abilities to respond to questions with higher cognitive demands as well as their competence to make decisions and judgements about the quality of their work. An interesting finding of our study is that Zack refused to use peer- and self-assessment in his current class although he had realized that this strategy could foster student engagement from his previous experience. As Nancy, Zack's stated reason was that he doubted his current students' language abilities and assessment skills. Moreover, it appeared that he was reluctant to implement peer- and self-assessment in his current class because he also perceived the lack of communication trust among students, which is needed for students to feel psychologically safe to engage in assessment activities, especially student-led ones (Carless, 2013; Xu and Carless, 2017) Nancy and Zack's cases support Carless's (2013) claim that when teachers lack trust in their students, they tend

to adopt defensive tasks that leave little space for students to take risks and face challenges, and rely mainly on a transmission teaching approach.

CONCLUSIONS

Adopting a qualitative exploratory case study design, which involved three teachers, our study presented the different assessment practices of three Chinese university EFL teachers in their classrooms. Although AfL has been highly advocated as an effective method to increase student engagement in learning and assessment, not all teachers implemented AfL to the "spirit," which seemed to be a result of a combination of three teacher factors. First, our studies confirm the important role teacher assessment literacy plays in ensuring the effective functioning of AfL (Xu and Brown, 2016; Davison, 2019). Second, we also identify teachers' beliefs about the relationship between students' goals orientation and motivation as an important factor that may influence the way teachers implement AfL to facilitate student learning. Third, consistent with the literature on AfL, our findings also suggest that a trusting relationship between teachers and students was a prerequisite for successful implementation of AfL. These findings indicate that if teachers are to successfully embrace AfL as an approach to engage students, they should be equipped with sufficient AfL-related knowledge and skills, develop a sound understanding of which type of goal orientation can provide an enduring and strong motivation for students in their learning process, and acknowledge their students' agency and invest trust in their students' abilities to take control of their learning. All these points to the significance of the role of teacher education programs (Zhang and Ben Said, 2014; Zhang, 2016, 2021; see Gao and Zhang, 2020; Sun and Zhang, 2021; Yan et al., 2021). We suggest that teacher educators help teachers understand the roles of teachers and students in learning and assessment, provide teachers with clear instructions as to how each specific AfL strategy can be used. In addition, teacher educators may also need to help teachers find effective methods to draw students' attention to the improvement of their abilities, and help teachers start from designing easy tasks to motivate their students to participate in in-class activities and gradually treat their students as partners, and even protagonists, in learning and assessment.

One limitation of our study lies in the small sample size. Only three teachers were recruited in this study, and they were from two universities in Northwest China. Since our participants were chosen on a voluntary basis, maximum variation could not be achieved. More studies focusing on the implementation of AfL in other regions in China are needed to recruit more teacher participants to build up a more complete and clearer picture of how teachers might adopt AfL differently in their classrooms. In addition, as this exploratory study highlights that teachers should be fully prepared for AfL, another area of future research would be to investigate how Chinese teachers' entrenched beliefs in teaching, learning and assessment might change, and how teacher development programs could help teachers acquire and utilize the knowledge and skills needed for the effective functioning of AfL.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions generated for the study are included in the article/**Supplementary Material**, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

XMW and LJZ conceptualized the research. XMW collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the first draft. LJZ and QL

revised the subsequent drafts with XMW. LJZ submitted it as the corresponding author. All authors have made substantial, direct and intellectual contributions to the work, and approved it for publication.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.725132/full#supplementary-material>

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Reflection on EFL/ESL Teachers' Emotional Creativity and Students L2 Engagement

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Emotions are one of the pillars of all human beings which can play a vital role in providing education. Emotions can affect all aspects of education. The feeling of creativity is one of the subsets of emotions. This feeling strongly affects the performance of education and the level of involvement of students. Student involvement has different aspects: social aspect; individual aspect, and emotional aspect. The present review shows that the emotional aspect of L2 engagement plays a pivotal role in the process of learning the language in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) context. In dealing with the emotional aspect of teachers, the personal, social, and environmental aspects of the individual should be considered. The paper concludes with some pedagogical implications and provides some suggestions for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, second and foreign language researchers have focused on factors that increase or decrease learners' engagement (Aubrey et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020). Teachers in different educational environments around the world have mentioned that student engagement and lack of focus on learning are the biggest problems of most educational environments. Many of them believe that action and attention are the most important factors in creating active engagement and the existence of various distracters is the prominent hindrance in its creation (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Research has shown that language learners' high engagement has many positive results such as high levels of perseverance (Dao, 2020), remarkable academic achievements (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie, 2017; Phung, 2017), increased mental health (Dewaele et al., 2019; Ellis, 2019), reduced dropout rates (Martin et al., 2017), reduced amount of boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021), and reduced risky behaviors in the language teaching process (Christenson et al., 2012).

Many definitions have been offered for learners' engagements (Hiver et al., 2021). However, the common features of this notion are as follow: it needs the active involvement of language learners' in pedagogical tasks (Lambert and Zhang, 2019); it is context and culture-dependent (Martin et al., 2017), intrinsically situated (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), and dynamic and malleable (Greenier et al., 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). Regarding Svalberg, 2017 work, engagement can be evaluated from three different processes that are cognitive, affective, and social processes. Among them, the affective dimension plays a central role in teaching and learning a new language and can affect two other dimensions (Henry, 2019). It is directly related to the psychology of language teaching (Pishghadam et al., 2021a).

One of the areas that have received special attention in the last decade is Positive Psychology (PosPsy). Contrary to the traditional psychological view, which focuses only on the existing shortcomings and the ways to reduce or eliminate them, by focusing on an ideal life, positive psychology tries to help people develop their abilities and lead them to their potential (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2016; Dewaele et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). For instance, instead of focusing on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), language researchers in positive psychology looked at positive emotions or learners' pleasure and motivation (Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019). However, the emotions of teachers and students can be facilitating or limiting, motivating or demotivating, positive or negative. Researchers claim that teachers have the ability to control students' positive and negative emotions by using strategies such as boosting students' imaginations and relaxing practice in language classes (Talbot and Mercer, 2018). PosPsy as a scientific study seeks to help better understand the important conditions and processes in the flourishing or optimal performance of students and all people in language teaching environments. However, few researchers have examined positive psychology in language teaching field of study and its sub-disciplines (Jiang et al., 2016).

CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONAL CREATIVITY IN ELT

Before introducing some theories and exercises about creativity in English language classes, it is worth mentioning the importance of creativity in this process. Using language is a creative act; strategies that are used to avoid language deficiencies in different situations mainly use imaginative and creative methods; and creative activities increase students' self-esteem, which has a great impact on their moods and emotions (Dewaele et al., 2019). In addition, learning a foreign language usually occurs to improve the quality of human life. Research in this area has shown that there is a direct relationship between lifelong learning and the general well-being of language learners. Learning a foreign language improves learners' social engagement. Therefore, learning a language can increase learners' positive emotions about themselves (Al-Hoorie, 2016).

Positive emotions are used as one of the main pillars of positive psychology (Henry and Thorsen, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). They are also used as a tool for achieving mental growth, educational growth, intellectual development, and improving learners' engagement. Proponents of this view consider individual creativity as a structure related to emotions and focus on a concept called emotional creativity. According to their definition, emotional creativity (EC) is a voluntary trait that encompasses all of one's emotional experiences. They believe that the environment and social norms can have a remarkable impact on the performance of individuals' emotional creativity. Considering a cognitive root for this concept, they also believe that the formation and development of this concept starts from the childhood. This new trend influences various fields of study, and second/foreign language teaching was not an exception (Lambert and Zhang, 2019).

One of the most important characteristics of emotional creativity is the ability of language learners to recognize, understand and express, organize, and use their own emotions and those of others (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) stated that emotional creativity has four dimensions: novelty, effectiveness, authenticity, and preparedness. Researchers believe that emotional creativity can be employed as a predictor of learners' language creativity and language achievements. Different types of emotions affect learning processes. Different people such as teachers, learners, parents, and principals in an educational environment have or experience different emotions. Emotions in language classes can affect students' academic performance as well as their interest, commitment, and personality development. These emotions can also affect the social atmosphere of classrooms and learning environments. When pedagogical tasks evoke pleasure, joy, or hope, language learners become more motivated and more attentive before doing work (Amini Fakhodi and Siyyari, 2018). This motivation and attention will increase their engagement in classroom activities. Conversely, experiencing negative emotions may lead to poor academic achievements. Those learners who possess emotional creativity can control positive and negative emotions and lead them to deep and effective learning. Thus, the emotions that language learners experienced in their classrooms can predict the language learners' engagement level. It shows that emotions are the most prominent of every language teaching context. Thus, emotional engagement is extremely important in language classes (Derakhshan et al., 2020).

As mentioned before, in foreign language learning environments, emotional engagement occurs when learners participate in classroom activities and are influenced by the emotional reactions associated with that activity. Studies have shown that language learners have emotional engagement and a positive and purposeful attitude toward classroom activities (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014). Positive emotions are expressed more in the form of pleasure, passion, and expectation. On the other hand, language learners who have not experienced the desired level of emotional engagement involve in negative emotions such as anxiety, boredom, frustration, and anger (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). These studies also showed that emotional engagement as one of the most important elements of class engagement has a significant impact on other dimensions of interaction.

Social engagement as another aspect of students' engagement in learning a foreign language has a special place. The social aspect of engagement is divided according to class interactions and how they are (Azkarai and Kopinska, 2020). The main purpose of this dimension after the engagement of language learners is to interact with and support other components of the learning environment (Chen and Kent, 2020). Social engagement is the foundation of connecting learners in the classroom. Research findings show that negative and positive emotions are not exclusive and often exist in the language learning process and may have a positive or negative effect on language learning in interaction with cognitive and contextual factors (Runhaar et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

Because emotions are somewhat controllable, researchers believe that teachers have the potential to influence and help students' emotions and help them reach their full potential. To this end, teachers must create a safe environment in which the impact of negative emotions is even reduced (Benesch, 2018). They can use different techniques to encourage students to use their imagination and reduce negative emotions. Teachers can encourage students to substitute soothing responses when faced with such situations to reduce the intensity of emotional responses (Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). For instance, when those freshers just enter the universities, they may suffer various anxiety in learning in the institutes of higher learning. Obviously, teaching approaches may be totally different from those adopted in the senior high schools, so they would feel anxious when they have difficulty in learning. Under such circumstances, teachers in the universities have the responsibility of helping them get rid of their anxiety and teachers should give some learning guidance whenever necessary. By doing so, teachers, for one thing, can be able to help their own students to better their learning efficacy; and teachers, for another, can establish the harmonious and rapport relationship with their students. As the theory of loving pedagogy has put it, teachers' confirmation as well as teacher-student rapport relationship can facilitate the students' learning efficacy in the long run (Wang et al., 2021).

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As research has shown, it is impossible to completely eliminate negative emotions. There are positive and negative emotions in the classroom at the same time in every moment of the classroom. Teachers should try to use the power of positive emotions to communicate and increase their participation. In fact, positive emotions such as satisfaction, joy, pride, and interest in students allow them to learn the language better. Focusing on positive emotions and trying to use them allows students to reduce or eliminate negative emotions. Finally, positive emotions have a significant impact on students' resilience, stubbornness, and engagement. Teachers should consider the social and emotional aspects of engagement in creating an effective and positive learning environment by focusing on teacher-student interpersonal factors such as confirmation, credibility, stroke, care, immediacy, rapport, etc. (Pishghadam et al., 2021b; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Culture, context, and individual differences influence learner' engagement, so further studies are required to shed light on different aspects of it. In particular, learning will take on a different look when teaching entities are different. For example, foreign language learning will be enormously influenced by their first language. Therefore, future studies should be validated in different educational contexts.

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Comparing Students' Engagement in Classroom Education Between China and Germany

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Since the mid-1980s, there has been an academic shift toward students' involvement in the learning process. A great number of studies have focused on the relationship between student engagement and educational achievement. They have highlighted that appropriate educational input and a supportive classroom environment are necessary, but optimum learning should occur when students are engaged with the curriculum as well as the institution, particularly in higher education institutions. Many scholars claimed that higher levels of engagement will help students deal with academic anxiety and develop a sense of belonging, which may lead to higher academic success. Educational experts and policymakers have begun to propose nationwide and international strategies and programs to promote student engagement in the classroom, which has led to the proposal of well-known programs such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, the UK Engagement Survey, and Program for International Student Assessment. Such engagement-centered international measures have been used across the globe (e.g., Germany) and translated into different languages (e.g., Chinese). Although the findings of relevant studies confirm the effectiveness of engagement on learning achievement, there is still the need to conduct further (cross-sectional) studies considering the implementation of such programs in a different context. The present study is an attempt to review the related literature regarding student engagement among Chinese and German students across a variety of disciplines. The findings suggest that researchers should devote more time and budget to investigate the significance of learner engagement, especially in Germany and China.

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INTRODUCTION

Schaufeli et al. (2002) asserted that engagement has been originally implemented in occupational settings, and then, scholars and practitioners have decided to include this concept in the academic environment. They also argued that learning engagement is believed to emphasize personal assets and efficient performance among students. Finn and Zimmer (2012) believed that the concept of student engagement was developed, in the 1980s, as a response to experiences of isolation, boredom, and dropout among students (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Educational courses used to be regarded as successful if students were provided with appropriate materials, and teachers would employ optimum teaching approaches in the classroom. The impact of affective

and interpersonal factors as well as classroom environment was claimed to be of great importance in any educational endeavor (Newmann et al., 1992; Pike and Kuh, 2005).

After the proposal of positive psychology, many scholars and practitioners decided to investigate the effectiveness of learners and teachers' characteristics such as motivation, happiness, enjoyment, and engagement, as the influential factors leading to successful learning outcomes (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Trowler, 2010; Wang et al., 2021). For instance, Egbert (2020) declared that successful learning happens if only students are eagerly involved in the learning process, and they are passionate about exploiting the learning opportunities in the classroom. Universities and colleges have emphasized the role of student involvement in decision-making activities, given that students' collaboration with university staff may lead to greater educational achievement (Tchibozo, 2008). In addition, Hunter et al. (2010) proposed that higher education institutions are required to attract and maintain students, provide them with the necessary support, and have them engaged in learning. Consequently, students in higher education environments are regarded as partners, rather than customers, who actively participate in a variety of activities within the university/college (Lowe and El Hakim, 2020).

Ross et al. (2011) claimed that there is a growing tendency in China toward higher education, and therefore, China is regarded as an educational destination for a great number of students in the world. Consequently, they are trying to establish a multitude of private higher education institutions whose major objective is to involve and engage students in the learning process so that the quality of the Chinese educational system can be assessed and recommended reformist ideas can be perceived.

Moreover, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) was implemented in different countries so that they can measure students' performance in reading literacy, mathematics, and science. The German government and especially educational executives were informed of the students' dropout rate and low educational engagement in the sense of belonging and connectedness as a result of comparing the results of PISA 2000 scores with students from other countries (Ertl, 2006). It is regarded as the beginning of the exploitation of academic and curricular development reform in Germany focusing on providing more appropriate materials and support to students and fostering learners' autonomy and engagement in the classroom. Consequently, results of PISA 2018 indicated higher levels of engagement and lower levels of skipping or dropout from schools compared to the average scores of students within the organization for economic cooperation and development countries (Education Policy Outlook, 2020).

Given that cross-cultural studies can help practice the existing knowledge in other cultural contexts, findings might contribute to understanding new perspectives regarding the research area and integrating the previous knowledge and the novel information into a more comprehensive concept (Pishghadam et al., 2021). Hence, the present review study aims to investigate learners' engagement in academic courses and institutions in China

and Germany to explore theoretical strengths and weaknesses in this regard. Besides, the assessment of empirical studies within these two contexts should help us provide a clear state about the importance and implementation of the concept of engagement and the probable correlation with other individual, interpersonal, and institutional factors.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to Trowler (2010), time and effort are the building blocks of student engagement. He proposed that learners and institutions are required to employ necessary resources to promote learning outcomes, enhance learners' performance, develop institutional fame, and engage learners in the educational process. On the other hand, Teslenko (2019) declared that student engagement is not confined to classroom activities. Higher education institutions have decided to prepare the ground for students to take an active role and voice their ideas in curriculum development, staff recruitment, mental health issues, and even attend strategy development and policy-making meetings. Nonetheless, Lowe and El Hakim (2020) argued that both institutions and students must be wary about the probable disagreements and conflicts, so they should be able to patiently manage such challenges in a mutually respectful environment.

Engagement is defined by a number of scholars and is believed to include various sub-categories. For instance, as one of the prominent figures in this area of research, Reeve (2012) contended that engagement can be defined as a concept encompassing the following modes:

1. Behavioral engagement: This is the major area of interest for scholars and refers to the effort and focus on an educational task leading to taking an active role accordingly;
2. Emotional engagement: It deals with promoting facilitative emotions (e.g., creativity) and diminishing negative emotions (e.g., anxiety);
3. Cognitive engagement: It focuses on meaningful learning through conceptual perceptions in curricular development activities; and
4. Agentic engagement: It refers to deliberate and preemptive involvement in the learning procedure.

Having reviewed the related literature, Egbert (2020) concluded that task engagement can be facilitated through the following enablers:

1. Authenticity: The task is related to their real life;
2. Social interaction: communicating with the teacher or peers to receive proper feedback;
3. Learning support: Required resources should be available and there needs to be enough time and feedback;
4. Student interest: Tasks should be designed according to learners' interest to engage them;
5. Autonomy: learners' control over the learning process and teaching approaches; and

6. Task difficulty: The tasks should be designed a little beyond learners' capabilities so that they perceive the need to make an effort to perform the task successfully.

On the other hand, teachers and instructors believe that developing and maintaining students' engagement in the classroom is becoming a challenging task these days (Hiver et al., 2021). Furthermore, Egbert (2020) argued that teachers should highlight educational objectives so that learners' capabilities and demands are taken into account, and then, students are encouraged to be engaged in classroom tasks. Moreover, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) claimed that teachers' positive communication with learners can result in educational attainment for learners with different characteristics.

Eventually, we should present the conceptual framework proposed by Kahu (2013). It was introduced with an emphasis on the psychological perspective on student engagement, along with the socio-cultural and behavioral views. This framework encompasses institutional and personal factors based on the following sub-categories: socio-cultural, structural, and psychosocial influences as well as proximal and distal consequences (see Figure 1).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

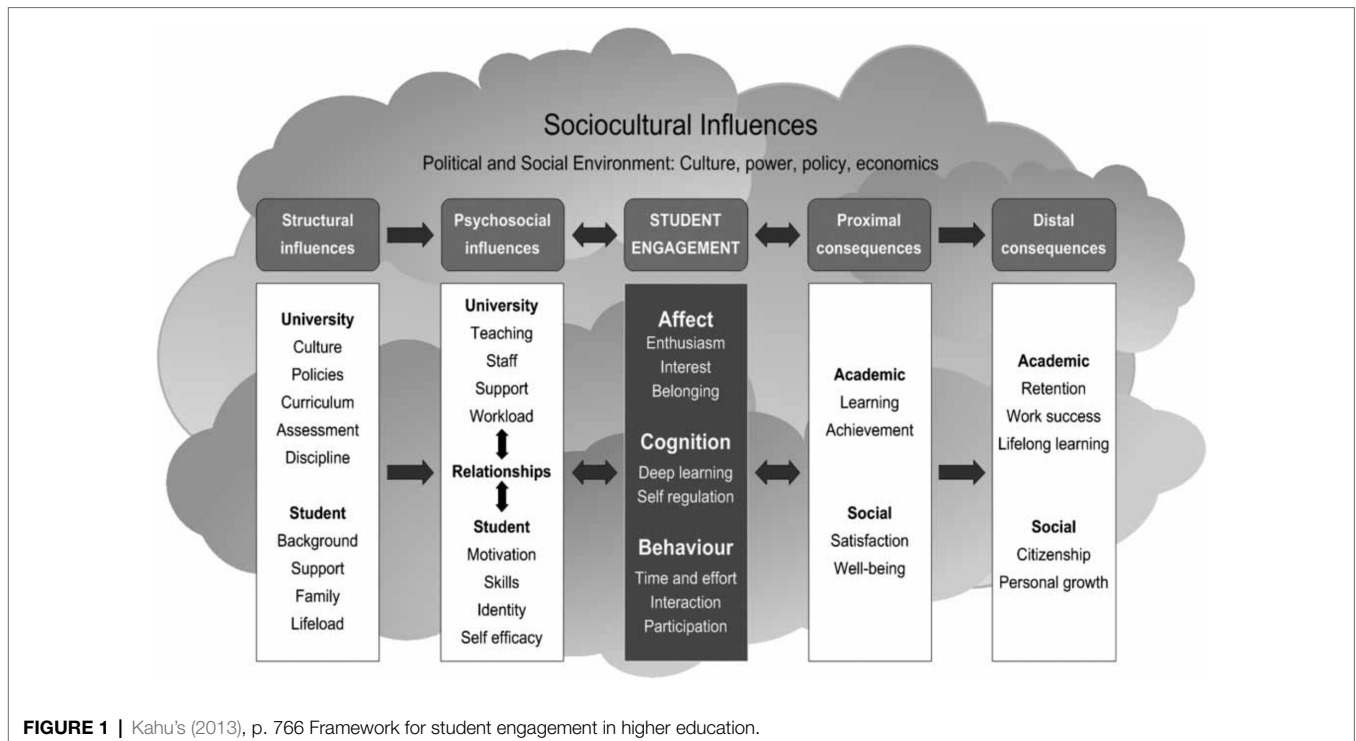
Students Engagement Assessment Instruments

Academic assessment of students' engagement was proposed by Indiana University, the United States in the early 2000s (Kuh, 2009). They would administer the National Survey

of Student Engagement (NSSE), as an institutional instrument to evaluate students' academic engagement, each year. NSSE was designed so as to measure engagement at curriculum and university levels. It was then followed by some other related measures in different countries, for instance, the UK Engagement Survey and the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (Lowe and El Hakim, 2020). In 2007, a panel of PhD candidates along with a visiting professor from Tsinghua University intended to translate NSSE into Chinese. They further developed the NSSE-C instrument as a standardized measure of students' engagement in the Chinese context.

In this regard, Ross et al. (2011) argued that such contextualized assessment programs can effectively measure and improve the quality of education across nations, that is, because they help collect data on students' experiences throughout their education that might lead to expression of their ideas and learning achievement accordingly. For instance, the Chinese version of NSSE assessment survey (NSSE-C) was used to collect data regarding student engagement from students at Tsinghua University in China in 2009. Ross et al. (2011) reported that the findings of this study led to the development of some influential programs such as holding discussions within the university context focusing on the establishment of student-faculty collaborations and promoting undergraduate teachers' professional knowledge.

On the other hand, Martin et al. (2015) conducted another seminal cross-national survey on student engagement among high students in the United States ($n = 975$), Canada ($n = 562$), England ($n = 1,558$), Australia ($n = 33,778$), and China ($n = 3,753$). They employed the Motivation and Engagement



Scale for High School developed by Martin (2010), which includes 44 items scored based on a 7-point Likert scale. They found that there is a consistency in the measurement of student engagement and motivation among these different regions since the normality distribution and reliability indices were similar. Therefore, Motivation and Engagement Scale is regarded as a generalizable cross-cultural instrument in this regard. Finally, they asserted that motivation and engagement were regarded as distinct concepts by the study population across various cultures.

Student Engagement Across Various Disciplines

Hiver et al. (2020) developed an assessment instrument to measure cognitive, social, affective, and behavioral dimensions of students' engagement in language learning classroom. The proposed scale can help evaluate involvement and persistence among students while completing a task. Moreover, Liu and Flick (2019) attempted to investigate the relationship between class engagement and academic performance provided that learners' psychological needs are satisfied. For this purpose, 573 accounting students from two universities in China were selected to participate in this study. The questionnaire included 5 items on student effort, 7 items on class involvement, and 7 items on task persistence, which were scored using a 7-point Likert scale. They concluded that competence and relatedness were the two psychological needs directly related to classroom engagement. On the other hand, effort and persistence were associated with students' academic performance.

Meng et al. (2018) examined the effect of information and communication technology (ICT) engagement and students' academic performance among high schools students in China ($n=9,841$) and Germany ($n=6,504$). The data were obtained from the PISA administered in 2015. They further concluded that there was a significantly positive relationship between learners' perceived autonomy and academic achievement in science, reading, and mathematics among Chinese and German students. However, there were some inconsistencies among these students of different cultures. For example, Chinese students believed that ICT interest had a positive impact on their achievement, while German students reported a negative impact accordingly. In the end, Meng et al. (2018) argued that the collectivist nature of Chinese cultural compared to the individualist framework of German culture might be regarded

as the predictors of such incongruity among students in this study.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Hiver et al. (2021) asserted that higher learner engagement scores indicate their responsibility for their own learning and academic success. They claimed that communicative language teaching paradigms welcomed students' involvement as a crucial factor in academic success and language development. Therefore, it is recommended to investigate students engagement from a variety of perspectives among language learners to identify the effective factors and lead learners toward enduring success in their education.

Moreover, Ross et al. (2011) believed that conducting cross-cultural evaluations of student engagement (e.g., NSSE) can result in the identification of actionable areas of higher education measures, which helps (higher education) institutions improve their curriculum and collaborations with learners. Consequently, it is highly suggested to assess students' engagement from different cultures using fresh data or even classified data collection measures such as PISA. In this regard, Meng et al. (2018) argued that economic relationships between different countries could prepare the ground for cross-cultural investigation of various disciplines accordingly. For instance, China and Germany are considered as the major economic partners these days and there is a growing number of visiting students between the two countries. Nevertheless, there are very few cross-cultural studies in academic or business areas of research, which might help develop a better perception of the two cultures leading to deeper and more successful mutual relationships in the future.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Toward the Positive Consequences of Teacher-Student Rapport for Students' Academic Engagement in the Practical Instruction Classrooms

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Due to the fact that teacher-student rapport may favorably influence students' academic behaviors, several scholars have empirically studied the impact of this interpersonal communication behavior on a range of student-related variables. Notwithstanding, academic engagement as another student-related variable has received less empirical attention. Further, no review study has been carried out to illustrate the beneficial outcomes of teacher-student rapport for students' involvement. The current study, hence, aims to fill these gaps by explaining the construct of teacher-student-rapport and its positive consequences for students' academic engagement in the practical instruction classrooms. Drawing on the available evidence, the positive impact of teacher-student rapport on students' academic engagement was illuminated. The significant implications of the finding are also discussed.

Keywords: teacher-student rapport, student academic engagement, practical instruction classrooms, positive consequences, interpersonal communication behavior

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INTRODUCTION

In classroom interactions, teachers and students may influence each other either positively or negatively (Luo et al., 2020). A negative teacher-student relationship may lead to stress, anxiety, and aggression in students (Hashemi, 2011; Alnuzailli and Uddin, 2020). Accordingly, creating a positive relationship with pupils is among the top priorities of teachers in any educational setting, especially in the practical instruction classrooms. A positive and favorable relationship between teachers and students is called teacher-student rapport (Frisby and Martin, 2010). Reyes and Von Anthony (2020) defined this construct as "a harmonious teacher-student relationship which encompasses enjoyment, connection, respect, and mutual trust" (p. 2). As put forward by Wilson et al. (2010), to establish rapport in classrooms, teachers should pay attention to students' interests, value their beliefs and ideas, and allow them to freely express their feelings toward instruction.

In addition, having a sense of humor and providing continuous feedback are also enumerated as the approaches through which instructors can create a close relationship with their pupils (Frisby et al., 2017). To illuminate the significance of teacher-student rapport, Ibarra (2014) stated that the strong rapport between teachers and students can contribute to desirable academic behaviors. In this regard, Nathan (2018) postulated that those instructors who are able to build a harmonious relationship with their pupils can effectively improve students' sense of accomplishment, which contributes to their increased autonomy.

Additionally, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) also illustrated that positive teacher interpersonal

behaviors such as teacher-student rapport can positively and dramatically influence student learning outcomes. Given the importance of teacher-student rapport in academic contexts, several studies have explored the positive outcomes of this factor for students' motivation (e.g., Opdenakker et al., 2012; Koca, 2016; Frisby et al., 2017; Henry and Thorsen, 2018; Zheng et al., 2021), learning achievement (e.g., Yunus et al., 2011; Hughes et al., 2012; Wubbels et al., 2016), and academic success (e.g., Camp, 2011; Estep and Roberts, 2013; Jimerson and Haddock, 2015; Lammers et al., 2017). Yet, the desirable consequences of teacher-student rapport for other student-related variables such as academic engagement have received less attention (e.g., Estep and Roberts, 2015; Geng et al., 2020).

In a general sense, student academic engagement refers to "the quality of students' participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, individuals, aims, and place that comprise it" (Skinner et al., 2009, p. 496). When it comes to the practical instruction classroom contexts, student academic engagement pertains to the amount of effort that learners dedicate to learn a new language (Hiver et al., 2021). Barkatsas et al. (2009) stated that students' academic engagement can lead to increased achievement, enhanced retention, and academic success. That is, those students who exert more effort in doing classroom activities are more likely to acquire course content. Thus, exploring factors that may positively contribute to students' academic engagement seems essential.

In line with this necessity, some empirical studies (e.g., Ghelichli et al., 2020; Derakhshan, 2021; Jiang and Zhang, 2021) have examined the desirable outcomes of various personal and interpersonal factors for student academic engagement. However, as previously mentioned, the favorable effects of teacher-student rapport as an important interpersonal factor on students' academic engagement have been less investigated. Additionally, no review study has been carried out to illustrate the beneficial consequences of teacher-student rapport for students' academic engagement. To fill this gap, the present review study attempts to explain the positive consequences of teacher-student rapport for student academic engagement in the practical instruction classrooms.

Teacher-Student Rapport

As a positive interpersonal factor, teacher-student rapport is conceptualized as "an emotional connection between teachers and their pupils based on understanding, caring, and mutual respect" (Lammers and Byrd, 2019, p. 128). Teacher-student rapport is a close bond between instructors and learners that enables them to work jointly in classroom contexts (Culpeper and Kan, 2020). As put forward by Weimer (2010), valuing students' ideas and viewpoints is a key to build a strong rapport with them. In this regard, Estep and Roberts (2015) postulated that demonstrating concern for students' welfare is also essential for establishing a positive relationship with them. Taken together, those teachers who respect students' ideas and pay attention to their well-being are able to develop a strong connection with their pupils. Building rapport in classrooms is of high importance, mostly due to the fact that having close relationships with

students motivates them to collaborate with instructors in order to attain their mutual objectives (Frisby et al., 2016).

Student Academic Engagement

Student academic engagement refers to "the quality of the effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to the desired outcomes" (Hu and Kuh, 2002, p. 557). As a complex construct, student academic engagement comprises three components of "Behavioral Engagement," "Affective Engagement," and "Cognitive Engagement" (Jimerson et al., 2003). As the first sub-construct, behavioral engagement relates to students' active participation/involvement in academic tasks and activities. The second sub-construct of student academic engagement, known as affective engagement, refers to students' inner feelings regarding the instructional-learning context, peers, and instructors. Cognitive engagement, as the last component, pertains to the positive perceptions and attitudes of pupils toward their instructors, classmates, and the learning context (Alrashidi et al., 2016).

The Positive Consequences of Teacher-Student Rapport for Students' Academic Engagement in the Practical Instruction Classrooms

To explain the positive consequences of teacher-student rapport, Ibarra (2014) stated that establishing friendly relations with pupils enables teachers to enhance students' willingness to engage in the learning process. In this regard, Pedler et al. (2020) also submitted that having positive relationships with teachers encourages students to enthusiastically participate in classroom tasks. Further, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) elucidated that positive interpersonal behaviors (e.g., confirmation, clarity, stroke, rapport, etc.) that teachers employ in instructional-learning contexts can remarkably promote students' learning engagement. Similarly, by relying on the basic assumptions of the positive psychology movement, Budzinska and Majchrzak (2021) suggested that students' academic behaviors such as engagement can be considerably enhanced in a positive learning atmosphere. To them, teachers can provide such pleasant atmosphere by developing a close and harmonious relationship with their pupils.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Owing to the fact that teacher-student rapport can contribute to desirable academic behaviors (Ibarra, 2014; Wang et al., 2021), a large number of studies have probed into the positive consequences of this construct. Nevertheless, the beneficial effects of this positive interpersonal behavior on students' engagement have remained elusive. That is, compared to other academic behaviors, student academic engagement has received less attention (e.g., Estep and Roberts, 2015; Geng et al., 2020; Snijders et al., 2020; Wanders et al., 2020). Estep and Roberts (2015), for instance, examined the impact of teacher-student rapport on students' engagement. To do so, 306 university students were selected from different countries. To

elicit participants' viewpoints, they were invited to respond to two close-ended questionnaires, namely *Professor-Student Rapport Scale (PSRS)* and *Student Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SAEQ)*. Analyzing respondents' answers, they found that teacher-student rapport is a strong predictor of students' academic engagement. By the same token, Geng et al. (2020) also attempted to scrutinize the positive effects of positive teacher-student relationships on Chinese students' learning engagement. To this aim, 628 Chinese students took part in this study. They were asked to complete two reliable questionnaires. Inspecting the correlations of the utilized questionnaires, the researchers reported that there was a positive connection between positive teacher-student relationships and Chinese students' academic engagement. In their study, Wanders et al. (2020) also studied the probable association between teacher-student connection and students' involvement. In doing so, 4,128 students were opted from different schools in the Netherlands. The analysis of students' perceptions revealed a strong association between positive teacher-student relationships and student involvement.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

So far, different conceptualizations of teacher-student rapport and student academic engagement, their underlying dimensions,

and their interrelationships were thoroughly explained. The previous studies conducted on these variables were also summarized to illuminate the positive consequences of teacher-student rapport for students' academic engagement. Drawing on the existing evidence, one can infer that favorable relationship between teachers and students can desirably influence students' academic engagement. An important implication of this is that those people who are in charge of training pre-service teachers should teach them how to establish pleasant and friendly relationships with students. It is due to the fact that inexperienced and novice teachers typically do not know how to establish a strong rapport with their pupils (Farhah et al., 2021). Another important implication that emerges from the finding of this study is related to both pre and in-service teachers. Since teacher-student rapport plays a pivotal role in fostering student academic engagement (Budzinska and Majchrzak, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), teachers in any educational context should employ appropriate interpersonal behaviors to create a close relationship with students.

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Enhancing Teacher–Student Interaction and Students’ Engagement in a Flipped Translation Classroom

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Learning faculties are looking for innovative approaches to effective teaching in the translation process which can not only enhance students’ engagement but increase the interactions between teacher and learners as well. With the amplified accessibility of network-centered instructive knowledge, teaching translation from the viewpoint of computer-aided instructions and online platforms have flourished. Flipped classroom (FC) is one of these new inclinations used in higher education nowadays which can attract stakeholders’ attention. This review aims at exploring its effects on students’ engagement and teacher–student interaction in translation classes. Some implications and suggestions have been presented for language teaching stakeholders in translation research.

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INTRODUCTION

There are currently remarkable issues about the translation courses, according to the surveys done in universities and colleges (Gong and Du, 2019). Students regularly deal with some problems including low achievement, lack of enthusiasm, engagement, and self-confidence (Joyce, 2018; Sun and Yuan, 2018). Significantly, translation instruction essentially follows the conventional mode, involving excessive education, insufficient class hours, inability to internalize translation theory, difficulty in shaping abilities, and inability to exercise translation thinking (Gong and Du, 2019). Since it is affected by the conventional educational model, the English translation course needs new educational ideas and approaches since their absence has truly blocked its improvement. Thus, changing the educational method of translation is a significant point, and it turned into a recent trend with the improvement of network innovation (Liu and Zhou, 2019). Indeed, being affected by conventional teaching, the progress of translation is hindered, so innovative teaching approaches in English translation courses should be accentuated (Wenwen and Yuying, 2020).

There are some different ways to assist learners to overcome these difficulties, one of which is to apply a learning method that is proper to solve the problems that learners generally come across in translation classes (Mannahali and Rijal, 2020). A method that has newly become popular in education is flipped classroom (FC) (Akçayir and Akçayir, 2018). In FC, teachers give learners asynchronous video speeches as assignments, thereby creating more opportunities for intuitive exercises in the class (Jensen et al., 2018). In addition, Bergmann and Sams (2012) have depicted the FC approach in a more extensive viewpoint, and they maintain that the FC approach is a setting

where students take charge of their own education which *per se* builds connections among learners and educators. In FC, students' responsibility for the content is promoted inasmuch as the fact assignments are utilized in a way to help learners to find thoughts and ideas on their own (Strayer et al., 2016).

Likewise, exploratory tasks and class negotiations often happen in cooperative groups that consequently stimulating constructive peer-to-peer communications and augment teacher–student interpersonal communications (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021) that is considered as vehicles for increasing student engagement (Derakhshan, 2021). The positive relation between teacher and student is a facilitator of an extensive kind of proper learner-related consequences including engagement, success, and enthusiasm (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021).

Among various factors, one justification for the interest in the FC could be the significant role of learners' engagement (Zainuddin and Halili, 2016) that has been at the center of attention lately due to the arrival of positive psychology (Wang et al., 2021). Student engagement is considered as a causative issue in education nowadays that refers to the strength and energy that students employ in the progress of their learning and it is manifested through the ranges of behavioral, cognitive, or affective criteria (Li, 2021). To preserve student engagement, another effective factor is the mutual relation between teacher and student (Pianta et al., 2012).

Indeed, FC has shifted the rights of learning from teachers to students (Sohrabi and Iraj, 2016) that cultivate autonomy. Learners learn via active learning practices that enhance their engagement and increase their critical thinking (Baepler et al., 2014). A major contribution of flipped education for many educators is the chance to involve learners in various learning activities in an environment where they, as well as the learners' classmates, are available to assist and cooperate (Hodgson et al., 2017). It is also important to note that changes have also occurred in the responsibilities and duties of learners; knowledge is no longer received passively by learners. Instead, they become active participants in classroom discussions through educators' guidance (Yanhui and Yi, 2014).

In the classroom, a major shortcoming of the translation classes is that learners do not receive the educators' prompt attention during the initial stages of absorbing and internalizing knowledge, which can act as an obstacle in this process (Yu, 2017). As the FC concurs with the hypothesis of constructivism (Bada and Olusegun, 2015), this issue can be settled in which translation education becomes like the fundamental scholarly translation knowledge, and translation procedures can be introduced before the class time to save time for learners to take on information through individual questions and shared learning, and subsequently study and merge information they have learned through the classroom communication (Yukun and Aili, 2014). The goal of a flipped translation education is unique in comparison to a conventional translation class where most of the class time is allotted to addressing translation procedures and working on translation assignments. The objective of FC for learners is to foster autonomy in learning translation and to utilize

higher-order thinking to expand their translation ability (Lin, 2019).

On the one hand, the impact of the FC on learners' engagement and academic success are scrutinized in prior studies (Jamaludin and Osman, 2014; Jensen et al., 2018), and on the other hand, peer-peer and learner-educator communication were investigated in some other studies (McLean et al., 2016); however, to date, no FC researches had been carried out relating the above-mentioned issues in translation classroom. Therefore, this review aims to address the aforementioned gap, by considering the same issue in the translation classroom.

FLIPPED CLASSROOMS AND ITS ADVANTAGES

FC idea allows learners to study the material in advance, so teachers devoted class time for collaborative discussions (Rotellar and Cain, 2016). There have been many perspectives and observations about the success of FC instruction, as its popularity grows every year (Hall and DuFrene, 2016). One of its advantages is an increase in the efficiency of time management as FC usually involves watching a video version of the course material online as an assignment. So, students have the opportunity to be actively engaged in that material during class the following day (Martin and Rimm-Kaufman, 2015). Likewise, it permits educators to invest more energy in communicating with learners, which sets out more open doors to check for comprehension and clear up misguided judgments (Bergmann and Sams, 2012). Learners acquire information at home in a flipped approach through watching video slides prepared by the educator and practicing the abilities in class, where the educator can definitely regulate and manage the student (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). Undoubtedly, as declared by Hung (2015), the learners' arrangement before the class is vital for them to have the option to be more included and to accomplish additional satisfying results. The principle of flipped learning is to involve learners through active learning conditions intended to prepare and rouse them to carry out appraisal assignments because of feedback presented via interaction through all the phases of learning.

The flipped approach intends to establish a learner-focused learning climate in which learners deal with their own learning and become more dynamic and intuitive in class which stimulates higher-order thinking, and improves educator-learner collaborations (Zainuddin, 2018). The flipped approach offers priority to learners where they are all involved in their learning and the educator turns into the "guide on the side" (Baker, 2000 as cited in Suo and Hou, 2017). Concerning the active learning in FC, one could argue that the classroom activities in such classes lead to a positive learning context, which increases students' levels of involvement and engagement (Jamaludin and Osman, 2014). Furthermore, engaging learners in problem-solving boosts their connections and confidence for their own educations, leading to higher emotional involvement (Lin, 2017, 2019), and at the same time, students' intellectual engagement increases when they have the option to ask questions that determines the

influence of flipped classroom on student interaction (Schussler, 2009).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present review probes into the role of FC in translation teaching and its effect on students' engagement as well as the student and teacher interactions. The present review has noteworthy implications for teaching translation. Indeed, by implementing FC in translation classrooms, students are encouraged to interact more and improve communication between educators and learners (Cen, 2018). So, to encourage learners to participate, the teacher provides useful video lectures for learners in advance to make them for discussion (Zainuddin and Perera, 2019). The teacher should provide problem-solving tasks for the learners as these types of tasks aim to engage students in the class discussion and develop their accountability for learning and help students become autonomous and problem solvers (Huang and Napier, 2015) and the activities should be designed in a way to trigger teacher–student interaction in class leading to the cultivation of critical thinking and creativity (Munir et al., 2018). The interaction embedded in FC can bring about more confidence (Cakici and Oflaz, 2012; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021) and provides the opportunity for more practice that impacts their enthusiasm and engagement (Kim and Kim, 2014; Derakhshan, 2021). In addition, the syllabus

designers should design class activities in a way that activates the teacher and student interaction since it was a policy for them to share knowledge with peers and their teacher that promote their engagement (Zainuddin and Attaran, 2016). As principle and practice should be closely associated, translation educators are supposed to apply FC in practices in the process of teaching and instruction to enhance students' engagement and interaction. In particular, in the time of pandemic worldwide, EFL teachers who teach translation courses should adapt to this new online teaching as well focus on EFL learners' adaptation to flipped learning style. As a result, future experimental studies can be conducted to assure the effect of FC.

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On the Role of EFL/ESL Teachers' Emotion Regulation in Students' Academic Engagement

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Considering the pivotal role of students' academic engagement in their success, discovering the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that inspire students to engage in class activities seems crucial. Notwithstanding, only a few empirical studies have been devoted to teachers' personal factors such as emotion regulation and their predictive function. Further, to our knowledge, no theoretical or systematic review study has been conducted on the association between teacher emotion regulation and student academic engagement. The current review study seeks to fill these lacunas by illustrating English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) teachers' emotion regulation and its' capability to enhance students' academic engagement. Using the existing evidence, the power of ESL/EFL teachers' emotion regulation in predicting their pupils' academic engagement was proved. The findings' educational implications are further discussed.

Keywords: teacher emotion regulation, student academic engagement, EFL/ESL teachers, EFL/ESL, education

INTRODUCTION

Given the fact that students' disengagement is a major threat to their success (Hiver et al., 2021), fostering students' academic engagement is of high importance for teachers in all instructional-learning contexts, notably ESL/EFL classes. The notion of student engagement is generally conceptualized as "the extent and manner of involvement manifested by learners in relation to academic activities" (Guz and Tetiurka, 2016, p. 136). As a multifaceted construct, student academic engagement covers both emotional and behavioral aspects of students' involvement in performing learning tasks (Christenson et al., 2012). As put forward by Finn and Zimmer (2012), students' academic engagement can remarkably contribute to their increased achievement, mainly due to the fact that engaged students who have positive attitudes toward the learning process commonly put more effort into acquiring the course content. Thus, discovering factors that enhance students' academic engagement seems essential. In line with this premise, the impact of students' personal factors on their academic engagement has been widely studied (e.g., Renninger and Hidi, 2015; Li et al., 2016; Qureshi et al., 2016; Alley, 2019; Khajavy, 2021). Similarly, considerable attention has been paid to the role of teacher interpersonal behaviors (e.g., Estep and Roberts, 2015; Derakhshan, 2021; Jiang and Zhang, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021; Zheng, 2021, Dixon et al., 2017). In contrast, the probable effects of teacher personal traits such as emotion regulation has been the focus of less empirical research (e.g., Akbari et al., 2017; Kwon et al., 2017; Burić and Frenzel, 2020).

Teacher emotion regulation as a personal factor pertains to internal and external processes an instructor goes through to assess and manage his/her inner feelings (Thompson et al., 2008). In their study, Cole and Deater-Deckard (2009) conceptualized teacher emotion regulation as “the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reaction as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed” (p. 1327). Regulating their emotions, teachers can create a desirable learning environment (Shao et al., 2020; Fathi et al., 2021), which is fundamental for involving pupils in the learning process.

Despite the facilitative function that teacher emotion regulation may serve in engaging students, a few studies (Akbari et al., 2017; Kwon et al., 2017; Burić and Frenzel, 2020) have empirically explored the impact of teacher emotion regulation on ESL/EFL students' academic engagement. Further, no theoretical review study has been conducted on the association between these variables. Hence, in this study, the researcher aims to explicate different conceptualizations of teacher emotion regulation and student academic engagement, their theoretical underpinnings, and their interrelationships.

Teacher Emotion Regulation

The construct of emotion regulation is generally conceptualized as “individuals' ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reaction” (Cole et al., 1994, p. 76). More specifically, teacher emotion regulation is defined as the ability of instructors to manage their emotional experiences in classroom contexts (Fried, 2011). Emotion regulation strategies that teachers utilize before and after the generation of emotions are called *response-focused strategies* and *antecedent-focused strategies*, respectively (Greenier et al., 2021). Among various response-focused and antecedent-focused strategies, one can refer to expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal as two main strategies that teachers frequently employ to navigate their feelings. Cognitive reappraisal is described as one's endeavor to reframe an emotional event or experience in such a manner that modifies its underlying meaning and impression (Troy et al., 2018). Expressive suppression is also defined as individuals' effort to hide, impede, or restrict emotion-expressive behavior (Cutuli, 2014).

Student Academic Engagement

Student academic engagement is primarily defined as “the quality of students' participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, individuals, aims, and place that comprise it” (Skinner et al., 2009, p. 496). This concept is further conceptualized as students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in learning academic content (Archambault et al., 2009). In line with this conceptualization, Reeve and Tseng (2011) divided the construct of student academic engagement into four components of “*behavioral engagement*,” “*cognitive engagement*,” “*emotional engagement*,” and “*agentive engagement*.” Behavioral engagement, as the first

component, refers to students' amount of effort, persistence, and attention in doing learning activities. As the second component, cognitive engagement pertains to students' adoption of advanced learning techniques and self-regulation strategies. Emotional engagement also relates to students' interest and passion for acquiring course content. Agentive engagement as the last component of student academic engagement refers to “pupils' positive contribution to the flow of instruction” (Alrashidi et al., 2016, p. 43).

The Positive Connection Between ESL/EFL Teachers' Emotion Regulation and Their Students' Academic Engagement

To illuminate the importance of ESL/EFL teachers' emotion regulation in fostering students' academic engagement, Dewaele and Li (2020) stated that teachers who are able to control and navigate their emotions can create a positive atmosphere which is crucial for raising students' learning engagement. In this regard, Kwon et al. (2017) also postulated that the manner in which teachers control or express their feelings can enormously affect students' academic functioning, notably academic engagement. To them, those who do not express severe emotional reactions to students' misbehaviors are more successful in motivating pupils to participate in class activities. Similarly, in light of positive psychology core assumptions, Wang et al. (2021) proposed that the emotion regulation strategies that instructors utilize to down-regulate their undesirable feelings enable them to establish close relationships with their students. Those students who have favorable relations with their instructors are more motivated to engage in learning activities (Reyes et al., 2012; Quin, 2017; Martin and Collie, 2019; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Given the undeniable role of ESL/EFL students' academic engagement in their success (Hiver et al., 2021), a large amount of study has been devoted to this construct and its predictors. Nevertheless, limited attention has been paid to the predictive power of teacher personal factors such as emotion regulation (Akbari et al., 2017; Kwon et al., 2017; Burić and Frenzel, 2020). Kwon et al., 2017, for instance, explored the association between teacher emotion regulation and students' engagement. Distributing two validated questionnaires among participants, their perspectives on the impact of teacher emotion regulation on students' academic success were obtained. The inspection of the correlations portrayed a favorable relation between teacher emotion regulation and students' learning engagement. In a qualitative study, Akbari et al. (2017) also investigated the positive consequences of teacher emotion regulation for EFL students' academic behaviors. In doing so, some semi-structured interview sessions were performed. Analyzing participants' answers to interview questions, the researchers reported that the emotion regulation strategies that teachers utilize in EFL classes can dramatically affect student academic behaviors, notably academic engagement. In a similar vein, Burić and Frenzel (2020) also examined the role of instructors' emotion regulation

in their pupils' academic engagement. To gather data, Teacher Emotion Regulation Scale (TERS) and Student Engagement in Schools Questionnaire (SEQ) were given to participants. Analyzing participants' responses to the questionnaires, the researchers discovered a positive connection between teachers' emotion regulation and students' engagement. That is, students viewed teacher emotion regulation as a strong antecedent of their engagement.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the current review study, the variables of teacher emotion regulation and student academic engagement were fully described. Further, the favorable association between these constructs was clarified. The existing literature was then reviewed to prove the capability of teacher emotion regulation in fostering students' academic engagement. Considering the empirical and theoretical evidence, it is logical to conclude that teacher emotion regulation as an important personal trait can drastically influence students' propensity to actively engage in the learning experience. This finding seems to be illuminative for teacher trainers who are expected to give teachers adequate instructions on how to control and navigate their emotions in instructional-learning settings. It is mainly due to the fact that in order to motivate students to become involved in the learning process, teachers should be able to control their negative reactions to students' misdeeds (Kwon et al., 2017). Besides, both EFL and ESL teachers can also benefit from the findings of this study. As put forward by Martin and Collie (2019), a positive

learning environment is vital for raising students' engagement. To them, teachers can create such desirable atmosphere through controlling their emotions. Accordingly, those teachers who aspire to improve their pupils' academic engagement should regulate their emotions in classroom contexts. Given the paucity of research on this topic, more empirical and theoretical investigations are required to delve into the association of teacher emotion regulation and student academic engagement. Due to the importance of emotion regulation in academic contexts, some cross-cultural studies are also suggested to be conducted on the role of this construct and other variables related to positive psychology. Besides, with the unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19, it stands to reason to delve into how such dynamic negative factors as boredom (Li and Dewaele, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Kruk, 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021) and burnout (Fathi et al., 2021) can affect students' engagement and learning.

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The Role of English as a Foreign Language Teachers' and Learners' Emotions and Language Achievement and Success

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It is preserved that one of the noteworthy influential subjects of success and achievement is emotions, and enhancing emotions is dominant in promoting the language learning of students in the classroom. Although emotions are an integral part of the practices of both educators and students, their function has been sidelined due to the emphasis on intellectual instead of emotional scopes of foreign language learning. Therefore, the present theoretical review tries to refocus on the role of emotions of teachers and learners and their effects on language success and achievement. Successively, the effectiveness of verdicts for educators, students, syllabus designers, and future researchers are deliberated.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions such as pleasure, anger, and sadness are innate in human being, which means it is regular for psychological and social actions of people to be influenced by emotions, and education is no exception (Ge et al., 2019). Emotions are at the center of language education, and within previous decades, there is an emergent attentiveness in emotion inquiries in language teaching (Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele and Li, 2020). Emotions can affect learning on the whole (Pekrun et al., 2002), and language learning particularly (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). Although emotions are particular, multifarious, and challenging to understand, they are important in boosting influential teaching and learning (Shao et al., 2019). The position of emotions in language education has been significantly renowned by scholars (Saito et al., 2018; Bigelow, 2019), but it has relatively received little consideration in language learning (MacIntyre, 2002; Dewaele, 2015) due to the fact that a growing concentration on emotions in teaching has lately appeared in the research literature, considering this investigation domain from different perceptions or methods that have generated supportive perceptions into the active, complex, and sophisticated nature of human emotions (Agudo, 2018). Moreover, another considerable justification of the ignorance of emotions is that they are innately very personal and irrational, and accordingly, they are neither simply visible nor assessable (Ross, 2015). While several scholars accredited the significant function of emotion in the language process (e.g., Dewaele, 2005; Swain, 2013), investigations of emotion and language learning are dropping back the swiftly developing arena of emotion in psychology and learning (Goetz et al., 2010; Pekrun et al., 2019). Concerning the issue, Benesch (2012) pinpointed that emotions have been undoubtedly disregarded in the literature because they have been hard to capture.

It is just about the previous four decades that emotions have concentrated principally on negative emotions such as anxiety (Daubney et al., 2017) and boredom in language learning (Pawlak et al., 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2021), and it is approved that students experience a massive collection of different emotions all through their learning development (Mercer and Kostoulas, 2018; Li, 2020; Zhang and Tsung, 2021). Emotions are not only a cogent activity but also a societal one that occurs in individuals meeting in a societal context, in which feelings affect the educational experience of teachers and their reaction to the involvement of education and learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Applied linguists may have undervalued the applicability of feelings lately, owing to the power of intellectual and the untruthful belief that reviewing emotion is somehow unsystematic (Sharwood Smith, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the condition has reformed with the arrival of positive psychology (PP) as researchers stimulated by the PP movement have stated that not all types of emotions are negative, and they have attempted to boost eudemonic well-being (Ergün and Dewaele, 2021), so the consideration of scholars in the language education, instructors and teachers have been moved into positive emotions (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2016). The launch of PP in language education has developed indulgent of the array of emotions, educators and students confronted and predominantly the function that positive emotions can perform in helping education (Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele and Li, 2020; Wang et al., 2021), subsequently, emotions have a central role in education progression and success (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Li, 2020).

Both students and teachers similarly encounter various kinds of emotions alternating from constructive to destructive ones (King and Chen, 2019). In fact, Fried et al. (2015) declared that studies in the emotion realm have frequently concentrated on the emotions of students on the one hand. Emotions inspire the awareness of learners and activate the learning route that governs what is achieved and what is recalled. Several studies in different realms such as neuroscience, teaching, and psychology have demonstrated that emotions are dominant in education (Seli et al., 2016; Tyng et al., 2017). On the other hand, above and beyond the prominence of emotions in the learning, it is viewed as the central element of operational education (Hosotani and Imai-Matsumura, 2011) and an essential element of teaching quality (Day and Qing, 2009; Hosotani and Imai-Matsumura, 2011), and a large body of investigations in recent times have focused on the emotions of teachers, as well (Keller et al., 2014; Taxer and Frenzel, 2015).

Emotions, for students, have been defined as the dynamic powers of inspiration and enthusiasm in education (Dörnyei, 2005). White (2018) pinpointed that positive emotion in this field functions to boost the capability of being conscious of and notify things in the situation and increase mindfulness of language materials. Other scholars (e.g., Fredrickson and Losada, 2005; Dewaele et al., 2017) maintained that progressive emotions inspire interest, willingness to communicate, and support self-directed learning educational achievement, while lack of success may provoke lots of diverse emotions in learners,

which consequently may influence their presentation and manage their forthcoming guidelines (Pekrun and Perry, 2014).

In addition, teachers play a significant role in EFL classrooms in providing materials to learners, observing their progress, organizing interaction among learners, providing feedback, and evaluating their success (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021a). However, the place of teacher in the language process is more than that as they are responsible for handling the emotive sense of the classroom, building a constructive setting in the language learning classes, making social rapports among classmates, and preferably, instruction with pleasure, and confidence (Dewaele, 2018). Regardless of the anger and apprehension that teachers occasionally had in the classroom, for most individuals, teaching is regarded as a foundation of positive emotions, and these support their attentiveness for teaching within the classroom (Richards, 2020). Indeed, inquiries have indicated that while in the classroom, teachers undergo different emotions, for example, pleasure, burnout, superiority, anger, frustration, and apprehension (Chang, 2009; Frenzel et al., 2009; Sutton and Harper, 2009; Beilock et al., 2010; Fathi et al., 2021). The emotions of educators can form their perception, enthusiasm, and interactions with learners (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003); influence teaching efficacy, well-being, and work engagement of teachers regarding intellectual and motivational encouragement, classroom supervision, and support, that result in the success and accomplishment of learners (Frenzel et al., 2009; Greenier et al., 2021). Hagenauer and Volet (2014), and it plays a vital role in shaping the sense of proficient characteristics, assurance, success, and well-being of educators (Day and Qing, 2009; Li et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a significant correlation between the emotions of educators and learners as learners are regularly conscious and inclined by the emotions of instructors (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011).

The foremost roles of both positive and negative kinds of emotions that exist in language education have been discriminated as “broadening” and “narrowing” (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014), academically based on the “Broaden-and-Build Theory” (Fredrickson, 2003). In Fredrickson’s theory, she discriminates the roles of both types of emotions, asserting that the positive types can expand temporary thought-action collections of societies and shape their permanent individual foundations, fluctuating from behavioral and academic bases to societal and emotional properties, while negative ones are reversed, triggering simple persistence manners. Likewise, the other theory in this regard is the “Control-Value Theory” defining that human affection is utilized to differentiate kinds of emotions, that is to say, valence (pleasant vs. unpleasant) and activation (stimulating vs. disengaging). The control value theory perceives emotions as ranges of interconnected emotional developments, by which emotional, intellectual, motivational, and physical mechanisms are at prominence. This theory arranges for an integrative method for scrutinizing several types of emotions experienced in achievement settings, containing academic situations along with achievement circumstances in other life realms (Ismail, 2015).

Using these proportions concentrates four extensive sets of emotions: positive stimulating (e.g., satisfaction, confidence),

positive motivating (e.g., enjoyment, comfort), negative motivating (e.g., nervousness, embarrassment), and destructive aspects (e.g., tediousness, boredom) (Pekrun et al., 2017). The theory suggests that these emotions impact intellectual bases, enthusiasm to study, and use of learning approaches of learners, and techniques and consequently affecting their success (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012).

To sum up, the emotions of students have been deliberated recurrently in the literature (Gkonou et al., 2020), while the emotions of teachers have stayed in the shades of study and theory. It is frequently supposed that the educators are the utmost significant figures on the academic prospect (Pishghadam et al., 2021a), and their role to a large degree regulates the final achievement of both scholars and the teaching organization (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). However, to the best of the information of a researcher, the way both learners and their teachers react to emotions should be taken into account as it seems that they may impact the teaching of students in ways that may afterward turn into their intellectual growth. Consequently, extending the information on emotions undergone in the classroom by both teachers and learners is worth investigating on the one hand and their effects on language success and achievement on the other hand.

EMOTIONS AND LEARNING

Emotions can impact an individual in determining to study a language and to do activities in a classroom (Méndez Lopez and Pea Aguilar, 2013) and they added that both types of emotions, namely positive and negative, can have noteworthy effects on the enthusiasm of students. They declared that negative feelings such as anxiety and depression can boost learning, and they can also be regarded as constructive in the procedure of language education. Benesch (2017) preserved that language courses are incorporating both destructive and constructive emotions; the former hindering effective education and the latter nurturing them. Additionally, due to the interactional nature of the educator-learners relationship, they entail the incorporation of individually significant content and distinctiveness, which are simplified through relation of teachers and emotive considerations of students (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

The existing review of literature has acknowledged the function of emotions of teachers concerning various features of learning, namely teacher, education, learner, and scholarship. Primarily, it is extensively documented that emotion of teachers influences their teaching. The emotion of a teacher interweaves with the intellect of educators and impetus that is correlated with their teaching manners (Uitto et al., 2015). It is acknowledged that the emotion of a teacher impacts numerous facets of the perceptive procedures of teachers. For instance, they can stimulate their consideration, recall, and thoughtfulness (Golombek and Doran, 2014). In addition, other results demonstrated that the emotion of a teacher is connected to other features such as teacher identity, helplessness, individual and professional lives, and well-being (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2011;

Lee et al., 2013; Yin et al., 2017; Greenier et al., 2021). Certainly, emotions had a momentous effect on teacher growth in the instruction career (Fried et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies also have proved that emotions of teachers influence many parts of time of students in the class together with feelings of learners, learner-teacher relationships, engagement, stress, and enthusiasm (Becker et al., 2014; Van Uden et al., 2014; Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019; Kruk, 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021).

Empirical studies specified that the rapport between educators and learners is a perilous “emotive filter” (Zembylas, 2014). Nevertheless, it is suggested that educators want proper maintenance to progress a noble learner-teacher rapport in which a range of emotive determinations is restricted (Newberry, 2010). It is believed that educators with destructive feelings are prone to diminish the probabilities that learners will employ a higher degree of intellectual learning methods (Linnenbrink-Garcia and Pekrun, 2011). Teaching spaces that determine constructive emotions are more about generating a superior educational atmosphere that preserves the success and development of learners (Yan et al., 2011; Pishghadam et al., 2021b).

The Control-Value Theory

The control-value theory incorporates suggestions from expectancy value and attributional ways to deal with attainment emotions (Turner and Schallert, 2001) that are characterized as feelings identified with accomplishment exercises and their results of either success or disappointment. The theory sets that these feelings are stimulated by psychological evaluations of control over, and the emotional worth of, accomplishment exercises as well as their results (Pekrun and Perry, 2014). Control examinations comprise of the impression of capability of a person to effectively accomplish activities (i.e., scholarly self-ideas assumptions) and to achieve results (result assumptions). Worth examinations relate to the apparent significance of these exercises and their results (Pekrun et al., 2017). Moreover, the theory puts forward that these feelings, thus, impact accomplishment behavior and execution. Since execution results shape the ensuing impression of control over execution, one significant suggestion is that feelings, their examination precursors, and their exhibition results are connected by mutual causality. As far as mutual causality, the theory is predictable with corresponding impacts models for factors like self-ideas of learners (Marsh et al., 2005; Marsh and Craven, 2006).

The Broaden-and-Build Theory

As stated by Fredrickson (2004), the broaden-and-build theory proposes that constructive feelings work to broaden temporary thought-action collections of people and construct their permanent subjective foundations. The theory suggests three explicit impacts of positive emotions, including the widening of thought-action collections, the assembling of assets for the future, and the undoing of bothersome impacts of negative feelings (Fredrickson, 2013). Positive emotions empower practices like play, innovativeness, interest, and investigation, which are generally seen as advantageous in learning. These expanding practices differ from those created by a destructive emotive reaction. When tension is hard to stay away from, positive

emotions might even function as a precaution or defensive role contrary to negative feelings, like language nervousness (MacIntyre, 2017). Along with the broaden-and-build theory, the ramifications of bringing constructive feelings into language education could expand further than that of diminishing or fixing the impacts of negative feelings. This theory proposes that positive emotions expand the viewpoint of an individual student, working with commitment language, and investigation inside new settings. Such exercises may permit students to better observe L2 input (Mackey, 2006), assisting construct assets by including explicit language encounters coming from relational communications that gather social principle of students (Gregersen et al., 2014).

This theory presents that positive emotions work in at least four significant ways (Cohn and Fredrickson, 2006). First, to begin with, positive emotions will, in general, expand consideration and thinking of individuals, prompting an investigation and new learning. Second, positive feeling assists with fixing the lingering impacts of negative emotional encouragement. The third role of positive feeling is to advance versatility by setting off useful responses to distressing occasions, like working on cardiovascular recuperation and developing salient sensations of satisfaction and interest while under pressure. Fourth, positive feeling advances building individual assets, for example, social bonds brought about by grins, scholarly assets sharpened during innovative play, and even when younger practice self-safeguarding moves during a play.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The arrival of PP in language education and the specific domain of feeling and language learning resonates with a difference in attitude among language specialists, moving from a destructive concentration to a more positive, adjusted methodology for examining language education. PP is considered to be an interesting theme to bring into the investigation of feelings and language learning since it incorporates aspects like positive foundations, attributes, and emotions, all of which are among essential pertinence to the assessment and development of advantageous effective encounters in language classes. The review introduced in this study stresses the requirement for the investigation of feelings to have a more focal situation in principle, exploration, and practice in language learning. While the comprehension and administration of feelings are significant components of information and capacity of an educator, for students, feelings are significant in terms of how they explore and process their education. The present paper can familiarize language scholars, experts, teachers, and students with the main values of emotions and their use in language education.

The present review has significant implications for language instruction as well future inquiries in second language acquisition (SLA) research. The organization of emotions is a central element of awareness and capability of a teacher, while for students, they are fundamental to how they direct and develop their

education. In the language setting, developing positive emotions and reducing negative feelings of both educators and students could enhance inspiration, engagement, and achievement.

Learners inclined to positive emotions might encounter undeniable degrees of accomplishment mostly in light of the fact that such feelings are related to high-quality connections with friends and educators. Presently, the emotion of an educator is considered as a crucial research focus for several reasons that assume a critical and essential part in language learning and the well-being of learners (Fried et al., 2015). At present, educators are established to practice more negative than positive emotions (Thompson, 2014; Hassard et al., 2016) and educators have hurt from the same problematic and challenging issues that have been even worse recently (Yang et al., 2019). The emotion of a teacher has been acknowledged to affect the passionate situation in a classroom; thanks to its effects on learner-educator communications and teaching space manners (Schroeder, 2006). This burden has not facilitated the prevailing emotive state of educators (Thompson, 2014). In the same vein, the emotions of teachers affect their individual and proficient lives and eventually govern teacher efficiency (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). Similarly, it can be asserted that the nature of education learners receive is likewise impacted by the feelings of their educators. Scholastic quality is worse among educators who show negative feelings and disappointment in instructing as opposed to those who exhibit more constructive emotions (Frenzel et al., 2011; Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). First, regardless of whether positive or negative, the feelings of educators have a specific impact on their enthusiasm (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). Positive emotions are a significant, but not an entirely enveloping, component of intrinsic motivation. Notwithstanding, the intrinsic motivational level of the educator is often lowered by negative emotions (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). Second, the teaching approach is closely connected to the accomplishment of education of learners, which is firmly identified with the feelings of the educator (Mohammadjani and Tonkaboni, 2015).

The underlying empirical proof created in this review paper is delivering new thoughts, information, and experiences for L2 emotion researchers (Lee, 2014) and suggesting useful proposals for educators (Shao et al., 2019). The new advancement of investigations on emotions in psychology and teaching gives L2 teachers invigorating potential outcomes. Concerning language educators, they are prescribed to acquire information on psychology and get to know the significant ideas and segments of feelings of educators and to attempt to show their insight in their practice and states of mind and to invigorate the improvement of perspectives of students on the accomplishment of educators in the language classes. Furthermore, by teaching to determine personal aims, educators can motivate learners. They can urge students to attain self-satisfaction in completing an assignment effectively. The educators can practice making light of the negative emotions, since it is perilous to concentrate a lot on negative emotions because showing such impeding factors in the classes will have a bad effect on some learners. The incorporation of emotion paradigms into the language learning field not only helps to control current shortfalls in language inquiries, for example, procedural matters and assessment difficulties, but

also to provide new chances for the research populations of learning and psychology.

Regarding the language learners, they are recommended to concentrate on their emotions of educators and captivate the types of emotions, namely, pleasure in the educational field and a sensation of pleasure, and do not allow the destructive emotions to impact their fulfillment of learning a language and comprehend the ways wherein they are pursuing to grasp their scholastic proficiencies and for teachers especially to disclose the method in which students follow their language learning capabilities in the educational setting.

Syllabus designers should think through employing teaching techniques and strategies and utilizing mediation tasks and activities that nurture opinions of control of learners on their learning package to uphold their success both through increasing views of control, and by enlightening positive feelings and decreasing negative ones (Hamm et al., 2017). They are supposed to plan tasks based on desires, emotional states, and well-being of students that focus on the roles of emotions of educators and how the learners deduce their feelings, and the special effects of opinions of learners in the educational process. Since it is believed that achievement from emotion investigation in psychology and learning knowledge can support fundamental awareness into language achievement. It may function as a new stimulus in language education to plan further research for inspecting the emotive features of success.

Finally, future scholars can conduct some research incorporating the views of diverse participants in this respect;

therefore, enthusiastic researchers are suggested to study these constructs regarding other factors such as optimism, pleasure, engagement, and social behaviors such as intelligibility, credibility, and immediacy (Derakhshan, 2021). In particular, some empirical studies embedded in the theoretical rational aforementioned can be done to add the fresh and nutritious food to the emotional studies of SLA. As has been indicated, emotional factors in language education have not been equally investigated (Wang et al., 2021). In view of this, it is advocated that EFL teachers of the globe and applied linguists should put their effort into doing the related studies to flourish the emotional studies. Aside from this, a large body of research is quantitative rather than qualitative studies. The main reason for this may be due to the fact that it is less challenging for language educators to collect their research data. As is known, it is pretty time-consuming to collect and codify the interview protocols as well as reflective journals. Therefore, it is suggested that more qualitative studies be conducted in the near future. Last but not least, cross-cultural or cross-national studies should also be done because the variables of emotion-based education will, to some great extent, be influenced by the identity of participants.

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QH: conceptualization, writing of the draft, and checking language before this manuscript was ready for submission.

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Using Stronge Teacher Evaluation System to Assess the Effectiveness Level of Mr. Brown as an EFL Teacher in the Mind Your Language TV Show: An Attempt to Validate a Reflective Tool to Train Preservice EFL Teachers

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To develop a reflective tool for promoting teacher effectiveness among preservice EFL teachers, this article seeks to investigate the effectiveness degree of an EFL teacher as it is being depicted in a popular TV show. This is conducted using the Stronge teacher evaluation system to assess the main character's level of effectiveness as an EFL teacher (Mr. Brown) in the Mind Your Language TV show. Drawing upon the intersection of the character's effectiveness within the framework of characterization, representation, and perceived realism theory, a qualitative research method involving seven performance indicators of the Stronge teacher evaluation system was adopted to assess the main character. The findings showed that the character is a highly effective EFL teacher because his personal and professional characteristics are evidenced in the evaluation system's seven performance standards. This suggests that the Show can be used as a reflective tool by preservice EFL teachers to construct and enhance their professional identities and instructional practices. This work contributes to the existing knowledge of teachers' representation in movies and its implication in preservice EFL education by providing the first study on the representation of EFL teachers in a TV show. A future research direction is also presented.

Keywords: Mind Your Language, effective EFL teacher, reflective practice, TV show, teacher evaluation, teacher effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The question of what constitutes an effective teacher's personalities has been a subject of debate in the past decade (Rockoff et al., 2011; Ansari and Malik, 2013). This is owing to the belief that the effective learning of students depends on effective teaching of teachers (Alrefaee and Al-Ghamdi, 1987). Therefore, teachers need to be well aware of the objectives, goals, as well as other stakeholders' and students' expectations to which they are deemed to live up to (Mazandarani and Troudi, 2021). It can be observed that adjectives such as good, quality, and competent have been adopted interchangeably to describe excellent educators in several studies (Gower and Byrne, 2012; Miller, 2012; Goodwin and Kosnik, 2013). Common specific conduct and dispositions have been found among highly effective teachers. This includes the ability to use different approaches

and strategies needed to improve students' learning and achievement (Stronge et al., 2011) and possessing personal attributes such as perseverance and dedication in fighting for one's beliefs, a willingness to take risks to achieve students' academic goals, and pragmatism (Colker, 2008). Some experts also think that effective teachers should add instructional strategies (Harding and Parsons, 2011), classroom management (Gordon, 2012), and knowledge of the subject matter (Stronge and Tonneson, 2012) to their attributes and teaching practices. Nevertheless, considering the dynamic role of teaching and the variety of contexts in which teachers work (Lewis et al., 1999), there is no direct formula for what makes a teacher effective (Whitaker, 2013).

Over the years, the nature and purpose of teacher evaluation have evolved from a moralistic and ethical perspective that focuses on personal attributes to comprehensive learner-centered and classroom-based assessment (Ellett and Teddlie, 2003) and a system that supports the professional growth and performance accountability of teachers (Stronge et al., 2008). The latest and most widely adopted comprehensive teacher evaluation instrument is the Stronge teacher evaluation system developed from extant research related to effective teachers' qualities (Stronge, 2012). Its effectiveness in assessing the qualities of teachers in various dimensions has been reported in different contexts (Grant et al., 2013; Schoenlank, 2017; Lynch, 2019). Regarding teacher effectiveness evaluation in EFL/ESL higher education contexts, notable evaluation instrument is based on the learners' perception of their teachers in the aspect of English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective factors (Park and Lee, 2006). Another perceptive study involves investigating Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward teachers' wants, likes, dislikes, and ideals as to what constitute language teaching (Mazandarani and Troudi, 2021). Given the Stronge evaluation system's efficacy in helping school administrators to communicate with teachers regarding their instruction in several disciplines (Schoenlank, 2017). It will be interesting to study its effectiveness in evaluating an EFL teacher to promote accountability in EFL education, measure the progress of EFL learners, and the monitoring of EFL teacher quality (Superfine et al., 2012).

In the area of education, many studies on how teachers are represented in movies have been conducted. According to Raimo et al. (2008), teachers in film roles are portrayed as optimistic, sentimental, and unrealistic people (Burbach and Figgins, 1993), sensuality and exploitation of teens (Hill, 1995; Bauer, 1998), curriculum and instruction paradigm changers (Dalton, 1995; Lasley, 1998). With respect to teachers in different disciplines, movies on physical education (Barbero and Rodriguez, 2017), music (Brand, 2001), English literature (Kurniadi, 2017) teachers have been produced. Moreover, a group of researchers has explored and analyzed teaching strategies adopted by a teacher in the movie *Freedom Writers* (Zulfian et al., 2018). The key objective underlying these studies is to serve two functions. Firstly, they are used in teacher training for reflective practice (Nugent and Shaunessy, 2003). This is because movie offers surrogate experience upon which to develop an educational philosophy since most preservice educational programs do

not have sufficient teaching experience to reflect (Ryan and Townsend, 2010). Secondly, they are a valuable tool to foster learning in a classroom due to their audiovisual nature that stimulates emotions (Blasco et al., 2015). This is due to the affordance of moving images in films through a story or plot that provides a complete communicative situation. Such affordance stimulates interest and motivation vital for successful learning (Guest, 1997). In sum, there seems to be a reciprocal relationship between education and school movies.

Mind Your Language is a British sitcom created by Vince Powell and produced and directed by Stuart Allen. The TV show, which was aired between 1977 and 1979, has three seasons. The sitcom plot is centered on Jeremy Brown, a British EFL teacher who helps his immigrant students to learn English language and its culture. Given the EFL pedagogy of laughter that the Show and its protagonist offers to its global audience (Ellingson, 2018). It can be hypothesized that Mr. Brown's character in the sitcom can be used to model a highly effective EFL teacher, which can serve as a reflective instrument for students in preservice EFL education. Thus, this study evaluates the effectiveness level of Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher in the *Mind Your Language* TV show by using the Stronge teacher evaluation system. The remaining part of the paper begins with the design of the theoretical framework, followed by reviewing the literature, methodology, results, and discussion and finally, the conclusion, which gives a summary and critiques of the findings. This study provides an exciting opportunity to investigate the personalities and instructional practices of a typical EFL teacher. This is critical to understanding how a teacher should deal with the learners and meet their teaching expectations (Alzebaree and Hasan, 2020). The identified personalities can also be used as a reflective tool in preservice EFL education and promote instructional accountability among EFL teachers in public schools.

Theoretical Framework

A character is an individual or other being in a story (such as a novel, play, television series, film, or video game) (DiBattista, 2011). Characters should be plausible and consistent (Faisal, 2011). Alternatively, characterization is the method and process of creating and developing character in fiction (Latif, 2016). Jones (1968, p. 84) notes that characterization is the depiction of an individual's explicit images. Thus, the true picture of the characters involved in the story is portrayed through their actions, physical appearance, social status, social relationship, and personality of the main characters.

A representation is a written, audio, or visual portrayal of something or an individual (Beltrán, 2018). This term also refers to what picture and written-texts represent, the interpretation that they conceivably express, and how they come to adopt those meanings. It is pointed out that the study of representation also includes a long tradition of critique of how various social groups and identities have been represented in the popular culture more broadly. The author listed some scholarship such as feminist studies and critical race studies, which approach representation with a primary focus on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, colonization, and its aftermath, class, and ability. Finally, the author stated that one of the critical

approaches to studying representation is image analysis. An approach to learning representation that examines media images is one of this study's primary research methods.

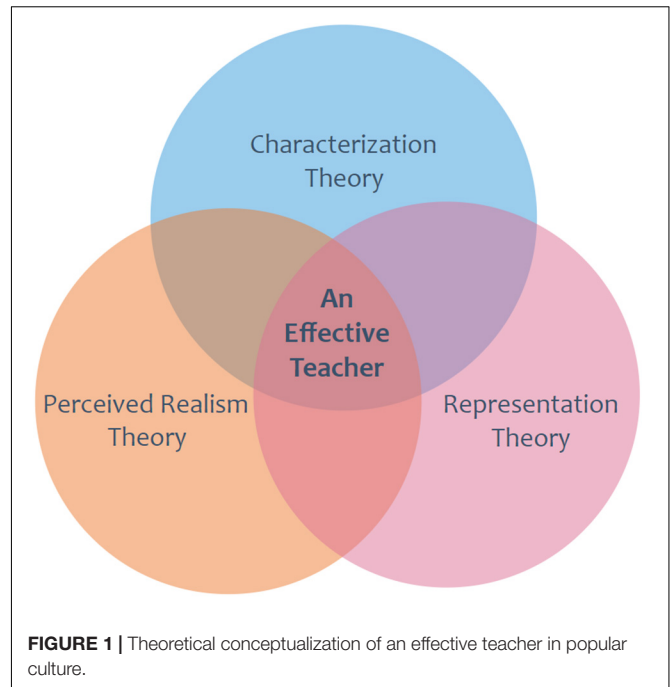
In a summary of Hall (2012), readers and audiences perceive media content as realistic, judge it to be like real life in some meaningful way or respond to it as though it were real. These perceptive responses may depend on the content's characteristics, such as its theme and genre, which are not fully determined. The author highlights various popular forms of perceived realism. This includes factual realism (whether what is portrayed happened), social realism (whether what is shown is like what one would expect to find in the real world), and narrative realism or narrative coherence (whether the events within a story are well explained and consistent). An empirical study has investigated the social effects of realism on TV messages (Taylor, 2005). The study reveals that the effects on viewers are more important if the message content is perceived to be real rather than fictional (Pouliot and Cowen, 2007). A study has also shown that perceived factuality is likely to influence viewers' involvement with an audiovisual stimulus, which causes the high intensity of emotional responses (Murry and Dacin, 1996).

In order to evaluate Mr. Brown as an effective EFL teacher, it is essential to analyze his character using the method of characterization. Variables such as his physical appearance, social status, personality, and relationship with students will be considered for the analysis. The researcher will capitalize on the fact that there is yet to be a study on how EFL teacher is represented in popular culture. Thus, based on representation theory, the writer will explore how image media depicts an EFL teacher's professional and personal characteristics. Lastly, considering the strong connection between reflection and emotion, the researcher will justify the adoption of film for reflective practice. This is based on the notion that factual realism with an audiovisual dimension of perceived realism is potent enough to stir up emotions needed for reflection among preservice EFL teachers. Finally, the successful evaluation of the main character using the Stronge teacher evaluation rubric will demonstrate the role of social realism in the Show. The Show reflects issues that are germane to themes in the real world of EFL education.

Thus, as shown in **Figure 1**, my research will be intersecting an effective EFL teacher within the theoretical framework of representation, perceived realism, and characterization. It is where these theories overlap my specific research focus is positioned as demonstrated in the following Venn diagram:

Literature Review

A large and growing body of literature has investigated good teacher's attributes and practices. Some view good teachers as professionals with constructivist principles and are committed to facilitating deep, engaged, experientially based, empowering, reflective, and lifelong learning among their students (Duarte, 2013). This view is supported by Harding and Parsons (2011), who writes that a teacher's pedagogical knowledge depends on his or her ability to engage learners, mediate and negotiate students to participate in their learning actively. Views on the competency and personality of good teachers have been



expressed by seeking the opinions of fellow teachers. In a study conducted among early career teachers in Canada, good teachers are described in terms of their core competence (classroom management, adaptive teaching practice, and knowledge of teaching resources) and attribute (optimistic, contributing to the school community, and passion for teaching) (Bernard, 2015). Similarly, a study conducted through an observational analysis concluded that an effective teacher should possess instructional delivery skills, student assessment skills, classroom management skills, and pleasing personalities (Stronge et al., 2011). With regard to the characteristics of EFL Teachers, Park and Lee (2006) compared the opinions of high school English teachers and their Korean students. The study showed that while teachers emphasized the importance of English proficiency, students prioritized pedagogical knowledge. Conversely, Alzebaree and Hasan (2020) reported that Kurdish high school students placed more importance in English proficiency. Practices such as reading English well, managing classroom properly and being confident and having self-control are also regarded as the quality of effective EFL teachers. It can be argued that there is a copious of studies on the characteristics of an effective teacher. The gap in the literature is the degree of effectiveness of an EFL teacher.

The relevance of teacher performance evaluation is centered on its capacity to foster educational reforms (Stronge, 2018) and as a tool to improve instructional strategies (Goldrick, 2002). For example, it can be used to ascertain the training needs of a teacher by identifying the strengths and inadequacies to facilitate further professional development (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). According to the authors, it can also serve as a tool to make teachers accountable for their performance and relates the level of performance to different actions taking during their career. The past decades have seen publications on the historical involvement

of a teacher evaluation system. For example, the Hay McBer model of teacher effectiveness (McBer, 2000), which introduces “professional characteristics,” “teaching skills,” and “classroom climate” as measures of teacher effectiveness (p. 6), Campbell et al.’s (2003) conception of differentiated model, discussing five domains of difference between their proposed differential model and those of others, and Cheng and Tsui’s (1999) multimodels of teacher effectiveness are a combination of seven models of teacher effectiveness. The most popular one is the Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance evaluation standard (Stronge, 2012). It is a comprehensive uniform evaluation system that involves the teacher evaluator (principal or supervisor), and leaders. Its popularity in over 20 countries is based on its uniform evaluation for teachers, principals, and leaders, its comprehensiveness and easy implementation of its seven research-based professional standards custom design for teachers, result-based standards for assessing students’ progress and promoting instructional accountability (Stronge and Tonneson, 2012). Lastly, a study has focused on teachers’ attitudes toward an evaluation system (Paufler and Sloat, 2020). A similar study in the Iranian EFL context revealed that items such as transparency, fairness, multiple measurement, formative evaluation, and cognizance of unequal power relations are critical for an effective evaluation system (Mazandarani and Troudi, 2021). However, far too little attention has been paid to the application of existing teacher evaluation systems in EFL education.

Most current researchers are paying attention to how teachers can acquire character traits critical and essential for successful teaching. The impact of Mindfulness Meditation (MM) on trait personality characteristics is one of the primary studies (Fabbro et al., 2020). MM has been proven to foster positive improvements in teachers’ personality/character traits and self-concept (Campanella et al., 2014; Crescentini and Capurso, 2015). One of the most common instruments employed in this line of study has been the Big Five Personality Inventory BFI (Costa and McCrae, 1992), addressing five different personality traits: (a) extraversion (related to positive affectivity and sociality); (b) neuroticism (reflecting negative affectivity, such as anxiety or depression); (c) agreeableness (encompassing empathy, cooperation, and altruism); (d) conscientiousness (related to self-discipline, self-efficacy, and control); and (e) openness to experience (reflecting curiosity for cognitive exploration). The instrument has been used to examine preservice teachers’ personality trajectories (Corcoran and O’Flaherty, 2016) and compare the personality traits of preservice elementary school teachers in Spain and Turkey (Perkmen et al., 2018). These established studies have important implications for developing personality traits critical for effective teaching practices in ESL/EFL education.

Teachers’ public perceptions are influenced mainly by popular culture (Dalton, 2010), and especially movies (Resnick, 2018). That explains the copious of studies on constructing teachers’ identity by the media (Farhi, 1999; Kirby, 2016). Teachers are portrayed as heroic (Farhi, 1999) and professionals that persevere during frustration (Edelman, 1990, p. 18). The trajectory of teacher representation in movies has also been argued on how male and female teachers were depicted. In contrast to

male teachers who are shown to possess masculine power in a social space, female teachers are portrayed as professional in conflict with maternal and allure powers in a domestic space (Dalton and Linder, 2008). Recent representation is now focusing on the concept of “goodness” or “highly effective teacher” (Dalton, 2013). Some authors focus on the personal attributes of teachers in the movie, like *Ms. Sinclair* (Kurniadi, 2017). In the same vein, Zulfian et al. (2018) depict teaching strategies and class management skill demonstrated by a teacher in a movie like (*Freedom Writer*). In sum, these studies provide important insights into how teachers’ personalities and professional practices are constructed in film.

Reflection is regarded as a vital core practice in preservice teacher education (Robichaux and Guarino, 2012). One effective way to promote reflection in this program is to use films as the platform to stimulate interest, motivation and reflection (Ryan and Townsend, 2010). Various studies have demonstrated the positive role of films in enhancing the professional practices of student teachers. Tan (2006) found that films help students to reflect on their personal beliefs and assumptions, solve their personal and professional obstacles and apply the implications to the local context, then meet their students’ specific educational needs, and finally, review and change personal instructional goals, methods, and resources. A study design to help student–teachers to reflect on their complex and sensitive aspect of teacher identity involves identifying educational taboos in Half Nelson and All Things Fair (Van Beveren et al., 2018). The result shows that the rhetorical perspective adopted as a methodological approach helps students to identify and understand the complex and sensitive aspects that affect teaching and teachers’ identities. In a nutshell, student–teachers can develop their professional identity through admired teachers’ depicted in media images (Kirby, 2016).

Given this backdrop, there is a lacuna in the literature with regard to reporting EFL teacher’s representation in films and the application of teacher performance evaluation system (TEPES) for assessing EFL teacher effectiveness. Thus, having identified Mind Your Language TV show as the only existing sitcom that depicts the personal and professional characteristics of a typical EFL teacher, the questions underlying this research was:

What is the effectiveness level of Mr. Brown (an EFL teacher) in the Mind Your Language TV show using Stronge teacher evaluation system?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

Previous studies on movie rely on researcher’s interpretation. The methodology used by the investigator is qualitative descriptive research. In a qualitative research design, the meaning is not explicitly revealed, but it is constructed (Schreier, 2012). The study is intended to decode the signs that cause the main character “Mr. Brown” to be a real representation of an effective EFL teacher in the TV show “*Mind Your Language*.” Sandelowski (2000, p. 4) says that qualitative descriptive designs are typically

an eclectic but realistic and well-considered mix of sampling, and data collection, evaluation, and representational techniques.

Source of Data

The data for this analysis was extracted from episodes of *Mind Your Language*. It is a British sitcom that premiered on ITV in 1977. It was produced by London Weekend Television and directed by Stuart Allen. Three series were made by LWT between 1977 and 1979 and briefly revived in 1985 (or 1986 in most ITV regions) with six of the original cast. The Show is set in an adult education college in London and focuses on the class in English as a Foreign Language directed by Mr. Jeremy Brown (Barry Evans), who is the main character. The plot of *Mind Your Language* focuses on Jeremy Brown, an EFL teacher who works at a school managed by Dolores Courtney, and his experiences that his students to learn English and its culture. It is a show of over 40 episodes with four seasons. The sitcom was chosen as a source of data collection because it provides EFL pedagogy of laughter to its global audience (Ellingson, 2018). That is, the Show as an edutainment adopts humor to teach and motivate viewers across the world to learn English and its culture. This reduces anxiety, tension, and stress (Berk, 2000) critical for successful passive learning of English among the viewers (Garner, 2006).

Instrumentation

Concerning EFL teacher effectiveness, parameters such as English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective factors have been adopted (Park and Lee, 2006). However, the instrument is developed based on the perception of learners. It does not take account of fellow teachers and school administrators, nor does it involve teachers' self-perception. This drawback has led to the creation of Teacher Performance Evaluation System (TPES) by James Stronge (Dinwiddie County Public Schools, 2012). TPES is a rational and rigorous evaluation system that provides sufficient detail and accuracy so that both teachers and evaluators reasonably understand job expectations. It uses a two-tiered approach to define teacher performance expectations consisting of seven criteria and multiple performance metrics. Teachers will be graded based on the performance standards using performance appraisal rubrics. This instrument's choice to assess the character is based on its robustness in covering all dimensions of teacher quality, its popularity as well as acceptability in over 20 countries (Stronge and Tonneson, 2012). Reference to the dimensions of a past instrument developed by Park and Lee (2006) overlap with some of the performance indicators of Stronge's instrument. However, the latter's instrument does not cover EFL teachers' professionalism, an aspect critical for assessing their professional relationship with other teachers and school and student progress, which serves as a self-assessment skill that helps teacher measure student learning progress. The TPES provides a balance between structure and flexibility (Dinwiddie County Public Schools, 2012). According to the source, it is prescriptive in that it describes common purposes and standards, thereby guiding effective instructional practice. Furthermore, it provides flexibility, thereby allowing for creativity and individual teacher initiative. Stronge et al. (2008) argued that the tool was initially developed to promote teachers'

professional development and performance accountability as well as schools' improvement. Also, Dinwiddie County Public Schools (2012) believed that the performance indicators are constructed to illustrate observable, tangible behaviors for each standard. They are the types of performance that will occur if a standard is being fulfilled.

Furthermore, the list of performance indicators is not exhaustive. In other words, it is not supposed to be prescriptive or a checklist. However, based on the number of indicators meet in each performance standard, teachers will be rated in the order of highly effective (teacher surpasses the established standard), effective (teacher meets the expected standard), partially effective (teacher is often performing below the established standard), and ineffective (teacher perform consistently perform below the established standard), respectively. For example, an effective teacher is expected to meet the indicators in each of the seven performance standards. Thus, Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System (STEPES) was adapted to evaluate Mr. Brown as an effective teacher. In formulating the Performance Standard Indicators (PSI), and the accompanying evidence for each standard, the discipline (EFL), previous classroom observation form adopted in different contexts (Dinwiddie County Public Schools, 2012) and the age group (adult) were considered. Stronge (2012) checklist is divided into seven performance standards (professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism, and student progress). Each performance standard and the corresponding indicators are adapted and redefined as follows:

Professional knowledge: The teacher demonstrates an appreciation of the curriculum, subject matter, and the formative needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

Instructional planning: The teacher plans to use the school's curriculum, appropriate methods, tools, and data to meet the needs of all students.

Instructional delivery: The teacher promotes learning by utilizing an assortment of instructional techniques to meet students' needs.

Assessment of and for student learning: The instructor systematically utilizes all relevant information to assess student academic progress, guide instructional content, and delivery methods and provide students with timely feedback.

Learning environment: The instructor makes use of tools, routines and procedures to provide an atmosphere that is respectful, constructive, secure, student-centered, and conducive to learning.

Professionalism: The teacher is committed to professional integrity, communicates efficiently, takes responsibility for professional development and participates in it, and resulting in better students' learning outcome.

Student progress: The teacher's job results in acceptable, and measurable student academic progress. That is, teacher's mandate to foster students' learning is fulfilled.

Data Collection Procedure and Justification

The procedures of data collection used are visual observation and documentation. In analyzing the data, the descriptive analysis technique is used to identify and analyze the teaching strategies and the teacher's personality in the Show. Among the four seasons aired during the chosen period, three were selected for analysis. This is because the fourth seasons' unavailability on YouTube (the most extensive video sharing and depository in the world). The YouTube playlist of the Show uploaded by Daily Laughter, Asian Streysart, and other individuals were chosen interchangeably for analysis in missing episodes. Season 1, 2, 3 have 13, 8, and 8 episodes, respectively. Suppose one of the episodes selected as part of a multiple-part episode, all episodes from the series were considered and analyzed. The number of selected episodes was based on a study by Manganello et al. (2008) that sampling seven episodes from a TV season was necessary to draw character-based conclusions. This research represents a much more robust and systematic approach than this recommendation, similar to Lasekan (2021) method.

Mind Your Language was chosen because it is the only existing TV show that depicts an EFL teacher's character. The TV Series' choice over a movie is based on the fact that the latter offer more elaborate content for analysis, being a 3-year TV show with over 40 episodes. The investigator viewed each meaningful contact exchange multiple times. First the researcher watched the entire episode, taking notes on which interaction met the evidential characteristic and teaching techniques formulated in the checklist of Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance Evaluation. The researcher transcribed the correspondence between the instructor and a student or students in the second viewing. The researcher took notes on the interaction meaning in the final viewing, subtle verbal intonations, and any non-verbal images. Next, each of the main interactions was coded and corresponded to the seven performance standards. Professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, and professionalism and student progress.

Data Analysis

In this study, the qualitative content analysis research method was used, and the data analysis is conducted according to the adapted procedures put forward by Lacko (2011). The first step in content analysis is the determination of research objectives. In this study, the researcher's main objective was to portray Mr. Brown's character in Mind Your Language TV show as an effective teacher using STEPES as a checklist for evaluation. The researcher aimed to identify the teaching strategies and characteristics of the main character that match the seven performance standards of the evaluation system.

The essential unit of the investigation was analyzing of the interaction between the teacher and students. The interaction had to have lasted at least 5 s to count as important and is expected to be crucial for advancing the story. Significance assessments are based on the rationale of Ye and Ward (2010) analysis unit.

Manifest and latent content analysis were the data analysis used in this report. They are described in details as follows:

Manifest Content Analysis: It refers to the process of encoding visible or surface content (Neuman, 2000). In other words, quantitative content analysis entails categorizing the material according to predefined and precise characteristics (Dowler, 2004).

Latent Content Analysis: It involves the process of determining the underlying, implicit meaning of a text's content (Neuman, 2000). Thus, the meaning of words, phrases, or terminology is subjective, necessitating some semantic analysis (Dowler, 2004).

Using a single coder for this study is justified and reliable because the coder is knowledgeable about the subject matter (Campbell et al., 2013). The researcher's knowledge is based on years of watching every episode of the series. Similar to study conducted by Lasekan (2021), several steps were taken as a lone researcher to improve the analysis's reliability. This includes discussing the coding and analysis with other colleagues who are strong followers of the show. This process which is called "member checking" entails sharing coded field note excerpts and discuss coding and analysis helps in reconciling views on the rating of professional and personal characteristics depict by Mr. Brown (Burant et al., 2007).

In this study, with the help of the Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance checklist (Stronge, 2012), explicit categories were developed for the analysis of Show. This involves interpreting and matching with adapted Stronge's proposed evidential traits and strategies of each performance standard with personal characteristics of the teacher and its teaching strategies in both in-class and out-class. This is followed by coding of manifest and latent themes. The researcher matches the themes with the evidential characters and teaching strategies of each performance standard.

To determine the degree of effectiveness of Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher, a seven-point Likert scale ranging from ineffective (1), lowly effective (2), slightly effective (3), neutral effective (4), moderately effective (5), very effective (6), and highly effective (7) (Joshi et al., 2015). The scale is used to correspond to the TEPES 7 performance standards. Therefore, the total number of personal or professional characteristics of Mr. Brown evidenced in all the performance standards determines his effectiveness as a teacher.

RESULTS

This study identifies and evaluate the personal and professional characteristics of Mr. Brown in the "Mind Your Language" TV show using Stronge teacher evaluation system. As shown in **Supplementary Table 1**, evidence from different observation forms of each performance standard and the corresponding indicator revealed that Mr. Brown is a highly effective EFL teacher.

Professional knowledge involves teachers showing an understanding of the subject and meeting the need of the students. Mr. Brown knowledge of English as a native speaker of the language and its qualification as an EFL teacher is expressed

in Season 1, Episode 1. The school principal claimed that she requested a female teacher, but the Ministry of Education sent her a male teacher. Thus, for working with the Ministry of Education, it can be argued that Mr. Brown is qualified and licensed EFL teacher. Regarding the establishment of English communication to ensure that students needs are met as adult learners, Mr. Brown adopts the concept of repetition by checking students' understanding. He is also aware that the students are immigrants in Britain; thus, they should learn and practice tasks that helps them to communicate easily in British society. For example, he gave them a task that is suitable for an adult. They were asked to do sightseeing tour in England to practice their English conversation.

Instructional planning is the second performance standard. The indicator includes a paced lesson, creating a lesson that causes critical thinking and adapting the curriculum to meet the students' needs. With the way the teacher instructs, it suggests that the teacher plans his lesson before the class begins. For example, the Crossroad Game for class activity was prepared on the blackboard before the beginning of the class. In Season 2, Episode 2, Sentence Structure development was taught systematically. That is an indication that the lesson was systematically planned. Also, the teacher adopts the standard curriculum to meet student needs. This is manifested in Season 1, Episode 2 when he justified his personalized curriculum to the Ministry of Education's local inspector.

Instructional delivery centered mainly on the strategies adopted by Mr. Brown. This includes using questioning techniques on a wide variety of topics. Topics such as music, the royal family of England and Shakespeare were adopted to teach British culture. This helps in facilitating a higher level of thinking. The teacher helps the students in providing feedback to each other. Being a multicultural class, the students collaborate by helping each other interpret and explain the teacher's idea in the classroom. In addition, numerous instructional strategies such as the art of conversation, joke, game, debate, and excursion were adopted to facilitate learning inside and outside the classroom.

Assessment of/for learning focus on a systematic way of providing feedback to students and measuring students' progress. One of the scenes shows how the teacher gives feedback to students based on the previously assigned homework. Students were also informed about the structure of their lower Cambridge examination. With respect to preparing students for the final exam, a mock is given as a formative test to prepare students for the final exam.

Learning environment involves creating a conducive environment for effective learning. Being a classroom full of students from different countries, maintaining an inclusive environment to make the student comfortable in the classroom is critical. Arranging the class in a manner to facilitate effective learning is also demonstrated. For example, the classroom is rearranged by asking two students to sit in front of the class while using the art of conversation to facilitate speaking practice. The teacher respects his Japanese student by greeting him Japanese to promote cultural acceptance. An inclusive classroom is shown when extra attention is given to new students with lower level of English proficiency. Several occasions revealed how conflict is

resolved between students from different cultures and religions. Especially between a Sikh and Muslim student. An atmosphere where students provide one another moral support for learning through encouragement was revealed in the Show.

Professionalism as one of the performing standards of a good teacher involves teachers upholding and committing to professional learning. The main character does not demonstrate this practice. Still, professional ethics concerning manner and dressing are revealed in the Show. The teacher is seen dressing professionally throughout the Show. An ethical relationship is also maintained with all of his students, especially toward a student expressing an unsolicited flirtatious attitude toward him. Several instances are also shown when teacher communicate with the family member of his student to resolve their personal problems. Thus, he can be described as a caring teacher. Furthermore, a professional and collegiate relationship is built between the teacher and principal to improve student learning. For example, the principal and teacher work together on how to improve students' learning outcomes.

Student progress involves assessing the work of the teacher result in an acceptable and appropriate student academic progress. The Show demonstrates evidence in the improvement of one of the student's oral communication named Jamila. The student was not fluent in the first season of the Show, but she becomes fluent by the end of the second season. The teacher is also monitored continuously by the principal to ensure that the goal of fostering the students' English proficiency is fulfilled.

DISCUSSION

It is interesting to know that the main character is a highly effective modern EFL teacher. This is because Mr. Brown fulfilled the standard performance indicator of each of the seven performance standards. This includes professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism, and student progress. That implies Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher has sustained high performance over period of time, his behaviors have strong positive impact on learners and school climate and can serve as a role model to other EFL teachers (Stronge, 2018). In other words, based on the set standard to assess Mr. Brown's effectiveness as EFL teacher, the character depicts all the PSI except in the area of pursuant of professional development and following the local curriculum in the Show. The inadequacy of the latter was justified through the need to use personalized curriculum to meet the students' specific needs. In sum, the effectiveness level of Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher, which is established through the analysis of his character provides a clear understanding of how the profession is represented in a popular culture. Theoretically, the researcher has succeeded in depicting the character (DiBattista, 2011) of Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher through its interaction with the students in the Show. As a result of this, the representation (Beltrán, 2018) of an EFL teacher can be understood in the TV show. The teacher's positive assessment with the use of Stronge TEPES is a demonstration of perceived reality (Hall, 2012), which is capable of stirring up the emotion

needed for reflective practice among preservice teachers. This study is consistent with previous research on the role of film in shaping the belief system of people (Mariani, n.d.).

In consistence with the study conducted by Zulfian et al. (2018), some of the teaching strategies adopted by Mr. Brown in this work are similar to the ones identified in the *Freedom Writers* movie. This included games, field trips, and class discussion. However, in contrast to previous findings (Brand, 2001; Barbero and Rodriguez, 2017), this is the first study to evaluate the effectiveness of an EFL teacher by considering a TV Series that avail the considerable amount of content for identifying the characteristics of the teacher. In addition, unlike the previous study that focuses on a teacher's personality (Kirby, 2016), this study adopts a robust and well-acceptable approach to evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher by considering both the personalities and other significant criteria that define a 21st-century teacher. Moreover, the TEPEs as an instrument is validated in EFL education because some of its performance standards is similar to previous tool developed by Park and Lee (2006) to assess the characteristics of EFL teachers. The overlap items in both instruments are encapsulated in the subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills identified by the authors, and it has been used to assess the perception of Kurdish high school students toward the characteristics of their EFL teachers successfully (Alzebaree and Hasan, 2020). Therefore, adopting TEPEs to evaluate EFL teachers is effective in identifying the key competencies of an EFL teacher.

Having established Mr. Brown as a highly effective EFL teacher, it can be argued that the Show is a valuable popular culture that perpetuates the personalities, teaching strategies, classroom management, and professionalism of an English teacher. As a highly effective EFL teacher, Mr. Brown can serve as a role model to other EFL teachers. That is, his personalities can be used to promote reflective practice among preservice English teachers through journal writing, which is an efficient way to boost reflections after the students have watched the visual (Holly, 2002). The character of Mr. Brown can be used to carry out self-examination of one's aims, beliefs, assumptions, and actions (Pollard and Tann, 1987), resolve one's own personal and professional obstacles (Dewey, 1933), understand the socio-cultural implications of teaching and learning (Zeichner and Liston, 1987) and modify one's skills in response to the learners' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Such reflections will empower a preservice teacher to develop their intellect and learn autonomously to unravel the effective approach to teaching EFL learners. Furthermore, this Show can trigger reflection regarding the education myth (Van Beveren et al., 2018). For example, a debate on teachers' gender staminality to work in a harsh condition was mentioned in the Show. The principal's initial belief is that Mr. Brown will not last in his teaching job because he is a man. However, the Show proves otherwise by portraying a male's capability to teach EFL effectively in a chaotic and multicultural classroom. Finally, the character of Mr. Brown is suitable enough to teach and promote teacher effectiveness in preservice and in-service EFL education. Other than the adapted teacher evaluation system of Stronge, the researcher can argue that if the students were to evaluate Mr. Brown, they would

have rated him as a good teacher. Their rating would have been based more on his personality rather than his pedagogical skill or qualification to teach English. For example, In Season 3, Episode 4, the students fought for Mr. Brown's reinstatement when he temporarily lost his job while he was trying to secure a better-paid job in another school. According to one of the students, she testifies, "a new teacher won't be as nice as Mr. Brown." With respect to the local inspector official from the Ministry of Education, Mr. Brown is commended as a remarkable man for his teaching style. The official says in Season 1, Episode 2, "His teaching methods may be revolutionary, but they appear to be working." Another profound practice shown by the main character is assigning homework as a positive reinforcement to improve learning outcomes. The writer observes that students are interested in English, but they are easily distracted during classroom activities. Thus, whenever students are not making significant progress in their learning or causing a distraction during class activities, the teacher assigns more homework to his students as a form of positive reinforcement. Another important practice is the taking of attendance at the beginning of the class. It can be argued that the teacher understands the importance of attendance so that the learning outcome can be expedited. Finally, it is essential to reveal the flaws of the teachers. These flaws are related to his professional ethics. In Season 1, Episode 2, the teacher was seen coming late to the class. Also, while the principal was testing the students' progress of learning in the teacher's presence, Mr. Brown was trying to provide answers to the students so that they could answer the principal's question. Thus, even though he can be considered a quality teacher by an acceptable and standardize teacher evaluation system, the teacher still have flaws that can trigger reflection among preservice teachers, which helps them change or modify their values, beliefs, and actions (Tan, 2006).

As mentioned in the literature, studies have identified an effective EFL teacher's characteristics based on perceptive views of EFL learners in different contexts (Mazandarani and Troudi, 2021). The identified personality traits portrayed by Mr. Brown are consistent and overlap with those of Park and Lee (2006), who identified pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency and socio-affective skills as characteristics of effective teachers. These findings may help EFL teacher to understand how they can be dealing with the learners and also meet their teaching expectations (Alzebaree and Hasan, 2020).

The identified personal attributes in this study have offered an opportunity to investigate the development of personality traits among EFL teachers. Given a considerable amount of literature that has been published on the role of MM in boosting teachers' personalities (Crescentini and Capurso, 2015; Fabbro et al., 2020), little is known about its application in ESL/EFL education. Thus, a further study focusing on operationalizing MM for the formation of identified personal and professional traits among EFL teachers is suggested.

One of the critical factors responsible for the popularity of implementing the Stronge TEPEs (2006) is the increasing demand for instructional accountability among teachers in several contexts (Lynch, 2019). According to the author, the demands speak to higher instructional expectations and the need

for the school administrator to be abreast of instructional practices occurring in the classroom more diligently. In its application, numerous school administrators believe the evaluation system is valuable in communicating with teachers regarding their instruction (Schoenlank, 2017). As far as this study is concerned, TEPES has been proven to be efficient in evaluating the effectiveness of an EFL teacher. That suggests that the system can catalyze English class improvement, professional growth, and performance accountability of teachers (Stronge et al., 2008). Moreover, this instrument can help school administrators to set higher expectations for teaching and learning English at public and private schools. They will help English teachers carry out purposeful discussions that will yield good results in teaching and learning English (Zarei et al., 2019). In addition, the evaluation system can be used to foster reforms (Stronge, 2018) and enhance instructional strategies in ESL/EFL education (Goldrick, 2002). Moreover, it can serve as a tool to carry out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of EFL teachers to facilitate their professional development and make teachers accountable for their performance (Santiago and Benavides, 2009).

The sitcom and its protagonist were chosen as sources of data collection because it offers EFL pedagogy of laughter to its global audience (Ellingson, 2018). The current study has shed more light on how Mr. Brown uses jokes and humor to carry out his English instruction and management of the classroom. That speaks to the importance of using appropriate humor to facilitate foreign language learning in the classroom (Jansson, 2016). Also, Mr. Brown exceptional skill in using a game to facilitate language learning confirmed the pertinence of his teaching practice in the 21st-century classroom. This practice further supports the importance of ludic pedagogy, a teaching philosophy that emphasizes the importance of play, games, and fun while maintaining academic rigor (Broussard, 2011). Lastly, the relevance of this Show in today's modern classroom is demonstrated in the way a modern teacher evaluation system rated the quality of an EFL teacher that lives in the 1970s highly. This is an indication that as long as education is always in a state of transition, there will always be places for old teaching approaches within the EFL education (Luther, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The current study's main goal was to use the Stronge teacher evaluation system to assess the effectiveness level of Mr. Brown as an EFL teacher in Mind Your Language TV show. This study has shown that the character is a highly effective teacher because his personal and professional characteristics are evidenced by all the seven performance standards of the evaluation system.

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- The results of this study indicate that his character in the Show as a quality EFL teacher can be used as a positive role model and reflective tool to train preservice EFL teachers on how to enhance their professional identities and instructional practices. Consequently, it helps them to become highly effective teacher. Concerning EFL teachers in public school, the personal characteristics identified in this study can be used by school administrators to promote instructional accountability among their EFL teachers. This research add to a growing body of literature on teachers' representation in movies and its implication in preservice education. This is the first study reporting on the representation of EFL teachers in a TV show. In addition, this is the first time that the Stronge teacher evaluation system has been used successfully to assess a teacher's image in popular culture. Thus, this assessment tool can be used to evaluate teachers' personal and professional characteristics in different school movies. Finally, the generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, Mr. Brown's effectiveness is based on his character as an EFL teacher that teaches only adult learners. Also, the dataset was analyzed by a single rater; therefore, the analyses were based on the researcher's interpretation. Thus, his effectiveness should be interpreted with caution when it comes to teaching both young and adult EFL learners. Another limitation lies in the fact that only a qualitative method was adopted. Thus, triangulation method is required for collecting more robust data. More research is needed to better understand how this TV show can be used to promote philosophical reflections in preservice English teachers' education.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author designed the research and wrote the manuscript.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648760/full#supplementary-material>

Supplementary Table 1 | Assessment of Mr. Brown effectiveness as an EFL teacher using Stronge teacher evaluation system.

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A Review of Teachers' Sentiments and Attitudes in Inclusive Education in China

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Students should receive appropriate and comprehensive educational opportunities regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and even probable disabilities or exceptionalities. For this purpose, governments and educational boards have agreed to investigate the concept of inclusive education as a new paradigm where students can benefit from materials and classroom environment whether they are ordinary students or students with special needs. Chinese educational government has also adopted inclusive education within its pedagogic program since the middle of the 1990s. In this regard, some well-known researchers highlighted the impact of teachers' attitudes, sentiments, and concerns in inclusive education as a driving force toward student support and rapport. Moreover, the cultural background has also been emphasized in studies of inclusive education. Hence, it is necessary to employ the proposed and standardized attitude, sentiment, and concern scales, as well as the translated version to measure the factors affecting the proper implementation of inclusive pedagogy. The present study was an attempt to review related studies on teachers' attitudes and sentiments, particularly in China. Findings suggest that cultural differences might not necessarily contribute to the successful implementation of inclusive programs; however, pre-service or in-service teachers have demonstrated that higher levels of sentiment (efficacy), as well as positive attitude, can lead to the efficient provision of materials and building a supportive classroom environment for ordinary students and more importantly student with special needs.

Keywords: teacher training, inclusive education, attitude, sentiment, Chinese educational government, supportive classroom environment

INTRODUCTION

Educators and educational systems have always attempted to provide equal and appropriate education to students with special needs. Nevertheless, according to Calgary Board of Health (2008), the concept of inclusion in education started to refer to providing opportunities to all students together, particularly those who belong to minorities, come from poor families, and are vulnerable. Besides, Loreman (1999) and Andrews and Lupart (2000) believed that educating all students impartially and within a shared instructive context is the key to inclusive education.

Loreman et al. (2008) asserted that mutual acceptance among students is regarded as a crucial aspect of inclusion classrooms where students can learn more and experience improved self-efficacy

and motivation. Consequently, along with significant educational success among students with exceptionalities, inclusion education has also helped ordinary students improve academically (Demeris et al., 2008).

Teachers' sentiments regarding the special educational needs for target students as well as teachers' positive attitude toward inclusion in education can lead to a better understanding of students' special conditions and provision of more appropriate support (Burke and Sutherland, 2004). Hobbs and Westling (1998) asserted that appropriate training as well as positive experiences with exceptional students can result in teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusion.

In addition, Forlin (2008) argued that it is imperative to design and modify teacher education programs consistent with the advent of the educational inclusion paradigm. For instance, according to Article 24 proposed by United Nation (2006), new teacher training courses should focus on the implementation of proper techniques, materials, and communication strategies tailored at supporting all students, even those with disabilities or special needs.

Inclusion in education has been introduced and developed around the globe for the last 4 decades. Deng and Harris (2008) proposed that inclusion programs emerged in the 1980s in China with a focus on providing mandatory schooling for students with disabilities. Moreover, Yan and Deng (2018) asserted that the Chinese Department of Education introduced the Action Plan for Implementing Inclusive Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools in 2013. Consequently, it is necessary to conduct related studies to determine factors influencing and the role of teachers' attitudes and sentiment toward inclusion education. Hence, the present study aimed at investigating previous studies on inclusion in China to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as to promote them within the Chinese context.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Effective and constant education should be delivered to every child in the community. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic status, and disabilities, the students should have the right to be provided with equal schooling (Ainscow et al., 2011). Therefore, the concept of inclusion was proposed as an approach to engage students with disabilities in learning tasks within the classroom setting. As Foreman (2001) argued, inclusive education refers to the collaboration of such students with their classmates (normal students or students with disabilities) in ordinary schools.

Sharma et al. (2015) conducted a seminal study on influential factors in the implementation of inclusion education. They reported that the following factors can affect inclusion programs: context policies, proper employment of resources, social and cultural necessities, family's roles, and revisiting and adapting school activities. Furthermore, some researchers asserted that teacher-related factors can play a significant role in the proper adaptation of inclusion education, e.g., teachers' self-efficacy, concerns, and attitudes (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Loreman et al., 2014; Specht, 2016) as well as demographic

characteristics, type of disability, and teacher-training courses (De Boer et al., 2011).

In an attempt to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure teachers' sentiment, attitudes, and concerns in the implementation of inclusive education, Loreman et al. (2007) conducted a seminal study and proposed a 19-item scale regarding the perception of teachers about inclusion programs accordingly, i.e., the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education (SACIE) scale. They further proposed that teachers' sentiment can help them deal with classes with students who have disabilities, teachers' attitude is also directly related to the successful implementation of teaching approaches, and finally, teachers' concern stems from their uncertainty about their capabilities and preparedness for inclusion schools.

Jordan et al. (2009) contended that teachers' sentiments and attitudes are the predictors of successful inclusion programs. In addition, Forlin et al. (2009) concluded that the implementation of inclusive pedagogy has led to the development and promotion of more positive attitudes and sentiment as well as reduced concerns among educators.

Following the global movement toward inclusive education and, particularly, the UNESCO declaration on Education for ALL (1990), the Chinese government and educational policies have highlighted the need for the implementation of inclusion pedagogy (Liu and Jiang, 2008). More specifically, Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) contended that the initial measures concerning inclusion education in China were established in 1994 after the establishment of the learning in the regular classroom (LRC) program. Consequently, it is essential to design pre-service courses for teachers to raise awareness of features of inclusive education in the Chinese context. The present study aimed to review related studies and key empirical findings are introduced in the following section.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

There is a great body of research on inclusion programs as well as the effectiveness of teachers' attitudes and sentiment (efficacy) in this regard. We will discuss related studies in terms of cultural diversity and teachers' characteristics.

Inclusive Education Across Cultures

According to Webber and Lupart (2011), culture is believed to have an impact on inclusive education in different international contexts. For instance, Sharma et al. (2008) conducted a multi-cultural study highlighting educators' attitudes and concerns as well as sentiment about people with disabilities. They investigated 603 undergraduate teacher training programs (Australia = 245; Hong Kong of China = 182; Canada = 58; Singapore = 93). Then, the authors evaluated teachers' attitudes using attitudes toward inclusive education scale (ATIES), developed by Wilczenski (1992). This scale consists of 16 items measuring participants' attitudes toward different aspects of inclusion: social, physical, academic, and behavioral. As a result, it was concluded that teacher training programs can lead to a significant change in pre-service students' attitudes in all contexts except Singapore.

Moreover, findings of Malinen's 2013 Ph.D. dissertation with regard to Chinese, Finnish, and South African pre-service and in-service teachers demonstrated that teachers' sentiment (efficacy) can be categorized as efficacy in collaboration, efficacy in inclusive instruction, and efficacy in managing behaviors. They also reported that these three factors are significantly correlated. Furthermore, all the participants from different countries indicated that there is a significant relationship between the prior experience of teaching students with special needs and high levels of sentiment in inclusive education.

Forlin et al. (2009) conducted a study on 603 pre-service teachers from Australia ($n = 270$), Singapore ($n = 93$), Canada ($n = 58$), and Hong Kong of China ($n = 182$) teachers. They concluded that there is no significant difference between these participants from different cultural backgrounds in terms of inclusive education attitudes, sentiment, and concerns.

Eventually, Murdaca et al. (2016) investigated four hundred Italian teachers' attitudes, sentiments, and concerns in inclusive education using the SACIE-R scale (proposed by Forlin et al., 2011). They confirmed that findings are consistent with other related researches, including the original study. However, the authors had to remove 4 items from the original scale due to the goodness of fit indices for the Italian context.

Attitudes, Sentiments, and Other Teacher-Related Factors

Li et al. (2016) attempted to investigate pre-service teachers' attitudes, sentiment, and concern regarding inclusion education. For this purpose, they assessed 424 freshman and sophomore Chinese students using the simplified Chinese version of the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale Revised (SCACIE-R) (proposed by Forlin et al., 2011). Li et al. (2016) concluded that there is a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' experience with people with disabilities and their attitudes and sentiment about inclusive education. They further reported that students' self-confidence has an influence, yet insignificant, on their belief regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

It is worth noting that Malinen (2013) reported the different findings among pre-service teachers from different countries. For example, Chinese students demonstrated that school patterns in which they choose to work are associated with their self-efficacy, while students in Finland reported that training is positively related to self-efficacy. Besides, male teachers in Finland showed higher capabilities of dealing with students' unfavorable behavior in the classroom. Finally, older participants could score higher in terms of self-efficacy. In addition, Malinen and Savolainen (2008) investigated a sample of 523 Chinese university students by using questionnaire on their perception of the inclusion of children with disabilities and those students with special needs were assigned into regular classrooms. Their study indicated that (a) the participants' average attitude toward inclusion was slightly negative; (b) Social justice, Meeting the special needs of the pupils with severe disabilities, Quality of education and Teachers' competence, were extracted; (c) the most important background variable that explained the attitudes was the participants' major

subject in the University; and (d) the ratings for the best educational environment for a student with a disability varied based on different types and levels of disability.

Forlin et al. (2009) concluded that teachers' age might not play a significant role in their attitudes toward inclusive education. Meanwhile, age could have an effect on teachers' previous knowledge in terms of inclusion. In addition, they claimed that gender also does not make significant changes in teachers' sentiment or concern.

From the discussion aforementioned, it can be seen that following the concept of mainstream education in western societies, China has recently started to embrace inclusive education through the learning in regular classrooms (LRC) model. It was established by the Chinese ministry of education in 1994. As Feng (2010) argued, LRC includes the implementation of inclusive education to benefit students with special needs along with ordinary students in an environment of mutual acceptance. Since learning is a dynamic process associated with learners' characteristics, there is always the need for ongoing assessment of teaching students for the purpose of developing required skills and capabilities accordingly.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) claimed that a lack of knowledge and experience among teachers who are supposed to work with students with special needs is inevitable. Such lack of awareness can lead to poor instruction quality, particularly in inclusive education programs. Besides, Xiao (2007) asserted that teachers may not have adequate expertise and enough time to get involved with students with disabilities in the classroom. Therefore, it seems necessary to design and implement teacher education courses or programs on how to teach effectively in a mainstream and inclusive education context. It could also include short-term pre-service and in-service courses to improve teachers' perception and skills in this regard.

Previous cross-cultural studies have concluded that the majority of pre-service teachers show similar trends concerning the impact of attitudes and sentiment on inclusive education practices. For instance, Forlin et al. (2009) concluded that pre-service teachers from Australia, Singapore, Canada, and Hong Kong of China follow similar trends in promoting positive attitudes and sentiment toward inclusive education. Nevertheless, it is recommended to conduct further cross-cultural and also longitudinal studies in order to explore new aspects of teacher training programs and the impact of teachers' characteristics in the successful practice of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, the current study mainly explored teachers' attitudes and sentiments, particularly in the educational context of China. Besides, the findings suggest that cultural differences might not necessarily contribute to the successful implementation of inclusive programs; however, pre-service

or in-service teachers have demonstrated that higher levels of sentiment (efficacy), as well as positive attitude, can lead to the efficient provision of materials and building a supportive classroom environment for ordinary students and more importantly student with special needs. Pre-service teachers should be provided with internship that can help them to gain the working experience that cannot be acquired from their

own textbooks. Only in this doing so can novice teachers enhance their instruction quality.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Using Games to Promote English as a Foreign Language Learners' Willingness to Communicate: Potential Effects and Teachers' Attitude in Focus

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This study aims to find out the role of games in promoting students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their teachers' attitude toward it. In order to collect the data, the researchers employed a 28-item questionnaire which was given to 60 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an English institute. Then, the students were randomly divided into two groups of 30 learners functioning as control and experimental groups. The students in the experimental group received games in their language lessons and classes, while control group learners did not. At the end of the term, the same questionnaire was given to the students to know if playing games had a significant impact on their WTC. In addition, the teachers were asked to answer a 30-item questionnaire to investigate their attitudes toward playing games in language classes. The results showed that most of the teachers in this study believe that games have a positive influence on the students' attitudes towards learning English and that using them in class serves many educational purposes. In addition, games played a significant role in improving the EFL learners' willingness to communicate. In the light of these findings, the researchers suggested using games as energizers and practical activities at the end of class not only to improve enthusiasm for learning, but also to improve the learners' WTC.

Keywords: games, willingness to communicate (WTC), EFL learners, teachers' attitude, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Lack of inspiration and motivation, using traditional methods of learning and teaching, being discouraged by their teachers and instructors, and having a fear of not learning English easily are some of the fundamental difficulties in learning to speak English correctly and fluently. Due to not having enough self-confidence, learners - especially young ones - face more problems in this area. To overcome this trouble, some teachers believe that games, specifically integrating ones into the teaching process, could increase students' desire and willingness to learn more and communicate in classrooms in all levels and from different interests.

As a matter of fact, learners want active, fun, and interesting enough activities to get motivated to learn more. Research in this subject has signified various advantages of integrating games into language teaching: games emphasize the meaning in language learning, thus, learners will better remember the language they learnt (Tuan and Doan, 2010); games enable children to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively as well as being enjoyable and fun, either as a competition or cooperation with clearly defined goals and rules (Read, 2007); and games provide a fun and comfortable environment in which learners are more motivated to take risks in language practice (Wright et al., 2006).

This study was done in order to find out whether playing educational games based on the learners' levels can play a significant role in encouraging them to communicate instead of using old, boring, and traditional methods in English classrooms. This study aims to understand whether games can trigger students' willingness to learn by playing games in class and try to relieve associated learning problems. The basic function of games is to intensify human experiences in ways that are relatively safe. The theory of games might be called the mathematics of competition and cooperation. Situations are analyzed in terms of gains and losses of opposing players. They are applied in various aspects of life and different areas of study such as economics, mathematics, science, and language. McFarlane et al. (2002) agreed with *Sim City* (2002) in the respect that they all showed the importance of cooperative games, competitive games, and communication games as one of the most important ways to teach efficiently in a language class.

This study aims to find out the effectiveness of using games in teaching English and their role in promoting students' attitudes towards learning English. In addition, it aims to discover how useful and practical educational games can be in promoting EFL learners to communicate in class and break the ice from the teachers' perspective. Moreover, it aims to know teachers' attitudes in this case.

Research Questions

RQ1: Does using games have a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' WTC?

RQ2: What are Iranian EFL teachers' attitude in regard to using games in increasing students' WTC?

LITRETURE REVIEW

A lot of research has been carried out on the method of teaching using games and other types of icebreakers; by reviewing the educational related literature, the researchers were able to come up with a number of studies which strongly supported the use of games, as they are considered a welcome break from the usual and boring routine of a language class.

Quinn (2011) studied the fact that serious games create a hands-on, minds-on opportunity that allow players to actively focus on, create, and change a scenario whilst simultaneously learning about consequences of choice in the situation. When students become more engaged and committed to succeeding in

the game, they become more willing to learn about the scenario the situation is taking place in.

Schuna (2010) proved that playing educational games also helps learners with focus, self-esteem, and memory. Educational games can help children focus because they are being patient while waiting to advance to the next level. Playing these games helps their self-esteem because sometimes they get a quicker reaction from the game system, and they can really see how they have accomplished something.

Johnson (2005) supported McFarlane and Sakellariou (2002) who see game play as inherently valuable, leading to the development of a range of skills and competencies that may be transferred to other social and work-related uses of digital technologies. Macedonia (2005) argued whether learning a foreign language is declarative or procedural. She concluded that the process of learning FL is procedural. One of the methods used is language games which are employed in a targeted way to proceduralise foreign language. Moreover, they bring a sense of fun and a positive attitude towards learning and facilitate the learning process. Positive emotions promote learning not only in our perception but also from a neurological perspective. In contrast, negative emotions restrain information flow.

Kamra (2010) concluded that using games is an efficient way to teach English in the classroom. Following this method, you get the best results in the classroom. It increases students' motivation. Games prepare young learners for life, and they acquire positive social attitudes. Games teach sharing, helping each other, and working as a team. A child learns by doing, living, trying, and imitating. So this kind of learning is lasting. During games, some feelings, such as the pleasure of winning and the fear of losing, may arise. This gives the teacher an idea about the student's character. So, games are must-have activities for hardworking teachers. This is in line with Buckingham (2003).

In conclusion, Prensky argued that children are naturally motivated to play games. Serious games are interactive play that teach students goals, rules, adaptation, problem solving, and interaction, all represented as a story. They allow them to learn by providing enjoyment, passionate involvement, structure, motivation, ego gratification, adrenaline, creativity, social interaction, and emotion. "Playing has a deep biological, evolutionarily important, function, which has to be done specifically with learning." (Prensky, 2011; P. 40).

Having reviewed the relevant research projects and mentioned their results and findings, we now turn to the present study's purpose and research questions. The purpose of this study is therefore to use games to promote EFL learners' willingness to communicate in an Iranian context. The study focuses on the roles that games play in children's classrooms to know if playing educational games can lead the students to be more active and motivated to communicate more in class.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants were one hundred students chosen from intermediate classes of the English institutes. They were both

male and female students between 18 and 35 years old. In order to have homogenous participants, OPT was run and 60 intermediate students were chosen. The other participants of the study were six English teachers (three females and three males) teaching in that institution. All these teachers had teaching experience with young students of at least 10 years. They all had either a B.A or M.A. from ELT departments of different universities in Iran. Their majors were English teaching and English Literature. All the teachers were taught how to apply these games and when to play them.

Instruments

In carrying out this research, four different instruments were applied. They were Oxford Placement Test (OPT), Willingness to Communicate (WTC) pre and post-test, attitude questionnaire, and finally ten educational games. The first three instruments were applied in all classes, but games were only used in the experimental group.

Oxford Placement Test

The OPT (Allan, 2005) consists of 200 items including 100 grammar items. For the purpose of this study, only the grammar part was used, and so through a pilot study, its reliability was estimated. The Kr-21 reliability formula showed a reliability of 0.78, which is a rather acceptable reliability for using the test. It

took about 55 minutes for students to complete the test. After administrating the test, the obtained results were estimated based on the OPT-associated rating levels chart and those who received 70 or more in this test were considered as intermediate learners.

Willingness to Communicate Pre-test and Post-test

In order to collect the required data, all of the participants were asked to answer a WTC questionnaire which had had five parts; scores between 0 and 4 were given to them: Never (0), Rarely (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3), and Almost always (4) as the pre-test. After carrying out the treatment the participants were asked to answer the same questionnaire. The questionnaire was obtained from Gol et al. (2014).

Attitude Questionnaire

The present study is concerned with investigating teachers' attitude toward playing games in the classrooms. Therefore, all six teachers were asked to check their ideas. The questionnaire had 30 questions with Likert Scale of five. The questionnaire had five parts and scores between 0 and 5 were given to them: Very low (1), Low (2), Moderate (3), High (4), and Very high (5). The questionnaire was obtained from Mahmoud and Tanni (2012).

TABLE 1 | Distribution of the responses of the control group to the questionnaire before Treatment.

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Almost always		Mean	Std. deviation
	Frequency	Percentage	frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Q1	5	16.7	7	23.3	9	30.0	7	23.3	2	6.7	1.8	1.2
Q2	3	10.0	4	13.3	18	60.0	4	13.3	1	3.3	1.9	0.9
Q3	0	0.0	10	33.3	11	36.7	7	23.3	2	6.7	2.0	0.9
Q4	1	3.3	7	23.3	13	43.3	7	23.3	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q5	2	6.7	9	30.0	12	40.0	7	23.3	0	0.0	1.8	0.9
Q6	1	3.3	8	26.7	14	46.7	4	13.3	3	10.0	2.0	1.0
Q7	3	10.0	5	16.7	14	46.7	6	20.0	2	6.7	2.0	1.0
Q8	3	10.0	11	36.7	9	30.0	5	16.7	2	6.7	1.7	1.1
Q9	0	0.0	9	30.0	11	36.7	10	33.3	0	0.0	2.0	0.8
Q10	3	10.0	8	26.7	13	43.3	5	16.7	1	3.3	1.8	1.0
Q11	1	3.3	11	36.7	11	36.7	6	20.0	1	3.3	1.8	0.9
Q12	3	10.0	4	13.3	13	43.3	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.1	1.0
Q13	0	0.0	10	33.3	15	50.0	5	16.7	0	0.0	1.8	0.7
Q14	3	10.0	9	30.0	8	26.7	8	26.7	2	6.7	1.9	1.1
Q15	1	3.3	8	26.7	13	43.3	4	13.3	4	13.3	2.1	1.0
Q16	1	3.3	6	20.0	14	46.7	9	30.0	0	0.0	2.0	0.8
Q17	2	6.7	3	10.0	15	50.0	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.2	0.9
Q18	2	6.7	8	26.7	13	43.3	5	16.7	2	6.7	1.9	1.0
Q19	0	0.0	9	30.0	13	43.3	7	23.3	1	3.3	2.0	0.8
Q20	3	10.0	5	16.7	13	43.3	8	26.7	1	3.3	2.0	1.0
Q21	3	10.0	8	26.7	10	33.3	8	26.7	1	3.3	1.9	1.0
Q22	0	0.0	6	20.0	11	36.7	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.3	0.9
Q23	4	13.3	7	23.3	10	33.3	9	30.0	0	0.0	1.8	1.0
Q24	2	6.7	5	16.7	12	40.0	10	33.3	1	3.3	2.1	1.0
Q25	1	3.3	9	30.0	10	33.3	9	30.0	1	3.3	2.0	0.9
Q26	7	23.3	7	23.3	8	26.7	8	26.7	0	0.0	1.6	1.1
Q27	2	6.7	4	13.3	15	50.0	7	23.3	2	6.7	2.1	1.0
Q28	1	3.3	14	46.7	11	36.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	1.6	0.9

Educational Games

Ten educational games were selected by the researchers to be played in the experimental group in order to investigate their role on learners' willingness to communicate.

Procedures

In the study, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert-type rating scale was formed by the researchers in order to investigate what practicing teachers think about WTC through games. The questionnaire was administered in their classrooms. The internal consistency reliability of the learners' questionnaire was checked based on the Cronbach's alpha. On the other hand, the students were asked to answer two (pre and post) tests to know if the games were useful.

One hundred English learners were chosen to participate in this study. Their level of proficiency was intermediate since they all passed the same levels in that institute. To be sure about it, OPT was run to have a homogenous group based on the scores they got and eventually sixty of the students were chosen as participants of the study. Then WTC pre-test was performed on all the students to know their willingness to communicate (WTC) during class time.

Afterward, the students were divided into two groups, each containing thirty students. The group which underwent the treatment was called game group and the other thirty students

were called control group. Then, the educational games were played in the game group at the end of each class, but no games were applied in the control group, to investigate whether games encouraged learners' willingness to speak English as well as improve their speaking. After that, all the students were asked to check their WTC in the same questionnaire as the post-test of the study. Finally, in order to investigate the teachers' attitude toward playing games, they were asked to answer the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Results

A willingness to communicate questionnaire was given to the control group and experimental group to investigate their willingness to communicate before doing any treatment. The questionnaire had twenty-eight questions. The questionnaire had five parts and scores of 0 to 4 were given to them: Never with the score of zero, Rarely with the score of one, Sometimes with the score of two, Often with the score of three, and Almost always with the score of four.

Table 1 shows the frequency and the percentage of responses to the questionnaire for students in the control group in the pre-test phase. Average scores earned by learners for each question are also displayed in all the tables.

Table 1 revealed that the highest mean was related to question 22 ("I ask the teacher a question in class.") which was 2.3 and the lowest mean belonged to questions 26 and 28 which was 1.6.

TABLE 2 | Distribution of the responses of the experimental group to the questionnaire before treatment.

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Almost always		Mean	Std. deviation
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Q1	2	6.7	9	30.0	10	33.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	2.0	1.1
Q2	2	6.7	9	30.0	6	20.0	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.1	1.1
Q3	1	3.3	5	16.7	13	43.3	10	33.3	1	3.3	2.2	0.9
Q4	0	0.0	11	36.7	14	46.7	3	10.0	2	6.7	1.9	0.9
Q5	1	3.3	4	13.3	18	60.0	7	23.3	0	0.0	2.0	0.7
Q6	1	3.3	10	33.3	12	40.0	6	20.0	1	3.3	1.9	0.9
Q7	3	10.0	7	23.3	12	40.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	1.9	1.1
Q8	0	0.0	12	40.0	11	36.7	6	20.0	1	3.3	1.9	0.9
Q9	1	3.3	9	30.0	13	43.3	7	23.3	0	0.0	1.9	0.8
Q10	2	6.7	8	26.7	13	43.3	5	16.7	2	6.7	1.9	1.0
Q11	2	6.7	7	23.3	11	36.7	9	30.0	1	3.3	2.0	1.0
Q12	0	0.0	6	20.0	16	53.3	7	23.3	1	3.3	2.1	0.8
Q13	2	6.7	7	23.3	11	36.7	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.0	1.0
Q14	2	6.7	8	26.7	10	33.3	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.0	1.1
Q15	3	10.0	5	16.7	10	33.3	12	40.0	0	0.0	2.0	1.0
Q16	0	0.0	10	33.3	10	33.3	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q17	1	3.3	12	40.0	8	26.7	8	26.7	1	3.3	1.9	1.0
Q18	6	20.0	7	23.3	13	43.3	4	13.3	0	0.0	1.5	1.0
Q19	2	6.7	8	26.7	11	36.7	7	23.3	2	6.7	2.0	1.0
Q20	2	6.7	11	36.7	8	26.7	7	23.3	2	6.7	1.9	1.1
Q21	2	6.7	10	33.3	12	40.0	4	13.3	2	6.7	1.8	1.0
Q22	0	0.0	3	10.0	14	46.7	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.4	0.8
Q23	4	13.3	9	30.0	11	36.7	4	13.3	2	6.7	1.7	1.1
Q24	1	3.3	8	26.7	15	50.0	4	13.3	2	6.7	1.9	0.9
Q25	1	3.3	9	30.0	11	36.7	9	30.0	0	0.0	1.9	0.9
Q26	3	10.0	7	23.3	10	33.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	2.1	1.3
Q27	4	13.3	8	26.7	10	33.3	8	26.7	0	0.0	1.7	1.0
Q28	1	3.3	7	23.3	7	23.3	14	46.7	1	3.3	2.2	1.0

TABLE 3 | Distribution of the responses of the control group to the questionnaire after treatment.

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Almost always		Mean	Std. deviation
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Q1	5	16.7	7	23.3	10	33.3	7	23.3	1	3.3	1.7	1.1
Q2	2	6.7	5	16.7	18	60.0	3	10.0	2	6.7	1.9	0.9
Q3	0	0.0	8	26.7	13	43.3	7	23.3	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q4	1	3.3	6	20.0	13	43.3	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q5	1	3.3	10	33.3	12	40.0	7	23.3	0	0.0	1.8	0.8
Q6	0	0.0	9	30.0	14	46.7	4	13.3	3	10.0	2.0	0.9
Q7	1	3.3	6	20.0	15	50.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q8	2	6.7	13	43.3	9	30.0	4	13.3	2	6.7	1.7	1.0
Q9	1	3.3	9	30.0	12	40.0	8	26.7	0	0.0	1.9	0.8
Q10	4	13.3	9	30.0	12	40.0	4	13.3	1	3.3	1.6	1.0
Q11	1	3.3	9	30.0	13	43.3	6	20.0	1	3.3	1.9	0.9
Q12	3	10.0	4	13.3	14	46.7	8	26.7	1	3.3	2.0	1.0
Q13	0	0.0	11	36.7	14	46.7	5	16.7	0	0.0	1.8	0.7
Q14	2	6.7	10	33.3	9	30.0	8	26.7	1	3.3	1.9	1.0
Q15	0	0.0	8	26.7	14	46.7	4	13.3	4	13.3	2.1	1.0
Q16	1	3.3	6	20.0	14	46.7	9	30.0	0	0.0	2.0	0.8
Q17	2	6.7	3	10.0	15	50.0	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.2	0.9
Q18	2	6.7	6	20.0	15	50.0	5	16.7	2	6.7	2.0	1.0
Q19	0	0.0	9	30.0	12	40.0	8	26.7	1	3.3	2.0	0.9
Q20	2	6.7	6	20.0	13	43.3	8	26.7	1	3.3	2.0	0.9
Q21	2	6.7	8	26.7	11	36.7	8	26.7	1	3.3	1.9	1.0
Q22	0	0.0	5	16.7	12	40.0	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.3	0.8
Q23	4	13.3	7	23.3	10	33.3	9	30.0	0	0.0	1.8	1.0
Q24	2	6.7	4	13.3	14	46.7	9	30.0	1	3.3	2.1	0.9
Q25	2	6.7	7	23.3	11	36.7	9	30.0	1	3.3	2.0	1.0
Q26	5	16.7	11	36.7	8	26.7	6	20.0	0	0.0	2.1	0.9
Q27	1	3.3	5	16.7	15	50.0	7	23.3	2	6.7	1.5	1.0
Q28	1	3.3	15	50.0	10	33.3	3	10.0	1	3.3	1.6	0.9

(26. “I participate in pair activities in class.”, 28. “I chat with my classmates out of class.”). The 23rd question shows that students were most eager to talk in that situation. On the other hand, the 26th and 28th questions demonstrated that they were not willing to communicate in these situations.

Table 2 displayed that the highest mean was related to question 22 (“I ask the teacher a question in class.”) which was 2.4 and the lowest mean was 1.5 and belonged to question 18 (“I dislike some of my classmates.”). Therefore, asking the teacher a question was mostly used and their dislikes of their classmates was used the least. **Table 3** shows the analysis of data on the WTC post-test.

Table 2 revealed that the highest mean was related to question 22 (“I ask the teacher a question in class.”) which was 2.3. As it can be seen, this mean was the same as the mean of this question in the pre-test. The lowest mean belonged to the 27th question (“I help others answer a question.”) which was 1.5. Therefore, the results showed that learners’ question of the teacher was most used and helping classmates in answering was the least used among the learners in the control group.

Table 4 demonstrated that the highest mean was related to question number 3 (“the topic is interesting”) which was 2.4, and the lowest score was related to question 9 (“an assignment is being discussed.”) which was 1.9. Therefore, being interested in a topic was most checked by the learners and discussing

the assignments was used the least by the learners in the experimental group.

Table 5 shows the mean and Std. Deviation of every question between the learners of the two groups in pre-test and post-test. The results of the table revealed that, in the experimental group, there was an increase in the mean score from the pre-test to the post-test. On the other hand, in the control group, the answers to questions 1 (“the class is engaged in an open discussion”), 9 (“an assignment is being discussed”), 10 (“I am comfortable with the subject matter”), 12 (“no one else is talking”), and 26 (“I participate in pair activities in class.”) experienced a great decrease. Their means were 1.7, 1.9, 1.6, 2, and 1.5 respectively. However, the answers to questions 3 (“the topic is interesting”), 7 (“everyone is talking”), 11 (“the topic is based on my experience”), and 18 (“I dislike some of my classmates”) enjoyed a great increase. Their means were 2.1, 2.1, 1.9, and 2.0 respectively. In other questions, the average score of the questions was not changed.

In order to answer the first question some procedures were applied. The above-mentioned results revealed that using games has a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners’ willingness to communicate. Playing educational games in the experimental group has demonstrated that the educational games can really increase Iranian learners’ willingness to communicate and motivate them to talk more in class and share their

TABLE 4 | Distribution of the responses of the experimental group to the questionnaire after treatment.

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Almost always		Mean	Std. deviation
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Q1	0	0.0	8	26.7	12	40.0	7	23.3	3	10.0	2.2	0.9
Q2	0	0.0	11	36.7	6	20.0	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.1	1.0
Q3	0	0.0	3	10.0	14	46.7	11	36.7	2	6.7	2.4	0.8
Q4	0	0.0	11	36.7	14	46.7	3	10.0	2	6.7	1.9	0.9
Q5	0	0.0	5	16.7	18	60.0	7	23.3	0	0.0	2.1	0.6
Q6	0	0.0	6	20.0	15	50.0	8	26.7	1	3.3	2.1	0.8
Q7	0	0.0	7	23.3	13	43.3	7	23.3	3	10.0	2.2	0.9
Q8	0	0.0	12	40.0	11	36.7	6	20.0	1	3.3	2.0	0.9
Q9	0	0.0	10	33.3	12	40.0	7	23.3	1	3.3	1.9	0.9
Q10	0	0.0	10	33.3	13	43.3	5	16.7	2	6.7	2.0	0.9
Q11	0	0.0	9	30.0	11	36.7	8	26.7	2	6.7	2.1	0.9
Q12	0	0.0	5	16.7	17	56.7	4	13.3	4	13.3	2.2	0.9
Q13	0	0.0	9	30.0	11	36.7	5	16.7	5	16.7	2.2	1.1
Q14	0	0.0	9	30.0	11	36.7	4	13.3	6	20.0	2.2	1.1
Q15	0	0.0	8	26.7	10	33.3	9	30.0	3	10.0	2.2	1.0
Q16	0	0.0	6	20.0	12	40.0	9	30.0	3	10.0	2.3	0.9
Q17	0	0.0	8	26.7	10	33.3	8	26.7	4	13.3	2.3	1.0
Q18	0	0.0	9	30.0	12	40.0	5	16.7	4	13.3	2.1	1.0
Q19	0	0.0	10	33.3	11	36.7	4	13.3	5	16.7	2.1	1.1
Q20	0	0.0	11	36.7	7	23.3	6	20.0	6	20.0	2.2	1.2
Q21	0	0.0	11	36.7	13	43.3	2	6.7	4	13.3	2.0	1.0
Q22	0	0.0	6	20.0	13	43.3	8	26.7	3	10.0	2.3	0.9
Q23	0	0.0	7	23.3	15	50.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	2.1	0.8
Q24	0	0.0	8	26.7	15	50.0	4	13.3	3	10.0	2.1	0.9
Q25	0	0.0	10	33.3	11	36.7	9	30.0	0	0.0	2.0	0.8
Q26	0	0.0	9	30.0	11	36.7	7	23.3	3	10.0	2.1	1.0
Q27	0	0.0	6	20.0	13	43.3	11	36.7	0	0.0	2.2	0.7
Q28	0	0.0	8	26.7	7	23.3	14	46.7	1	3.3	2.3	0.9

information and experiences more. On the other hand, not playing educational games in the control group and teaching those without any treatment revealed that their willingness to communicate did not really improve. Therefore, by playing games in EFL classes, learners can get more enthusiastic to talk and have discussions in class.

Based on **Table 6** the average score of the learners in the control group was 54.20 and their Std. Deviation was ± 4.11 in the pre-test. These scores were increased in the post-test; the mean increased to 54.37 and the Std. Deviation became ± 4.16 . The means and Std. Deviation of pre-test and post-test do not show a great difference in the control group.

On the other hand, as the table shows, the mean and Std. Deviation of the experimental group in pre-test were 54.73 and ± 5.60 . The average of the experimental group was increased in the post-test to 59.77 and their Std. Deviation became ± 5.15 .

Figure 1 shows the mean of the control and experimental group in pre-test and post-test.

In order to compare the mean of pre-test and post-test of the learners in the control group, a paired sample t-test was run. **Table 7** shows the result of the comparison. Paired-sample t-test results showed no significant difference between mean scores of the learners in pre-test and post-test [$t(29) = 0.556$, $p = 0.582$]. The difference between pre-test and post-test was 0.167, which was not really different. It means that before

and after the course their willingness to communicate did not change.

Another paired sample t-test was run (**Table 8**) to compare the scores of the experimental group's pre-test and post-test. In the experimental group, the results of t-test showed a significant difference between the mean score of their pre-test and post-test [$t(29) = 7.750$, $p < 0.001$]. The mean of the post-test was significantly higher than the mean of the pre-test. This difference was about 5.033, which was a great difference. Therefore, the treatment had played a significant role in improving learner's willingness to communicate and motivated them to talk more during class time.

In order to compare the difference between pre-test and post-test scores of both groups, an independent t-test was run. As **Table 9** shows, the average difference of the mean of the control group in pre-test and post-test was 0.17 and its Std. Deviation was 1.64. In other words, the average difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group was increased by about 0.17, which was not really significant.

Table 9 shows that the average difference between two stages of pre-test and post-test in the experimental group was 5.03 and its Std. Deviation was 3.56. It indicates that learners' scores in the experimental group had an average increase of 5.03. The average score differences between the two groups were compared by independent t-test. The results of an average of the

TABLE 5 | Mean and std. deviation of the questionnaire scores for learners of the control and experimental groups before and after the treatment.

	Control				Experimental			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Q1	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.1	2.0	1.1	2.2	0.9
Q2	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.9	2.1	1.1	2.1	1.0
Q3	2.0	0.9	2.1	0.9	2.2	0.9	2.4	0.8
Q4	2.1	0.9	2.1	0.9	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.9
Q5	1.8	0.9	1.8	0.8	2.0	0.7	2.1	0.6
Q6	2.0	1.0	2.0	0.9	1.9	0.9	2.1	0.8
Q7	2.0	1.0	2.1	0.9	1.9	1.1	2.2	0.9
Q8	1.7	1.1	1.7	1.0	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.9
Q9	2.0	0.8	1.9	0.8	1.9	0.8	2.0	0.9
Q10	1.8	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.9	1.0	2.0	0.9
Q11	1.8	0.9	1.9	0.9	2.0	1.0	2.1	0.9
Q12	2.1	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.1	0.8	2.2	0.9
Q13	1.8	0.7	1.8	0.7	2.0	1.0	2.2	1.1
Q14	1.9	1.1	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.1	2.2	1.1
Q15	2.1	1.0	2.1	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.2	1.0
Q16	2.0	0.8	2.0	0.8	2.1	0.9	2.3	0.9
Q17	2.2	0.9	2.2	0.9	1.9	1.0	2.3	1.0
Q18	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	2.1	1.0
Q19	2.0	0.8	2.0	0.9	2.0	1.0	2.1	1.1
Q20	2.0	1.0	2.0	0.9	1.9	1.1	2.2	1.2
Q21	1.9	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.8	1.0	2.0	1.0
Q22	2.3	0.9	2.3	0.8	2.4	0.8	2.3	0.9
Q23	1.8	1.0	1.8	1.0	1.7	1.1	2.1	0.8
Q24	2.1	1.0	2.1	0.9	1.9	0.9	2.1	0.9
Q25	2.0	0.9	2.0	1.0	1.9	0.9	2.0	0.8
Q26	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.0	2.1	1.3	2.1	1.0
Q27	2.1	1.0	2.1	0.9	1.7	1.0	2.2	0.7
Q28	1.6	0.9	1.6	0.9	2.2	1.0	2.3	0.9

TABLE 6 | Average score of learners in both groups in pre-test and post-test.

WTC score	Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control	54.20	4.11	54.37	4.16
Experimental	54.73	5.60	59.77	5.15

differences between pre-test and post-test of the experimental group was significantly higher than the average of the control group [$t(58) = -6.804, p < 0.001$]. Therefore, the experimental group took the advantage of playing educational games in willingness to communicate.

Teachers' Attitude Results and Discussions

In order to collect the required data of the study, a questionnaire with 30 questions was given to the six teachers to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes in regard to using games to increase students' willingness to communicate. Then the

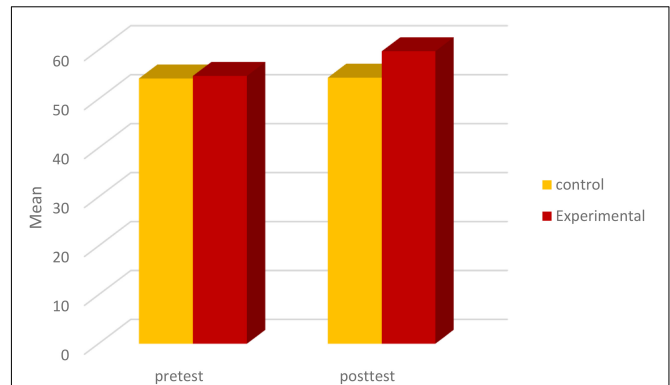


FIGURE 1 | The mean of the scores of WTC between learners in pre-test and post-test.

collected data were analyzed, and **Tables 10, 11** show this analysis. The questionnaire had five parts and scores between 0 and 5 were given to them: Very low with the score of one, Low with the score of two, Moderate with the score of three, High with the score of four, and Very high with the score of five. **Table 10** shows the frequency and percentage of answers to different scales of the questionnaire.

According to the results of the **Table 10** and based on the Five Likert Scale, the highest mean score was seen in questions 5 and 20 (“Amuse learners” and “Being student-centered”) which was 4.5. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was found in questions 16 and 29 (“Waste one’s time” and “Increase anxiety”) which was 2.3. Thus, teachers believed that playing games would mostly affect two questions of the questionnaire, “Amuse learners” and “have student-centered classes.” However, teachers also stated that playing games does not play any role in two questions, “Increase anxiety,” and “Waste one’s time.”

The average score of questions in this section with the average of Likert Scale (3) was compared by using the Wilcoxon Test and it was revealed that the means of eight questions were significantly higher than 3 ($p < 0.05$). They were question 5 (“Amuse learners”), question 12 (“Help shy learners to participate”), question 13 (“Promote whole class participation”), question 16 (“Waste one’s time”), question 19 (“Enable learners

TABLE 7 | Results of paired- sample t-test in comparison of mean score of learners in pre-test and post-test of the control group.

Variable	Group	Mean difference (post-test-pre-test)	Std. deviation	T	Df	p-value
WTC score	Control	0.167	1.642	0.556	29	0.582

TABLE 8 | Results of paired- sample t-test in comparison of mean score of learners in pre-test and post-test of the experimental group.

Variable	Group	Mean difference (post-test-pre-test)	Std. deviation	T	Df	p-value
WTC score	Control	5.033	3.557	7.750	29	<0.001

TABLE 9 | Independent T-test results in comparison of difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and the experimental group.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Df	p-value
Reading ability (post-test-pre-test)	Control	30	0.17	1.64	-6.804	58	<0.001
	Experimental	30	5.03	3.56			

TABLE 10 | Frequency distribution of teachers' answers to the questionnaire.

	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high		Mean	Std. deviation	p-value
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Q1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.7	3.8	0.8	0.059
Q2	0	0.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	3.5	1.0	.257
Q3	0	0.0	2	33.3	3	50.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	3.0	1.1	1.00
Q4	0	0.0	1	16.7	3	50.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	3.3	1.0	.414
Q5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	50.0	3	50.0	4.5	0.5	.024
Q6	1	16.7	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	0	0.0	2.8	1.2	0.705
Q7	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0.0	3.0	1.3	1.00
Q8	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0.0	3.0	1.3	1.00
Q9	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	3	50.0	2	33.3	4.0	1.1	0.084
Q10	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	4	66.7	0	0.0	3.5	0.8	0.180
Q11	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0.0	3.0	1.3	1.00
Q12	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	4	66.7	1	16.7	4.0	0.6	0.034
Q13	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50.0	4.3	0.8	0.038
Q14	0	0.0	2	33.3	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0.0	3.2	1.0	0.655
Q15	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	0	0.0	2.5	1.0	0.257
Q16	0	0.0	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2.3	0.5	0.046
Q17	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	0	0.0	2.5	1.0	0.257
Q18	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	4	66.7	0	0.0	3.5	0.8	0.180
Q19	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50.0	4.3	0.8	0.038
Q20	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	50.0	3	50.0	4.5	0.5	0.024
Q21	1	16.7	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	0	0.0	2.8	1.2	0.705
Q22	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50.0	1	16.7	3.7	1.0	0.157
Q23	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	2	33.3	2	33.3	4.0	0.9	0.063
Q24	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	3.8	1.2	0.129
Q25	0	0.0	2	33.3	2	33.3	2	33.3	0	0.0	3.0	0.9	1.00
Q26	0	0.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50.0	0	0.0	3.3	0.8	0.317
Q27	0	0.0	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	0	0.0	2.8	1.0	0.655
Q28	0	0.0	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	0	0.0	2.8	1.0	0.655
Q29	0	0.0	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2.3	0.5	0.046
Q30	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0	3.7	0.5	0.046

to acquire new experiences”), question 20 (“Having student-centered classes”), question 29 (“Increase anxiety”), and question 30 (“Require little preparation”). In question number 20, the mean was significantly lower than 3. Therefore, the teachers' answers for “Increase anxiety” was lower than average.

On the other hand, the means of the answers for seven questions were higher than the average. These questions were question 5 (“Amuse learners”), question 12 (“Help shy learners to participate”), question 13 (“Promote whole class participation”), question 16 (“Waste one's time”), question 19 (“Enable learners to acquire new experiences”), question 29 (“Increase anxiety”), and question 30 (“Requires little preparation”). In the other questions, there was no significant difference in teachers' answers with an average of 3, so teachers' attitudes were about average in these questions.

Based on the **Table 11** the teachers' mean score for all the questions of the questionnaire was 3.37 and the Std. Deviation was 0.53. The Median was 3.5 which means that in half of the

teachers, the score for the questionnaire was less than 3 and in the other half was more than 3. However, in comparing the median of the scores with the average of 3, no significant differences were seen ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, teachers' attitude toward the treatment was moderate.

DISCUSSION

Although nowadays most teachers try to take advantage of new and encouraging methods in their L2 classrooms, it seems the implication of such methods has been overlooked in Iran. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to investigate the effect of playing games on Iranian learners' willingness to communicate. To tackle the above problems the following research questions were addressed. One of the goals of this study is to answer the first research question: “does using games have a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' WTC?”

TABLE 11 | Mean and median scores of teachers' attitude.

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Median	<i>p</i> -value
Attitude	6	2.70	3.90	3.37	0.53	3.5	0.116

This question was followed by the hypothesis that using games does not have a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' WTC.

Considering the first research question, the results of the present study indicate that playing games in classes can have a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate. According to Andrea (2011), games played a major role in achieving meaningful learning where the most productive and motivating learning experiences are taking place. This is in line with the findings of this study.

These findings reveal that games are very good at promoting students' attitude towards learning English. They also reveal that by using games, learners learn the target language appropriately and enthusiastically. In addition, it increases their willingness to communicate when the topic of the lesson is interesting. Moreover, the results reveal that games are not just for fun, but also allow students to ask the teacher questions in class. These findings were in line with Modirghameneh and Firouzmand (2014) as well as Lee and Drajati (2020). On the contrary, students believe that if they play games in classes, they do not dislike their classmates and they do not participate in pair activities in class. They also claim that they are not willing to talk when the teacher plays games.

In the present study, educational games are considered as important teaching tools that have not received enough attention in EFL classes. If the teachers play more games in classes, their students' willingness to communicate will increase, which makes them more successful students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and using games has a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' WTC.

Another goal of the current study is to investigate the second research question: What are Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes in regard to using games in increasing students' WTC?

A unique finding of this study can be summed up in a short sentence "applying and choosing a game is a challenging task as it requires planning and effort as well as preparation; it amuses learners in students- centered classes." This can be seen from the responses to items 5 and 20. Another unique finding is that games can help learners sustain interest and amuse all students in class. It received the highest level of importance. These findings were in line with Mahmoud and Tanni (2012).

Teachers believed that games amuse learners, help shy learners to participate, promote whole class participation, waste one's time, enable learners to acquire new experiences, and have more student-centered classes. On the other hand, playing games does not increase anxiety; in this case the mean was significantly lower than 3 ($p < 0.03$). Therefore, the teachers' answers for "Increase anxiety" were lower than average. Our findings were similar to Lindfors (1980), Ozmen (2004), and Millis (2005) who revealed that games can positively affect learning a foreign language. In contrast, this dimension receives the highest level

of importance in the present study which might be considered as a unique finding. In terms of a communicative classroom where one feels comfortable, interested, and motivated, this study shares the assumption that games have a great effect in removing boredom. In this dimension, the present study is in line with other studies such as McFarlane and Sakellariou (2002); Fromme (2003) Thomas (2004); Cornelius-White (2007), Robbins and Timothy (2007); Prensky (2011), and Henry et al. (2021). Overall, the results have shown that a large number of participants believe that games can be used as an educational mechanism in English classrooms. There are certainly enough positive results to justify large-scale, extensive research into game playing habits, the motivations for playing games, and students' attitude/perceptions towards games. In a nutshell, teachers believed that playing games increases Iranian learners' willingness to communicate in the class and even out of the classroom, which is similar to de Freitas (2006) who claimed that games and simulations are very powerful and excellent tools that support collaborative learning skills.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study demonstrate that games are effective as energizers and educational tools that can provide enjoyment, pleasure, passionate involvement, structure, and motivation among other benefits; the researchers supported the trend towards using them as short warm-ups.

When learning exercises are held alongside games, instruction is assisted, and increases foreign languages students' achievement. Moreover, if English language is practiced with the help of games, the achievement of the learners can be higher than that from traditional education. This is a strong invitation for teachers to refer to games while teaching difficult tasks so as to maintain an interesting teaching environment.

Games should be perceived as elements of the process of teaching, learners should benefit from games connected with English learning in the process of teaching-learning at the right time and the right place.

The overall results of this study reflect the fact it does not matter what games are played; we cannot deny the importance of games. If students learn with games, have fun, and feel happy and free, it means that you have reached your goals. Games strengthen language skills, in addition to allowing learners to develop social skills and good relationships while they interact with each other.

Based on all of the information above it seems clear that games can and should be used as a teaching method when teaching languages. One reason why games could work well as a teaching method is because of the change that has occurred in teaching, where students have become much more active in the learning process. Besides giving students a chance to be more active, games usually place the teacher in a background role, and therefore allow the students to take on more responsibility.

When we consider the positive effects of language games, such as lowering learners' anxiety and providing meaningful use of a language in the classroom, this result is striking and should be investigated in detail. Since the perspectives of learners

and teachers might vary, even about the specific issue such as learning English through games, teachers and researchers should conduct studies or action research to examine learners' views on several points to take into consideration when teaching a language and planning their lessons in a way that meets their individual learners' needs. If learners are children, language teachers should not ignore their natural instincts for games, and they should seek ways to turn education into edutainment.

It has also been made clear that games help create diversity and can be very helpful in sustaining interest amongst students in school. We have also learned that by creating diversity, teachers are reaching out to a broader group of students and that is very important because students are individuals that differ from each other in so many ways.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the staff of Iranian Language Institutions. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Cognitive and Affective Learning in English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language Instructional-Learning Contexts: Does Teacher Immediacy Matter?

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A noteworthy frame of the literature has maintained the idea that communication in the classroom is dominant in language education, and in the process of language learning, teachers as an important figure may apply several ways to develop interpersonal relationships and social manners, such as teacher immediacy that has been established to support affective and cognitive learning in instructional settings. Therefore, this theoretical review tries to systematically refocus on the existing literature about teacher immediacy and its types, such as non-verbal and verbal, and their significant connections with affective and cognitive education. To this end, this review focuses on social behavior to review the eminence of teacher immediacy in the classroom and unquestionably exemplify their relationship with affective and cognitive learning. As a final fact, this review has been intended to consider the prevailing literature about teacher behavior, and suggestions and recommendations have been presented correspondingly for language teaching stakeholders in the educational setting.

Keywords: affective learning, cognitive learning, instructional-learning, teacher immediacy, social behavior

INTRODUCTION

Universally, teachers are noted as the main resources in any educational system, and the communication between teachers and their learners has been regarded as an essential part of the instructional cycle of language learning (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2020). Teachers ought to be multi-capable to support their work since expert teachers are both transferring information and preparing and arranging the exercises that would be introduced in class to get the ideal outcome (Ribahan, 2018). Among the factors related to scholastic achievement in higher education, a subset of studies inspected factors related explicitly to instructional methodologies and within the classification of instruction, results showed that the social communications of learners with teachers were more regularly connected with positive effect sizes than other factors (Schneider and Preckel, 2017; Chen and Liu, 2021). Furthermore, a vigorous issue in the success and accomplishment of learners is the communication skills of teachers (Khan et al., 2017). The art of educating is correspondence-rich, utilizing verbal, non-verbal, and composed modalities (Rosati-Peterson et al., 2021). Besides, the greater degree of the practice of verbal and non-verbal

communication had a dominant function in the success of learners to a great extent (Balat et al., 2019), which is warranted as a result of the presence of emotive, instructive, sympathetic, and persistent communication between learners and teachers. Moreover, a significant segment viewed as firmly identified with the nature of schooling was the relational practices of teachers (Omar et al., 2014).

For the reason that both learners and teachers are similarly accountable for the effective acknowledgment of the instructional and learning cycles, their connection and rapport are significant (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Due to the prominence of teacher-learner relational connections, a great amount of consideration has been drawn to its principle and excellence (Nayernia et al., 2020; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021). In addition, from the time of Plato and Socrates, teacher-learner association and the related results have been the focal point of many inquiries (Violanti et al., 2018; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), and it has been fairly stated that positive teacher-learner relational connections are the solid facilitators of a wide scope of beneficial learner-related results such as commitment, learning, accomplishment, prosperity, motivation, resilience, enjoyment, achievement, and hope, among others (Aldhafiri, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Frymier et al., 2019; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

While educational interaction is regularly comprehended across the discipline, the educational correspondence (i.e., the role of correspondence in education) is not clear all the time. The educational correspondence centers around the role of correspondence in all educating and training settings, in addition to settings across the entire life expectancy (McCroskey et al., 2006b) and settings throughout the whole life period (Nussbaum and Friedrich, 2005). Similar to how relational contact happens in personal connections in the work environment and classes, the educational relationship might occur across grade levels, educational settings, and topics (Myers, 2010).

Teacher immediacy is deemed as one of the utmost obligatory means in the path of emerging relationships, which utilizes a central part in which both teachers and students must endure to reduce the gap between them, lessen fear and pressure, and denote friendliness (LeFebvre and Allen, 2014). Possibly, the manifestation of immediacy manners permits constructive education and emerging positive interactions to be conceivable, in which both contribute to advance the full perspective of students (Nguyen, 2007). Regarding the remarkable role of immediacy in learning contexts, Witt et al. (2004) explained that verbal and non-verbal manners that teachers utilize in communications with their learners can be supposed as worthwhile subjects, and these worthwhile manners can motivate learners to be more encouraged, observant, and involved throughout the learning process (Liu, 2021).

Intentionally and unintentionally, teachers and learners send and get messages that can pass on cognitive and affective data as they cooperate in the class (Miller, 2000). Certainly, learning goals should allude to three aspects, specifically, the domain of points of view (cognitive), the domain of qualities or mentalities (affective), and the domain of abilities (Putri et al., 2018). The cognitive domain is the area that incorporates

mental exercises including the cycle of acknowledgment and/or disclosure that centers on the conception, the preservation, the remembrance, and the presentation of facts (Putri et al., 2018). Similarly, it incorporates relationships between components, idea arrangement, issue disclosure, and problem-solving abilities, which thus structure novel considerations. Mental exercises identified with the cognitive domain include thinking, reasoning, admiring, and envisaging. The affective domain is the area identified with mentalities and qualities which highlight the outlook and emotional state of students toward learners and/or teachers. The mentality is one of the terms in the field of psychology which deals with insight and practice that can similarly be deciphered as a construct to permit seeing an activity. The idea of mentality itself can be observed from different related components such as mentality with character, thought processes, confidence level, and so on (Putri et al., 2018). The affective domain identifies with how an individual responds to boosts or the climate encountered to give an appraisal. Affective learning results are identified with overseeing feelings, consolation, interests, and perspectives. Affective and cognitive learning have been customarily noticed as equal learning objectives; however, recently, researchers contended that the latter is an ultimate end while the former is solely a means to the end (Zhang and Oetzel, 2006).

For those researching the role of correspondence in the education of ideal learners, understanding the emotional and social parts of class correspondence is basic. Therefore, one of the strengths of our field (i.e., English language teaching) is its consideration of the relational parts of educational correspondence (Johnson et al., 2016). Even though educational correspondence has developed as a domain of study in the course of the recent 35 years, the heft of research centers on understanding learner-teacher correspondence and connections in the class (Myers, 2010). One of the regularly examined emotion-facilitating issues is the immediacy of teachers, which brings up the opinion of physical, emotive, or emotional intimacy proven through constructive interaction manners (Enskat et al., 2017). One of the fundamental educational correspondence practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes is the immediacy of teachers (Liando, 2015) which has gained more academic consideration than most different constructs in the field of educational correspondence (Richmond et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2007).

Immediacy has been an exploratory concept in the instructional literature and has been related to numerous preferred education consequences, containing affective learning, teacher credibility, the enthusiasm of learners, and cognitive learning (Pogue and Ahyun, 2006; Comadena et al., 2007). The verbal and/or non-verbal immediacy of teachers has been interrelated with the observed affective and/or cognitive learning of learners in the class (Witt et al., 2004). In addition, it stimulates friendliness, provokes constructive emotive reactions, and gets individuals together. There are deep-rooted inquiries that individuals are enthusiastic to be closer in immediacy to those whom they are engrossed more in instructional communications (Miller et al., 2014; Kalat et al., 2018). Teachers may employ numerous verbal or non-verbal performance systems to attain

immediacy that can be observed by learners and accordingly had a confident and effective influence on their language education (Ge et al., 2019).

In addition, immediacy in the practice of teachers during teaching correspondence identifies with a positive effect and expanded cognitive learning and more positive evaluation of learners made by teachers (Bicki, 2008). It similarly motivates the uplifting perspective of learners toward teachers and school. Immediacy, along these lines, influences the learning cycle and the environment in the class. Teacher immediacy is made by moving the emphasis toward learners and can be accomplished by the utilization of both verbal and non-verbal practices (Richmond et al., 2006). Affective learning has been investigated widely as both an associate and a result of teacher immediacy as studies investigating the association between immediacy and affective learning reliably uncover a solid connection between these factors (Witt and Wheelless, 2001; Chesebro, 2003).

Besides the abovementioned clarifications demonstrating the significance of the verbal and non-verbal immediacy of teachers, numerous researchers (e.g., Sutiayatno, 2018; Violanti et al., 2018; Sheybani, 2019; Lee, 2020) have indicated the fundamental role of the instantaneous manners of teachers in EFL or English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. It is evinced that immediacy has been significantly interrelated to student affective and cognitive erudition (Allen et al., 2006). Immediacy is also significantly linked to augmented emotive and cognitive commitment in a course, learner education approval, more constructive learner assessments of a teacher (Arbaugh, 2001; Pogue and Ahyun, 2006; Velez and Cano, 2008), condensed learner attrition degrees, and learner self-efficacy principles (Gunter, 2007). Learning researchers have premeditated immediacy in relationship with factors such as teacher integrity, intelligibility, verification (Comadena et al., 2007; Goodboy and Myers, 2008; Finn and Schrodt, 2012; Schrodt, 2013), learner communication anxiety, and learner education (Allen et al., 2006; Henning, 2012).

Based on the review of the literature and in line with the function of teacher immediacy in an instructive setting, many studies have pursued to scrutinize the relationship between these relational manners, namely, immediacy and learner-associated issues such as educational commitment, participation, willingness to take part in classes, cognitive and affective learning, fulfillment, and enthusiasm (Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh, 2018; Kalat et al., 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Zheng, 2021). As an instance, adopting a quantitative approach, Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh (2018) examined the association between teacher immediacy and the cognitive learning of students. To do so, three close-ended questionnaires were administered to 206 university students. Inspecting the correlation between the scales, they reported that verbal and non-verbal immediacy was associated with the cognitive learning of students. Performing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), they also found that teacher immediacy was perceived as a strong antecedent of student cognitive learning. By the same token, Kalat et al. (2018) focused on the positive consequences of the verbal and non-verbal immediacy of teachers. To this aim, some qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the responses of interviewees indicated that verbal

and non-verbal actions that instructors employ in classroom contexts can contribute to student positive behaviors, such as learning motivation and engagement. Furthermore, Hussain et al. (2021) investigated the association between perceived teacher immediacy and student academic motivation. In doing so, three validated scales were distributed among 726 college students who were voluntarily participated in the study. The results of correlational analyses illuminated a strong connection between the variables under investigation.

Although teacher immediacy has been investigated in various settings and territories and on several interindividual and intraindividual features, as Liu (2021) noted, it appears that the immediacy of language teachers has endured an unexplored area anticipating additional investigation. Language courses are different from those courses on which preceding immediacy inquiry has been presented. Within language lessons, individuals not only come around talking about language but also employ it to generate and preserve their societal setting (Nguyen, 2007).

TEACHER IMMEDIACY

Broadly referred to as a characterizing attribute for effective learning in both customary and online learning conditions, communication is at the core of the learning experience (Swan, 2002). Besides, it is credited as an impetus for affecting the motivation of learners, dynamic learning and contribution among learners, and the accomplishment of learning results (Du et al., 2005; Sargeant et al., 2006). The idea of immediacy, initially created by a social psychologist, Albert Mehrabian, is characterized as one of the correspondence practices that improve proximity to and non-verbal association with another (Mehrabian, 1967 cited in Velez and Cano, 2008). Initially, Mehrabian stressed non-verbal immediacy; however, he also created the scientific categorization of verbal parts later (Allen et al., 2006). Immediacy is characterized as the level of apparent physical or mental proximity between individuals (Richmond, 2002 as cited in Sheybani, 2019). Immediacy, in the field of education, has been connected to the motivational characteristic of approach-aversion in that people approach what they are interested in and stay away from what they are not attracted by (Mehrabian, 1967 as cited in Velez and Cano, 2008). In light of Mehrabian's scientific categorization of immediacy, teacher immediacy can be arranged as verbal and non-verbal practices that happen during a learner-teacher association that would develop physical and mental proximity between the two (Bozkaya and Aydin, 2007). Immediacy is a factor identified with the teaching demeanor and correspondence practice of teachers inside the educational setting. Within this system, the literature alludes to teachers or educating immediacy (Stamatis, 2014). Immediacy is a specialized instrument with an extraordinary worth that teachers possess. The educating immediacy of teachers gives learners a significant learning motivating force. The perspectives on learners about the correspondence practice of teachers and their non-verbal immediacy are connected to learning results, and learners are particularly highly motivated

to learn when teachers convey the data explicitly by non-verbal immediacy and react dependably (McCroskey et al., 2006a).

Teacher immediacy is characterized as the verbal and non-verbal signals diminishing the teacher-learner physical and/or mental distance (Estep and Roberts, 2015). As a matter of fact, teacher immediacy is a correspondence practice such as verbal and non-verbal correspondence components. Verbal immediacy alludes to elaborate contrasts in articulation, in light of which inferences are made concerning what is liked and so forth. This alludes to verbal articulations utilized by teachers. For instance, as stated by Velez and Cano (2012), a teacher could utilize the phrase “our class” and not “my class.” Verbal immediacy also incorporates verbal messages communicating sympathy, straightforwardness, generosity, reward, acclaim, sense of consideration, humor, individual information, and the readiness of teachers to include learners in correspondence (Pladevall-Ballester, 2015). Teacher immediacy works with fulfilling the necessities of learners (Frymier, 2016). Verbal immediacy practices incorporate taking part in cordial discussions with learners, getting some information about their viewpoints, and utilizing humor, while non-verbal immediacy signals involve having a casual stance, inclining forward, having fitting eye contact, and grinning at learners (Park et al., 2009; Wendt and Courduff, 2018; Derakhshan, 2021). Characterized as correspondence practices that upgrade proximity, non-verbal immediacy has been a significant domain for correspondence research for over 40 years (Pribyl et al., 2004). The non-verbal teaching immediacy is characterized as the practice that enhances proximity and non-verbal cooperation between the correspondence parties. It is the capacity of teachers to communicate sentiments, warmth, closeness, and a sense of belonging (Velez and Cano, 2012). This can be accomplished through eye contact, body position and movements, signals, grins, and expressiveness (Zhang and Sapp, 2013). The non-verbal immediacy construct depends on the possibility that the non-verbal practices of teachers advance the sensations of excitement, like, delight, and predominance. These sentiments are interceded through activities, for example, eye contact, body position, actual closeness, individual touch, and body movement to stimulate the consideration (Rocca, 2007) and interest of learners during teaching. Most non-verbal immediacy of teachers emphasizes practices, for example, eye contact, signals, body position, grinning, vocal expressiveness, movement, and locality (Liando, 2015).

A series of agencies that can ascertain distinctive behaviors such as smiling, verbal emotion, and a situation of the body has been established by immediacy scholars, and these types of immediacy variables can be taught to teachers to increase the learner-teacher rapport, student enthusiasm, commitment, and cognitive learning (Velez and Cano, 2008). Based on the studies conducted through decades about immediacy, it is generally recommended that teachers should enhance their immediacy manners for optimal success in the classroom interaction and communications through which immediate teachers build a setting where student enthusiasm and engagement can flourish, which as a result regulate their emotions (Mazer and Stowe, 2015; Greenier et al., 2021).

Non-verbal immediacy is assumed as extra-language communications guided by teachers to learners intended at creating spiritually positive interactions. They are associated with the affective realm of communication. The non-verbal clues are intermediated through such active teaching behaviors as proper eye contact, the usage of motions, movement about the class, vocal variability, and the practice of humor (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review set forth several implications in language education. Among the manners that teachers are inclined to establish in courses is verbal/non-verbal immediacy that has considerable impacts on the affective and cognitive learning of learners. The suggestions and recommendations of this study become more vivacious in assisting teachers to upturn the commitment and achievement of learners through emerging their immediacy. Successful immediacy courses provide teachers with a noble opportunity to increase more information about the prominence of communication and then encourage their verbal and non-verbal immediacy. By promoting immediacy, constructing behaviors in teachers, the learning of learners, stress tolerance, motivation, satisfaction, and self-image would expand (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001). The satisfaction of learners is accomplished by inspiring more learner involvement and negotiation in the language class so that the learners can cultivate the abilities to talk over thoughts and make conclusions (Brookfield and Preskill, 2012) that the fulfillment of learner interactions result in upgraded learner knowledge, success, and achievement (Richmond et al., 2006). Through high verbal and non-verbal immediacy of teachers, learners were fortified to exchange their notions without distress and teachers greeted them for conversation and debate not only in the classroom but also out of the classroom. These learners felt that they were also able to increase their negotiation talents and capabilities. Teacher immediacy, affirmation, and affinity-seeking promote positive teacher-learner connections, thereby promoting fulfillment. Utilizing immediacy in-class discussion, teachers, and learners turns into better relationships and connectedness and also undergoes greater quality in communication. In particular, when learners feel associated with teachers due to these practices, they are bound to have their relatedness needs fulfilled (Frymier, 2016). The main practical contribution of this review is that if teachers are intended to upturn the satisfaction of learners of the progress, encourage them to obtain the lessons, and expand their interaction, engagement, and cognitive learning, they should emphasize increasing the immediacy of teachers. Teachers can apply verbal immediacy manners, such as humor, commitment in dialogs with learners prior, afterward, or outdoors, inspiring learners to speak, demanding involvement, calling them by name, admiring their effort, and being accessible for learners outdoors if they have any problems.

The review serves to show support for teacher immediacy as an important element of learner success, that is, the goal of language learning. Immediacy in the class assists learners

to form a constructive opinion of the ability, credibility, and thoughtful approach of teachers (Rocca, 2007; Gao, 2021; Liu, 2021). These positive insights can also support to boost learner involvement in the class, and both types of immediacy, namely, verbal and non-verbal communication, are significant (Woods and Baker, 2004) while the former helps to convey subject matter, and the latter is appropriate in increasing teacher-learner relationships (Richmond et al., 2006). Immediacy in a class can also embolden the progress of relational fascination between teachers and learners (Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Through immediacy, the students become aware that their teachers care about them that consequently boosts their communication in the class (Comadena et al., 2007). Instructive academics (Henson and Denker, 2009) proposed that teachers must pay attention to each student, and this helps them to realize the teaching objective. Teachers taking them into account motivate them to take part and act together in the classroom.

Based on the review, it was proved that more learner awareness of immediacy causes more motivation in learners and that better learner motivation brings about more view of cognitive learning, besides higher effective ones. The role of teacher immediacy behaviors is assured in constructing cognitive learning (Frymier and Houser, 2000) as the immediacy of a teacher aids to eradicate the physical or mental space between the students which builds an insight that the teacher is close to them and this principle reintroduces the teacher-learner connection, which is considered as a prompting aspect of cognitive learning. Thus, the immediacy of teachers acts as a facilitator that moderates the apparent gap between teachers and learners and increases their language teaching (Allen et al., 2006).

In addition, when a teacher is highly immediate, it is obvious that they have a positively better influence on their learner motivation, which refers to the affective learning that can be defined as the encouraging principles that learners stick on to the behaviors of teachers in the classroom and it is proved that there is a positive relationship between the immediacy and affective learning of teachers (Frymier and Houser, 2000; Allen et al., 2006; Pogue and Ahyun, 2006). It surges motivation in the progression of education that may adjust the manners of learners. Teachers with immediate behavior are deemed more communicative that can govern their class (Mottet et al., 2006). The verbal and non-verbal immediacy of teachers leads to constructive social interactions with learners, which pinpointed that learners are less worried and more self-initiated in the instructional process in which they express that the inspiration and enthusiasm of students for education are augmented (Allen et al., 2006). An important implication taken from this review is that teachers should be aware that their immediacy, either verbal or non-verbal, successfully and strongly boosts the enthusiasm of learners for language learning. Therefore, on the one hand, teachers should be more thoughtful in their classes, keeping in mind that their immediacy could have a positive effect, increasing the motivation of learners. On the other hand, the less immediacy of teachers decreases and even diminished the interests and affective learning of learners (Pogue and Ahyun, 2006).

Similarly, this review is beneficial to those supervisors and administrators who wish to select the best teachers for their

language school or institute since the information of teachers, classroom administration capability, and other important teacher features; for example, the capability to create an immediate rapport with learners should be deliberated as a new prominent issue. Furthermore, aiming to aid learners struggling with negative issues such as stress, boredom, burnout, low self-confidence, or other factors (Seifalian and Derakhshan, 2018; Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2021), language faculty should certainly decide on instructors with great verbal/non-verbal immediacy. Students are proficient enough to deal better with difficulties and problems in class when they feel enthusiastically close enough to their teacher so they can control and adjust demanding circumstances and opposing occasions in a mode that does not offend them in educational contexts.

As the purpose of education is to look for routes to encourage students, possibly teacher training teachers should study the upshot of immediacy, so all the stakeholders of learning progression should be stimulated to assess and contemplate their verbal and non-verbal communication approaches. If teachers propose to assist an ideal classroom situation, they must direct caring and considerate communication messages to all learners. Training of teachers is becoming gradually mutual in different contexts (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004) so it is imperative to develop the understanding of teachers about both the principle and training of immediacy-constructing manners with the aim of heightening learner education. Therefore, teachers are supposed to take part in some seminars that concentrate on the social side of the classroom milieu to study detailed and precise approaches and tactics that further lead to positive interactions among learners. Due to the great role of verbal/non-verbal immediacy in education and their distinctive effect on the success and feelings of learners (Wei and Wang, 2010), it is suggested that teaching policymakers and experts put emphasis on both types of immediacy by presenting teacher immediacy instructing progressions.

Some lacunas were also found in the existing literature, which needs to be highlighted. First and foremost, there is a dearth of research to investigate in what way the social interaction practices of teachers can be heightened and as it is concluded that based on the review of the related literature, teacher immediacy is deemed to be a crucial element, so future studies, particularly experimental ones, should be carried out to present instructional treatment to a group of teachers on a specific facet of relational interactions to notice how receiving intervention can encourage the social behavior of teachers. Second, most of the previous studies in this area were carried out in general education (Bozkaya and Aydin, 2007; Estepp and Roberts, 2015; Enskat et al., 2017). That is, the consequences of immediate behaviors for language learners, such as EFL and ESL students, received scant attention. Thus, to narrow this gap in the literature, future inquiries are required to delve into the impact of the verbal and non-verbal immediacy of teachers on the academic behaviors of EFL and ESL students. Third, the majority of existing studies were purely quantitative, using close-ended questionnaires to gather the data. To attain more comprehensive findings, future investigations are recommended to triangulate

the data employing other data collection instruments, such as observations, structured/semi-structured interviews, and diary/narrative writings. Finally, contextual factors, such as age, gender, and educational background, were not among the main concerns of previous studies. To identify to what extent age, gender, and educational background of participants can alter their perceptions regarding the effects of teacher interpersonal

factors, notably verbal and non-verbal immediacy, future studies should measure the probable effects of such variables.

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Exploring the Dynamic Interplay Between Foreign Language Enjoyment and Learner Engagement With Regard to EFL Achievement and Absenteeism: A Sequential Mixed Methods Study

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Scholarly attention to the feeling of enjoyment experienced in second language acquisition (SLA) has sharply increased in the past 5 years owing to its positive effect on facilitating academic outcomes as well as promoting language learners' well-being. This sequential mixed methods study aims to examine the interplay between Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and learner engagement (LE) as well as their combined effects on participants' EFL achievement and absenteeism. To this end, we administered a questionnaire containing the adapted FLE Scale and the four-aspect engagement inventory among 707 Chinese university students and a semi-structured interview among 28 of them. Statistical analysis revealed that FLE was highly and positively correlated with LE, and the causal relationship between the two constructs was reciprocal. Furthermore, both FLE and LE had low correlations with participants' academic achievements, but no significant correlation was found between FLE or LE and absenteeism. However, a higher level of FLE-social was associated with a lower level of absenteeism. Finally, no gender differences were found either in the level FLE or in that of LE. The thematic analysis indicated that FLE was subject substantially to teacher-related variables and the second most significant attractor of FLE was FLE-self. Analysis of the trends of LE indicated that Chinese EFL learners preferred to engage themselves in their English study more emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively than agentically. Pedagogical implications of the findings for EFL practitioners are also discussed, and suggestions for future research are offered.

Keywords: Foreign language enjoyment, learner engagement, achievement, absenteeism, mixed methods study

INTRODUCTION

The turn of the new millennium has witnessed the modern positive psychology (PP) movement since Martin Seligman became the president of the American Psychological Association. Shifting away from the exclusively pathological orientations toward abnormalities, disorders, and other negative experiences people encounter in general psychology, PP is devoted to "the scientific study of what goes right in life" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4). Focusing on human positive functioning

and flourishing at biological, personal, relational, social, institutional, cultural, and global level (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), PP was founded on three pillars: (1) positive experiences, (2) positive character traits, and (3) positive institutions.

To corroborate the practical significance of PP, Fredrickson (2001, 2013) formulated the broaden-and-build theory to further highlight the impact of positive emotions and experiences on nourishing flourishing individuals. The theory states that positive emotions—including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love, share the ability to “broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219). The inherited humanistic concern of PP and the significant progress it has made in social science, coupled with the “social turn” (Block, 2003; Gregg, 2006) and the “individual turn” (MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014) of SLA as well as the existing methodological diversity in this avenue, have made the application of PP both desirable and feasible (e.g., MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; Mercer et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Budzińska, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, the relatively short marriage of PP and SLA is producing new knowledge in each of the original three pillars (MacIntyre, 2021).

Foreign language enjoyment (FLE), as one of the key positive emotions predicting the performance and well-being of FL learners and a critical factor contributing to the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere, is in alignment with the first and third pillar of PP and has drawn considerable scholarly attention in the past 5 years. A large body of existing literature on FLE has focused on investigating the nature, predictors as well as dynamic features of this positive emotion over a period of time, yet a few recent studies have expanded their research attention to exploring the correlation between FLE and desirable academic outcomes or positive personality traits (e.g., Dincer et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020b; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2021b; Wang et al., 2021). It is worth mentioning that Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) have noticed the association between FLE and LE and pointed out explicitly that FLE has an effect on sustaining learner engagement (LE) despite the fact that the connection between the two constructs has been touched upon implicitly in a couple of previous studies.

Learner engagement (LE) has been one of the hottest research topics in the field of educational psychology (Sinatra et al., 2015) and, with the arrival of PP in second language acquisition (SLA) in the past couple of years, it has been a renewed and burgeoning domain in this avenue due to its core status in successful language learning, maintaining both language teachers and learners’ wellbeing and its malleability as well. A majority of existing studies on LE explains its antecedents in light of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017) whereas it is worth noting that the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness which is found to induce LE (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017; Noels et al., 2018), to some degree, also facilitates FLE. However, existing research on LE in SLA is relatively sparse (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) and few empirical studies have been undertaken so far to explore the dynamic interplay between FLE and LE.

When it comes to absenteeism, there is little doubt that school attendance is highly related to academic achievement as decreased exposure to teachers and teaching would probably reduce the opportunity for learning. Previous studies have found strong significant correlations between attendance and achievement (Roby, 2004) and that high absenteeism predicted dropping out (Rumberger and Lim, 2008). That makes the exploration of factors reducing absenteeism an imperative and meaningful endeavor whereas next to none studies have been undertaken to investigate the effects of FLE and LE on language learners’ academic performance and class attendance. To bridge the gap, this study is set to examine the interplay of FLE and LE, and their combined effects on EFL learners’ achievement and absenteeism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign Language Enjoyment

Resonating with the advent of PP in SLA, the feeling of enjoyment has been one of the hot topics in recent research on foreign language education. Researchers’ interest in the enjoyableness in SLA initiated from their exploration of the possible link between this positive emotion and EFL learners’ academic performance. Green (1993) found across 17 activities that enjoyment and perceived learning effectiveness of the tasks did indeed go hand in hand. However, Brantmeier (2005) reported conflicting results from his own data: enjoyment was correlated positively with self-assessed ability as measured by a written recall task, but did not correlate significantly with scores on a multiple-choice test.

Drawing on the insight of PP, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) made a giant step toward the study of enjoyment. They explicitly introduced the concept of FLE in SLA and developed the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, based on Likert scale ratings of 21 items, which has become the main instrument used to measure FLE. In this paper, they used an internet-based survey to investigate the relationship between FLE and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), and the statistical analysis revealed that FLE and FLCA were two different dimensions instead of the two sides of a coin, learners experienced a significantly higher level of FLE than FLCA, and there was a modest negative correlation between the two experiences (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014). They were also the first researchers who pointed to the gender difference in both emotions, claiming that female participants experience more FLE and FLCA than their male peers. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) further advanced the investigation of FLE in the following paper which conducted an in-depth analysis of 2014 research using the aforementioned scale and an attached open question asking participants to give a detailed description of a really enjoyable event or episode in their FL class. Based on the respondents’ narratives of their most enjoyable experiences, they contrasted enjoyment with pleasure and conceptualized it as a “complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks” (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016, p. 217). Moreover, they argued that FLE was mediated by both social factors such as a good

atmosphere among nice teacher and supportive peers and private factors like learners' sense of pride and success.

Since then, the research on FLE began to flourish and expanded epistemologically, methodologically, and geographically (Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2021), yet majorly following the two research lines that Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016) have established: (1) investigating the mechanism or contributors of FLE, and (2) examining the dynamics between FLE and FLCA.

In alignment with the first research line, Dewaele et al. (2016) further explored the gender difference in FLE and FLCA at the item level, using both FLE Scale and an open question to collect data. The results, confirming yet refining the findings in the previous study (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014), revealed that female participants significantly had more fun and experienced more mild FLCA in the FL classroom. Piechurska-Kuciel (2017) investigated the relationship between learners' command of language and their levels of enjoyment. The results revealed that while reliable social bonds with teacher and peers facilitated FLE, language proficiency was also significantly, positively related to this positive emotion, since better command of language was usually connected with greater control perception and proficient learners were more likely to benefit from the recognition of the value of language proficiency. Elahi Shirvan and Talebzadeh (2017) used an idiodynamic method to discern the effect of different conversational topics on the dynamics of FLE by recording rapid moment-to-moment changes of this positive experience. Results from this research indicated that FLE was a dynamic system varied both inter-personally and intra-personally and the topic was an attractor state for learners' enjoyment. These findings suggested that teachers could increase language learners' level of enjoyment with the selection of proper conversational topics and the control of the extent of their difficulty and amusement in classroom interactions. Dewaele et al. (2018) investigated whether, and to what extent, FLE and FLCA were connected with learner-internal and teacher-specific variables. The results indicated that FLE and FLCA were subject to both learner-internal and classroom-specific factors. To elaborate, older, more experienced, more proficient students experienced higher levels FLE. What's more, enthusiasm toward the FL and the FL teacher, a lot of FL use of the target language by the teacher in class, a big proportion of time students spent on speaking were all reported to contribute to higher levels of FLE. Teachers were found to play a more vital role in boosting students' FLE than alleviating their FLCA. De Smet et al. (2018) examined how target language influenced FL learner's FLE and FLCA. They found that bilinguals had higher levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA than their monolingual counterparts. In addition, target language played a fundamental role in classroom emotional engagement. For example, English learners reported significantly more FLE and less FLCA and than Dutch learners. Talebzadeh et al. (2019) explored the mechanisms and dynamics of enjoyment contagion in a course of foreign language. The findings indicated that automatic mimicry was the main mechanism of enjoyment contagion in teacher-student interactions. And this was shaped by the application of facial expressions, gestures, and postures like laughter, vocalic expressions, smiling, nodding, and leaning forward.

By the same token, Moskowitz and Dewaele (2020) administered an online survey on 163 adult Spanish EFL learners to explore possible links between FL learners' intellectual humility (IH) and FLE and FLCA. The results revealed that IH had a mixed and complex relationship with FLE and FLCA, with some IH domains negatively predicting FLE and both positively and negatively predicting FLCA. Ahmadi-Azad et al. (2020) investigated the role of Big Five personality traits of EFL teachers in facilitating learners' FLE and found that teachers' openness, extroversion, and agreeableness were significantly, positively associated with learners' FLE while their conscientiousness and neuroticism did not have significantly similar effects.

In line with the second denomination, Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) investigated how FLE and FLCA changed over time among secondary students, basing on a pseudo-longitudinal design. Statistical analysis revealed that while the weak negative correlation between FLE and FLCA remained stable, the variables influencing positive and negative emotions did change over time. For example, the effect of the teacher grew over time on FLE but not on FLCA. Set in the Iranain context, Elahi Shirvan and Taherian (2018) conducted a longitudinal study, using the latent growth curve modeling (LGCM), to investigate the growth and changing trends of university students' FLE and FLCA. Statistical analysis revealed that the growth of FLE and FLCA were strongly, negatively correlated though their initial states were weakly associated. What's more, the initial states of either FLE or FLCA did not predict their growth through the semester. In addition, the growth of both the positive and negative emotions were subject to both inter-individual and intra-individual variables. Moreover, Elahi Shirvan and Talebzadeh (2020) used the retrodictive qualitative modeling (RQM) to explore the signature dynamics of FLE and FLCA. The study found that the prototype contributors of those emotions were the influence of the teacher, personal goals, a perfectionist image of oneself and dissatisfactory and unsuccessful experiences in the past. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) investigated whether FL learners experienced similar levels of FLE and FLCA in the same language if they had two different teachers at a single point. Statistical analysis revealed that students had significantly higher level of FLE with the main teacher while their FLCA level was stable with both teachers, suggesting that teachers' creation of a positive emotional atmosphere in class contributed to the higher FLE score. More recently, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2021a) adopted a longitudinal confirmatory factor analysis-curve of factors model (LCFA-CFM) approach to explore the temporal growth of FLE over time and how it evolved through the L2 course (FLE) among adult EFL learners. The results revealed that learners with lower initial FLE experienced a faster increase in FLE over time, which can be attributed to learner's motivation, changing attitude to L2 learning and the supportive role of the teacher. Elahi Shirvan et al. (2021b) used a factor of curves model (FCM) to further trace the longitudinal co-development of adult EFL learners' private-FLE and social-FLE. The results indicated that there was a significant increase over time in both subdomains and the increase could be largely explained by the global factor of FLE.

Apart from the aforementioned two denominations, there were also studies undertaken to investigate the possible links between FLE and desirable academic outcomes or other positive personality traits. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), for instance, investigated the effect of FLE and FLCA on learners' FL performance. Statistical analysis from their study showed that there was a significant, positive relationship between FLE and students' self-reported test results and a slightly bigger one than the significant, negative relationship between FLCA and their achievement. This study also suggested that perception of the FL teacher and teachers' pedagogical practices played a crucial role in facilitating FLE. In another study, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) explored the interplay of learner-internal and learner-external variables to predict students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and found that high level of FLE was positively associated with learners' WTC in FL classroom. In another study undertaken by Elahi Shirvan et al. (2021b), a bivariate latent growth curve model (LGCM) was used to investigate the growth of FLE and L2 grit over time. The findings indicated an increasing trend in the association between the growth levels of both variables and an increase in the level of FLE among the participants was strongly correlated with an increase in the level of L2 grit during the whole course.

Different from previous studies concentrating on EFL learners' feeling of enjoyment, Mierzwa (2019) made a pioneering investigation of the level of FLE among FL teachers in Poland to examine the possible sources of the positive feeling. The results revealed teachers experienced a relatively high level of enjoyment both in FL learning and FL teaching. And, female teachers scored significantly higher in FL learning enjoyment than their male counterparts while there was no gender difference in FL teaching enjoyment. In addition, the study also found that FLE was more related to learner-internal and teacher-specific variables than to the behavior of peers and the atmosphere in the classroom, corroborating the findings of Li et al. (2018).

Inspired by the scholarly attention to FLE in the Western world, Chinese scholars began their exploration of FLE in Chinese educational and cultural context, following practically similar research course of studies in other parts of the world. Li et al. (2018) initiated their exploration of FLE among Chinese EFL learners by capturing the uniqueness of Chinese psychometric properties. Using the Chinese version of FLE scale they devised, Li et al. (2018) examined the factors facilitating FLE in Chinese EFL context and the results revealed that Chinese EFL learners' enjoyment was formulated by the dimensions of FLE-teacher, FLE-private and FLE-atmosphere among which EFL instructors played a crucial role in creating a positive classroom. Jiang and Dewaele (2019) examined to what extent Chinese undergraduate EFL learners' FLE and FLCA were different from that of learners outside China. Statistical analysis illustrated that Chinese EFL learners experienced similar levels of FLE but higher levels of FLCA compared to the international sample collected by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). Their study further confirmed the previous findings that FLE was more strongly predicted by teacher-specific variables while FLCA was mostly subject to learner-internal variables except that Chinese learners disliked teachers' unpredictable behaviors. Li et al. (2020b) administered

questionnaires among Chinese secondary and university students respectively to examine the combined effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and Classroom Environment (CE) on FLE and FLCA. The results of both samples indicated that TEI and CE had both independent and joint effects on FLE and FLCA.

Despite the fact that a vast majority of extant literature on FLE focused on the conceptualization, measurement, and antecedents of this positive emotion, there emerged studies which correlated FLE with the language learning process. Several Chinese studies focused their research attention to the mediating effects of FLE on learners' academic outcomes. Li (2019) examined the complex relationships between Chinese EFL learners' trait emotional intelligence (TEI), FLE, and achievement. The results revealed that there were small to medium correlations between students' TEI, FLE, self-perceived English performance, and their actual English achievement. Moreover, FLE played some yet indirect part in mediating learners' TEI to influence their self-assessed achievement and actual scores. Wei et al. (2019) investigated the mediating role of FLE and classroom environment (CE) in the relationship between Chinese EFL learners' grit and performance. The results revealed that students' grit was positively associated with their performance and that FLE mediated the relationship between their grit and performance. In addition, Positive CE played a part in increasing the impact of grit on both FLE and achievement. Their research also indicated some gender differences with females reporting higher scores in grit, FLE, CE, and performance than their male peers. Li et al. (2020a) examined the interplay between Chinese EFL learners' FLE and FLCA and found that FLE was positively related to their self-rated proficiency while FLCA was significantly, negatively related to that. The latest research concerning FLE was conducted by Zhang et al. (2021) who investigated whether Thai EFL learners' FLE and English proficiency influenced their preference for Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). The results showed that learners preferred more explicit types of WCF irrespective of their language proficiency and FLE level. However, the FLE level seemed positively linked to their perception of the value of WCF in terms of scope. Other studies further found that FLE could lead to better academic achievement (Jin and Zhang, 2018; Li et al., 2020a), increase their engagement in the language learning process (Jin and Zhang, 2019) argued, or boost social-behavioral learning engagement (Dewaele and Li, 2020).

Learner Engagement

Engagement, as an antidote to signs of student alienation such as classroom boredom and absenteeism and a booster for academic achievement, has been one of the hottest research topics in the field of educational psychology (Sinatra et al., 2015). For this reason, it has been brought under investigation across multiple contexts and subject matters (e.g., Fredricks et al., 2004; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks and McColskey, 2012; Lawson and Lawson, 2013). Engagement is also one of the pivotal occupations and cornerstones of positive psychology (PP), constituting the E construct of PERMA framework to promote individual wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). Its crucial role in both fields has made engagement a fledgling darling in SLA in the past few years (see Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012;

Philp and Duchesne, 2016; Mercer, 2019; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020) since learner engagement lies at the heart of successful language learning and is one of the predictors of learners' happiness. Moreover, a growing body of research suggests that learner engagement is malleable and subjects to deliberate interventions and specific teacher behaviors (Harbour et al., 2015). These reasons make language learner engagement an interesting and meaningful domain to explore in depth whereas existing research on engagement in SLA is relatively sparse (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

It has been widely accepted that engagement is a multidimensional construct which makes the understanding and definition of it quite a challenge. Fredricks et al. (2004) defined engagement as a notion comprising three core components: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Yet the endeavor in conceptualizing and theorizing this construct never stops owing to its complexity. Later, Svalberg (2009) as well as Philp and Duchesne (2016) brought forth "social" as the fourth component, arguing that cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional dimensions operated interdependently and mutually influenced one another. However, the "social" dimension aroused skepticism since all the other components have been socially situated (Reeve, 2012; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). To further conceptualize and theorize learner engagement, Reeve and Tseng (2011) and Reeve (2013) added an alternative "agentic engagement" as the fourth facet of this construct. Agentic engagement was defined as "students' constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (Reeve and Tseng, 2011, p. 258) and considered as a "proactive, intentional, collaborative, and constructive student-initiated pathway to greater achievement" (Reeve, 2013, p. 579).

All of the aforementioned conceptualization and theorizing of engagement lay emphasis on the behavioral involvement in various level ecologies of engagement, or share the reference to action (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). This resonates with Skinner et al.'s (2009, p. 225) description of engagement as "energized, directed, and sustained actions." It is this actional or behavioral dimension that differentiates engagement from another affinitive notion—motivation (Oga-Baldwin and Nakata, 2017; Mercer, 2019). As a matter of fact, studies of engagement to some extent initiated from the more conventional notion: motivation. Prevailing views include seeing engagement as a descriptor of motivation (Philp and Duchesne, 2016) or an observable manifestation of cognitive and emotional activity in the form of participation and enjoyment (Reeve, 2012), and regarding motivation as the hidden mental reality encompassing conscious and unconscious drives (Reeve, 2012), the precursor (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012), or antecedent (Christenson et al., 2012) of engagement, to name just a few. Reeve and Lee (2014) also tested the impact that changing students' classroom engagement had on their longitudinal classroom motivation. Results revealed that high-quality classroom engagement facilitated students' in-course motivation, especially their psychological need satisfaction and self-efficacy. A similar study undertaken by Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2017) suggested that engagement strongly predicted intrinsic motives but negatively predicted extrinsic motives. Male

students were found to have lower engagement, lower internally regulated motives, and higher externally regulated motives.

Svalberg (2009, 2017) was among the first researchers who explicitly brought up the topic of engagement in SLA and laid a sound theoretical basis for the study of engagement in language learning. She advanced the term "engagement with language (EWL)" and defined it as "a cognitive, and/or affective, and/or social state and a process in which the learner is the agent and the language is the object and may be the vehicle (means of communication)" (Svalberg, 2009, p. 244). To resolve terminological and methodological confusion, she also made a clear distinction between engagement and neighboring terms of involvement, commitment, and motivation, arguing that each of the three concepts covered only part of the nature of engagement yet failing to capture the entirety of the construct (Svalberg, 2009). In another paper, Svalberg (2017) conducted a diachronic delineation of "engagement" in the literature to better understand its role in language awareness and language learning, and to situate this construct in relation to other similar notions like contextual engagement, task engagement, and engagement with corrective feedback. It was found that meaningfulness, which is linguistic, social, or individual in nature and predicted by purposefulness, utility, and enjoyment, is a highly influential factor for engagement research.

Across a bulk of previous studies on engagement, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017) was the most frequently adopted theoretical framework to explain the antecedents of learner engagement. The basic assumption of SDT approach is that greater engagement can be predicted when basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are met (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017; Noels et al., 2018). Autonomy refers to learners' need to exercise agency in shaping their own learning according to their beliefs, values, and interests (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Competence concerns learners' deep-held belief that they can face up to challenges and bring their action to the desired end. Learners' sense of relatedness is more context-dependent, relying on the feeling of belonging provided by supportive teachers and peers (Jang et al., 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017; Dincer et al., 2019).

To better understand the predictors of engagement, several researches were conducted in the light of the SDT. For example, Skinner et al. (2008) used a motivational development model to investigate the internal dynamics of four indicators of behavioral and emotional engagement and disaffection and how teacher support and students' self-perception of their competence, autonomy, and relatedness effected changes in these indicators over the school year. The study found that emotional engagement positively predicted changes in behavioral engagement. Furthermore, teacher support and students' self-perceptions had a similar effect when it comes to increasing behavioral engagement and decreasing disaffection. Noels (2009) examined the mediating role of enhanced engagement, predicted by the satisfaction of psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, in supporting learner motivation. Furthermore, a sense of autonomy was argued to be the strongest facilitator for volitional engagement in the learning process

since it conferred learners a feeling of identification with ethnolinguistic groups.

Noels et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal investigation of the causal claim that learners tend to be more engaged and motivated when they feel autonomous, competent, and related to others in their learning environment. Statistical analysis confirmed an early argument that engagement arose through self-processes, particularly a self-determined motivational orientation (Ryan and Deci, 2017), and further revealed that earlier engagement levels enhanced later motivational orientations and that earlier motivational levels had an effect on learners' later perceptions of psychological need fulfillment and later engagement. Moreover, Mercer (2019) discussed antecedents of engagement through the lens of SDT and argued that students' feeling of competence, autonomy, and relatedness prepared them for fuller engagement and necessary actions taken in the language learning process. By the same token, Dincer et al. (2019) examined the relations between EFL classroom context, self, engagement, and academic outcome and found that engagement was predicted when students' psychological needs were met. They also found that higher emotional and agentic engagement was positively associated with academic achievement while cognitive engagement predicting decreased absenteeism.

When exploring the antecedents of engagement, several researchers focused their attention on the dynamics between classroom context and EFL learners' engagement. Ryan and Patrick (2001) examined the dynamic relation of students' perceptions of the social environment (classroom) to their motivation and engagement and found that higher-order classroom social environments were strong predictors of changes in learners' motivation and engagement. And students' perceptions of teacher support, and the teacher as promoting interaction and mutual respect facilitated their motivation and engagement whereas their perceptions of the teacher as promoting performance goals led to negative changes in motivation and engagement. The relation between teacher-student interaction and engagement also aroused the interest of Reeve et al. (2004) who tested whether classroom teachers could incorporate autonomy support into their motivating styles as a way to promote their students' engagement during instruction. The results showed that trained teachers were significantly more autonomy-supportive behaviors, and more importantly, teachers autonomy support was significantly, positively related to students' engagement. Reeve (2012) drew on the insight of SDT to explain how classroom conditions acted as variables to either support or neglect and frustrate students' motivation, engagement, and positive classroom functioning. The study further identified the interactive relation between engagement and the learning environment. Qualitative analysis of another study (Dincer et al., 2019) also indicated that a positive social atmosphere where teachers' autonomy-support was perceived played a crucial role in supporting students' engagement. Teachers' role in facilitating learner engagement was also examined by Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020) who found that teachers tended to concentrate on the improvement of students' behavioral engagement and had little access to the emotional dimension and less concern for cognitive or social

components of the construct. A holistic investigation of learner engagement drawing on insights from PP was conducted by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020). They examined how teachers could develop students' positive emotions in order to promote their active engagement (Liu, 2021), pointing out that feeling of enjoyment learners derive from teacher-student rapport, quality peer relations, and performing tasks with balanced challenges etc., was one of the key elements to sustain their engagement (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). The association between FLE and LE was also identified by Dewaele and Li (2020). Moreover, learner engagement was found to be positively related to other teacher-student interpersonal communication behaviors (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), such as teacher care, rapport (Derakhshan et al., 2021), nonverbal immediacy, and credibility behaviors (Derakhshan, 2021).

The current empirical study is warranted due to several research gaps in the existing literature. First and foremost, there is still a scarcity of empirical studies investigating the effect of FLE on factors vital for successful FL learning, notably learner engagement, despite that FLE is no longer an underestimated emotion (Wang et al., 2021) and a number of studies have expanded our insights into the nature as well as the mechanism of FLE. Second, although FLE has been pinpointed as an significant antecedent of LE in recent research, no empirical study have been carried out to examine the interplay of the two constructs. Finally, no empirical study has been conducted to explore the associations among FLE, LE, achievement and absenteeism. To fill these gaps, this study aims at investigating the impact of FLE on LE, their interplay, and their combined effects on participants' EFL achievement and absenteeism.

METHODS

Participants

Respondents for the questionnaire in this present study were 707 non-English major undergraduates from three comprehensive universities in central China (273 males, 405 females, and 29 who preferred not to specify their gender). The average age of these participants was 19.4 years old ($SD = 2.570$). Most of them were first-year students (64.2%) and sophomores (14.9%) for whom English was a compulsory course. They were required to take two general English courses, *English Listening and Speaking* and *English Reading and Writing*, respectively, for 2 h per week and for four consecutive semesters. A small proportion of the participants were junior (11.3%) and senior students (9.6%) who were still learning English to sit various tests such as CET (College English Test) band 6, national post-graduate entrance examination, IELTS and TOEFL.

Participants for the semi-structured interview were 28 freshmen from the 707 respondents (13 males, 15 females, and 1 who preferred not to specify the gender). Their average age was 19 years old ($SD 0.881$).

Instruments

The present study collected both quantitative and qualitative data *via* a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, respectively. Both data were obtained *via* the electronic versions which

were distributed through WeChat (a Chinese multi-purpose messaging app). The questionnaire started with obtaining participants' consent followed by a section collecting their demographic information including gender, age, and level of education. The ensuing section contained two measures: the FLE scale and the learner engagement scale. The last section of the questionnaire asked participants to report their achievements as well as their absenteeism. Students rated their English exam score with a 4-point scale from low (0–59) to high (90–100) following the university grading system (0–59 = 1, 60–69 = 2, 70–89 = 3, 90–100 = 4) (Junior and senior undergraduates reported their self-perceived English proficiency). Higher scores indicated higher academic achievements. And they also self-reported their course attendance throughout that term using a 4-point scale ranging from no class absences (0) to many class absences (≥ 5) (0 = 1, 1–2 = 2, 3–4 = 3, ≥ 5 = 4). Higher scores indicated greater absenteeism. Students who missed 5 or more classes would automatically fail the course.

The qualitative phase of the study involved a semi-structured interview containing 15 open-ended questions regarding classroom atmosphere, psychological needs, classroom engagement, self-perceived performance, and suggestions for improving the course.

Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale

An adapted and bilingual version of FLE scale including 17 items extracted from the original one developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016) was used to measure participants' FLE. The first nine items reflected the private dimension of FLE and the following eight items indicated its social dimension. All items were positively phrased and juxtaposed with Chinese translations in brackets. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each item on a standard 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, No idea = 3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5). Internal consistency of the 17 items was assessed, using Cronbach's Alpha, and the results indicated that the FLE scale used in the present study showed a very high internal reliability ($Alpha = 0.936$).

Learner Engagement Scale

We used the bilingual version of the learner engagement scale redesigned by Reeve and Tseng (2011) which consisted of 22 items assessing four aspects of learner engagement: agentic, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Corresponding Chinese translations of all items were provided in brackets. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Often = 4, and Almost always = 5).

The five-item *agentic engagement* measure was originally developed by Reeve and Tseng (2011). Miserandino's (1996) five-item task involvement questionnaire was used to assess *behavioral engagement*. For the assessment of *emotional engagement*, four positively-valenced items reflecting energized emotional states (i.e., enjoyment, interest, curiosity, and fun) were extracted from Wellborn's (1991) conceptualization of students' emotional engagement. *Cognitive engagement* was assessed using Wolters (2004) briefer version of the learning strategies questionnaire containing eight items. The four

measures in the present study showed high internal reliability ($Alpha = 0.89$).

Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 participants. After giving consent and providing demographic information including their gender, age, and level of education, participants were asked to answer 15 open-ended bilingual questions either in Chinese or in English to make sure they expressed their ideas clearly and accurately. The interview questions (see the English version of the semi-structured interview in the **Appendix**) were primarily designed to learn about (1) the sources of participants' FLE *via* their rating of the reasons for which they enjoy leaning English, description of enjoyable episodes in English class, comments on the English course, the teacher and the classroom atmosphere, and (2) how they were engaged in English learning in the aspects of agentic, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The present study was operationalized in two stages: the questionnaire phase and the semi-structured interview phase. In the first stage, questionnaires were distributed and collected online through a Chinese multi-purpose messaging app, WeChat and 707 samples were obtained. In the second stage, 28 participants who agreed to further engage in the present study were asked to answer the interview questions and submit the questionnaires on the same online platform.

Accordingly, data analyses of the study proceeded in two phases. Descriptive analyses, independent-samples *T*-test, correlation analyses, and regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 23.0 in the first phase to have a panoramic view of Chinese EFL learners' FLE and engagement, and more importantly, to identify the relations between FLE and learner engagement and their single and combined effects on achievement and absenteeism. In the second phase, qualitative data were analyzed with Nvivo 12 Plus to elicit themes facilitating participants' FLE and indicating their engagement.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Levels of FLE and Learner Engagement

Average scores on the 5-point scale were calculated for FLE ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.65$) and separately for FLE-private ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.74$) and FLE-social ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.70$). Means of each of the two aspects were compared and the results displayed in **Table 1** revealed that participants scored significantly higher in FLE-social than in FLE-private.

Average scores on the 5-point scale were calculated for LE ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.71$) and separately for agentic LE ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.0$), behavioral LE ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.75$), emotional LE ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.80$) and cognitive LE ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.75$). Means of each of the four aspects were compared and the results displayed in **Table 1** showed that participants reported significantly lower scores in agentic LE than in behavioral LE ($f = 28.32$, $p < 0.001$), emotional LE ($f = 28.11$, $p < 0.001$) or cognitive LE ($f = 16.97$, $p < 0.001$).

TABLE 1 | Means comparison of different aspects of FLE and LE.

	F	P
FLE-private * FLE-social	25.05	0.000***
Agentic LE * Behavioral LE	28.32	0.000***
Agentic LE * Emotional LE	28.11	0.000***
Agentic LE * Cognitive LE	16.97	0.000***

*** $p < 0.0001$; (all two-tailed tests).

TABLE 2 | Correlations between FLE and LE.

	LE	
	r	P
FLE	0.784	0.000***
FLE-private	0.753	0.000***
FLE-social	0.639	0.000***

*** $p < 0.0001$ (all two-tailed tests).

TABLE 3 | Results of multiple regression analyses.

Predictor variables	Adjusted R ²	B	t	p	VIF
FLE	0.614	0.851	33.538	<0.0001	1.000
FLE-private	0.619	0.538	18.564	<0.0001	1.689
FLE-social	0.619	0.304	9.953	<0.0001	1.689
LE	0.614	0.304	33.538	<0.0001	1.000
Agentic LE	0.622	0.140	7.218	<0.0001	1.703
Behavioral LE	0.622	0.137	7.181	<0.0001	3.818
Emotional LE	0.622	0.259	3.500	<0.0001	3.672
Cognitive LE	0.622	0.187	6.060	<0.0001	2.353

TABLE 4 | Correlations between FLE, FLE-private, FLE-social, and LE and achievement and absenteeism.

	Achievement		Absenteeism	
	r	p	r	p
FLE	0.220	0.000***	-0.069	0.067
FLE-private	0.272	0.000***	-0.023	0.534
FLE-social	0.109	0.004**	-0.108	0.004**
LE	0.217	0.000***	-0.045	0.233

*** $p < 0.0001$; ** $p < 0.01$ (all two-tailed tests).

Gender Differences in Levels of FLE and Learner Engagement

Independent-samples *t*-tests revealed that there were no significant gender differences for either FLE ($df = 469, t = 1.15, p = 0.25$) (Females FLE $M = 3.80, SD = 0.56$; Males FLE $M = 3.86, SD = 0.75$) or LE ($df = 500, t = 1.38, p = 0.17$; Females LE $M = 3.51, SD = 0.65$, Males LE $M = 3.59, SD = 0.80$).

Interplay Between FLE and Learner Engagement

First, we conducted a series of Pearson correlation analyses to investigate the correlations between FLE and LE. The results summarized in **Table 2** showed that FLE was significantly highly and positively correlated with LE. To elaborate, FLE-private and FLE-social had, respectively, high and moderate correlations with LE.

Considering the significant correlation results between FLE and LE, we performed multiple linear regression analyses, taking FLE and LE as well as their different aspects as predictor variables, respectively, to explore the interplay of the two constructs. FLE and its both aspects were entered into the regression model, respectively for LE as the predicted variable. Significant regression equation models were found ($F = 1,124.791, p < 0.0001$, and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.614$; $F = 573.814, p < 0.0001$, and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.619$). According to the regression model summarized in **Table 3**, 61.4% of the variance of LE was explained by FLE, without any clear evidence of multicollinearity [$VIF(1.000) < 3$]. Comparatively speaking, FLE-private displayed a better predictive power ($B = 0.538$) on LE than FLE-social ($B = 0.304$). LE and its four aspects were entered into the regression model, respectively, for FLE as the predicted variable. Significant regression equation models were found ($F = 1,124.791, p < 0.0001$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.614$; $F = 291.557, p < 0.0001$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.622$). In contrast, emotional engagement had a better predictive power ($B = 0.259$) on FLE than agentic ($B = 0.140$), behavioral ($B = 0.137$), or cognitive engagement ($B = 0.187$).

Interactions Between FLE, LE, and Academic Achievement and Absenteeism

A series of correlation analyses were conducted to explore the combined effects of FLE and LE on learners' achievement and absenteeism. The results (see **Table 4**) revealed that both FLE (including FLE-private and FLE-social) and LE had significant yet low, positive correlation with learner achievement (FLE $r = 0.220, p < 0.0001$; LE $r = 0.217, p < 0.0001$). Moreover, FLE-social was significantly, negatively correlated with learner absenteeism ($r = -0.108, p < 0.05$) while none of FLE, FLE-private or LE demonstrated significant correlations with it.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Participants' Description of Sources of FLE

Nvivo 12 Plus was used to conduct thematic analysis of the participants' answers to interview questions, given the fact that employing a "Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software" (CAQDAS) will remarkably enhance the credibility of the coding process (Baralt, 2012). The 28 interviewees were numbered, and their responses were compiled in single word files prior to the coding process. Diverse themes of FLE emerged from participants' descriptions of the most enjoyable episodes in English class, listing of reasons they enjoy learning English and comments on the English course, the teacher, and the classroom atmosphere. In the open coding phase, the analyst read the transcribed data and generated some initial codes. Then, in

TABLE 5 | Three Categories of FLE and the number of tokens in the feedback of 28 interviewees.

Category	FLE-teacher	FLE-self	FLE-peer
Source (the number of tokens)	Stimulating classroom activities (27), positive classroom atmosphere (25), teacher-student rapport (22), teaching skills (19), positive teacher character traits (14), teacher credibility (7), and teaching style (6)	Pursuit of novel knowledge (26), utilitarian needs for English proficiency tests (23), pride of mastering a FL (19), interest (11), and good language performance (8)	Peer support (7), meeting new friends (3)
In total	87	123	10

TABLE 6 | Trends of LE and the number of tokens in the feedback of 28 interviewees.

Category	Agentic LE	Behavioral LE	Emotional LE	Cognitive LE
Trends (the number of tokens)	Communicating opinions and preferences after class (17), asking questions in class occasionally (15), communicating opinions and preferences after class in class (6), asking for clarification in class (3)	Engaging in classroom interactions (25), attending class regularly (21), listening to the teacher attentively (19), taking notes (16), presenting in class (9)	Enjoying engaging in class activities (27), enjoying harmonious teacher-student and peer relationships (27), enjoying the class atmosphere (25), interested in English (11), enjoying teamwork with peers (3)	Internalizing knowledge through repeated practice (19) resorting to internet for further information (16), previewing and identifying problems before class (13), reciting (7), and constant accumulation (6)
In total	41	90	93	61

axial coding phase, the initial codes was compared and grouped under higher-order headings. Finally, in the selective coding phase, the generated themes were categorized into three main themes, *FLE-self* (Participants' *per se* were the primary source of FLE), *FLE-teacher* (Teacher and teacher-related elements were attractors of FLE), and *FLE-peer* (Peer behaviors or peer interaction were the antecedents of FLE), with reference to the coding approaches of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and Jiang and Dewaele (2019). Descriptions touching upon multiple themes had to be categorized differently. Thus, there might be some overlapping coding owing to the complexity of thematic categorization. **Table 5** summarizes the sources of FLE emerging from the qualitative data and the number of tokens under each category and subcategory and in total.

As is shown in **Table 5**, participants' FLE is mostly related to teacher-external variables followed by categories of FLE-self and FLE-peer. Among FLE-teacher, stimulating classroom activities, positive classroom atmosphere, and teacher-student rapport are the most frequently mentioned sources of enjoyment. Diversified classroom activities with appropriate challenges, related to students' immediate concern, allowing them chances to present themselves and enhancing interaction, such as debating, translation competition, and text presentation, were reported as most conducive to their FLE. Among the category of FLE-self, participants mentioned that acquiring novel knowledge such as syntactic rules, new vocabulary, and western culture and customs contributed the most to their feeling of enjoyment. Utilitarian needs to get a good grade in multiple English proficiency tests to pass the final exams, CET (College English Test) band 4 or band 6, obtain a bachelor degree, get enrolled to graduate schools home and abroad were also mentioned as an influential

attractor to participants' sustained FLE. Among the category of FLE-peer, peer interaction was mentioned as an important factor for participants' FLE.

Participants' Description of Trends of LE

The codification went through the same stages with that of FLE. Diverse themes emerged from participants' descriptions of their feelings of the English course, their performances in class, the learning strategies they deployed, whether and how they ask questions or express preferences and opinions, and their attendance were first brought into initial codes in the opening coding phase and further classified into higher-order headings in the axial phase. Finally, in the phase of selective coding, previously generated codes were categorized into the four main themes of the emotional, behavioral, cognitive and agentic dimensions of LE. Those descriptions involved multiple themes were categorized differently. Thus, there might be some overlapping coding owing to the complexity of thematic categorization. The results were summarized in **Table 6**.

Table 6 shows that stimulating classroom activities, harmonious teacher-student and peer relationships and a positive classroom atmosphere are pivotal factors inducing participants' deep emotional engagement. Taking part in class interaction, attending the class regularly, listening attentively, and taking notes assiduously were mentioned as the most prevalent ways participants engaged in English learning behaviorally. For cognitive engagement, the repeated practice was mentioned as the most important way participants adopted to consolidate and internalize linguistic knowledge. Going to the internet for further course-related information was reported as

another influential way they used for cognition. Participants did not report an active agentic engagement and preferred to raise questions for clarification in class very occasionally, leaving their opinions and comments conveyed to the teachers after class.

DISCUSSION

We first examined the levels of FLE and LE of Chinese EFL learners. Participants reported an average of 3.82 of FLE which is equal to the mean (3.82) reported by the international sample of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). This suggests that Chinese EFL learners are having fun in learning English, probably due to a weakening emphasis on examination-oriented education in Chinese education policy in recent years. To elaborate, participants reported significantly stronger FLE-social than FLE-private, which confirms previous findings that FLE subjects more to learner-external factors, largely teacher-related variables (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2017, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2018; Elahi Shirvan and Taherian, 2018; Jiang and Dewaele, 2019; Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020). This makes it significant and imperative for EFL teachers to perceive the potential affordances of FLE and actualize them as utilized and shaped ones by improving their agency capacity (Elahi Shirvan and Taherian, 2020) or teacher-student interpersonal skills (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Participants reported an average of 3.54 of overall learner engagement, yet a significantly lower level of agentic engagement, indicating that Chinese EFL learners tended to be more emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively engaged with language learning than agentially. We conjecture that this could be attributed to the tradition of “honoring the teacher and respecting his teaching” in the Chinese educational context where certain agentic behaviors such as recommending a goal or objective to be pursued or communicating likes and dislikes freely, if not performed properly, might be regarded as being impolite and a compromise on the teacher’s prestige and dignity.

Secondly, the present study examined the possible impact of gender on FLE and LE. No significant gender differences were found in either foreign language enjoyment or learner engagement. The first half of the finding confirmed Jiang and Dewaele’s (2019) research yet differed from other studies in which females reported higher levels of FLE than their male counterparts (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2016, 2018). The latter half of the finding differed from previous research where female students were found to have a higher level of engagement (Oga-Baldwin and Nakata, 2017).

Thirdly, correlation analyses revealed a high positive correlation between participants’ FLE and LE. In a larger picture, this echoes the prevalent conclusion supported by cognitive psychologists, social psychologists, and neuroscientists in laboratory studies that activating positive emotions, like the feeling of enjoyment, are critically important for students’ engagement with academic tasks (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Again, this finding is consistent with recent

research in SLA where FLE is found to facilitate or sustain learner engagement (e.g., Ryan and Patrick, 2001; Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Reeve, 2012; Dincer et al., 2019; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). It further underpinned the broaden-and-build theory which argues that positive emotions like joy have the ability to broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001, 2013).

The aforementioned finding could further borrow support from the results of the multiple linear regression analyses which indicated that approximately 62% (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.614$) of participant’s engagement with their language learning could be explained by the feeling of enjoyment they experienced in EFL class. With respect to the subdomains of FLE, FLE-private was a stronger predictor of participants’ engagement ($B = 0.538$) than FLE-social ($B = 0.304$). This result lends support to previous findings that EFL learners’ self-concept, which was defined as “an individual’s self-descriptions of competence and evaluative feelings about themselves as a FL learner” (Mercer, 2011, p. 14), was an important psychological antecedent of learner engagement (Mercer, 2019). Regression analyses further showed that the causal relationship between FLE and LE was reciprocal rather than unidirectional as the same proportion of FLE could be attributed to learner engagement. This finding echoes the results of Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia’s (2012) study that academic emotions were linked to their antecedents and effects by reciprocal causation over time. The high correlations between FLE and LE can be partly explained by the overlap of the two constructs in that feeling enjoyable, to some degree, means EFL learners are emotionally engaged in the class considering emotional engagement is one of the pivotal aspects of LE. More importantly, the interplay found between FLE and LE makes it safe to conjecture that FLE and LE are antecedents of each other. The actualization of FLE where EFL teachers have a big part to play will engage learners more and accordingly, learners’ deep engagement in their study will boost their feeling of enjoyment.

Fourthly, the present study dealt with the interactions between FLE, LE and learners’ academic achievements and absenteeism *via* correlation analysis. The results revealed that both FLE and LE had low, positive correlation with learner achievement. The positive correlation between participants’ FLE and their achievements is consistent with similar findings in previous SLA studies (Pekrun et al., 2002; Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017; Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018; Li et al., 2020a). The positive correlation between LE and achievement confirms the prevalent claim that engagement predicts achievement and attainment (Finn and Zimmer, 2012; Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). However, this low correlation was probably due to the fact that achievements in this study were not reported according to exact scores but on a 4-point scale, which might makes the differentiation a fuzzy area to explore. The results also revealed that a higher level of FLE-social was associated with a lower level of absenteeism. However, there was no significant correlation found between LE and absenteeism, which was not consistent with the original intention of engagement studies for dropout intervention (Reschly and Christenson, 2012).

Finally, the present study dealt with the sources of FLE and trends of LE. Results of the thematic analysis were consistent with the findings of the quantitative data. FLE was subject substantially to teacher-external variables including mainly stimulating classroom activities the teacher devised, positive classroom atmosphere the teacher directs, and harmonious teacher-student relationship the teacher dominates to create (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). This finding lent support to previous studies (e.g., Dewaele and Dewaele, 2017, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2018; Jiang and Dewaele, 2019; Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020). Besides, the statistical analysis also revealed that FLE-self was the second most important attractor of FLE. EFL learners' pursuit of new knowledge from class and, in the long run, utilitarian needs for good scores in multiple English proficiency tests were pivotal predictors of FLE. This finding was in line with Elahi Shirvan and Taherian's (2020) study where personal goals were found to be one of the two prototype contributors to FLE, the other being the teacher. However, FLE-peer was the least significant predictor of FLE in this study although peer support and friendship added to the feeling of enjoyment of some participants. This was probably due to the gap in students' English proficiency and people preferred to make progress through peer interaction rather than interacting for interaction's sake.

Thematic analysis of the trends of participants' LE was also consistent with the findings of the qualitative results. FLE was an important contributor of LE and Chinese EFL learners tended to engage themselves in English learning more emotionally, behaviorally and cognitively whereas they were not accustomed to the more active and aggressive agentic engagement owing to the uniqueness of the Chinese cultural and educational context discussed above.

CONCLUSION

This present study conducted a sequential mixed-method study to examine the dynamics between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and learner engagement (LE), and their effects on EFL learners' academic achievement and absenteeism. It turned out that FLE was highly and positively correlated with LE and the causal relationship between them was reciprocal. To be more concrete, FLE-private had stronger power in predicting language learner engagement than FLE-social. In addition, both FLE and LE showed low correlations with participants' academic achievements and no significant correlation emerged between FLE or LE and absenteeism. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data further revealed that FLE was subject substantially to teacher-external variables such as stimulating classroom activities, positive classroom atmosphere, and teacher-student rapport. What is more, EFL learners' pursuit of new knowledge from class and utilitarian needs for good scores in multiple English proficiency tests made FLE-self the second most significant attractor of FLE. Analysis of the trends of LE indicated that Chinese EFL learners preferred to engage themselves in their English learning more emotionally, behaviorally and cognitively than agentially. Next, we suggest some pedagogical implications to enlighten the practice of EFL practitioners.

Several limitations of this present study should be noted. First, participants of this study were from three comprehensive universities in central China where university students had intermediate English proficiency level. This means the findings reported here might not predict the general trend of all Chinese undergraduate EFL learners. Future research could include participants with a broader range of language proficiency levels. Second, participants' achievements were reported on a much broader 4-point scale rather than according to exact scores. This might make the measurement of achievement less sensitive to the variation of foreign language enjoyment or learner engagement. Third, we could not find any correlation between learner engagement and participants' absenteeism despite that engagement studies initiated from dropout intervention (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Last, there existed some extent of overlapping coding since some of participants' descriptions involved multiple themes that needed to be categorized differently.

Despite the limitations, the findings of this study have important pedagogical implications for EFL teaching in Chinese universities. To begin with, teachers should devise stimulating classroom activities with balanced challenges (Oxford, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2019; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), related to students' immediate concerns, allowing them autonomous chances to present themselves, enhancing interactions and encouraging positive atmosphere. Second, teachers should establish rapport in the classroom through being approachable, being supportive to students' learning enthusiasms, respecting students, and showing confirmation for them. Both the factors of teacher (with interpersonal treatments of immediacy, confirmation, care, and positive character traits) and positive classroom atmosphere with stimulating activities and encouraging interactions play an influential part in facilitating foreign language enjoyment (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), which will, in turn, lead to desirable academic outcomes such as deep learner engagement and better achievement. Third, teachers should treat students as equals to establish a relaxing classroom environment instead of patronizing them as subordinates, and encourage them to exchange their preferences and opinions freely in order to boost the feeling of enjoyment and induce their deep engagement in language learning accordingly. Finally, FLE can be correlated with other teacher-student interpersonal variables (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021) and positive psychology variables (Wang et al., 2021) to investigate more effective ways to engage students in EFL learning and improve their academic attainment.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the author, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Henan University Academic and Ethics Committee.

The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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APPENDIX

Semi-Structured Interview

1. Have you ever experienced enjoyment in your English class?
If so, please describe the experience.
2. If one of your very close friends asks you what you think about this course and this teacher, what will you say?
3. Could you give details about your relationships with your teacher and classmates in the class?
4. How does being in this class make you feel about your English competency?
5. What kind of behaviors do you perform in the class to be successful?
6. Are you interested in classroom activities and the course?
Why or why not? Please explain.
7. How do you feel in class?.
8. Do you do extra things that would help your learning when you are studying course-related concepts?
9. What kind of strategies do you follow when studying this course?
10. Do you ask questions that would help your learning in the class?
11. How do you express your opinions to your teacher in this course?
12. Could you give details about your course absenteeism and feelings when you do not attend the course?
13. How is your English achievement?
14. If you had a magical wand to change anything about this course, what would it be?
15. What factors make you enjoy learning English? (You can enumerate them based on their importance).



The Role of Grit on Students' Academic Success in Experiential Learning Context

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Students' success as a cognitive issue in learning is prejudiced by proper learning approaches which improve their comprehension and achievement. In an attempt to scrutinize supplementary or alternate variables that envisage students' success, the researcher inspected a non-cognitive factor, namely grit, theorized as passion and perseverance due to its long-term quality, on the one hand, and its popularity among scholars in preceding decades on the other hand. Moreover, experiential learning (EL) is a momentous instructional approach used in the educational process to accelerate "do it and learn." The proposed review aims to gauge the EL approach as well as grit to regulate learners' educational success. Consequently, some pedagogical implications are presented for teachers, students, and syllabus designers.

Keywords: grit, experiential learning, students' success, educational success, pedagogical implications

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INTRODUCTION

The success of learners primarily depends on not only proficiency tests, which aim to test learning capabilities but also a limited set of academic abilities (Sternberg et al., 2012). Positive psychology (PP) is a comprehensive academic field that concentrates on elements that promote learners' success and well-being (Wang et al., 2021; Zeng, 2021) and their psychological stability by emphasizing optimal human performance (Lopez et al., 2015). To obtain knowledge of the elements that lead to achievement and success, it is critical to evaluate people at their best, following PP (Seligman, 2011; Pishghadam et al., 2021) because learners with similar capabilities and preparation may attain equivalent academic success; however, this type of success may differ greatly (Dweck et al., 2011) in that individuals' personality, intelligence quotient or effort may vary from person to person. The potential to learn across different learning areas has traditionally been linked to educational success at a variety of degrees and there has been a growing interest in this concept across a diverse range of settings. Nevertheless, educational success depends on a multitude of interrelated factors and cannot be attributed to merely one factor (Paat et al., 2020). To preserve and certify learners' success, higher education is seeking other ways to ascertain and determine it containing not only students' cognitive but also their non-cognitive traits, as well. Researchers and university administrators widely recognized that the presence of social skills, such as communication, initiative, flexibility, and perseverance, are essential for educational success (Farruggia et al., 2018) and these socio-emotional factors consist of traits or behaviors associated with engagement and academic success of college learners (Sedlacek, 2017). As a moderately new construct in the educational realm and within a PP paradigm, grit embraces theories of passion and perseverance (Farruggia et al., 2018; Mattick et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021), and it is deemed as a

non-cognitive skill that is known in predicting success (Sommerfeld, 2011; Alan et al., 2019). As stated by Duckworth et al. (2007), a learner's competence to continue after complications is known as grit and the study distinguishes a positive effect of grit on persistence, self-control, and self-guideline, and it also alludes to mental strength in endeavoring toward achievements (Reed and Jeremiah, 2017). It is proven that traits such as grit influence psychological performance through the reduction of stress, depression, and tension (Zhang et al., 2018; Mosanya, 2019), and enhancement positive feelings such as efficacy, self-regulation, pleasure, well-being, and optimism (Salles et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2018; Kim, 2019; Datu and Restubog, 2020). Learners who show energy toward their homework and continue with their project, despite scholarly and social difficulties, are probably going to encounter scholastic achievement (Allen et al., 2021). Indeed, it has been shown that teachers who encourage grit can help learners to achieve their learning goals by motivating them to try hard and persevere in this process (Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020). Gritty people not only can perform tasks but also keep track to achieve goals throughout their education progress and they are interested in learning involvement, the durability of commitment, and perseverance through stimulating teaching (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). According to Stoltz (2015), every successful person has perseverance, a great attribute that executives value above any other characteristic when selecting people to achieve any notable goal. Achievement and success are considered to be the effect of both perseverance and consistency. Perseverance is a result of the first failures that an applicant faces on the way to success in a field while consistency is a result of many hours of concentrated effort (Credé et al., 2017).

One of the primary objectives of many individuals in education is looking through various educational practices that trigger learners' enthusiasm for learning and increment the learning results successfully (Balan et al., 2015). In conventional teaching, sometimes referred to as the teacher-centered method, the actual teaching takes place as the educator directs the lesson, and the learners sit passively and just listen to the educator. Moreover, conventional education regularly underlines the completion of tasks and memorization, which describe surface learning (Turner and Baskerville, 2013). In contrast, coordinating new materials with existing information is known as reflective learning (i.e., experiential instruction), which gives learners a special chance to deal with difficult abilities to recreate in a conventional class but will be needed for accomplishment in their work after graduation (Bradberry and De Maio, 2018). In the most recent decades, and as indicated by educators, EL keeps on being well-known in higher education (Barnes, 2016), and experiential, student-focused training keeps on acquiring infinite acknowledgment (Kolb, 2014). Moreover, Kolb and Kolb (2018) claimed that EL is a constructive method of learning inspired by the learner, and it intentionally seeks to link better career, college, and personal learning results together (Holmes et al., 2018). Thus, as declared by Kolb and Kolb (2005), EL can be depicted from a constructivist structure where information is made and reproduced in the student's individual information and not simply by passing on previous

notions to the student (Kolb and Kolb, 2018). Through their endeavors, students build information, learn-by-doing as they participate in tackling issues, either alone or cooperatively, and critically ponder over bits of knowledge that arise (Watts et al., 2011; Che et al., 2021). Learners' involvement in solving problems in the learning system is the main contribution of EL, which is its innate characteristic. Experiential instruction can improve learners' education and workplace execution by building critical thinking abilities, problem-solving aptitude, and the capacity to deal with multifaceted problems in reality (Butler et al., 2019). EL programs give learners a special chance to deal with abilities that are difficult to recreate in a conventional class but will be needed for accomplishment in their work after graduation (Bradberry and De Maio, 2018).

Through active learning, learners can master knowledge, retain information, improve problem-solving skills, and gain cognitive flexibility (Brickner and Etter, 2008). The learning-through-experience method encourages participation, interaction, difficulty, and personal responsibility of the learning process. However, some essential elements for knowledge creation are not required for active learning and EL theory states that learning takes place when learners analyze, interpret, and make use of knowledge (McCarthy, 2010). Numerous studies examined the relationships between grit and cognitive or non-cognitive issues like educational achievement or personality traits (Ransdell, 2001). For instance, the positive connections exist between grit and grade point average (GPA) and accomplishment (Chen et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015), and completion of homework (Bennett et al., 2013). Correspondingly, several studies have verified the efficiency of active learning (Benecke and Bezuidenhout, 2011; Penger et al., 2011; Maskulka et al., 2012) that they proved that EL significantly influences learning purposes that may have a prolonged effect on students as they get ready for progressive educational scholarships and professional provision. Although studies on grit, success, and EL have been carried out; just some have currently carried out reviews about the variables and they have not been investigated together so far; consequently, regarding this lacuna, this review makes an effort to consider them in education.

GRIT

Grit has been introduced as a distinctive feature noticeable in successful learners (Duckworth, 2016), and it is a conception that should be regarded as both social and emotional and certain attention is paid to it concerning one's success in his life (Brooks and Seipel, 2018). Characterized as a compound and stable individual attribute, grit impacts mentalities and practices across various settings and is shared by the most exceptional innovators in each field (Wolters and Hussain, 2015). Grit can also be characterized as the enthusiasm and determination to achieve long-haul objectives, despite difficulties and afflictions, and it could be dynamic personality strength for the occasions when people experience their own difficulties

and concerns or when they experience crucial circumstances (Lozano-Jiménez et al., 2021). Generally, grit incorporates the ability to sustain both the interest and exertion in projects that can require some time to finish. Those who do not steer from their original objectives have a high level of grit (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009; Tough, 2012). Thus, the essence of grit can be regarded as the follow-through or the intentional, persistent devotion to exercises and obligations experienced to accomplish one's objectives effectively (Duckworth et al., 2007). In studies of grittier people, academic and non-academic performance improved, and motivation increased as they discovered meaning in the achievement of success (Von Culin et al., 2014). A successful person with added perseverance is not only extremely motivated but also eager to concentrate on fulfilling long-term, more ambitious goals, as well as being adaptable and less concerned with daily routines (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth, 2016).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Learning by performing and dealing with problems is an important concept in experiential education that helps learners acquire knowledge, abilities, and behaviors through challenges they encounter and allows learners to become proficient by practicing and overcoming obstacles (Andreu-Andrés, 2016). Kohonen (2007) suggests that EL is a rich learning environment where learners learn through their own experiences as well as others' experiences and includes both observational and hands-on learning. An EL program may be conducted in the academic context or the workplace (Schwartz, 2015), and this form of learning is popular among informal learning contexts, like working in organizations and companies, medical knowledge, global experience, and community service. As this method explores specific aspects like abilities, tactics, and context, the learners become familiar with those particular elements which indeed enhance their learning performance (Kolb, 2014). The direct participation of learners, their dynamic commitment, and work-based learning chances have been distinguished as the vital components of EL (Mak et al., 2017). Learners engaging in this kind of learning will attain help in the improvement of their fundamental abilities, basic reasoning, critical thinking, hard-working attitude, collaboration, correspondence, and leadership abilities (Roberts, 2018). Moreover, as has been confirmed by Ruzek et al. (2014), how to adopt these integrative, limit-crossing methods of EL connecting the class with the rest of the world has the best effect on higher education. Different advantages and recipients of EL have been accounted for; however, the learner is the best recipient (Schwartz, 2015). Learners in modules taught through EL techniques are regarded to be more ready for the workforce, with better moral thinking, more significant levels of inventiveness and ingenuity, and further developed lateral and basic reasoning abilities (Clem et al., 2014). Furthermore, they demonstrated better multicultural comprehension and sensitivity and they are well-prepared to connect theory with practice, and they have greater levels of confidence and they demonstrate promoted degrees

of motivation. Since teachers become more acquainted with the learners as individuals and are compelled to reconsider the course content, they take advantage of applying an EL model (Clem et al., 2014). Schwartz (2015) additionally highlighted these advantages by expressing that through EL, colleges guarantee that learners have the important abilities to outperform professionally.

In addition, learning within interactive/experiential settings also involves the application of concepts through guided in-class exercises, activities, and tasks that are accompanied by relevant examples and even illustrations (Peterson et al., 2015; Wong and Kawash, 2020). Active learning is deemed as a vital factor in experiential and student-centered instructive contexts, and engaging students in everyday and realistic situations are among the aspects of the education as providing learning activities and methods are not only effective but also motivating for learners when they are given some responsibilities during the learning process (Laguador and Dizon, 2013). As learners participate in group projects in experiential education settings, they obtain responses and reactions immediately and be conscious of the teamwork value, which helps them skip the competitive situation that often takes place when learners do not have chances to work together effectively to achieve their goals (Canziani et al., 2015). It is common for learners to experience short-term challenges or discouragement while trying to learn a new field of education or strategy for finding solutions. Generally, learners who are incapable of pushing forward despite obstacles or disappointment are less likely to succeed (Arslan et al., 2013).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current review has innumerable academic, operational, and theoretical implications. Concerning theory, the study distinctively added to the body of the current literature regarding grit by proposing introductory confirmation about its function on students' success in the EL context. This review aims to present some evidence that the grit construct may be a significant factor leading to improved educational success among learners. It is also proved that perseverance has a remarkable role in the learning process. Based on the literature review, it was found that effort and persistence as a facet of grit may impact educational success. Moreover, perseverance is more precisely relevant to educational success due to other factors, such as teaching methods. Besides, to be successful in the process of learning, educators must improve students' grit in classrooms and through extra-curricular EL activities.

In line with the literature review, the learners can benefit from this type of research by attending in a learner-centered learning context. Indeed, there should be a more profound, more critical, and longer enduring change in the manner by which the learners are instructed and supported in the class and the utilization of a learner-focused learning approach, like EL, is fortified. Since it requires the student to distinguish and find assets, foster inquiries characterize issues, create speculations,

and goes through individualized assessment, EL is regarded as learner-focused (Butler et al., 2019). Learners are bound to persevere despite challenges when they are offered a proper learning strategy that assists them to be more successful in their learning and permits them to completely participate in scholastic assignments. By building learners' collection of learning systems, educators can increase learners' perseverance indirectly. In addition, students may take advantage of activities presented in EL to enhance their grit and consequently their success. Learning through experiential activity makes it simple for learners to think by themselves, to be cooperative and work in a team, gather and handle information, introduce notions, make large presentations ahead of time, and are proactively dynamic in learning. Simply put, it is an active learning technique that can be executed in many fields of information, hence articulating limits for students and cultivating learners' character successfully (Brickner and Etter, 2008). Learning by doing and applying prior learned information through EL tasks and activities is noteworthy for students as they are provided with notable prospects to enhance their professional skills, implement and increase their theoretical information, engage in classroom tasks (Lan and Moscardino, 2019; Derakhshan, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), and improve moral traits and the resulting personal and professional growth will promote learners' success (Sternberger et al., 2005). In addition, character strengths such as grit enhance student perseverance when confronting challenges, enhance academic performance, and help graduates stay in higher education longer. For example, a large number of university students obtain their bachelor degrees when they complete their study in the universities. They may be faced up with two options—finding a job directly or pursuing their further studies. It is obvious that pursuing one's further studies needs one's effort as well as perseverance. In this regard, if one cannot persist in what they have been doing, he/she hardly ever go to other institutions to pursue their further studies. Thereby, grit may play a vital role in helping graduates stay in higher education longer.

Moreover, the educators should plan teaching methods using learners' perspectives and values as a means of helping them understand what they are learning. Experiential education builds learning experiences and engages learners by allowing them to make sense of learning. In addition to facilitating EL, teachers should act as a facilitator to prepare and implement activities that trigger the experiences of the learners and encourage them to push through failure and persist with difficult tasks that also stimulate their sense of grit. It has been proved that gritty humans have better powers of identifying the solutions to demanding challenges rather than those who are passive (Lucas et al., 2015). For gritty learners, obstacles and challenges serving as opportunities for learning lead them to be more persistent and attentive in the face of difficulties, which result in success (Dweck et al., 2011). When dealing with various environmental problems and issues during problem-solving occurred in EL, they are forced to make decisions on what would be the best solution in resolving the particular situation so when executing an action, they should demonstrate perseverance of effort that is indicative of their effort, dedication,

and commitment to significant tasks (McDermott et al., 2015) measured by the grit construct, which is significantly related to attentiveness to the main decisions of life (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014).

Educators can help learners boost and promote grit by being aware of the assignments given to the learners and the assurance of honesty that the educators demonstrate both within the classroom and at home. Through both classroom and extracurricular activities, learners can develop perseverance as it is significant for learners to possess high levels of persistence and effort to complete their educational requirements (Hwang et al., 2017). Teachers should try to assist learners to endure when experiencing difficulties, increase their educational presentation and work on learners' maintenance that is among the objectives of creating character qualities like grit in higher education. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to increase performance-based activities by which students can have additional opportunities to make an effort to engage in activities. Moreover, teachers should also provide emotional support by praising and identifying students' efforts to actively take part in diverse tasks. Besides, teachers must evaluate the achievements of the learning process as well as plan and observe each phase of the activity, providing feedback to learners (Villarroel et al., 2020). In this way, they are involved in the learning and try to work hard to perform well on the tasks. Since the teacher acts as a facilitator instead of a presenter in EL, they assist the students to construct perceptions and connect concepts by supporting information, guiding exploration, reinforcing understanding of difficult concepts, and presenting sources that enhance their success. Furthermore, the teacher stimulates mediation of group progression (Lozano-Jiménez et al., 2021) and upshots so he/she may be supposed as an instructor or a director who offers and arranges reaction and reinforcement (Salari et al., 2018).

Additionally, syllabus designers are suggested to design instructive and emotional instructions or programs that can promote grit among students with various dispositional backgrounds. Indeed, a more student-centric learning setting should be built in an academic setting in which grit is encouraged by exchanging the mindset of the learners (Farrington et al., 2012). Through grit-related mediations, adult students do not experience educational confusion together with dropping out whereas leading them to maintenance, educational success, and enhancements in syllabuses of their course. Unfortunately, since academic mediation and instruction programs that emphasize the enhancement of grit have not been presented to date, this review presented noteworthy shreds of evidence that have possibly set the stage for future research considering the benefits of grit in the EL context and the use of syllabuses as a way of intervention at universities that embrace more constructive learning strategies and goals that lead to higher academic success (Wurdinger and Allison, 2017). Finally, more empirical research should be done in this domain and also more studies are recommended to inspect the process and development of grit and EL via longitudinal studies to detect the modifications that teachers may experience in the process of developing education. Future research should be conducted to examine the facilitating and regulating

constructs and noticeable traits of gritty learners to contribute to theoretical developments of the grit and grit-augmenting mediation platforms.

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YL and JL have made substantial, direct and intellectual equal contributions to the work, and approved the publication of the work in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

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EFL Teachers' Optimism and Commitment and Their Contribution to Students' Academic Success

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The present review study determines to scrutinize EFL teachers' optimism and commitment and their contribution to students' academic success. Academic optimism, as a new construct, is evolving from the examination of the positive psychology (PP), societal principal, and communal school assets that affect the attainment and success of all learners. In addition, within the past decades, commitment has received a great level of consideration, principally in the domain of structural research. The straightforward perseverance of this review is to extend the concept of academic optimism to individuals, that is, to hypothesize theoretical optimism and approve the efficacy of this paradigm at the instructor level in relation to students' academic success. According to the literature review, the definitions of these constructs, namely teachers' optimism and commitment, and students' academic success, as well as empirical studies in this domain are presented. As a conclusion, this study, to some extent, promotes the educators' mindfulness about their commitment. In this respect, pedagogical implications for teachers, school principals, teacher-trainers, and future researchers are presented, and new guidelines for further research are determined.

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INTRODUCTION

The success of learners will be consistently at the core of learning strategy and training, and nurturing learner accomplishment levels continues to be perhaps the most basic of objectives that instructors have had for quite a long time (James et al., 2001; Strong et al., 2001). Academic success is a journey that is not easily accomplished or ensured, and approaches to making scholastic progress may fluctuate (Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy, 2005; O'Donnell and White, 2005). Learners' success can be credited to an assortment of explanations; however, it is not obvious which components are liable for the transformation (Goddard et al., 2009). Success is accomplished when the three parts are available and completely created in a school situation; consequently, attempts are made to remove the socioeconomic obstacle to accomplishment and interpret it as less of an issue in the formula for learners' achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan and Hoy, 2006).

Lately, positive psychology (PP) ideas like self-efficacy, emotional well-being, execution, anxiety, exhaustion, sadness, and nervousness have been a significant focal point of the study (Peterson, 2009; Meyers et al., 2013; Seear and Vella-Brodrick, 2013; MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2016; Dewaele et al., 2019; Mercer and Gregersen, 2020; Budziński and Majchrzak, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). As declared by Seligman (2000),

PP investigates and clarifies ideal conditions. To Seligman (2002), PP plans to enhance personal satisfaction as opposed to tackling existing issues; similarly, Kurz (2006) expressed that PP centers around an appropriate concentration of skills and limits instead of issues. It is a total term that encompasses well-being, fulfillment, joy, demonstrative fulfillment, confidence, reliance, and zeal for work, all involving individual constructive encounters (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Hoy and Tarter, 2011). Self-efficacy, in particular, is maintained to be a progressive and encouraging component that ought to be investigated in the academic study (Hoy and Tarter, 2011). Examining positive feelings (particularly optimism), characteristics, and establishments, positive psychologists recognize circumstances where people flourish and prosper. Such a climate is absolutely what most teachers want the class to be. A positive teaching space would accentuate the prospects and potentials, flexibility, and trust (Piliavin, 2003; Ryff and Singer, 2003; Wethington, 2003; Hoy et al., 2006). As stated by Pajares (2001), when taking a glance at the class setting, optimistic instructors center around the positive characteristics of learners, classes, schools, and networks. Optimism is the direct opposite of weakness, which is an approach to extend individual mechanisms (Seligman, 2006); it highlights hope, obligation, and an overall positive attitude to life.

The educational optimism has its hypothetical foundations in Bandura's social intellectual hypothesis, Coleman's community principal hypothesis, Seligman's academic optimism, and Hoy and his associates' research on the values and environment of the schools. This concept has been investigated as a discrete instructor trademark (Hoy et al., 2008; Beard et al., 2010) and as the assets of the faculty (Hoy et al., 2002; Hoy and Miskel, 2005; McGuigan and Hoy, 2006). Nonetheless, at the two points, the hypothetical reinforcements and their parts continue as before—the only contrast being that the item of scrutiny is either the discrete instructor or the department. Optimism gives an establishment to the paradigm and inspirational essence of scholastic optimism in that it elicits perspectives on instructors as skilled, learners as willing, guardians as caring, and the assignment as feasible (Hoy et al., 2006).

Optimism, in general, envisions positive outcomes (Carver et al., 2010). Besides, when optimistic people experience difficult yet conceivably conquerable impediments, they attempt to resolve the issues and emphasize their objectives, adapting to critical thinking, and cautious arrangements (Carver et al., 2010). Optimistic people are bound to show strength when confronting testing circumstances despite the fact that they may show moderate advancement (Snyder et al., 2002). Optimism assists learners with adapting to difficulties in school (Miranda and Cruz, 2020). Moreover, it has been shown that learners practice greater strength levels with more optimism levels (Dawson and Pooley, 2013). Optimistic people are stronger when confronting difficulties compared to less enthusiastic and confident people (Kleiman et al., 2017; Gómez-Molinero et al., 2018; Pathak and Lata, 2018).

Past and current research (Chang and Sanna, 2001; Diener et al., 2003; Makikangas and Kinnunen, 2003; Eid and Diener, 2004) have discovered that optimism altogether envisages a few

parts of personal well-being. As stated by Shnek et al. (2001) and Vickers and Vogelanz (2000), optimism is negatively identified with burdensome symptomatology both in general populaces as well as in populaces with different chronic conditions, like a cardiovascular infection. It is similarly a critical display of physical and spiritual working in people undergoing diverse ailments (Fournier et al., 2002). Optimism has been discovered to be related to operational issues and health both straightforwardly and in a roundabout way by means of, for instance, confidence (Taylor and Armor, 1996). Numerous inquiries have also conveyed a positive rapport between educational optimism and the learner and school success (McGuigan and Hoy, 2006; Smith and Hoy, 2007). Academic optimism was defined by Hoy et al. (2006) as a more contemporary construct than scholastic optimism. It considers theoretical self-efficacy, confidence, and educational implications not only at the individual but also at the administrative level (Hoy and Tarter, 2011). Educational optimism is described as a professor's reliance on paternities and learners about their educations, self-efficacy to pass through the connected difficulties, for the moment highlighting researchers supporting learners to flourish (Hoy et al., 2006).

In addition, commitment is a mental connection to an association wherein individuals give their faithfulness to its beliefs and objectives. Teacher commitment is the expressive security that instructors exhibit in the direction of their work. It has been perceived as quite possibly the most basic component in successful instructing. In this way, as stated by Altun (2017), educators with significant degrees of commitment can affect the education and accomplishments of their learners. Teacher commitment is related to establishing a powerful learning climate wherein learners upgrade their capacities for more prominent accomplishments, and it is a core power that pushes instructors to display improved job execution (Altun, 2017). The high loyalty of an educator to the school shows a high receptivity to class beliefs and an eagerness to apply exertion to school tasks and remain in school (Huang et al., 2016). Teacher commitment to instructing alludes to the degree to which educators are happy with their work and prospectively distinguish themselves as instructors (Park, 2005). Teacher commitment is connected to generating an operational learning situation in which learners improve their capabilities for superior and better accomplishments (Tsui and Cheng, 1999). Teacher commitment has been proposed as a basic component of the accomplishment of faculty instruction, which is related to educators' work performance, non-attendance, turnover, and disposition toward school and learners' scholarly accomplishments (Elliott and Crosswell, 2002). There are two main reasons to accentuate teacher commitment. First, it is an inner power coming from educators themselves who have a need for more noteworthy duties, variety, and challenges in their work as their instructive ranks are developing. Second, it is an outer power originating from the change program looking for exclusive requirements and responsibility, which are reliant upon teachers' wilful commitment.

Inquiries have guaranteed that teacher commitment is a basic indicator of an educator's work execution and the quality of teaching (Tsui and Cheng, 1999). Educators are relied upon to be committed to their work at all times, yet their commitment

exclusively relies upon the foundation of the school, mentalities exhibited by their directors, school size and culture, and head initiative (Huang et al., 2016). The commitment arises when they show a more significant level of execution by taking extra responsibilities in their obligations (Sarikaya and Erdogan, 2016). Therefore, one might say that commitment is the capacity of instructors to truly embrace a school's long- and short-term objectives with great energy, enthusiasm, and an ability to display preferable exhibitions, over what is anticipated from them, toward the accomplishment of goals. Abd Razak et al. (2010) isolated this aspect into two parts, in particular, teacher commitment to instructing work and teacher commitment to the career. The main part highlights the degree to which an individual identifies mentally with their work, and intends to participate in an effort of instruction, and the subsequent part specifies an affective connection to the job related to individual documentation and the fulfillment of functioning as an instructor.

Inside the school settings, educator experts' commitment is dictated by their feeling of inclusion during the time spent instructing, which determines the extent of exertion that they put into promoting advanced learners' education and well-being, and exceptionally committed proficient teachers are required to attain capability in new issues that add to their effort, to upgrade their capacity to manage learners' distinctive necessities, and to further develop their class execution. The high loyalty of an educator to their school shows high receptivity to class beliefs and eagerness to apply exertion in school tasks and to remain at school (Somech and Bogler, 2002). Student success is associated with a wider variety of issues containing the learner's academic capability, home atmospheres, and socioeconomic eminence that are hard to adjust to, along with school and teacher features. The main problem found was that although many studies have been done on creating an enjoyable situation in which to foster effective adjustment in schools, the impact that optimism and teacher commitment have on the learners' success is still unclear. Moreover, it is an old perception that learner success and accomplishment are indiscernible and have longstanding consequences, and it is difficult to recognize the teacher's impacts on learner accomplishment in an instantaneous way. For these reasons, the present review attempted to investigate the association of teacher commitment and academic optimism with learner educational success.

TEACHER COMMITMENT

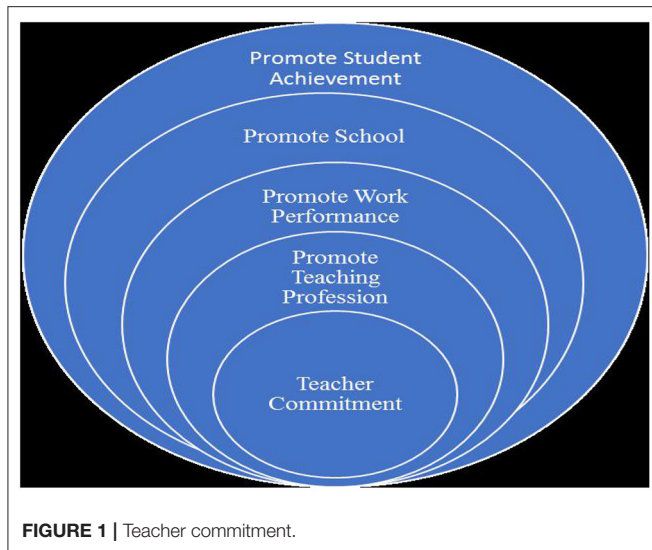
Teacher commitment has been regarded as a desire for work that is at the center of successful instruction. It is a requirement for great instruction (Day, 2004). It urges instructors to go about it as it is the wellspring of inspiration (Vallerand, 2008). Hence, passionate educators can create fervor in students to accomplish more. Without passion, all educational methodologies fail (Hargreaves, 1997). Subsequently, the impact of passion on student accomplishment is extensively perceived. Hansen (2001) in his endeavor to characterize a zealous educator expresses that they can urge students to be more

willing and achieve more. Students accomplish more as long as they give it a second thought and are eager for learning (Fink, 2003). Teachers with commitment can give learners imaginative educational techniques that can prompt higher levels of accomplishment. Furthermore, committed educators, through urging learners to be included in school exercises, can make students energetic. Teacher commitment is vital for excellent instruction, and it incorporates a commitment to the school, learners, vocation continuation, proficient knowledge base, and instructing career (Crosswell and Elliott, 2004). Committed teachers are interested in interacting with their learners and think frequently about their growth. These instructors significantly battle for proficiency in educating and education by utilizing various methodologies. Without affection for their career, teachers cannot lead education successfully. Teachers with an undeniable degree of commitment are enamored with educating others (Linston and Garrison, 2003).

Commitment to instruction is essential to decrease educator turnover, carry out curricular advancements, authorize change inside a discipline, keep up with program progression, maintain achievement, and improve the profundity of learners' improvement (Hausman and Goldring, 2001; Ingersoll and May, 2010; Robinson and Edwards, 2012). Studies have recognized a critical scope of factors that impact commitment to instruction, featuring the requirement for research investigating the connection between different skill regions and commitment to educating others (Mee and Haverback, 2014; Sorensen and McKim, 2014; McKim and Velez, 2016).

Committed teachers might have solid mental connections to their school, their learners, or their branches of knowledge. They ought to be internally roused. Teacher commitment might be coordinated toward various substances; for instance, to the control of educating, to learners' achievement, to explicit projects, or the school as an association (Alfassi, 2004; Smith, 2010). When there are committed teachers, schools can work effectively. Consequently, establishing a positive school environment (Peterson and Skiba, 2000) can be an extraordinary assistance to assembling teachers' commitment. School managers and executives are supposed to be familiar with the components that are identified with the school environment. A constructive school culture (Ellison et al., 2005) is the basic initial step that managers need to make and maintain regardless of the difficulties of alterations. Accordingly, the school administration ought to be capable of assuming an impartial part in establishing a pleasant workplace for the educators; thereby, prompting the improvement of learners' conduct and academic accomplishments.

Figure 1 demonstrates that teacher commitment is at the center of encouraging the training career, work presentation, and school and learner success. It is a fundamental part of quality schooling. Commitment gives instructors the affection, want, and energy that they need to perform better. As declared by Somech and Bogler (2002), committed teachers are believed to be happier with educating others and consistently endeavor to achieve decent teaching. They are anxious about their execution and consistently look for elevated expectations to accomplish education appropriately. Their dedication to the faculty is



verifiable and their tendency toward the achievement of school objectives is obvious (Carbonneau et al., 2008). Student success needs the consideration of instructors and is influenced by teacher commitment and strong teacher-student interpersonal variables such as care, stroke, clarity, credibility, confirmation, and rapport (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Committed teachers consistently endeavor for greatness to have an effect on the improvement of learners (Dannetta, 2002). They take care of their qualified progress and take care of educating and learning successfully from others. It is crucial to comprehend the necessities of learners in instruction. Teacher commitment is a significant element that attracts the consideration of educators to the necessities of learners. Simultaneously, these instructors realize how to urge learners to take an interest in the learning cycle. All things considered, encouraging a dynamic participation is a way to propel learners to accomplish more.

TEACHERS' SENSE OF ACADEMIC OPTIMISM

Optimism addresses clear expectations for what is to come (Carver et al., 2010). Correspondingly, it is maintained that individuals with positive expectations lean toward great outcomes as much as could be expected and regularly remain objective-oriented. The present review has revealed that optimism adds to flexibility and is portrayed as the most critical component in alleviating pressure features. Also, optimism addresses people's uplifting outlook toward difficulties and is regarded as a noticeable component of resilience (Souri and Hasanirad, 2011). Utilizing Bandura's Triadic Mutual design, Hoy et al. (2006) made a system for considering educators' feeling of scholastic optimism as an administrative variable. The three components of scholarly optimism are instructors' sense of efficiency, educators' confidence in learners and guardians, and instructors' scholastic accentuation; these convictions are straightforwardly identified with student success.

As stated by Hoy et al. (2006), the term scholastic optimism was picked to address the numerous positive choices that schools make to defeat the unfortunate results of low socioeconomic status. Optimism addresses an inspirational, emotional, and psychological position toward what is to come. Specifically, optimistic people establish helpful opportunities in which beneficial things will be copious. As declared by Peterson and Seligman (2004), at any event, when confronted with a difficult undertaking, optimists endeavor to defeat obstacles to accomplish their set objectives. Thus, scholastically optimistic educators have elevated standards for all learners and individuals from their local area, continually seeing the potential for learners' education and development.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present study has some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers and teacher trainers as it supports educators and experts in the EFL teaching domain to expand their points of view on the importance of teacher commitment and optimism and its effect on the students' success. It can also promote the educators' mindfulness about their commitment. Teacher commitment is supposed to accomplish institute objectives, increase teacher competence, and nurture education. Furthermore, teacher commitment is supposed to be important in explaining the teachers' difficulties, which is not restricted to the school level; however, it happens even in the occupation that these reflections offer a requirement to underline teacher commitment systemically (Park, 2005).

The review of the literature sheds light on the requirement for EFL instructors to know about EFL optimism as a significant individual contrast and the crucial role that it can play in language education. In this manner, endeavors to make learning a foreign language a reachable objective in the perspective of learners ought to be a significant concentration in foreign language instruction and learning settings to advance learners' language education support and self-directed language learning conduct. Administrators are supposed to simplify premeditated and determined actions to build and improve trusting relations between the teaching space and the home, which in turn leads to students' success.

The present review of the literature additionally featured the massive support of L2 education optimism in language learning which has suggestions for educators and teachers as they are constantly focused on approaches of upgrading learners' education. It accentuates the necessity of concentrating on learners' optimistic perspectives toward L2 learning and offering help for learners to foster this characteristic. As a result, interventions and mediations ought to be intended to fortify and support L2 learning optimism and limit skeptical perspectives toward L2 learning.

Notwithstanding the apparent importance of a positive state of mind to language accomplishment, it appears to be that subsequent language research has been delayed in embracing an uplifting outlook. In this research, solely optimism was designated as a PP variable. Further research needs to emphasize

different hypotheses related to positive disposition comprising resilience and constancy as markers of different contrasts in PP and explore their importance in language learning. A more noteworthy consideration regarding PP is following the overall pattern in scholastic works which centers on the strength-based simulations models of working on students' success (Wrosch and Scheier, 2003). Scholarly optimism can be achieved and when it happens, expanded achievement and better execution are probably going to be studied. Unmistakably, the connection between scholarly optimism and accomplishment is proportional. Optimism enables accomplishment; however, accomplishment builds up and upgrades optimism. The two notions are viable as well as reciprocal (Smith and Hoy, 2007).

The conventional perspective on accomplishment in a language setting is that achievement is an element of ability and inspiration; the skilled and inspired people are the successful ones. Seligman (2006) proposed another issue for learners' success, which is optimism, and he contends that optimism is as much as an ability or inspiration when it comes to accomplishment. Furthermore, optimism can be well-educated and created. Learned optimism is a discrete issue (Seligman, 2006) as is the scholastic optimism of educators. In fact, a significant number of the decisions about specifically educated optimism can be utilized to the scholastic optimism of educators.

Efficacy, trust, and scholastic accentuation are the crucial components in the overall concept of scholarly optimism. Four educator factors, specifically dispositional optimism, humanistic class administration, learner-focused instructing, and instructor citizenship conduct are distinguished in the improvement of educator's scholastic optimism. Scholarly optimism tries to sustain what is best in educators to improve learners' education. It is maintained that there is a genuine worth in advancing assurance, with its solidarity and resilience, instead of emphasizing disappointment, with its shortcoming, and powerlessness (Hoy et al., 2006). The essential ideas of aggregate efficacy, staff trust, and scholastic accentuation are powerfully and correspondingly identified with one another.

Educator efficacy, another noteworthy predictor of students' success, is a psychological part of scholarly optimism, the reasoning and accepting side; educator trust in learners and guardians is the emotional and passionate side of the overall concept; and educator scholastic accentuation is the social aspect, that is, the authorization of the intellectual and emotional into activities (Hoy et al., 2008). Teachers with an undeniable degree of commitment will be more faithful to faculties where they work; they will also contribute to students' achievements successfully, which is a notable impact of this paper. Commitment is laudable in light of the fact that it works with learning. In the event that

great working circumstances are accommodated for committed teachers, the adequacy of the instructive association that will prompt encouraging ramifications for the school and learners will be upgraded (Mart, 2013). Teacher academic optimism may be the strength for the accomplishment of learners just as school educational optimism is regarded to be at the mutual level (Hoy et al., 2006). Correspondingly, higher levels of teacher commitment have been found to lead to an undeniable degree of better results from learners and schools. This is because committed teachers exhibit excitement toward instruction and learning, keep up with elevated requirements, set objectives for learners' execution, and advance a precise climate conducive to learning.

Further development of the components of commitment has positive results on the others and lifts optimism. For instance, further developing personnel trust in guardians and learners builds the feeling of aggregate efficacy and advances scholarly accentuation; thus, the feelings of aggregate efficacy and scholastic accentuation improve each other and reinforce staff trust (Hoy and Miskel, 2005). Optimism is a strong persuader since it centers on prospects with its solidarity, and flexibility with its associated shortcomings and powerlessness. Since it is declared that diverse educator cultural factors may have various sociocultural significances founded on their diverse cultures, individual practices, socioeconomic level, and acculturation (Clugston et al., 2000; Schwartz and Bardi, 2001), more studies should be done in order to take these issues into account which might influence the emphasis of affection, and it is an important predictor of dissimilar centers of commitment.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The data was collected with the consent of respondent and ethical approval was taken from National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Islamabad, Pakistan.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DL read the relevant literature and studied EFL teachers' optimism and commitment and their contribution to students' academic success.

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Fostering Students' Autonomy and Engagement in EFL Classroom Through Proximal Classroom Factors: Autonomy-Supportive Behaviors and Student-Teacher Relationships

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Language learning achievement depends on student engagement which is at the center of attention these days. To assist students to become autonomous and independent learners, providing a social and supportive context is beneficial through autonomy-supportive and interaction. When learners are given the freedom to make choices about their education, they are likely to feel more enthusiastic and engaged. Moreover, learners' academic and social practices are largely influenced by educators, who play a major role as social agents and the function of the educators as the most dominant figures is the cornerstone of the language classroom. As there is a dearth of studies that have considered teachers and student interactions among all other effective issues and their significant effect on students' autonomy and engagement from the perspective of self-determination theory (autonomy support), the present review endeavors to focus on teacher-student interaction from the social perspective and their effects on student engagement in EFL classrooms. Subsequently, some implications are presented to elucidate the practice of teachers, students, teacher educators, materials developers.

Keywords: EFL classroom, students' autonomy, students' engagement, teacher-student interaction, autonomy-supportive behaviors

INTRODUCTION

Many teachers across the world, whether in language learning or other fields, have identified the challenges of keeping students engaged and focused on the solutions when they are faced with multiple distractions (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Due to the potential of learners' engagement in resolving persistent instructive issues like a low accomplishment, high dropout rates, and high paces of learners' fatigue and aggression, there have been a bulk of investigations about engagement in the classroom in recent decades (Fredricks, 2015; Boekaerts, 2016). The degree of cooperation in instructing exercises is known as learners' engagement (Sun and Rueda, 2012). As engagement predicts students' drawn-out educational accomplishment, it fills in as a significant social indicator (Skinner et al., 2008). Investigating learners' engagement has expanded a range of hypothetical practices. To inspect the connections between context-oriented components,

patterns of engagement, and change, a few researchers have utilized persuasive hypotheses like self-determination, self-guideline, flow, objective hypothesis, and expectance-value (Fredricks et al., 2016).

Self-determination theory (SDT) is an instructional theory of enthusiasm that is grounded on the essential value of student autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Along with the SDT, people have three important necessities: the necessity for autonomy, the necessity for capability, and the necessity for belongingness (Anja et al., 2016). As stated by Ryan and Deci (2017), how educators meet these fundamental necessities of learners will impact learners' prosperity, inspiration, engagement, and accomplishment. The experience of learners in the class during a semester can be useful and valuable if they see autonomy support from their educators, fulfill the mental necessity for autonomy, and involve during class discussion (Jang et al., 2016a).

SDT is regarded as a mediational paradigm in which the educator's instructing style in the class is fundamental and goes about as a mediator of class engagement. Thus, learners' fundamental mental necessities will be sustained and met when the educator gives autonomy support in the class, which, thus, will foresee the amount of class' engagement (Núñez and León, 2019). In their discussion of the SDT, Deci and Ryan (2016) argued that competence, autonomy support, and relatedness are among the most essential elements supporting learner autonomy. As they argue, when people engage themselves in a variety of activities socially, they feel relaxed and more connected to the community, and these processes lead to more control and autonomy throughout life. It is proposed that the connection between context-oriented attributes and learners' mental necessities impacts class engagement (Chen et al., 2021). The educator plays the role of a contextual facilitator of fulfilling learners' needs. Subsequently, the autonomy support that educators give upgrades learners' engagement as it helps fulfill learners' necessity for autonomy, which means experiencing a feeling of volition (Hospel and Galand, 2016).

Indeed, as declared by Skinner et al. (2008), autonomy has frequently been demonstrated as a huge indicator of changes in engagement. In case it is fulfilled, it prompts more constructive emotive, psychological, and behavioral results (Jang et al., 2012) and it is significantly linked to teacher success and accordingly learners' enthusiasm (Derakhshan et al., 2020).

Teacher-student interactions are among the remarkable aspects presumed to help student engagement in the classroom (e.g., Wang and Eccles, 2013; Furrer et al., 2014; Quin, 2017; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). The educational and social-emotional growth of learners is largely regulated by their classrooms (Hamre et al., 2013). Learners acquire knowledge and skills in their classes, learn social skills, and begin to develop a sense of self as they spend many hours there. As learners progress through the educational system, the events that occur in class may also directly affect their attitudes and social literacy (Skinner et al., 2009; Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). It is shown in the literature that social interaction is a fundamental factor affecting language learning (Hrastinski, 2008). While learners spend most of their time at school, everyday actions and interactions that occur in the classroom

and outside have a noteworthy effect on students' success and engagement (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Derakhshan, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2021).

The process of education is never isolated from its sociocultural context but is deeply interconnected. Therefore, learning is a function of both psychological abilities and social activities. Social and psychological aspects of classroom learning are interrelated. Taking part in activities of mutual interest with educators and other learners that build learning opportunities is the primary means through which learning occurs and engaged learners are more likely to study and share knowledge with others (Walqui, 2006). Social interactions can be classified into two categories, namely learner-learner and educator-learner interactions (Thoms and Eryilmaz, 2014; Vuopala et al., 2016). Educators have unlimited duties to motivate learners to be more dynamic and engaged in their learning (Chapman and Van Auken, 2001). As a consequence, establishing effective communication between educators and learners is essential (Liu and Wang, 2020).

The educator-learner relationship, which is commonly linked to the psychological needs of learners (Bakadorova and Raufelder, 2018; Froiland et al., 2019; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), is one of the most significant factors in their development at school, which arises out of an active relationship between the educator and the particular learner (Sabol and Pianta, 2012). It has been observed that external elements like the educator-learner relationships can lead to a high level of engagement (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Some situations are more favorable to learner performance than others when it comes to educator-learner interaction (Ruzek et al., 2014). There are many types of educator-learner relationship quality, which can range from psychosocial support to cognitive and academic support (Pianta and Hamre, 2009). Language educators often guide their learners. With more practice on the task, the teacher step by step decreases the rate and level of support until the learner can complete it independently (Vygotsky, 1978). The gap between current developmental level and maximum potential for solving problems under educator's guidance with skilled colleagues is referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Lantolf and Appel, 1994 as cited in Danli, 2017). During supportive interaction within the ZPD, the learner improves the skills he or she requires to be successful. The amount of input and feedback reduces specificity as learners become more confident in the subject or skill, allowing them to acquire autonomous abilities in the process (Danli, 2017). To develop autonomy in learning and teaching, scaffolding, as a systematic educational method, illustrates how educators can influence and exert control over many aspects and phases of instructional processes (Benson, 2011). The goal of autonomous learning is to become independent within learners' individual ZPDs (Cross, 2003). Similarly, learners are anticipated to become autonomous objects containing groups of factors when they learn within the ZPD, so they look for learning methods tailored to suit their learning styles rather than sitting back and waiting for their educators' directions (Nosratinia and Zaker, 2014). As a result, scaffolding is fundamental to encouraging an autonomous learning process in EFL (Smith and Craig, 2013). The purpose of scaffolding is to

develop a learning environment where language learners play the role of active seekers of knowledge rather than passive learners, allowing them to be fully involved in the learning process without extensive educator direction and control (Chen, 2020).

Earlier studies have proved a relationship between high-grade classroom relations and learner education, educational approaches, success, well-being, enthusiasm, and commitment (e.g., Allen et al., 2011, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011; Pianta et al., 2012). Grounded on the outcomes of these investigations, it is revealed that learners who consider educators as building mindful, well-organized learning conditions with exclusive requirements that are clear and reasonable are bound to report students' engagement. Moreover, high engagement is connected to higher participation and grades, which demonstrates an indirect connection between learners' impression of educator support and scholastic execution via students' engagement. For creating scholastic engagement and accomplishment, learners' connections with educators are important (Furrer et al., 2014). Therefore, the present theoretical review intends to show how teacher-student social interaction through the framework of SDT is related to learner autonomy and engagement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learners' Engagement

Generally, in language education and educational studies and practices, one of the demands of engagement as a paradigm is that it can arrange for a comprehensive view of how learners ponder, perform, and feel in teaching contexts (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). Learners' engagement refers to the time learners are being effectively engaged with their classroom assignments and exercises (Lei et al., 2018) and it is also characterized as how much learners are occupied with learning in the conventional teaching cycle and alludes to the time, exertion, and energy they exert on instructive learning assignments (Chang et al., 2016). In addition, Hiver et al. (2021) theorized engagement as the step that a student is not only physically but also mentally engaged in accomplishing a language learning task.

Student engagement is regarded as a multidimensional concept that comprises behavioral, affective (emotional), intellectual (cognitive) engagement, and agentic engagement (Harbour et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2016; Lei et al., 2018). Behavioral engagement alludes to learners' activities and cooperation in their education, containing learning exercises, like their behavior, exertion, and association in-class learning exercises and schoolwork (Fredricks et al., 2004). Affective (Emotional) engagement alludes to learners' sentiments toward their institute, learning, and educators, as well as their mentalities toward teaching, sense of connectedness, identification with the school, and degrees of attentiveness, fatigue, and other feelings identified with school and learning (Hu et al., 2012). Moreover, intellectual, self-guideline, objective-coordinated, and learning techniques that learners use in scholarly assignments and learning measures are known as psychological (cognitive) engagement (Hart et al., 2011; Harbour et al., 2015; Quin, 2017; Lei et al., 2018). Finally, as asserted by Reeve (2013), the degree to which learners add to the progression of the education they

get in terms of posing inquiries, communicating inclinations, and requesting what they need is known as agentic engagement. Every part plays its part in the inner elements of commitment (Skinner et al., 2008).

Teacher' and Student' Social Interaction (Scaffolding and ZPD)

Educators are at the core of the teaching-learning development, and they play a crucial role in both activities who are responsible for leading students in the best direction through their profession (Friere, 1990, as cited in Hussain et al., 2013). In the classroom, however, educators have more than one role, which means not only supporting learners to be successful but also creating a positive environment and encouraging learners' interest and motivation for learning. Therefore, the teacher must be personally and professionally acquainted with the students, since these experiences make a significant contribution to the relationship between the educator and learner (Khan, 2011). Consequently, the role of a teacher can be fundamental to the effective teaching and learning of a foreign language (Da Luz, 2015). According to Camp (2011), the effectiveness of an educator can have a significant effect on a student's ability to learn. When a teacher-student relationship is strong, it creates students' psychological connections, which allows them to feel calm and confident in front of their classmates and educators. Good communication between an educator and his or her learners can be one of the elements which influence positive relationships. The ability to maintain understanding is made easier by effective communication (Pratolo, 2019).

Scaffolding is an instructional method that facilitates the student's participation in an educational activity by structuring a learning assignment, using conversation for direction, and providing hints to assist the learner (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Scaffolding has historically been closely associated with the concept of ZPD from a sociocultural point of view (Hammond and Gibbons, 2005). The ZPD is an essential part of the scaffolding construct as the basis for its interpretation (Verenikina, 2003). A learner's proficiency level is measured by how effectively they resolve problems under adult supervision or in cooperation with more proficient colleagues (Vygotsky, 1978).

Students need scaffolding to be successful during class discussions (Raes et al., 2012). A large number of learners, particularly beginners with little previous knowledge and expertise in a particular field, require specific guidance to make sense of content, good decisions, monitor their progress and adapt to new issues. As part of scaffolding, learners are encouraged to classify related objectives, follow and analyze growth toward those objectives, clarify discrepancies between current knowledge and concepts still to be discovered, and create and update artifacts (Hannafin et al., 2009). A variety of scaffolding methods may be employed during SCL, including asking discovery questions, receiving peer feedback, finding appropriate solutions, and providing specific instructions (Sharma and Hannafin, 2007; Weigend, 2014). In addition to peers and educators, scaffolding sources can include technology. If scaffolding sources are combined; the effects can be greater

than if they are applied individually. The recent study by Roschelle et al. (2010) compared a mixed (peers and technology) scaffold with societal reasons to encourage peers to ask questions, explain their opinions, and give responses of their own.

Autonomy Support

Autonomy is defined as being capable of making decisions based on one's perceptions of the world. Learners have the power of choice over their actions when they are autonomous since they can attribute their actions to an inner source of authority (Reeve et al., 2008). To be competent, learners must be influential in their constant communications with the societal milieu and be able to practice and apply their abilities in their daily lives. External factors give information about a person's competence or capabilities, as well as support for competence to encourage them (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In *situations* where learners feel secure as members of a community, they are more likely to be involved in relatedness and autonomous learning will grow (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

The autonomy support described by Reeve (2016) relates to the effort of providing instruction in a classroom environment that supports learners' requirements for autonomy and the relationship between educator and learner. To clarify, educators' behavior and attitudes are essential aspects that can be used in discovering, developing, and improving learners' natural motivational abilities. As suggested by Reeve (2016), the primary objective of autonomy support is to confirm and clarify that the learning process, classroom atmosphere, and the connection between educator and learner in ways that enhance autonomy. Listening to learners' ideas and providing a variety of educational opportunities, building their motivational skills, accepting their opinions, explaining how activities can be done, and talking in a non-obtrusive way with them are all behaviors that encourage freedom of choice. Having autonomy supported by the teacher results in improved motivation, interest in the classroom, learning motivation, and academic success (Ryan and Deci, 2017). By satisfying their needs, their engagement and motivation in classrooms are enhanced. The outcome is that they are more likely to enjoy better emotional and physical health, as well as perform more academically (Jang et al., 2016a,b).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

School leaders, teachers, and teacher educators can benefit from this review in a variety of ways. As a first step, the importance placed on the essential link between educator-learner interactions and learner motivation indicates that schools, educators, and teacher educators should evaluate how teacher-student interactions can be improved to care about learner engagement in the classroom. Second, there appears to be a link between educator-learner interactions and learner motivation. For positive engagement to be achieved, both of these factors should be applied, and they should be related to factors such as managing classes, ensuring the safety of learners, educational methods, and educator quality.

Through interaction between teacher and learners, opportunities were provided for them to encounter difficult

tasks, to care for and inspire each other, to build an interactive context, and to have a positive outlook toward EFL autonomous learning. Indeed, students' autonomy can be deemed as the creation of interactive development and thus can be expanded through discussion (Little, 2007 as cited in Caixia, 2013). The ability of learners to be autonomous can be achieved through interactivity, which is characterized by clear instructions, adequate feedback, and direction, allowing learners to develop self-regulation and their ZPD ultimately. Having effective interaction means that both educators and learners appreciate how they can conduct the conversation. So, autonomy will improve (Danli, 2017).

Educators may assist learners' need for emotive connection and nurture their engagement through looking for prospects to cooperate with each learner, displaying particular attention, and providing well-being, encouragement, and help them in a suitable way (Pianta et al., 2012). Significantly, such constructive interaction and actions may also assist educators to get more satisfying emotional practices with their learners, leading to a more encouraging and optimistic classroom milieu and also it helps the growth of intervention databases to guide educators to care about students' autonomy.

Teacher trainers should be aware of how to be more autonomy-supportive in their classes and they should promote autonomy support by permitting learners to ask questions and attend in the discussion, debating multiple problem-solving tactics that all can be done through interaction that is a type of scaffolding and not only nurture autonomy in EFL context, but also support students' engagement and consequently achievement (Al-Issa, 2014). Moreover, through tasks that were used in the classroom through interaction, a positive atmosphere in the classroom may be built and constructed in a way that upsurge learners' engagement (Yu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). This review of the literature shows that learners are more involved over time when educators keep close relationships with individual learners in the proximal classroom setting. The transition from one level to another seems to be especially challenging for learners. In addition, having strong emotional relationships with the educator may assist them in adjusting to changes in peer relationships, increasing responsibilities, and emotional demands, which may lead to the learners' engagement and achievement in class.

Educators can upgrade learners' engagement by giving ideal degrees of format and support for learners' autonomy, grounded on SDT (Hospel and Galand, 2016). Learners, who are locked in focus and partake in-class conversations, apply exertion in-class exercises and show awareness and inspiration to study (Fredricks et al., 2004). Also, they share thoughts, pose inquiries, and monitor each other's clues. In classes whose learners are involved, educators can unmistakably recognize what their learners comprehend and which ideas and points require more clarification and more profound conversation. Engaged learners who work in teams continue to examine, ask questions from one another and their educators, listen to one another with a critical ear, and contend with examples from their own lives and past information.

A learner who regularly credits a positive relationship with his/her educator in a class understands the material more quickly and acts well in the class. Logically, the nature of the relationship between the educator and the learner can be shaped and changed by both of their attributes. Hence, the more the learner is motivated by the educator, the better the learner will learn. Fostering a progressive association with learners is basic in succeeding the instructing learning cycle in a class since the positive connection between the two will encourage learners' participation and inspiration, and increment the learners' positive results at school (Varga, 2017). What increments openings for learners in acquiring the objectives of learning are the positive connections in the learning context. By providing choices and appropriate feedback on learners' autonomy, educators let learners take charge of their education.

In the courses taught by autonomy-supportive teachers through interaction, learners acquire and keep more knowledge for a longer period and demonstrate greater perseverance during learning (Reeve and Jang, 2006). Scaffolding is designed to enhance classroom learning which happens through educators providing appropriate feedback at the right time (Zhou and Lam, 2019). Consequently, educators who act as mediators to assist learners with overconfidence and excessively explicit instruction may hinder their progress in self-regulation. Thus, to monitor students' performance in the learning process, educators

need to offer appropriate and adequate support. Mediation is a process that needs to be appropriated by learners to improve their capability to control their behavior and to be autonomous learners.

The study illustrates the potential value of educators facilitating scaffolding and supports the framework for considering the interdependence of autonomy and scaffolding. By the use of scaffolding s in communicative activities in the classroom context, educators can play the role of managers or motivators (Chen, 2020). In the interaction between educator and learner, it was discussed how the educator's support can facilitate efficient language practice and give learners the chance to discuss meaning and form in communication. In the scaffolding process (Vygotsky, 1978), first classroom goals were examined and then progressed to the development of learners within the ZPD model, which has shown the power of autonomy. Future studies could follow the concepts presented in this review in a form of empirical structure to better realize the probable relations between the students' and teachers' interactions and other classroom factors.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Teacher Stroke as a Positive Interpersonal Behavior on English as a Foreign Language Learners' Success and Enthusiasm

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In the context of language learning, teacher-student interactions are regarded as pivotal for their impact on the education of learners and their academic journey. To help learners succeed, the teachers may employ various ways to develop this interpersonal relationship, one of which is teacher stroke which is also called teacher praise. Interpersonal skills, societal encouragement, and stroking manners, respect, consideration, or reactions that an individual provides for others can uphold such a connection and can affect the enthusiasm of the students. To this end, this study makes an effort to review the prominence of teacher stroke in the process of learning in the classroom and illustrate their relationship and their impact on the enthusiasm and success of the learners. Furthermore, this study contributes to the body of dominant literature and suggestions and recommendations have been presented for the language teaching stakeholders in the educational setting.

Keywords: positive interpersonal behavior, students' enthusiasm, students' success, teacher's stroke, EFL

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INTRODUCTION

Among a bulk of the elements providing satisfying learning practices for the learners in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), their success and enthusiasm in the classroom should be taken into account (Syahabuddin et al., 2020). Indeed, the concept of enthusiasm has been viewed as the primary element of the success and achievement of learners in both individual and educational lifetimes (Gopalan et al., 2020). In this domain, it has been frequently scrutinized from diverse directions and perceptions, which consistently confirmed the effect of enthusiasm on the progression of language education (Al-Hoorie, 2017). According to the review of the literature regarding the motivational aspect of language education, it is speculated that a high degree of enthusiasm can be achieved from various resources, namely parents, peers, and educators; however, in the learning route, educators have a noteworthy function to take charge of it (Varga, 2017), since they are viewed as the most significant stakeholders in all the instructive settings who can regulate the degree and superiority of success and interaction capability of learners, particularly in a language framework (Pishghadam et al., 2021). Similarly, constructing a positive association and interaction among learners are the ways to stimulate and encourage them in learning a language. Al-Nasseri (2014) suggested that when the teachers care about the confidence of the learners and nurture their self-trust, their motivation is enhanced. Also, the teacher-student rapport builds the emotional tie of the learner (Allen et al., 2013) and this relationship is worthwhile in language education where educators and learners are in persistent communication, construct more friendly

interactions, and are involved in social communications as a way to develop the language ability of the learners (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2019; Fathi et al., 2021). In conjunction with the verdicts and the activities of the educators, their social, spiritual, and educational aspects are conspicuous in academic circles and language learning (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Derakhshan, 2021). The positive collaboration between the educators and learners offers a suitable instructional setting in line with positive psychology in which the learners appreciate their learning knowledge (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Budzinska and Majchrzak, 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Moreover, the influence of teacher relational behaviors on the educational commitment, success, and enthusiasm of the learners is the basis of most studies these days (Gao, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Moreover, positive relationships with the educators and learners can support them in dealing with the burdens of the learning process and motivate constructive educational behaviors (Roorda et al., 2011). Such a relationship not only supports the learners to construct the required personal skills, reduces their apprehension, and enhances their enthusiasm, but also helps them to be involved in the education progression (Da Luz, 2015).

In any communication, educators and learners may impact one another either negatively or positively (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2020). On the one hand, a positive relationship constructively develops into a meaningful basis of provision, develops the enthusiasm of the students, creates a chance to find some compulsory interpersonal abilities (Khajavy et al., 2016), and have an appropriate impression on their enthusiasm and engagement (Van Uden et al., 2014; Martin and Collie, 2019; Derakhshan, 2021). On the other hand, a negative relationship may bring about numerous opposing values such as boredom (Li and Dewaele, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Kruk, 2021; Li, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2021).

Besides, students need to be recognized by the teacher in any interaction and get the care of the educator to fulfill their emotional desires (Pishghadam and Khajavy, 2014). One of the main elements that can have a constructive influence on the value of teacher-student relation is stroke, which is a fundamental section of teacher care, referring to the gratitude of the learner educator during rapport (Pishghadam et al., 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2019). The construct of stroke is frequently employed in learning psychology to talk about “teacher feedback” and “teacher praise” (Amini et al., 2019). Similarly, Rajabnejad et al. (2017) acknowledged that the stroke of teachers encourages learners to echo the appropriate manners that are critical for their success and it is stated that teacher stroke is connected to a great level of commitment from the learners (Van Uden et al., 2014; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Zheng, 2021) that consequently leads to the enhancement of the enthusiasm of the learners and higher levels of achievement (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021). In the same way, it is proved that educators can enhance the commitment of the learners in a stroke-rich educational situation (Baños et al., 2019).

Even though few studies on stroke have been completed, some systematic reviews have been carried out about the issue, and

have piqued the attention of researchers (Irajzad et al., 2017; Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). Nevertheless, based on the information of the researcher, the presentation of a review study on such a positive interpersonal behavior, namely stroke in an EFL context and its functions on the success and enthusiasm of the learners has been unnoticed. Regarding this gap, the present minireview attempts to review the history, definitions, and future guidelines of teacher stroke.

TEACHER STROKE

Positive interactions of the educators with learners can stimulate the ability of the learners and assist them to construct the required relational abilities (Pierson, 2003). These rapports can be inspected by a theory, suggested by Eric Berne, called transactional analysis (TA) theory. This theory is associated with behavior and analysis for individual development and modification (Stewart and Jones, 1987, as cited in Estaji and Rad, 2017). Through TA, the teachers and students are assisted in having creative interactions in the learning settings, and the construct of stroke, as one of the six major mechanisms of TA theory, is labeled as any acts to be done with the attendance of others (Shirai, 2006). Strokes are classified into verbal or nonverbal in which the former refers to a set of locutions assumed as a type of appreciation to another, while the latter range from corporeal touch to a smile, a compliment, or even a signal of endorsement or refusal (Stewart and Joines, 2008). Moreover, Francis and Woodcock (1996, as cited in Irajzad et al., 2017) pinpointed that motivating others may be succeeded in two ways. The first one is positive augmentation that is the act of giving encouraging and constructive strokes to strengthen encouraging manners, and the other one is destructive augmentation that is grounded on providing negative strokes to minimize errors and boost better presentation, which means that enthusiasm is straightforwardly interrelated to stroke.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based on the abovementioned study, since teacher-learner relations bring about a dynamic classroom environment and the success of the learners, educators should be conscious of the issue that stroking should be an indivisible section of their career and can be a supportive way of classroom supervision. So, the educational experts are encouraged to use the applied methods for successful involvement and optimal positive interpersonal behavior, namely strokes that boost the success and enthusiasm of the learners.

A positive relational behavior has concrete implications for the teachers in which they can provide beneficial evidence for teaching. Interpersonal interaction is essential to learner achievement, and building rapport is an operational manner of cooperating with students leading to achievement, engagement, and motivation. Concerning the implication of stroke in learning situations, the educators can be cognizant of the way in which they provide strokes and praises to their learners and, thus, they can upturn the enthusiasm of the learners. Learners

can accomplish higher degrees of presentation. Furthermore, teacher stroke has been revealed as offering encouragement, self-assurance, and worthy teacher-learner interactions. It is assumed that in educational psychology, teacher care, in general, and teacher stroke, in particular, are an indispensable foundation of care for influential student presentation and are noteworthy tactics in involving learners in the route of learning and admiring learners in the classroom that promote language motivation of the learner and manners (Derakhshan et al., 2019).

In this study, the supervisors imply that they should boost stroking in the institutional atmosphere to help develop the efficacy of their instructors. In fact, due to the critical role of stroking as an integral constituent of the careers of the teachers, it can help them enhance rapport with their learners, coworkers, and administrators. It has been shown that teachers rich in stroking are more consistent in their interactions and consequently their learners are inclined to attain their learning objectives more efficaciously. Similarly, it must be noted that strokes as a foundation of teacher care must be emphasized by supervisors and implemented in learning policy.

Similarly, materials developers and syllabus designers could embrace some tasks and activities stimulating communication and interaction including some types of strokes (verbal or

nonverbal), so that both the teachers and students could get a better sense of language and as a result a higher nous of enthusiasm; accordingly, they could better achieve their purposes, which are in line with the scholastic determinations of the resources and textbooks.

Furthermore, a study of the stroke construct, which was underlined in this study, can be carried out by using a mixed-methods research design to explore if this construct has any association with EFL teachers and the success and enthusiasm of their students. Qualitative research is also recommended to inspect this kind of stroke, which have a more considerable effect on the achievement of the EFL learners.

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Chinese EFL Students' Perceptions of Classroom Justice: The Impact of Teachers' Caring and Immediacy

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The correlation between students' perceptions of three dimensions of classroom justice, teacher immediacy, and teacher caring has been found important since it can provide a learning ambiance for students in which they can enthusiastically learn a new language. To find out this relationship, the present study has strived to probe into the interplay between the aforementioned variables and to see whether teacher caring and teacher immediacy can predict students' perception of justice. In so doing, the participants of this study were 1,178 Chinese EFL students of various ages and education levels. Three instruments were utilized in this study to perceive the students' perception of classroom justice, teacher immediacy, and teacher caring. To collect the data, these instruments were distributed through an online survey software called *Wenjuanxing* (Questionnaire Star). Results demonstrated that there was a positive association among these three variables, and utilizing SEM analyses, it was found that both teacher immediacy and teacher caring predict students' perception of classroom justice that implies teachers who are found to be more caring and give appropriate verbal and non-verbal immediacy where needed, are perceived to change the students' understanding of the classroom justice to a positive attitude. Finally, the results of this study were discussed regarding previous findings, and accordingly, some implications were put forward in the EFL context.

Keywords: classroom justice, teachers' caring, teachers' immediacy, English as a foreign language (EFL), students' perception

INTRODUCTION

Teachers without a shadow of a doubt are said to be one of the most important stakeholders particularly in the English as foreign/second language contexts and by whom students' perception of justice and engagement are highly impacted (Pishghadam et al., 2019). It was positive psychology that paves the way to think of the teacher-student relationship as a humanistic concept and it has been claimed that the way students are treated in the classroom affects their learning process. Furthermore, in order to enhance teacher quality, some strategies should be implemented to heighten students' passion and cause them to actively engage in the activities (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). Students' perception of classroom justice is of paramount importance as well. As it was claimed by Ciuladiene and Račelyte (2016), three types of justice can be dealt with considering the educational context. Distributive justice refers to the grades which are received by the students and the amount to which students attract their teachers' attention. The second

category of justice is procedural justice which incorporates how students' homework is evaluated, what methods are used by the teacher to manipulate the class, and the strategies applied in the class for students' behavior to be controlled. The third category of justice in the classroom is instructional justice. It is concerned with how much students are treated reverently and courteously by the teachers, and if the information can be clearly conveyed to the students by the teacher.

Another point that can be emphasized is teacher care and teacher immediacy through which worthwhile engagement can be created. Teacher care as a strategy falls under the category of teacher clarity in that the clearer the teacher's words, teaching methods, and examples are, the higher the comprehension and engagement would be and accordingly, it builds up an excellent teacher-student rapport. Teacher immediacy is described as a collection of non-verbal and verbal strategies and behaviors that are given by the teachers to generate a sense of closeness with the students (Cakir, 2015; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Moreover, studies show that teacher clarity and immediacy are interconnected; however, their functions are a bit different (Titsworth et al., 2015). They are at alteration since teacher clarity causes cognitive enthusiasm and teacher immediacy provokes emotional passion (Mazer, 2013). Both teachers' caring and teachers' immediacy are relevant to positive psychology in which the focus puts on how individuals can thrive and be happier, concentrating on positive emotions like hope, enthusiasm, resilience, positivity, and so forth rather than negative feelings (Dewaele, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2019) which means when students are behaved fairly in the class by their teachers through being given care as well as verbal and non-verbal immediacy, it boosts students' spirits and makes them feel better about themselves. The current study has stressed the predictive impact of teachers' caring and immediacy on students' perception of justice. It is of great importance that how students are treated in the class shapes their viewpoints about the classroom and it strongly impacts teachers themselves; therefore, the association among these three variables has been dealt with in this study. It differs from the previous studies in two aspects. Firstly, even though knowing the correlation among students' perception of justice, teacher caring, and teacher immediacy reveals benefits that can be practiced by teachers to have a nice learning environment, reviewing the relevant studies presented that no experimental study has tested the concurrent effects of these three variables so far. For instance, a study carried out by Liu (2021) showed that students' motivation is positively impacted by teacher immediacy. Despite the fact that it was a comprehensive study, just one of the variables in the present study was used there. Another example that can be taken into account is a study carried out by Zheng (2021) in which five other variables were dealt with: teachers' clarity, immediacy, credibility, students' motivation, and students' engagement. Therefore, these three variables in the current study have not been analyzed in previous studies. Secondly, this study has been conducted in China which is another factor that makes it different from the previous studies. In an effort to find the relationship between these three variables, the author in the present research made an endeavor to answer the next two research questions:

1. Are there any significant relationships between Chinese EFL teachers' caring, immediacy, and their students' perceptions of classroom justice?
2. Do Chinese EFL teachers' caring and immediacy significantly predict their students' perceptions of classroom justice?

BACKGROUND

Classroom Justice

The Importance of Justice in Life and in Educational Contexts

Justice is of great importance in life; it can be seen in political sciences, social sciences, and organizational behaviors in society. Other factors are related to justice in society and it is why it attracted much attention (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997). Regarding the educational contexts, many famous people have established the social psychology theory of justice. It has been discovered that many student variables are impacted by students' perception of classroom justice such as the students' level of motivation, academic aims, engagement, the teacher-student relationship, both behavioral and emotional reactions, showing enthusiasm in the subjects, the amount of willingness to talk, how they feel about their teacher, and cognitive learning. Positive equity, inspiration, and affective learning are decidedly anticipated by perceptions (Chory-Assad, 2002), and they positively affect accomplishment (Burns and DiPaola, 2013). Many studies of justice in the instructional context have concentrated on the students' perceptions of classroom justice that are related to their behavioral/affective answers and academic results (Rasooli et al., 2018). Nonetheless, how teachers identify their own justice in different aspects of the classroom is critical for creating and keeping a just classroom environment (Grazia et al., 2020). Students' perception of unfairness in the context of the class can cause negative behavior, fight, dishonesty, anger, and struggle increase as shown by Ciuladiene and Račelyte (2016). This study discovered students who experience unjust teacher behavior in the learning contexts. It was reported by the students in the mentioned study that they experienced interactional injustice more often than experiencing distributive or procedural injustice.

Distributive Justice

Justice can be categorized into three categories: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Distributive justice is described as an understanding of fairness regarding distributing outcomes. Three following principles can explicate this type of justice more: need (how the outcome is distributed when one expects or needs something), equity (how the outcome is distributed according to one's diligence, contribution, and performance), and equality (how equally the outcome among people are distributed) (Deutsch, 1975). School was portrayed by Dalbert and Stoeber (2006) as a space where students face significant distribution choices. Distributive equity can be dissected regarding the grades which are gotten by various students and with the point that who stands out enough to be noticed by the teacher (Chory-Assad and Paulsel, 2004).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the understanding of fairness in terms of utilized measures and policies so as to make allocation decisions. This justice is perceived to be kept when the measures are judged to be fair such as “bias dominance principal,” recognized on satisfactory and accurate information such as “accuracy principle,” engaged regularly across time and individuals such as “consistency principle,” adaptable such as “correctability principle,” considering all individuals’ concerns who are engaged such as “voice principle,” resting on the predominant ethical and moral values such as “ethicality principle,” enacted clearly and with clarity such as “transparency principle,” and are rational “reasonableness principle” (Leventhal, 1980; Kazemi and Törnblom, 2008; Rasooli et al., 2019). Interactional and procedural fairness are inspected in the instructive contexts as well. It was mentioned by Chory-Assad (2007) that there are three cycles in the instructional contexts, regarding procedural equity. The main cycle incorporates the manners in which homework assignments are evaluated, the second includes techniques utilized by the teacher to run the class, and the third deals with the arrangements used to control the students’ conduct. Fair techniques that can be used to lead the class are clarified in Horan et al. (2010). Nine classifications were grouped thinking about procedural unfairness. Just as evaluating techniques, it is additionally worried about different issues, for example, cosmetics/late arrangements, planning, data for tests, criticism, teachers’ mistakes, not finishing promises, class methods, and not upholding strategies. This idea was upheld by Houston and Bettencourt (1999) that upheld the idea that justice manages activities in regards to the clearness and precision of the information offered to the students with respect to the class and tests.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice that is the third classification of organizational justice, pertains to the understanding of fairness in conveying information and interpersonal relationships, when individuals perceive to be in a friendly atmosphere such as “caring principle,” behaved reverentially such as respect principle, and with dignity such as “propriety principle,” and when information is transferred to them in an appropriate manner such as “timeliness principle,” sincerely such as “truthfulness principle,” and according to sufficient and rational clarifications such as “adequacy/justification principle” (Greenberg, 1993; Colquitt, 2001; Rasooli et al., 2019). Out of the three dimensions, distributive justice was the one which was said to be the most crucially important from the teacher’s point of view which can be seen in different forms, from grading, giving feedback to praising and providing students with opportunities. Interactional equity alludes to the justice and quality of interpersonal treatment that people are given when strategies are cultivated.

As indicated by Chory-Assad (2002), interactional equity incorporates two elements. The principal thing is passing on data obviously. The subsequent one is concerned with dignity and reverence. In the classroom, interactional equity is concerned with the degree to which educators connect with their students politely, honorably, and straightforwardly. Assessments of the

teacher’s interactional equity concern when the educator care about students’ perspectives, pays attention to their interests and interacts in a decent way with them Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004). Horan and associates’ examination recommended that interactional equity issues included harshness/discourteousness, expressing or suggesting ineptitude, racist and biased comments, singling out understudies, blaming students for bad behavior, and teacher affecting intellectually (Estaji and Zhaleh, 2021).

Teacher Caring

Teacher care was first introduced by Noddings (1984) which refers to the amount of empathy shared and the openness in face of other people’s needs. Likewise, the same goes for the educational contexts (Gasser et al., 2018). Students’ well-being, feeling revered, the amount of being engaged during the class, the level of self-esteem, and their performance are stimulated when teachers show care (Derakhshan et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Liu et al. (2021), the relationship between teacher support, which can be regarded as a part of teachers’ caring, and creative self-efficacy with students’ autonomous motivation and achievement motivation was studied in China. It has been found that students’ motivation in academic contexts was affected by teachers’ support; however, no considerable association was discovered between teachers’ support and students’ creative self-efficacy. Although this study was of great importance due to the variables analyzed, the present study can be noticeable since it has put forward three main variables, especially teachers’ caring which can be perceived as an umbrella term for teacher support. Teachers’ caring is a substantial part of the educational context since it causes students to feel revered and they are more inclined to accept the classroom values in this way. When classroom values are respected by the students, they are more likely to learn the materials in a better way. It was claimed that caring about others makes one care about himself as well (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ware, 2006). As indicated by Mayeroff (1971), caring is an interaction through which one becomes more acquainted with someone else, thinking about earlier conduct, patience, truthfulness, quietude, and dependence. Mayeroff (1971) suggests that caring is not necessarily a reciprocal act. Similarly, Bluestein (1991) perceives that a relationship comprises of specific jobs that may not include corresponding practices. For example, the relationship between instructors and students can be characterized by a role that the instructor should really focus on students as his responsibility in his expert work. Albeit caring has been related to progress, secondary school students’ understanding is restricted, and it is perhaps because of the way that their theoretical reasoning has not been formed at this point. It was accentuated in past examinations that students were almost certain to remain in school when they saw educators as just (Knesting, 2008). Instructor caring was shown by practices that worked on students’ gifts, support their confidence, value their thoughts, and revere them as people. Likewise, Geary (1988) suggested that school achievement was facilitated by an instructor who is caring, approachable, compatible, encouraging, considerate, a decent audience, and funny. In a thorough report, Coburn and Nelson (1989) studied around 300 Native-American secondary school students in Washington, Montana, Oregon,

and Idaho. These students portrayed efficacious teachers as gracious, mindful, listening altogether, showing an uplifting perspective, giving assistance promptly, reassuring, agreeable, having the students engaged in activities, and giving students positive feedback.

In addition, Coley (1995) investigated information from the National Center for Education Statistics to perceive factors that brought about the drop-out rate in the United States. It was accounted for that about 43% of students surrendered school since they loathed school; under 40% told that getting grades that were not palatable was the reason; over 25% expressed there was a phony connection between their instructors and them, and about 25% could not feel a sense of having a place at school.

Teacher Immediacy

Teacher Immediacy is conceptualized as a range of behaviors such as giving a smile, making eye contact, and close premises which help the communicators to form a sense of physical and psychological closeness (Richmond et al., 2008). Verbal immediacy can be exemplified in this way: when students are asked about their ideas, they are asked to be involved in a friendly conversation, and teachers use a great sense of humor. Non-verbal immediacy, on the other hand, refers to teachers smiling, making eye contact, and using relaxing postures (Wendt and Courduff, 2018). It has been shown that students' empowerment and engagement can be enhanced through teacher immediacy, their anxiety decreases, and their attention is sustained (Bolkan, 2017). In a study conducted by Derakhshan (2021) both language teachers' non-verbal immediacy and credibility have been found to be predictors of Turkman students' academic engagement. Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh (2018) also tested how students' self-actualization, self-esteem, stress-control, cognitive learning, and emotional exhaustion have been affected by EFL teachers' immediacy. It has been discovered through the SEM analysis that all the constructs relevant to the students, particularly students' self-actualization were positively impacted by teacher immediacy. Similarly, according to Sheybani (2019), students' willingness to communicate was significantly and positively influenced by teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediacy.

Teacher immediacy can be exemplified in different forms such as using out-of-the class examples and experiences so as to create a sense of closeness and cause students to fit in with a new language which is actually viewed as a new culture. Asking questions and encouraging students to talk that causes them to start talking in a foreign/second language regardless of all the language barriers which can be experienced while learning a new one. Using humor in class brings about many advantages, out of which is establishing a friendly atmosphere in which students are not horrified by speaking even if they are panic-stricken. Addressing students by name is another behavior that can be used by the teacher to increase a sense of value in students and as a result, they may feel they have the bravery to start talking due to the fact that they may make some mistakes. Parsing students' work, actions, or comments falls under the category of verbal immediacy that has been found to play a paramount role in students' well-being and their academic achievements. Considering both types of teacher immediacy, the following

examples are perceived as non-verbal immediacy. Sitting behind the desk while teaching is said to be monotonous for students and they may lose concentration while their teacher gets stuck at his desk. Smiling at individual students in the class is another construct that can be practiced by teachers if they are inclined to build up a nice rapport with the students. Having a very tense body position, additionally, causes a stressful situation and makes students feel fearful to be engaged in the activities.

Positive Psychology

A new era of positive psychology happened in the educational context when MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) put emphasis on it. Therefore, researchers' concentration was shifted from negative emotions such as anxiety and boredom (Marcos-Llinás and Garau, 2009; Pawlak et al., 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021) to both negative and positive emotions (Kruk, 2021) that can be found in the learning and teaching process. It was highlighted in applied positive psychology that both negative and positive emotions are interwoven, and they cannot be separated from each other in many contexts and sometimes they are complementary (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Wang et al., 2021). Positive emotions have been said to add more meaning and enjoyment to the process of learning, and it causes students to be more resilient when encountering challenging issues in the instructional context (Gregersen, 2013).

Positive psychology dramatically thrived in 2016 after a thorough book published by MacIntyre et al. (2016). In their book, the authors noted that four main contributions have been made by positive psychology that impacted L2 education. The first one emphasized the movement from negative emotions to positive emotions which means emotions will play a pivotal role in L2 educational contexts, and both teachers and the educational achievements of the students (Li, 2020). The second noticeable influence of positive psychology in instructional contexts is the model which was entitled as "model of character strength" (Park et al., 2004). Six categories of characters are found to have a paramount impact on personal development: fairness, superiority, humanity, moderation, bravery, and wisdom. When it comes to an educational concept, provided that these characteristics are strengthened by teachers and learners, they can thrive (MacIntyre, 2021). The third influence is the movement from PERMA to EMPATICS to perceive well-being within positive psychology (Oxford, 2016). It was Seligman (2011) who devised the PERMA model I, which is a controversial concept, stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning in life, and Accomplishment. According to the model raised, in order to find meaning in life, a strong positive connection should be among these factors resulting in individuals' well-being (Mercer and Gregersen, 2020). After that, this model was expanded by Oxford (2016, p. 10) which was called: EMPATHICS, incorporating the nine components of "(1) Emotion and empathy, (2) Meaning and motivation, (3) Perseverance, including hope, resilience, and optimism, (4) Agency and autonomy, (5) Time, (6) Hardiness and habits of mind, (7) Intelligences, (8) Character strengths, and (9) Self factors self-verification, self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy." As indicated by Oxford (2016) many of these factors

such as empathy and resilience have not been studied by researchers yet which means they can be utilized for further research. The fourth influence of positive psychology in L2 contexts is flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) that is the extent to which one is so immersed in doing tasks that he forgets about time. Reference as a result, students' L2 learning attainments, and success are highly influenced by students' experiencing flow.

It has been said that students' perceptions of classroom justice have a positive correlation with both teacher caring and teacher immediacy. It is perceived by the students as fair when they are treated as follows: being given enough attention by their teachers, being provided with feedback on one's individual work, using comments on papers or oral discussions, being addressed by their first name, and being asked some questions, and being encouraged to talk which fall under the category of verbal immediacy. On the other hand, using a dull voice when talking to class, sitting on a desk or in a chair while teaching, and having a very tense body position while talking to the class that falls under the category of non-verbal teacher immediacy are viewed as unfair by the students. In terms of teacher caring, when a teacher is understanding and sympathetic, they are viewed as fair teachers by the students. As has been revealed by Greenier et al. (2021), there is a positive correlation between teachers' psychological well-being and their work engagement. Therefore, when a teacher feels good about his personal and working life, he can be actively engaged in what he does and as a consequence, they energize students to be involved in the activities.

METHODS

Participants' Demographic Information

In this study, the final 1,178 participants were from four universities in Henan province, namely Henan University, Henan Polytechnic University, Zhengzhou University of Aeronautics and Huanghuai University. To maximize the variation of the sample that enhances the generalizability of the outcomes, participants were from more than 15 majors including Chinese literature, French language, Law, Philosophy, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Accounting, etc. They were heterogeneous in terms of gender, with 342 (29.03%) male and 830 (70.46%) female, six participants (0.51%) preferred not to reveal their gender identity. In the sample, participants were of different levels of education, with 266 (22.58%) freshmen, 838 (71.14%) sophomores, 56 (4.75%) juniors, and 18 (1.53%) seniors. They were opted for based on random sampling. The respondents who were reassured that their information would be kept secret and be utilized only for research purposes signed their consent agreement before they participated in this survey.

Instruments

Students' Perceptions of Classroom Justice

The present study drew on Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004) scale to evaluate students' comprehension of classroom justice. It includes distributive justice that contains two parts with 14 items on which students were expected to evaluate the fairness of the grades given in a course. It also encompasses procedural justice including 17 items on which students were supposed to evaluate

teachers' policies and schedules, and it also contains interactional justice including 8 items on which students were expected to evaluate teachers' interpersonal relationship with their students. Three examples for the above instruments are, respectively, as follows: students' grades on the last exam were compared to the ones of their classmates; how the teacher coordinates the class discussions, and the way students are treated by their teachers. All the aforementioned instruments were supposed to be rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from extremely unfair (1) to extremely fair (5).

Teachers' Caring

The other instrument used in this study was teacher caring developed and validated by Koehn and Crowell (1996). The items were introduced in a standard way and each item included a seven-step continuum for the response. Students were supposed to rate the items and indicate their feeling about their current teacher in the following way: Numbers 1 and 7 showing a very strong feeling, numbers 2 and 6 indicating a strong feeling, numbers 3 and 5 expressing a fairly weak feeling, and number 4 showing the students are undecided.

Teachers' Immediacy

The subsequent instrument estimated students' impression of teacher immediacy developed by Richmond et al. (1987), featured two parts, the first part that evaluated teachers' verbal immediacy includes 17 items, and the second part that evaluated teachers' non-verbal immediacy consists of five items. Students were supposed to rate the items on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from Never (0) to almost always (4).

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires mentioned above consists of three sections and 71 items in total. To assure the accurate understanding of the questions and credibility of responses, all the instructions and items were conducted in Chinese. A free online survey platform called *Wenjuanxing (Questionnaire Star)* was utilized to generate the electronic questionnaire.

The link of questionnaire was sent to English teachers and tutors of above mentioned four universities through Wechat, and then was sent to class Wechat group. Students may feel free to fill the questionnaire if they were willing to participate in the survey. The survey was conducted between July 21 and July 22. The final 1,178 participants were of different levels of education, with 266 (22.58%) freshman, 838 (71.14%) sophomore, 56(4.75%) junior, and 18 (1.53) senior. They were from different colleges, covering more than 15 majors. The respondents who were reassured that their information would be kept secret and be utilized only for research purposes gave consent as the first item of electronic questionnaire. Their personal information would remain confidential.

Data Analysis

In the present study, to find the relationship between the students' perception of classroom justice, teacher caring, and teacher immediacy, Pearson correlation was utilized which showed that all the sub-constructs of classroom justice are positively

correlated with both teachers' caring and immediacy. Likewise, SEM analysis was used to find if Chinese EFL teachers' caring and immediacy significantly predict their students' perceptions of classroom justice. It has been shown that students' perceptions of classroom justice are significantly predicted by both Chinese EFL teachers' caring and immediacy.

RESULTS

Table 1 illuminates the normality of the data, utilizing Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data are normally distributed across all variables and parametric statistics can be utilized. **Table 2** displays descriptive statistics of Chinese EFL teachers' caring, immediacy, and their students' perceptions of classroom justice including the number of participants, the mean, and the standard deviation.

As **Table 2** shows, 1,178 students participated in the present study. Besides, it was found that classroom justice has a mean score of 170.96, teachers' caring has a mean score of 52.10, and teachers' immediacy has a mean score of 60.16. **Table 3** summarizes the information obtained from Cronbach alpha analyses.

TABLE 1 | The results of K-S test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Classroom justice	0.08	1,178	0.09
Teachers' caring	0.09	1,178	0.08
Teachers' immediacy	0.06	1,178	0.11

^aLilliefors significance correction.

TABLE 2 | Descriptive statistics of the variables of the study.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Classroom justice	1,178	66	195	170.96	15.50
Teachers' caring	1,178	31	70	52.10	8.08
Teachers' immediacy	1,178	13	88	60.16	10.35

TABLE 3 | Results of Cronbach alpha indexes.

Scale	Subscales	Cronbach alpha
Teachers' caring		0.82
	Distributive1	0.85
Classroom justice	Distributive2	0.91
	Procedural	0.95
	Interactional	0.89
	Overall justice	0.96
Teachers' immediacy	Verbal	0.94
	Non-verbal	0.70
	Overall immediacy	0.94

As can be seen, the utilized questionnaires gained acceptable indexes of Cronbach alpha as a whole as well as in their subscales.

To answer the first research question, Pearson correlation was employed. **Table 4** shows the results of Pearson correlation between overall EFL teachers' caring, immediacy, and their students' perceptions of classroom justice.

As it can be seen in **Table 4**, there are positive significant relationships between overall teachers' caring and students' perceptions of classroom justice ($r = 0.56, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$) and their immediacy ($r = 0.48, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$). Moreover, there is a positive significant relationship between overall teacher immediacy and students' perceptions of classroom justice ($r = 0.50, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$).

Table 5 shows the results of the Pearson correlation between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and overall teachers' caring.

As **Table 5** demonstrates, there are positive significant relationships between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and overall teachers' caring: Distributive1 ($r = 0.47, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Distributive2 ($r = 0.50, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Procedural ($r = 0.55, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Interactional ($r = 0.56, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$).

Table 6 shows the results of Pearson correlation between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and overall teachers' immediacy.

As **Table 6** demonstrates, there are positive significant relationships between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and verbal immediacy: Distributive1 ($r = 0.42, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Distributive2 ($r = 0.44, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Procedural ($r = 0.49, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$), Interactional ($r = 0.56, n = 1,178, p = 0.000, \alpha = 0.01$).

TABLE 4 | Results of Pearson correlation between overall EFL teachers' caring, immediacy, and their students' perceptions of classroom justice.

		Justice	Caring	Immediacy
Justice	Pearson correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	1,178		
Caring	Pearson correlation	0.56**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	1,178	1,178	
Immediacy	Pearson correlation	0.50**	0.48**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	1,178	1,178	1,178

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

TABLE 5 | Results of Pearson correlation between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and overall teachers' caring.

	Distributive1	Distributive2	Procedural	Interactional
Teachers' caring	0.47**	0.50**	0.55**	0.56**

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

TABLE 6 | Results of Pearson correlation between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and overall teachers' immediacy.

	Distributive1	Distributive2	Procedural	Interactional
Verbal	0.42**	0.44**	0.49**	0.50**
Non-verbal	0.36	0.36	0.40	0.41

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

$\alpha = 0.01$), Interactional ($r = 0.50$, $n = 1,178$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.01$). Furthermore, there are positive significant relationship between all sub-constructs students' perceptions of classroom justice and non-verbal immediacy: Distributive1 ($r = 0.36$, $n = 1,178$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.01$), Distributive2 ($r = 0.36$, $n = 1,178$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.01$), Procedural ($r = 0.40$, $n = 1,178$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.01$), Interactional ($r = 0.41$, $n = 1,178$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.01$).

To address the second research question, SEM was used through Amos 24. For the qualities of the causal connections among the segments to be checked, the normalized estimates were analyzed. As shown in **Figure 1**, the model of the interrelationships among factors.

As indicated in **Figure 1**, both teachers' immediacy ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$) and teachers' caring ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) are positive significant predictors of students' perceptions of classroom justice. Finally, teachers' immediacy correlated positively and significantly with their caring ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.05$).

For the model fit to be checked, goodness of fit indices was utilized. Goodness of fit indices can be visible in **Table 7**. In this study, χ^2/df , GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were employed. In order to have a fit model, χ^2/df is required to be <3 , GFI CFI, and NFI is required to be above 0.90, and RMSEA is required to be <0.08 .

Table 7 delineates that all the integrity of fit indices can run inside the satisfactory level. Thus, the model had a reasonable level of validity.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to probe into a predictive role of EFL teachers' caring and teachers' immediacy in students' perception of classroom justice that was done in China. Some important findings were put forward through this research. Among the variables, classroom justice has the highest mean, while teachers' caring obtained the lowest mean. As can be implied, the highest correlation is ascribed to teachers' caring and students' perception of classroom justice. The second highest correlation can be seen between teachers' immediacy and students' perception of classroom justice. It is also found that the relationship between all the sub-constructs of classroom justice is positive and out of which interactional justice reached the highest ($r = 0.56$, $p = 0.000$). Considering all the sub-factors of classroom justice, it can be perceived that all the sub-constructs including distributive, procedural, and instructional justice are positively correlated with the sub-constructs of

teachers' immediacy including verbal immediacy and non-verbal immediacy, among which the highest relationship can be found between instructional justice and verbal immediacy. It implies that teachers' caring and teachers' immediacy have a pivotal impact on how students perceive classroom justice. If the students are supported and are given verbal and non-verbal immediacy, their perception of classroom justice will meaningfully enhance. Last but not least, the SEM analysis clearly showed that both teachers' immediacy and teachers' caring are positive significant predictors of students' perceptions of classroom justice.

The current study aimed to test a predictive role of teacher immediacy and teacher care in Chinese students' perception of justice. The importance of three variables, students' perception of classroom justice, teacher immediacy, and teacher caring as well as the relationship among the variables have been discussed. As indicted by Pishghadam et al. (2019) productive language teaching is something beyond just teaching the subject-matter and conveying information, yet, the psychological aspect of teaching in the educational area should be emphasized. Since teachers and students communicate well in a friendly learning ambiance, it seems essential that a nice rapport be shaped (Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). The results revealed that these three variables were positively correlated. Classroom justice is perceived as positive through students' eyes provided that they are treated with care and also with appropriate verbal and non-verbal immediacy by their teachers.

With regard to the first research question of this study, the results of correlational analyses showed that there is a significant positive correlation, first, between teacher immediacy and students' perception of classroom justice, second, between teacher caring and students' perception of classroom justice. Likewise, regarding the second research question, both teachers' immediacy and teachers' caring have been found to be the predictors of students' perception of classroom justice by employing SEM analysis. It can be noted that this finding was in line with the outcomes of Liu (2021) study underscoring the considerable role of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy on students' motivation and it was also consistent with Zheng (2021) emphasizing the impact of teacher clarity, immediacy, and credibility on students' motivation and classroom engagement even though students' perception of justice was not a variable in the above studies and instead, students' motivation and engagement were analyzed. Additionally, the findings of the current research are somewhat consistent with the following Derakhshan's (2021) in which it has been found that Turkman students' academic engagement is highly impacted by teachers' verbal and non-verbal immediacy. Alternatively, Gholamrezaee and Ghanizadeh (2018) found that students' constructs such as self-esteem and self-actualization are influenced by teachers' immediacy. Knesting's (2008) findings provide support for the present study in that it highlights how students' confidence, talent, and values are affected positively when they are treated justly by their teachers. Besides, in line with what Estaji and Zhaleh (2021) reported, the results of the present study corroborate that classroom justice plays a crucial role in the teachers' instructional practice.

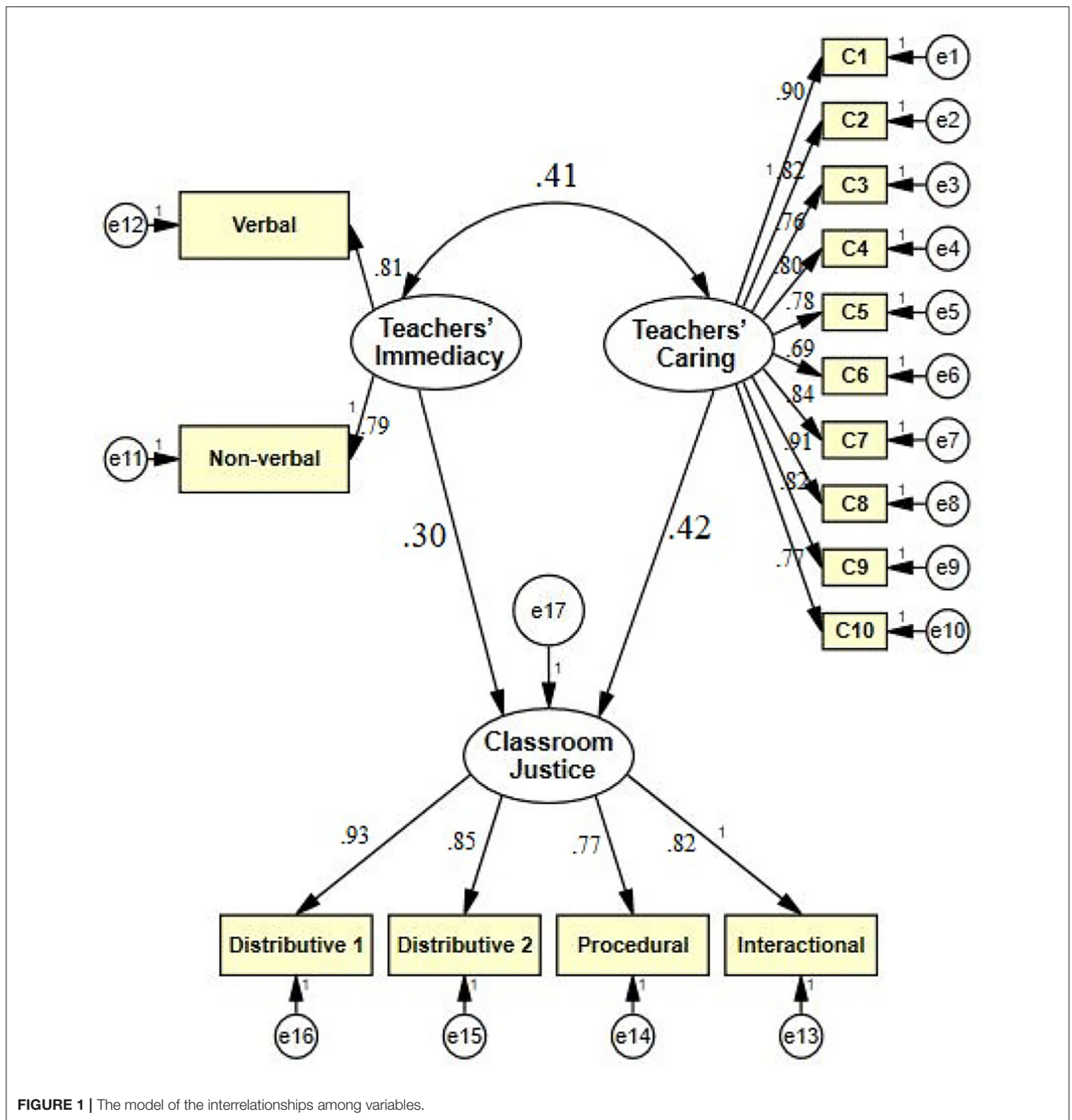


FIGURE 1 | The model of the interrelationships among variables.

CONCLUSION

As it has been shown in the current study, teacher caring, teacher immediacy, and students' perception of classroom justice are positively correlated. Another result that was revealed in this study was that teacher caring and teacher immediacy predict students' perception of classroom justice. Two groups incorporating teacher educators and teachers themselves can be impacted by the results of this study. Without a shadow

of a doubt, teachers should be equipped with theoretical and pedagogical knowledge as it empathetically affects teachers' physical and mental well-being (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020). Therefore, in this regard, the results of this study give credence to teacher educators who are supposed to provide teachers with such knowledge discussed above. Moreover, teaching is not a one-dimensional job that is not demanding; it is a multidimensional career that takes perseverance and mental energy to create a learning context in which students can reach

TABLE 7 | Goodness of fit indices.

	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08
Model	2.15	0.94	0.95	0.93	0.07

their pinnacle and high academic achievements can be achieved. Thus, teachers themselves are the second group that can benefit from this study since they deserve to feel good both about themselves and about their jobs. Working with students and having struggled to make them feel satisfied with what they have been taught and a learning context causes the teachers to feel tension and stressed. To relieve the tension, teachers should feel valued in order to boost their spirits, and it is not attainable unless teachers will come to the belief that their class and the way they teach and treat the students is perceived as fair in the eye of the students. The following examples are the actions that can be done by a teacher in the classroom so as to cause students to have a positive perception of classroom justice; however, it should be kept in mind that care should be taken to apply such activities in class because students' well-being in the class to a great extent rests on the following activities that can be utilized by the teachers:

- when a teacher makes a timely communication of his expectations with students at the beginning of the semester;
- when he provides the students with sufficient and honest information regarding the criteria that are employed in grading them;
- when the students are graded based on their achievements;
- when equal attention and help are provided to both high and low achievers in the class;
- when a teacher has a caring and supportive relationship with students;
- when a teacher is sensitive to his students' feelings, opinions, and rights;
- when students are adequately informed of the class attendance policy if a topic has been taught incorrectly;
- when the teacher attempts to provide correct information subsequently;
- when equal opportunities and time are set for the students to participate in classroom discussions;
- when there is no favorite student in class to be treated differently from others in class;
- when students are allowed to express their concerns about the learning process.

The first limitation of this study that can be taken into consideration is that this study was cross-sectional and correlational; therefore, a longitudinal study can be implemented to provide teachers with more examples in detail since these characteristics for teachers help them create a living-learning environment for students in which students are encouraged to express themselves better and have a better understanding of justice. Moreover, the collected data in this study drawn from four comprehensive universities located in different cities in Henan Province. Great proportion of the sample students were

from local areas and belonged to Han ethnic group. The results of this study were applicable to central part of China, but cannot be blindly generalized to coastal areas or autonomous regions like Tibet or Ningxia. Future studies may be conducted to include more regions.

The second limitation is the amount of care and immediacy may differ considering the time. When it is at the beginning of the semester, students are more curious both about teachers' characteristics and about the subject-matter. As time goes by, they may get conditioned and habituated to the situation in which they are engaged to do the activities, their perception of classroom justice may change, and they may feel reluctant to consider teachers' caring and immediacy as positive since they need to be given a variety of activities so as to feel passionate about the learning process as time passes throughout the semester. Thus, there is a difference between how students feel about the class and their teacher at the beginning of the semester and the one which will be felt throughout the semester. In this regard, a longitudinal study appears of great importance. Student caring and teachers' willingness to teach better would be the title of another future study in which the focus will be shifted to students rather than teachers. The teacher-student relationship is reciprocal where both teachers and students should have enough enthusiasm to enhance this relationship although it is said that students are more impacted by their teachers and the way they are treated by their teachers in the classroom is of paramount significance especially when it comes to students' progress. Because teachers are in need of being cared for and being valued, students who are caring are perceived as encouraging for their teachers since they cause them to teach in an effective way. Another limitation of this study is the age through which justice is perceived by students is of great importance. It has been said that the older the students are, the wider their horizon would be which leads to students perceiving more and more about justice around them in the teaching context. Therefore, the definition of justice is different, from the prospect of various aging groups of students. Teenagers, for instance, may consider not running eyes over all the students equally as unfair, while adult students expect to be given enough care, otherwise, it makes them feel humiliated. Another concern can be the amount to which students are supposed to be given both verbal and non-verbal immediacy and caring. It is not proven that the more caring a teacher is, the more satisfied the students are regarding the learning process. So, more studies can be conducted in the future to find out the interplay of these variables with other teacher-student interpersonal factors (see Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Henan University Ethics Division. The

patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

PY conceptualized, designed research methodology, collected data, analyzed data, and as well as independently drafted the manuscript.

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The Role of Experiential Learning on Students' Motivation and Classroom Engagement

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Due to the birth of positive psychology in the process of education, classroom engagement has been flourished and got a remarkable role in the academic field. The other significant determining factor of success in education is motivation which is in line with classroom engagement. Moreover, based on the constructivist approach, experiential learning (EL) as a new method in education and a learner-centric pedagogy is at the center of attention, as a result of its contributions to improving the value of education which centers on developing abilities, and experiences. The current review makes an effort to consider the role of EL on students' classroom engagement and motivation by inspecting its backgrounds and values. Subsequently, the efficacy of findings for academic experts in educational contexts is discussed.

Keywords: classroom engagement, experiential learning, students' motivation, positive psychology, education

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INTRODUCTION

It is stated that a basic causative factor in the general achievement of learners studying in higher education is learners' engagement (Xerri et al., 2018; Derakhshan, 2021). It is extensively approved that learners who are actively participating in the learning progression and take interest in their academic education are more likely to achieve higher levels of learning (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, higher education institutions encourage learners to use their capabilities, as well as learning opportunities and facilities that enable them to be actively engaged (Broido, 2014; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). Moreover, students' dissatisfaction, boredom, negative experiences, and dropping out of school are in part due to the low engagement in academic activities (Derakhshan et al., 2021). It has been demonstrated that engagement is, directly and indirectly, related to intelligence, interest, motivation, and pleasure with learning outcomes within many academic fields (Yin, 2018). Likewise, engagement is a construct that is shaped from the multifaceted relations of perceptions, feelings, and motivation which is corresponding to the progress of self-determination theory in the motivation realm (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Besides, the student's motivation is a significant factor in cultivating learning and consequently increasing the value of higher education because the more the learners are motivated, the more likely they can be successful in their activities (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Halif et al., 2020).

From a psychological point of view, motivating learners and engaging them in the classroom are closely related (Han and Wang, 2021); nevertheless, motivation consists of factors that are psychological and difficult to observe, while engagement involves behaviors that can be observed

by others that it is not simple to notice and estimate learners' motivation (Reeve, 2012). In other words, educators cannot concretely understand the fulfillment of their learners' basic mental necessities and enthusiasm for learning (Reeve, 2012). Nonetheless, Reeve asserted that in contrast to motivation, learners' engagement by all accounts is a phenomenon that is distinctive and can nearly be noticed. Generally, educators can impartially consider whether or not a specific learner is engaged in the class exercises, such as problem solving.

As a reaction to the traditional teaching approach that is teacher-centric (Che et al., 2021) and following the inclination to expanding interest in a more unique, participative learning atmosphere, educational organizations are orienting toward learning approaches that cultivate students' involvement, interest, and dynamic participation. EL is a successful teaching method facilitating active learning through providing real-world experiences in which learners interact and critically evaluate course material and become involved with a topic being taught (Boggu and Sundarsingh, 2019). Based on the teaching theory of Socrates, this model relies on research-based strategies which allow learners to apply their classroom knowledge to real-life situations to foster active learning, which consequently brings about a better retrieval (Bradberry and De Maio, 2019). Indeed, engaging in daily activities, such as going to classes, completing schoolwork, and paying attention to the educator, is all indicators of classroom engagement (Woods et al., 2019). Moreover, by participating in an EL class paired with relevant academic activities, learners improve their level of inherent motivation for learning (Helle et al., 2007) and they have the opportunity to choose multiple paths to solve problems throughout the learning process by having choices and being autonomous (Svinicki and McKeachie, 2014). EL is regarded as learning by action whereby information is built by the student during the renovation of changes (Afida et al., 2012). Within EL, people become remarkably more liable for their learning which regulates a stronger connection between the learning involvement, practices, and reality (Salas et al., 2009) that are key roles in learning motivation.

To make sure that the learners gain the required knowledge and get the factual training, it is equally important to give them time to develop their ability to use their knowledge and apply those skills in real-world situations to resolve problems that are relevant to their careers (Huang and Jiang, 2020). So, it seems that they would like more hands-on training and skills development, but awkwardly, in reality, they generally just receive theoretical and academic education (Green et al., 2017). In addition, as in today's modern world, where shrewd and high-performing people are required, motivation and engagement should be prioritized in educational institutions as they are required features in the learning setting while they are often overlooked in classrooms (Afzali and Izadpanah, 2021). Even though studies on motivation, engagement, and EL have been conducted so far; however, based on the researcher's knowledge, just some have currently carried out systematic reviews about the issue and these studies have not been all taken together to date; therefore, concerning this gap, the current mini-review tries to take their roles into account in education.

CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

As a three-dimensional construct, classroom engagement can be classified into three types: physical, emotional, and psychological (Rangvid, 2018). However, it is not always easy to tell whether a learner is engaged because observable indicators are not always accurate. Even those who display signs of curiosity or interest in a subject or who seem engaged may not acquire knowledge about it. Others may also be learning despite not displaying any signs of physical engagement (Winsett et al., 2016).

As an important component of success and wellbeing, motivation encourages self-awareness in individuals by inspiring them (Gelona, 2011). Besides, it is a power that manages, encourages, and promotes goal-oriented behavior, which is not only crucial to the process of learning but also essential to educational achievement (Kosgeroglu et al., 2009). It appears that classroom motivation is influenced by at least five factors: the learner, the educator, the course content, the teaching method, and the learning environment (D'Souza and Maheshwari, 2010).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

EL, developed by Kolb in 1984, is a paradigm for resolving the contradiction between how information is gathered and how it is used. It is focused on learning through experience and evaluating learners in line with their previous experiences (Sternberg and Zhang, 2014). The paradigm highlights the importance of learners' participation in all learning processes and tackles the idea of how experience contributes to learning (Zhai et al., 2017). EL is a method of teaching that allows learners to learn while "Do, Reflect, and Think and Apply" (Butler et al., 2019, p. 12). Students take part in a tangible experience (Do), replicate that experience and other evidence (Reflect), cultivate theories in line with experiences and information (Think), and articulate an assumption or elucidate a problem (Apply). It is a strong instrument for bringing about positive modifications in academic education which allow learners to apply what they have learned in school to real-world problems (Guo et al., 2016). This way of learning entails giving learners more authority and responsibility, as well as involving them directly in their learning process within the learning atmosphere. Furthermore, it encourages learners to be flexible learners, incorporate all possible ways of learning into full-cycle learning, and bring about effective skills and meta-learning abilities (Kolb and Kolb, 2017).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review focused on the importance of EL and its contributions to classroom engagement and motivation. Since experiential education tends to engage a wider range of

participants who can have an impact on the organization, employees, educators, leaders, and future colleagues, it is critical to maintain its positive, welcoming atmosphere. The importance of EL lies in its ability to facilitate connections between undergraduate education and professional experience (Earnest et al., 2016), so improving the connection between the university and the world of work (Friedman and Goldbaum, 2016).

The positive effect of EL has actual implications for teachers who are thinking of implementing this method in their classes; indeed, they can guarantee their learners' success by providing them with the knowledge required in performing the task as following the experiential theory, knowledge is built through converting practice into understanding. Based on the literature review, the conventional role of the teacher shifts from knowledge provider to a mediator of experience through well-known systematic processes. Likewise, teachers should encourage learners by providing information, suggestion, and also relevant experiences for learning to build a learning milieu where they can be engaged in positive but challenging learning activities that facilitate learners' interaction with learning materials (Anwar and Qadir, 2017) and illustrates their interest and motivation toward being a member of the learning progression. By learners' dynamic participation in experiential activities, the teacher can trigger their ability to retain knowledge that leads to their intrinsic motivation and interest in the course material (Zelechowski et al., 2017).

The present review is significant for the learners as it allows them to model the appropriate behavior and procedures in real-life situations by putting the theory into practice. Indeed, this method helps learners think further than memorization to evaluate and use knowledge, reflecting on how learning can be best applied to real-world situations (Zelechowski et al., 2017). In the context of EL, students often find activities challenging and time-consuming which necessitates working in a group, performing work outside of the classroom, learning and integrating subject content to make decisions, adapt procedures, compare, and contrast various resources of information to detect a difficulty at one hand and implement that information on the other hand to form a product that aims to solve the issue. Participation, interaction, and application

are fundamental characteristics of EL. During the process, it is possible to be in touch with the environment and to be exposed to extremely flexible processes. In this way, education takes place on all dimensions which cover not only the cognitive but also the affective and behavioral dimensions to encompass the whole person. Learners enthusiastically participate in mental, emotional, and social interactions during the learning procedure within EL (Voukelatou, 2019). In addition, learners are encouraged to think logically, find solutions, and take appropriate action in relevant situations. This kind of instruction not only provides opportunities for discussion and clarification of concepts and knowledge, but also provides feedback, review, and transfer of knowledge and abilities to new contexts.

Moreover, for materials developers and syllabus designers to truly start addressing the learners' motivation and engagement, they could embrace some interesting and challenging activities because when they can find themselves successful in comprehending the issue and being able to apply their information to solve it; they are not only more interested to engage in the mental processes required for obtaining knowledge but also more motivated and eager to learn. More studies can be conducted to investigate the effect of EL within different fields of the study courses with a control group design to carry out between-group comparisons. Besides, qualitative research is recommended to scrutinize the kinds of EL activities which make a more considerable effect on the EFL learners' motivation and success and even their achievement.

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Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning

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Students' academic engagement depends on a variety of factors that are related to personal learner characteristics, the teacher, the teaching methodology, peers, and other features in the learning environment. Components that influence academic engagement can be cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, task-related, communicative, and foreign language-related. Rather than existing in isolated spheres, the factors contributing to an individual's academic engagement intertwine and overlap. The relationships students cultivate with others are prominent in several of these areas. Positive interpersonal relationships enhance individuals' enthusiasm for learning (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), which benefits sustainable learning success and self-confidence. The relationships between students and teachers and the perceptions students have of their teachers seem to be particularly influential on students' engagement in academic undertakings. Problem-based learning (PBL), a teaching approach particularly suitable for tertiary education, involves students in authentic problem-solving processes and fosters students' self-regulation and teamwork. Intensive relationship-building is one of the key characteristics of this student-centered approach (Amerstorfer, 2020). The study reported in this article explores the connection between the academic engagement of 34 students and their perceptions of three instructors in a teacher education program for pre-service English teachers in Austria. An online questionnaire was used to investigate the participants' perceived academic engagement (effort, dedication, learning success) in a university course that implements PBL as its underlying teaching methodology in comparison to conventional teaching approaches. The study further examines how the students perceived the course instructors' caring, credibility, communication style, and feedback, which leads to new information about how PBL shapes student-teacher relationships. Due to Covid-19, the otherwise face-to-face course was taught online.

Keywords: academic engagement, communication style, feedback, problem-based learning, student-teacher relationships, teacher caring, teacher credibility

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INTRODUCTION

Academic engagement happens when students dive deep into learning activities, when they are mentally and emotionally absorbed by the study materials, and often when interacting with peers. Academic engagement goes beyond “surface learning” (Hattie, 2003, p. 9) like content memorization and fulfilling requirements to achieve a passing grade for a course. It draws

students into intense thinking activities like analyzing and understanding concepts, rationalizing procedures, and deducing meaning. It involves social interaction with peers and the teacher, in the form of exchanging experiences, knowledge, opinions, and support. Problem-based learning (PBL) requires both academic engagement and intense peer interaction. It changes the relationships between students and teachers in comparison to conventional teaching approaches in tertiary education. This article explores how PBL shapes the academic engagement of preservice English teachers and their relationships with the course instructors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Engagement in Tertiary Education

Much of the literature about learner engagement refers to students in primary and secondary education. While featuring terminological idiosyncrasies, several models of learner engagement recognize similar physiological, behavioral, and psychological components (Marks, 2000; Finn and Zimmer, 2013; Skinner and Pitzer, 2013). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), for instance, discuss the academic engagement of students in terms of behavioral engagement (i.e., effort, persistence, instrumental help-seeking), cognitive engagement (i.e., strategy use, metacognition), and motivational engagement (i.e., interest, value, affect). Academic engagement at tertiary level has much in common with engagement at primary and secondary levels but it must be defined as a concept of its own due to the overall different context.

From our experience, university students have generally more autonomy in comparison to primary or secondary school pupils; for example, they can choose which courses to attend and have more options regarding participation. In return, they are more expected to manage their own study progress and regulate their own learning. The gained autonomy, thus, causes increased responsibility. Furthermore, it seems that the expectations in young adults of society and individuals in a student's immediate environment (e.g., family members) are more sophisticated and often linked to cultural norms. Individual students can experience the transition from earlier to tertiary education as cognitively and emotionally challenging. The changes can cause negative repercussions on the self-concept and related psychological features of individuals, such as resilience and anxiety. For instance, compared to university students, young children do not consider it a weakness to ask the teacher for help (Brooks et al., 2013). From our experience, university students, on the other hand, often hesitate and consider what their peers will think of them if they reveal that they do not understand or know something. Also, the social standing in a group gains importance, and particularly adolescents and young adults can be troubled with internal battles regarding their self-confidence. What is more, university students are more mature in regard to their cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development. They have developed certain expectations in their own education, and their personal interests have evolved

since childhood. University students, in comparison to school pupils, usually have more clearly defined aspirations and matured personality characteristics. In sum, the transition from childhood to adulthood is accompanied by numerous changes and challenges that can affect students' academic engagement.

In light of the altered contextual and individual conditions of students in tertiary education and on the basis of literature reviews and personal teaching experience, we globally define academic engagement as all student behavior related to planning, managing, and completing their university education. We identify the following components as essential for academic engagement:

- **Cognitive engagement** comprises all kinds of thinking activities related to the involvement and participation in academic tasks, for example, paying attention; acquiring, processing, and storing information; as well as retrieving information from memory.
- **Metacognitive engagement** describes the behavior students apply to manage and reflect on their cognitive actions. It includes short-term and long-term planning; coordinating learning tasks; evaluating learning progress and outcomes; and compensating for knowledge gaps.
- **Affective engagement** is what students do to regulate their own and their peers' emotions. It includes handling boredom and curiosity; acknowledging and controlling anxieties; evaluating, generating, and maintaining interest and motivation; as well as demonstrating empathy toward others.
- **Social engagement** comprises different forms of interaction with fellow students and teachers. It includes establishing a facilitative network of peers and teachers; cultivating supportive relationships with individuals; contributing to group efforts; and being available for others in need.
- **Task engagement** is the manner and intensity with which students engage with learning materials in meaningful ways. It is strongly influenced by an individual's interest and motivation and also depends on other personal attributes, such as resilience and endurance. Task engagement includes practicing academic skills as well as setting obtainable goals and prospective rewards.
- **Communicative engagement** is what students do to effectively communicate with others in writing, speaking, and non-verbally. It includes receptive activities (e.g., attentive listening; observing body language, gestures, and facial expressions) and productive activities (e.g., building and presenting arguments; refuting the arguments of others; agreeing and disagreeing). Patience and respect play important roles in communicative engagement.

The university course described in this article is conducted in English, which is a foreign language for the students. Therefore, language engagement (Svalberg, 2018) must also be considered part of academic engagement in the current study. Language engagement is strongly connected to communicative and affective engagement and adds to the complexity of academic engagement through considerations regarding the students' self-concept (Mercer and Williams, 2014) and individuality

(Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2014) as users of English as a foreign language (EFL). Hence, we include an additional component in our model of academic engagement.

- **Foreign language engagement** is characterized by students' efforts involved in using a foreign language for academic purposes. It comprises general language skills (i.e., being able to read, listen, write, and speak in the foreign language); linguistic knowledge and ability (e.g., vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation); metalinguistic awareness (e.g., academic style; tone of voice; contextual appropriateness; cultural and regional variation); and psychological aspects (e.g., foreign language anxiety, willingness to communicate).

The individual components of academic engagement must not be regarded as isolated features as there is much overlap (e.g., between metacognitive and task engagement when planning how to approach and complete a task). The components are tightly intertwined and influenced by students' knowledge (e.g., subject-specific knowledge; knowledge of cultural norms), skills (e.g., strategic planning; composing academic text), and abilities (e.g., being able to empathize with others; linguistic abilities). Unlike other models of engagement that have inspired our model (e.g., Finn and Zimmer, 2013¹), we prefer to think of academic engagement in tertiary education as the *overarching* issue that depends on the components that constitute it.

In general, teachers want students to engage deeply in study activities because students' dedication and effort have a positive effect on learning success and achievement (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003; Christenson et al., 2013; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Teachers are in a position in which they can shape the engagement of students (Skinner and Pitzer, 2013) by creating a facilitative, motivating learning environment. Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), for instance, recommend the "Socratic method" for teaching, that is asking questions to promote critical thinking, as well as getting students to prepare questions for each other, which leads to sustainable and transferrable learning outcomes. Another way to increase academic engagement is a discovery approach to generate curiosity by letting students find out answers to questions and solutions to problems by themselves "simply for the reward of the pleasure of knowing more" (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 108). Such activities involve students in profound, meaningful thinking processes that create knowledge (e.g., by analyzing, comparing, reflecting, and contrasting information) instead of merely consuming knowledge (e.g., by hearing it from the teacher or reading it in a book).

An attractive task design is also beneficial for academic engagement. A task is emotionally captivating if its design is physically appealing and if the students appreciate the type of the activity and its content (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). The latter should be meaningful, valuable, and interesting for the students, triggering positive emotions during the learning activity (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003). Moreover, tasks should have a clear focus, enabling students to understand exactly what they are expected to do (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Providing explicit instructions – a teaching act that requires

careful planning and smooth delivery in both speaking and writing – is therefore critical.

Student-Teacher Relationships in Tertiary Education

Student-teacher relationships at university have been less investigated in comparison to elementary, primary, and secondary education (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). Nevertheless, university students and teachers also cultivate unique relationships with each other, which are positive when characterized by honesty, respect, trust, safety, caring, and support (Fitzmaurice, 2008; Komarraju et al., 2010). Studies that investigate how university students and teachers perceive their relationships (e.g., Anderson and Carta-Falsa, 2002; Fitzmaurice, 2008; Komarraju et al., 2010) often focus on qualitative information, which is also the case in the current study. According to Hagenauer and Volet (2014), student-teacher relationships in higher education are complex and context-dependent. They depend on the frequency and quality of interactions as well as on an affective and a support dimension (ibid.), which refer to the following:

- The *affective* dimension, which describes the bond built between students and teachers, forming the basis for secure and affective positively experienced relationships.
- The *support* dimension, which describes the support that must be provided through TSR [teacher-student relationships] for students' success at university (e.g., teacher setting clear expectations, answering emails promptly). (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014, p. 374; emphasis added)

The study at hand acknowledges the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the interwoven topics and focuses on the characteristics and actions of teachers within the context of PBL. Specifically, teacher credibility, caring, feedback, and communication style are scrutinized in order to investigate how they might enhance academic engagement and contribute to positive student-teacher relationships.

Teacher Credibility and Caring

A core prerequisite for learning is a caring pedagogy with credible teachers who afford a supportive, student-centered classroom environment (Noddings, 1992; Noblit, 1993; Wentzel, 1997; Elizabeth et al., 2008; Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Duffy, 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2018; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Students who perceive their teachers as credible and caring are more academically engaged, including a higher willingness to take risks and a higher level of persistence when faced with failure (Davis et al., 2012).

Research into teacher credibility began in the 1970s when the classical concept of ethos or source credibility (i.e., "the degree to which a source is perceived to be believable"; Banfield et al., 2006, p. 65) was connected to investigations of instructional communication. Teacher credibility thus refers to the degree to which students find a teacher believable. McCroskey et al. (1974) noticed that teacher credibility depends

on five criteria: competence, character, sociability, composure, and extraversion. After further inquiry, McCroskey and Young (1981) proposed that teacher credibility is exclusively limited to two dimensions, a teacher's competence and character. Additional studies revealed that caring is another fundamental component of teacher credibility. With McCroskey and Teven's (1999) widely used, three-dimensional assessment instrument for teacher credibility, students evaluate their perception of a teacher's credibility according to the teacher's competence (intelligence, training, expertise, knowledgeable, competence, brightness), goodwill (care about student, care about student's interest, self-centeredness, concern with student, sensitivity, understanding), and trustworthiness (honesty, honorability, morale, ethics, genuineness).

Reviewing related academic literature, Finn et al. (2009) noticed that research has so far focused on three topic areas related to teacher credibility: its effect on student outcomes and learning; its effect on instructional communication processes; and teacher characteristics and communication behaviors that foster credibility. Teachers who are perceived as credible by their students use argumentative messages; demonstrate verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors; seek affinity with students; appropriately use technology for teaching; are assertive and responsive; and engage with their students outside of class (consult Finn et al., 2009 for a detailed literature review with references). Teacher credibility has further been found to promote effective student-teacher communication and relationships. Also increased student motivation and positive learning outcomes have been noted (Finn et al., 2009).

Together with teacher credibility, caring is believed to be one of the key characteristics of effective teachers (Elizabeth et al., 2008; Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Pishghadam et al., 2018). Similar to academic engagement (see section "Academic engagement in tertiary education"), most research about teacher caring has been conducted in primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, there are some texts about caring in adult education (e.g., Watson, 2008, 2018; Duffy, 2018; Motta and Bennett, 2018), which support our hypothesis that despite contextual differences and students' progressed cognitive, social, and emotional development, teacher caring is important for academic engagement and relationship-building at tertiary level, too. The implementation of a caring pedagogy is influenced by factors like class size, teaching format (i.e., face-to-face or remote teaching), and teachers' ethical beliefs about pedagogy and caring (Watson, 2008, 2018; Christopher et al., 2020). Below we scrutinize the traits and actions of caring teachers situated in a university context, many of which can also be attributed to teacher credibility, its inseparable spouse.

Caring Teachers Pay Attention to Teaching and Learning

Caring teachers invest time and effort into the preparation of their teaching and manage it in a student-centered, democratic fashion. They adapt the syllabus within the given study program to cater for the students' preferences and thoughtfully integrate reading materials and other sources according to the students' interests. Caring teachers conduct communicative learning activities that engage students in

collaborative problem-solving and discussion, which leads to sustained learning outcomes (Strobel and van Barneveld, 2009; Yew and Goh, 2016). Where possible, caring teachers give students choices and autonomy regarding learning contents and procedures, putting students in "positions of genuine responsibility" (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 59).

Caring Teachers Are Available

Caring teachers are there for students – even beyond the classroom (Ekmekci, 2013). They are available outside class time to answer students' questions, listen to concerns, or simply engage in casual chats. They inform students about contact options, offer regular or irregular consultation hours, and promptly respond to emails. Social presence is vital for signaling care (Plante and Asselin, 2014), which may be more complicated though not less important in remote learning than face-to-face. In online instruction, caring teachers can use online learning platforms, social media apps, email, and websites for out-of-class communication. Switched-on cameras during online class meetings contribute to a sense of physical and social closeness and foster "student wellbeing through virtual presence" (Christopher et al., 2020, p. 823). Whether online or in person, by making themselves available, caring teachers demonstrate genuine interest in their students through simply being there.

Caring Teachers Provide a Psychologically Safe Learning Environment

Caring teachers convey feelings of closeness, understanding, and appreciation to students. They have high respect for students, demonstrate commitment for them, and are receptive to student needs (Hattie, 2003). They create a climate of mutual care and trust (Noddings, 1992) in order to facilitate open, democratic communication (Ranson, 2018). They seek mutual understanding and perspective taking with students (Noddings, 1992) and foster interaction with and among students that is characterized by the same values. Caring teachers promote positive group dynamics (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003; Williams et al., 2015) and enforce classroom conduct that is free of ridicule, blame, and embarrassment. They nurture an encouraging and supportive learning environment (Hawk and Lyons, 2008), in which students feel valued and safe.

Caring Teachers View Students as Individuals With Personal Characteristics

Caring teachers try to establish a holistic perspective of individual students (Motta and Bennett, 2018). They appreciate students' uniqueness as individuals, as members of society, and as learners in class (Hult, 1980; Hawk and Lyons, 2008). Caring teachers recognize students' personal strengths and weaknesses and "use their professional and moral judgment in responding" appropriately (Noddings, 2012, p. 774). Discovering students' uniqueness involves paying attention to and analyzing psychological characteristics such as self-concept, beliefs, affect, motivation, and agency (Williams et al., 2015). Caring teachers appraise students' learning style and strategy preferences and understand how individuals function in small teams and in the class community. Furthermore, they account for

students' personal characteristics when planning the syllabus and teaching materials.

Caring Teachers Are Empathetic

Caring teachers are “emotionally intelligent” (Goleman, 1996) and eager to understand their students' perspectives. They cultivate meaningful dialogs with students to establish relations of care and trust, which helps to “achieve empathic accuracy” (Noddings, 2012, p. 775). Caring teachers are attentive to students' verbal remarks regarding their emotional state and try to decode non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and eye contact (Mercer, 2016; see also for theory of empathy). They listen and observe without judgment (Mercer, 2016), try to understand students' thoughts and feelings (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), and display “compassion and tender-heartedness” toward their students (Oxford, 2016, p. 18).

Caring Teachers Foster Development Beyond Content-Related Aspects

Caring teachers are committed to both the academic and personal development of their students (Hattie, 2003). They expect and encourage students to do their best within their abilities (Noddings, 1992). They convince students that temporary failure is inevitable, included in most learning, and that making mistakes is an important part of the process. Caring teachers help students develop strategies to handle setbacks and frustrations to avoid the manifestation of any associated negative emotions in a student's self-concept. They help students set effective goals, boost their self-confidence and motivation, and aim for the development of growth mindsets (Hattie, 2003; Ryan and Mercer, 2012; see section “Teacher feedback and communication style”).

Caring Teachers Build Interpersonal Relationships With Students

Caring teachers cultivate genuine relationships with their students. They know their students' names and can pronounce them correctly, which signals respect and creates a feeling of belonging (Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Communicative classrooms provide plenty of opportunities for teachers to learn about students' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and interests. Caring teachers signal curiosity in their students' lives beyond the classroom and offer occasional insights into their own lives as well. Getting to know others, appreciating their stories, and enjoying their company can be pleasurable for both sides. It can lead to strong interpersonal relationships between students and teachers, which positively affect learner engagement (Rubie-Davies, 2015; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

Caring Teachers Foster Positive Peer Relationships

Additional to their own relationships with students, caring teachers foster supportive peer relations in order to encourage academic engagement. The aim is that “everyone feels accepted, valued, safe and included in group life” (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 71) with a perceived reciprocal importance between individual students and the group (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016). Caring teachers use their positions to steer group dynamics and socio-emotional processes in class toward mutual understanding and support among students. The gained sense of

safety, trust, and belonging consequently leads to less conflict, more cooperation and engagement, and overall increased student wellbeing (Hart and Hodson, 2004).

Caring Teachers Are Good Communicators

Caring teachers are expert listeners and observers. Instead of assuming student needs, they try to recognize and understand the needs actually expressed during student interaction in the classroom (Noddings, 2012). Caring teachers involve students in conversations and ask specific questions about their needs. Furthermore, they clearly state what is expected of the students in terms of learning and performance (Hawk and Lyons, 2008). Caring teachers speak in a pleasant voice, write emails in a respectful tone, convey clear messages, and signal a willingness to elaborate on follow-up issues. Non-verbal communication is also extremely important, though often underrated. A teacher's genuine smile can be reassuring for students, making them feel at ease, and giving them confidence in their abilities. Caring teachers use their body language to indicate openness, curiosity, and patience. (see section “Teacher feedback and communication style”).

Caring Teachers Give Constructive Feedback

Caring teachers recognize the effort students invest during academic engagement. They observe and evaluate both the learning processes and outcomes and consider what kind of feedback would support the learning growth and well-being of individuals. Caring teachers express respect and appreciation in their feedback and always include motivational comments.

The feedback itself should be specific and concrete (Hawk and Lyons, 2008), free of personal judgment, and fairly distributed among students. (see section “Teacher feedback and communication style”).

Caring Teachers Provide Feedback Opportunities for Students

In addition to involving students in planning processes, caring teachers give students a voice in retrospect to taught lessons or courses (Hawk and Lyons, 2008). They provide opportunities for students to express their opinions regarding course content, structure (e.g., weekly or blocked lessons), format (e.g., in class, online, hybrid), teaching methodology, and the teacher's individual teaching and communication style. Collecting feedback can take various forms with pros and cons attached to them. A round of verbal feedback in a group discussion during class might inhibit some students to speak their minds freely. Anonymous written feedback, perhaps online, generally provides more anonymity unless the class size is so small that the teacher can guess who wrote which comments. Caring teachers consider the circumstances and emphasize that all feedback is voluntary and irrelevant to grading. They further choose a suitable time for student feedback. If they aim to make immediate adaptations during a course, they invite student feedback while the course is ongoing. End-of-term feedback can be useful for revising the syllabus and course materials overall. In any case, student feedback is invaluable for caring teachers and providing feedback opportunities for students is a sign of respect, appreciation, and trust toward them.

Caring Teachers Model Caring Behavior to Students

Caring teachers are role models who practice an ethic of care through “dialog, listening, modeling, providing practice, and attributing the best motives” to students (Hawk and Lyons, 2008, p. 322; see also Christopher et al., 2020). They display the particular skills, knowledge, and dispositions that characterize them as caring. The aim is to demonstrate the competences and actions of a caring teacher and to support students in developing similar traits.

Caring Teachers Look After Their Own Well-Being

Caring teachers regularly reflect on their own well-being and set appropriate actions to create and maintain a high level of long-term well-being. Specifically, they consider how comfortable they feel in their roles as teachers and their workplaces; how healthy they are and what is affecting their physical and psychological health; and how happy they are with life in general and at work (Mercer and Gregersen, 2020). Caring teachers listen to the signals of their body and mind and learn how to react appropriately. They are aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses and focus on continued personal and professional growth (Mercer and Gregersen, 2020).

Teacher Feedback and Communication Style

Teacher feedback markedly influences student learning and achievement (Hattie, 2003). It shows students the gap between the current reality and the potential goals or expectations (Riordan, 2021). Frequent, constructive feedback can increase academic engagement (Gettinger and Walter, 2013) if it provides students with useful, comprehensible information about their efforts and directs them toward their learning goals (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) in an acceptable and motivating manner.

In general, teacher feedback can focus either on the person (abilities, personality, or character) or on the performance (observable actions or behaviors) (Riordan, 2021). This is a relevant distinction for teachers as the direction of feedback can have severe consequences for individuals. Person-focused feedback can promote a fixed mindset, while behavior-focused feedback can foster a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Individuals with a growth mindset believe that they can improve their abilities through effort and practice. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that they possess the abilities with which they are born and cannot change or improve them. Students are usually somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes (Dweck, 2006; Ryan and Mercer, 2012). As educators, it should be our goal to support our students in developing growth mindsets as learners with a growth mindset are

more likely to be motivated to seek out challenges and to look for opportunities to learn through the adoption of learner-oriented goals. They [...] experience more positive emotions and make more adaptive attributions for poor performance that contribute to higher expectations for the future, in turn enhancing motivation. (Ryan and Mercer, 2012, p. 76).

In brief, if feedback focuses on performance, learners with a growth mindset can use it to improve their actions and abilities. On the other hand, feedback focused on personality may lead learners to doubt their overall ability to learn, which

may consequently hamper their motivation and foster a fixed mindset – an undesired outcome of teacher feedback.

Performance feedback should relate to the process rather than the outcomes of students’ work because process feedback “is more conducive to behavior change and immediate course correction, whereas outcome feedback feels like a final evaluation” (Riordan, 2021, p. 15). Process feedback can stimulate academic engagement (Shernoff, 2016) and can positively affect students’ self-efficacy by making visible the impact of their efforts (Guthrie et al., 2013; Riordan, 2021). Experiencing success in a learning situation and receiving positive feedback on the processes that led to the success can consequently bolster the self-confidence (i.e., believing in one’s abilities) and self-esteem (i.e., overall self-worth) of individuals. Negative feedback, on the other hand, can have the reverse effect and may cause students to “react defensively [...], to reject or actively avoid feedback, and to opt not to use it” (Mercer et al., 2012, p. 18). Mercer and Dörnyei (2020, p. 63) recommend that teacher feedback should focus on “highlighting the effort, strategies and approach taken” even if the outcome of a learning activity was negative.

In order to produce the desired effects, feedback should be relevant and useful to the students. Mercer and Dörnyei name three key areas of which at least one must be addressed by the teacher, “the task itself, the process of working on the task, and/or self-regulation competencies for working further on related tasks” (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 63). Effective feedback can be characterized as being “detailed, accurate, and immediate, as well as encouraging and supportive” (Gettinger and Walter, 2013, p. 667), and it should be “clear, positive and specific” (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004, p. 100) instead of vague or general. Teachers should further personalize the feedback by using the pronoun “I” (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004), communicate it as soon as possible after a specific performance, and preferably give it in a private, face-to-face situation (Riordan, 2021).

Feedback can also become a regular, interactive process, in which students and teachers both reflect on an individuals’ learning processes and outcomes. The active involvement in feedback tasks gives students a sense of agency (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020) and increases their academic engagement (Brooks et al., 2013). In a school context, Mercer and Dörnyei (2020, p. 43) suggest “exit tickets” to make learning progresses visible and to actively engage students in self-reflection. Exit tickets are quick self-feedback tasks that invite learners to briefly evaluate their own learning progress at the end of a lesson by considering a few questions (e.g., what the student learned in the lesson and how confident they feel about their abilities in the moment of reflection).

In general, teacher feedback is accepted more easily when the teacher is considered to be credible and trustworthy, that is “possessing the expertise necessary to judge [students’] behavior accurately” (Ilgen et al., 1979, p. 351; see section “Teacher credibility and caring”). Constructive feedback given with care “can help build trust and enhance the relationship” between students and teachers (Riordan, 2021, p. 15). Destructive or unhelpful feedback, on the contrary, can be harmful for student-teacher relationships. Feedback is more likely to be taken to heart

and perceived as fair if the relationship between a student and the teacher is intact (Pat-El et al., 2012).

Effective teacher feedback is an example of mindful communication, which can have tremendous effects on teacher-student relationships and students' self-perception (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Positive teacher communication belongs in all supportive learning environments (Shernoff, 2016). When teachers use language for different purposes in the classroom, they "simultaneously send a range of hidden implicit messages through speech, choice of vocabulary and interactional discourse patterns about the roles and capabilities" of the students and themselves (Mercer and Ryan, 2013, p. 22). Teachers can use their voice and body language to convey their emotional state. They can vary pitch, volume, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact and should therefore be attentive to much more than just the content of their speech. They should carefully consider their comments and the possible effects they may have on students (Mercer and Ryan, 2013). Denton (2007, p. 1) puts it straight in claiming that language, verbal and non-verbal, is "one of the most powerful tools available to teachers."

Teachers are trained to use sophisticated communication skills to foster the academic engagement of students. Ideally, they create a comfortable, safe learning environment, in which engaging is easy and unthreatening for students (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). They listen actively and use verbal and non-verbal strategies to stimulate discussion and other group processes and to ensure that the students focus on the subject matter. Rather than simply talking to students, teachers should try to engage in a dialog *with* their students. They can adopt a coaching style in their communication by asking guiding questions to prompt students' thinking, active listening, and letting the students themselves identify issues (Beere and Broughton, 2013; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). In this vein, Mercer and Dörnyei advocate the GROW model (Whitmore, 2017), which can be used to support students "in setting their goals (G); reflecting on what the current reality (R) looks like; exploring the options (O) for achieving the goals and desired future outcomes," and which helps students to plan what they "will (W) do in concrete terms to keep moving forward toward their goal" (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 41).

The relationships between university students and teachers are unique and majorly depend on positive communication. The responses and feedback teachers receive from their students are equally important as teacher feedback directed toward students. The current Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of non-verbal communication. It has demonstrated how challenging communication can become if the non-verbal component is limited or erased. In the recent past, in-person classroom teaching has been increasingly or fully substituted by online teaching, which has tremendously impacted student-teacher relationships (Amerstorfer, 2021). Teacher credibility may also have suffered because its vital elements may have been lost in virtual space. In online classrooms, particularly where no video images are available, teachers sometimes feel like they are teaching into a void (Amerstorfer, 2021). Simultaneously, students may feel excluded or uncertain about the extent to which they are directly concerned by the teacher's speech. Such negative

experiences on both sides obstruct communication and hamper positive student-teacher relationships.

Problem-Based Learning in Foreign Language Teacher Education

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a collaborative method of instruction, mainly used in tertiary education, which is suitable in a variety of disciplines such as medicine, health sciences, psychology, law, and business (Schmidt, 2012). Through its strong foundation in reality, PBL can also be applied in teacher education (Amerstorfer, 2020), as is the case in the current study. Rooted in social constructivist theories, PBL is founded on the belief that learning happens through the negotiation of knowledge among active, intentional learners (Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2006). Students "engage in dialog through shared experiences, interpretations, reflection, and problem solving" (Christopher et al., 2020, p. 825), while the teacher mainly functions as facilitator. PBL lessons center around close-to-life problem scenarios, which are usually open-ended with multiple possible solutions but may include closed-ended sub-tasks like matching or ranking activities. A problem typically raises questions or asks for elaboration (Moust et al., 2007). It usually leads to discussions, motivates students to formulate appropriate learning goals, and stimulates self-directed learning (Amerstorfer, 2020). One of the pedagogical aims of PBL is for students to simultaneously acquire skills and knowledge that are essential for their future profession.

In the teacher education course central to this study (see section "Data collection"), the students apply a 7-step approach to problem-solving (Moust et al., 2007). In the first step, they clarify the problem's context and any unclear terms in the problem description. Second, they identify the problem itself or multiple problems within the problem scenario. Third, they brainstorm as many ideas as they can without paying attention to the form and exact relevance of what comes to mind. The fourth step entails a thorough problem analysis in which the students structure their ideas and analyze them in depth. During this process, the students consult and make use of their prior knowledge. It is common that further questions arise at this stage, which students might not be able to answer immediately. In step five, they define learning goals, which they translate into home assignments for individuals, small teams, or the whole group. Step six happens in between two class meetings, where students conduct literature research and consult other out-of-class resources, for example, their internship supervisors or other experienced teachers. During the following class meeting, the group continues pursuing their learning goals. They synthesize and apply the newly collected information, and reflect on the quality of their joint findings, which is the final one of the seven steps (Moust et al., 2007). Successful problem-solving in PBL requires cooperative teamwork. If the group is not satisfied with the outcomes of their research, they return and repeat steps five to seven until they are contented with the solution.

During PBL lessons, students assume different roles to contribute to the problem-solving process. In the EFL teacher education course, there are three roles that students can assume:

chairperson, scribe, and regular participant. The *chairperson* functions as facilitator and is the person “who moderates discussions, keeps the team on task and makes sure everyone works and has the opportunity to participate and learn” (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004, p. 86). The *scribe* is the timekeeper of the group, who takes notes during the conversations in class and shares the notes on an online learning platform. The student who functions as the scribe in one lesson becomes the chairperson in the subsequent lesson because they are best prepared for chairing follow-up discussions and tasks (Amerstorfer, 2020). The remaining students are *regular participants*, who contribute constructively to discussions, exchange knowledge and experiences, agree on learning goals, and seek out learning resources in between class meetings. The chairperson and the scribe may also contribute their views and knowledge to the group’s discussions.

Rotating the roles in PBL has numerous advantages. For instance, all students are engaged in the classroom activities; they share the responsibilities involved in the learning processes; they can experiment with varying levels of control over their peers and learning processes, which may temporarily take them out of their comfort zones (imagine, for example, a naturally shy student in the role of chairperson or a naturally dominant student as scribe); they practice leading and participating in discussions; and experience being effective parts of a team. Embodying different roles in PBL “encourages interdependence among team members” (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004, p. 87) and contributes to the development of students’ self-concepts.

PBL teachers are often referred to as tutors or facilitators due to their adapted roles in comparison with more traditional, teacher-centered methodological approaches (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004; Moust et al., 2007; Filipenko and Naslund, 2016; Ansarian and Teoh, 2018). In the beginning, PBL teachers may utilize verbal or non-verbal cues and strategies to stimulate discussions and keep the students focused on the subject matter, for instance, by using gestures, asking questions, summarizing and monitoring group progress, returning and deflecting questions, and suggesting alternatives (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004). They provide the necessary guidance, feedback, and support until the students understand the step-by-step approach to problem solving and their new responsibilities.

After a short induction phase, the students gradually take over until they have complete control over the problem-solving process (Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2006; Hmelo-Silver and Eberbach, 2012). The teacher’s traditional roles are reduced to those of a coach who scaffolds learning processes (Collins et al., 1989; Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2006) by raising awareness to diverse perspectives or inspiring critical thinking, which may be “a major departure from the traditional teacher role” (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 40). Teacher communication becomes scarcer and the teacher turns into an attentive observer who only intervenes if necessary or demanded (Amerstorfer, 2020).

Students’ Engagement in Problem-Based Learning

The authentic problem statements in PBL immediately involve students in communal academic activity. The problems are designed to activate students’ prior knowledge and memory of related experiences right from the start (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Hmelo-Silver and Eberbach, 2012), thereby sparking intrinsic motivation and creating a sense of purpose for individuals. Engaging problems are interesting, realistic, and relevant for the students and their future career (Amerstorfer, 2020). Their complexity and deliberately ill-structured nature (Hmelo-Silver and Eberbach, 2012; Ansarian and Teoh, 2018) trigger flexible, critical thinking and creative solution-seeking.

In PBL, students are not seen as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Instead, they are expected to participate actively in truth-seeking, knowledge-building activities inspired by the close-to-reality problems. Each individual already knows something about the problems to be solved from their own secondary education, previous teaching internships, and university studies. Past events in the students’ lives spark new, sustainable learning as students can better “construct [and memorize] new knowledge when they can relate it to what they already know” (Hmelo-Silver and Eberbach, 2012, p. 3). The different circumstances of individuals, their various, partly overlapping experiences, and a pool of diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and opinions are valuable assets for PBL.

The students “are the agents in the [PBL] classroom and take responsibility for the learning processes and outcomes” (Amerstorfer, 2020, p. 85). They set their own learning goals and adjust the focus according to their needs and interests. For instance, individuals choose which specific topics to research in between class meetings in order to contribute to cooperative problem-solving. Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) concur that choices and the ability to freely express one’s opinion give learners a sense of agency. Furthermore, students enjoy increased autonomy in PBL through the opportunity to adapt the syllabus according to new interests that surface or develop during the course (Amerstorfer, 2020). The high degrees of self-direction and autonomy in PBL create a sense of meaningfulness, which nurtures academic engagement.

Despite increased individual autonomy and self-regulation, the students work together as a team. They set group targets, which can be achieved by synchronizing the efforts of individuals. All students fulfill important tasks in the specific roles they embody, which generates a sense of co-dependency and togetherness (Amerstorfer, 2020). The students identify the exact learning objectives they wish to pursue and follow a clearly prescribed chain of actions to achieve these goals. “[H]aving clear guidelines and transparent learning objectives, accompanied by an outline of possible steps to be taken to complete the task, can notably facilitate the learning process and learner engagement” (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020, p. 48).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) relate to an undergraduate preservice teacher education course (see section “Research Environment”). Initially, this study was planned to answer two research questions related to aspects of academic engagement (RQ1) and attributes and actions of teachers (RQ2). During data analysis, a third question emerged about how PBL influences engagement and student-teacher relationships, which has not been addressed in the academic literature (RQ3).

RQ1: How do the students perceive their own academic engagement in the PBL course in comparison to other courses?

RQ2: How do the students perceive teacher caring, credibility, feedback, and communication style in the PBL course?

RQ3: How does the PBL approach shape the students’ academic engagement and their relationships with the course instructors?

Research Environment

The study was conducted in a PBL course in an undergraduate teacher education program for preservice teachers of EFL. The course was comprised of 15 weekly class meetings of 90 min each. The course materials were specifically designed to suit the PBL methodology and reflect the learning objectives as stated in the curriculum. The underlying theme of the course was learner diversity and inclusion. Coupled to the university course, the students completed 30 h in a supervised internship at local secondary schools, where they observed and taught (segments of) EFL lessons.

The course assessment was based on two components: (1) the students’ participation and performance during the PBL lessons and (2) a term paper, in which they reflected on their individual learning growth and the PBL approach. At the end of the semester, the students were invited to give feedback on the course materials, the PBL methodology, the teachers’ performance, and anything else they wished to put forward in relation to the course.

Unlike in previous semesters, the course was taught online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although remote teaching influenced teaching and learning in general, extensive previous experience with PBL shows that transferring the course into a virtual classroom did not affect the course materials and had only little impact on the overall PBL set-up. Instead of meeting in an actual classroom, the course was held in a virtual classroom. The roles of individuals in PBL remained the same, as did the 7-step approach to problem solving. Activities in small groups took place in virtual breakout rooms. All students were given moderator rights, which enabled them to use all functions available in the virtual classroom (e.g., screen sharing, breakout rooms, etc.).

Participants in the Study

The PBL course was attended by 49 English majors in the 5th semester of the teacher education program. To adhere to the

maximum group size of 15, the students were divided into four parallel groups (A–D), which were taught by three teachers. Out of the 49 students in total, 34 participated in the study (see **Table 1**).

Data Collection

A short questionnaire was developed to investigate

- the participants’ perceived engagement represented by their perceived effort, dedication, and learning growth in the PBL course compared to other courses they attended in the same semester; and
- the participants’ perception of their teachers’ credibility, caring, feedback, and communication style.

To gain a general overview of the participants’ subjective perceptions, we designed seven statements to be answered with either a *true* or *not true* response. These statements were each followed by an open-ended question or imperative statement to elicit further explanations (e.g., *Please explain why you put/didn’t put more effort into this course.*) and examples of teacher behavior (e.g., *What did/didn’t you appreciate about the teacher’s feedback?*). These follow-up items were aimed at gaining deep insights into the participants’ individual opinions, views, and experiences. The complete questionnaire is included in **Appendix 1**. Questions 1–3 address aspects of academic engagement (effort, dedication, learning growth). Questions 4–7 address attributes and actions of the teacher (credibility, caring, feedback, communication style).

The participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, that it did not affect their grades for the course, and that the responses would be anonymized and exclusively used for academic research, revision of the course materials, and professional development. The questionnaire was administered online at the end of the final class meeting in all four groups. Students who were absent during the lesson received the link to the questionnaire via email and were invited to respond in their free time.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was focused on the qualitative information expressed in the participants’ responses to the questionnaire in order to learn about the perceptions of individuals (see section “Qualitative results”). Additionally, percentages of the quantitative data were calculated to provide a general overview of the information (section “Quantitative results”).

TABLE 1 | Overview of PBL groups, teachers, students, and participants in the study.

Group	Teacher	Total number of students	Study participants
A	Lead author	13	11
B	Co-author	14	7
C	Co-author	12	8
D	Anonymous	10	8
Total		49	34

The analysis of the qualitative data was a comprehensive process, in which the authors continuously contrasted and complemented each other's work. First, they discussed how the data can be objectively interpreted and decided to cross-check each other's work at three stages in the data analysis to increase reliability. After reading through all qualitative data individually, they each determined code definitions and selection criteria, which they then refined together (reliability check 1). Then they independently coded the data and jointly reviewed their findings again (reliability check 2). They independently interpreted the information by comparing individual responses and emerging themes with the academic literature. Finally, they collaboratively scrutinized their individual results (reliability check 3) and formulated the final results. During the interpretation of the data, the authors consulted with the third course instructor on several occasions to include an additional perspective.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

The quantitative results obtained with the *true/not true* statements indicate the participants' general perceptions of aspects of their academic engagement (effort, dedication, learning growth) and the teachers' behavior (caring, feedback, communication style, credibility) in the PBL course. **Table 2** summarizes the quantitative responses by the participants (p.).

The open-ended follow-up items revealed that some participants would have preferred a third option in addition to *true* and *not true* because neither answer applied to them. This was the case for four participants in question 1 (the statement was actually *not true* for 10 participants instead of 14) and six participants in question 3 (the statement was actually *not true* for four participants instead of 10). The column *Not true* is

highlighted in gray for questions 1 and 3 due to the participants' not wanting to choose either of the two options.

Qualitative Results

The following are summaries of the explanations related to the *true/not true* responses gained with open-ended questions and imperative statements.

1: I put more effort into this course compared to other courses this semester. (true/not true)

Please explain why you put/didn't put more effort into this course.

An increased effort invested in the PBL course was mainly induced by the course contents and the PBL methodology. In comparison to other university courses, the participants experienced the effort in the PBL course as higher because of the rotating roles and the home assignments, which they set for themselves. Similar to other courses, the term paper at the end further added to the experienced effort. One participant [PB4]² wrote,

A significant amount of effort was put into the home assignments and preparation for each week's class plus the work put into the assignments when being a scribe or a chairperson. There were some research tasks that also consumed quite a bit of time. Additionally, the effort put into the writing of the final paper cannot be forgotten. Nevertheless, the work resulted in some fruitful insights about language teaching.

Other specific reasons for increased effort in the course were personal interest and enjoyment, relevant topics, the teachers (each mentioned three times), the motivating effect of PBL, and the team spirit created by PBL (each mentioned once). The participants highlighted that the teachers' encouraging, motivational teaching style, respectful communication, and the effort the teachers put into the course increased their own effort and motivation. Participants responded, for instance, "I put more effort in because I liked the way our professor was teaching and treated us [...]" [PD1] and "[...] I appreciate the effort our lecturer was putting into each session what motivated me even more" [PD6].

Four participants indicated that the effort in the PBL course was equal to other courses; yet, one added that PBL "was a little bit easier [...]" because one learned hand in hand with being scribe and chairperson" and that "remembering information was easier due to that" [PB2]. Two participants equated "effort" with "workload" measurable in ECTS credits. They felt that the actual workload was much higher than the accredited 2 ECTS points, which represent 50 h of study. Three participants explained that their effort was lower than in other courses because "it was a shared experience" [PA11] with shared home assignments and with much learning taking place during group discussions in class. One of them further acknowledged that all effort "was worth it" because it was "helpful for our future life as a teacher" [PA10]. One participant did not explain why they clicked on *not true*.

Some participants' reflections of their efforts were related to the fact that all university courses were conducted online during that semester. Three participants, for example, used Question

TABLE 2 | Overview of quantitative results.

Statement	True	Not true
Q1: I put more effort into this course compared to other courses this semester.	20 p. 58,82%	14 p. 41,18%
Q2: I felt more dedicated to the work I did in this course compared to other courses this semester.	28 p. 82,35%	6 p. 17,65%
Q3: I learned more in this course compared to other courses this semester.	24 p. 70,59%	10 p. 29,41%
Q4: I felt that the teacher cared about me.	34 p. 100%	-
Q5: I appreciated the teacher's feedback.	31 p. 91,18%	3 p. 8,82%
Q6: I liked the teacher's communication style.	34 p. 100%	-
Q7: I found the teacher credible.	34 p. 100%	-

¹Analyzing student engagement in relation with academic achievement in the transition from high school to post-secondary schooling, Finn and Zimmer (2013) distinguish four components of engagement: academic (students' observable participation during class), social (how students behave in the classroom), cognitive (brain activity during thought processes), and affective (emotional responses).

²Participant identification code.

³Number of participants who provided the response.

The column *Not true* is highlighted in gray for questions 1 and 3 due to the participants' not wanting to choose either of the two options.

1 as an opportunity to complain about other courses, which they found overwhelming because of too much self-study. This was assumed by the participants to be due to the teachers' lack of experience with remote teaching. One participant noted that despite the interesting course contents, they would have invested more effort if the course had not been online because they found it difficult to interact with others.

2: I felt more dedicated to the work I did in this course compared to other courses this semester. (true/not true)

Please explain why you felt more/less dedicated to the work in this course.

Participants who felt more dedicated than in other courses explained that this was because of the interesting topics (3)³ that were covered and the PBL design (2). They highlighted that the practical connection to their future careers as language teachers (9) and the internship (6) made the course more relevant for them, which enhanced their dedication. The intense peer-interaction (5) was appreciated, especially due to an overall lack thereof in times of distance learning. One participant [PB7] wrote,

We actually had to interact with the other students because of the way this course was held and this was really good – due to distance learning I kinda lost track of what we are doing in the other classes sind [since] the professors did not really care about interaction in their courses.

Another reason for increased dedication was that the course provided a platform for sharing research findings (4) and that it demanded active participation and interaction (3). The relevance of the individuals' achievements for the group (4) and not wanting to lose face in front of peers (1) were also incentives for increased dedication. Additionally, one participant highlighted the transparent goals in PBL as encouraging for student dedication. Another participant "felt dedicated to contribute to avoid silence in class" [PC4]. Furthermore, the teachers and the information they provided (2) were named as reasons for increased dedication, as well as experienced pressure to finish the term paper on time (1). One participant was more dedicated because they wanted to profoundly understand the PBL methodology.

Out of the six participants who felt less dedicated in the PBL course, one found some topics redundant and noted that speaking about them in class created more confusion than clarity. Another participant found the repeated procedure during the PBL class meetings boring, which decreased interest and consequently also dedication. One participant did not feel more dedicated in comparison to other courses but emphasized how important participation was during the PBL class meetings. One participant did not explain why they felt less dedicated. Two named the Covid-19 pandemic and the brought about online instruction as the main cause. They found the overall circumstances and remote learning demotivating. One explained, "Corona is siphoning away at all our energies, many [sic.] people

(including myself) [sic.] have gotten and still are depressed thus reducing all motivation and incentive to do anything" [PA6].

3: I learned more in this course compared to other courses this semester. (true/not true)

Please explain why you learned more/less in this course.

Nine participants answered that they learned more in this course because of the practical, interesting topics related to their future profession. The PBL design was highlighted 11 times in regard to learning gain, specifically the close-to-life problem scenarios; the group discussions to share ideas, thoughts, and research findings (each mentioned four times); overall participation and interaction; as well as intense preparation (each mentioned twice). Participants explained, for instance, "I learned more without having studied for it. It was the format of the teaching (problem-based learning) that helped to acquire a lot of information [. . .]" [PA11] and "[. . .] All the scenarios concerned me personally and my future job and they were interesting. Because these were real scenarios, which partially I have experienced myself already, I learned even more" [PA4]. Other factors that contributed positively to the participants' perceived learning growth were self-regulated learning processes (2), which the participants experienced as supportive to memorize new knowledge, and the variety of information sources (1).

Two participants who clicked *not true* did not add any comments. Two participants stated that they learned nothing new because they were already familiar with the topics. The remaining six who responded with *not true* explained that the perceived learning gain was similar but the learning experience was not comparable to other courses. One participant [PA8] contrasted PBL with other teaching approaches:

I would not say that I have learned more because in the other courses there was also a lot of input [sic.] but it was presented in different ways for example the professor talked a lot and explained things or there were only power point slides with an audio where the professor talks the students through the slides. I would say I learned in other courses as much as in this course just differently.

Others pointed out that the course contents were different from any other courses and that it was easier to memorize information in the PBL course (each mentioned once).

Q4: I felt that the teacher cared about me. (true/not true)

What makes you think that the teacher cared/didn't care about you?

All participants felt that the teacher cared about them. In the explanations, the following adjectives were used to describe caring teachers: understanding (5), respectful, polite, dedicated, friendly, kind (each mentioned twice), fair, empathetic, and well-prepared (each mentioned once). The teachers were further perceived as caring because they provided support (8); showed interest in the students' lives beyond the classroom; answered all questions; fostered learner engagement and learning gains (each mentioned five times); created a positive learning environment; provided useful advice (each mentioned four times); encouraged student interaction; responded fast to emails; were engaged in

the lessons themselves; and provided constructive feedback (each mentioned twice). One participant [PA6] gave a specific example:

When I was not feeling well and did not go to class the teacher reached out to me and asked me what's wrong why I was not participating anymore, I felt really nice then, and that's quintessential for a teacher IMO [in my opinion]. Showing care and understanding for bad things going on is [a] skill we have to possess as teachers. That way we can react accordingly choosing the best approach to make the situation better.

*Q5: I appreciated the teacher's feedback. (true/not true)
What did/didn't you appreciate about the teacher's feedback?*

Participants were overall grateful for being provided with feedback at all, understood that the feedback was supposed to help them improve their skills, and appreciated the teachers' honesty. Many participants found the teachers' feedback constructive (10), as exemplified in their responses, for instance, "The feedback [*sic.*] was positive [*sic.*] and constructive, the two elements that make it easy to improve without losing any motivation throughout the semester" [PD3] and "I generally appreciate any feedback, positive or negative. We received a lot of positive feedback from her which was really motivating. Also constructive feedback helped to further myself" [PA4].

Other adjectives attributed to the teachers' feedback were positive, motivating (each mentioned three times), respectful, extensive, precise, honest, informative (each mentioned twice), polite, objective, product-oriented, immediate, justified, formal, clear, educated, supportive, appreciative, and kind (each mentioned once).

Three participants did not appreciate the teachers' feedback. One could not remember any specific feedback, and another one did not find the teacher's feedback constructive. The third one noted just some remarks, which they "liked very much but sometimes critique seemed to be based on personal expectations" [PA5].

Q6: I liked the teacher's communication style. (true/not true)

What did/didn't you like about the teacher's communication style?

All participants liked the teachers' communication style, particularly, being treated in a respectful manner. They felt that the teachers had good social skills and experienced them as respectful (4), straightforward, honest, nice, helpful (each mentioned twice), authentic, understanding, and less strict or formal (each mentioned once) compared to university teachers in other courses. The teachers' communication style was described as friendly (3), clear, polite (each mentioned twice), transparent, open, fresh, motivating, appropriate, formal (each mentioned once), and "sometimes hesitant" [PB1]. Some participants remarked that their teacher had a good sense of humor (2), spoke in a pleasant voice, and was easy to understand (each mentioned once). They appreciated that the teachers focused on the subject matter and created a comfortable learning atmosphere (each mentioned once). Additionally, they noted that the teachers gave the participants opportunities to speak (2), were interested in their students' opinions, took time to answer questions, responded promptly, and chose their words carefully (each

mentioned once). The participants felt included and that the teachers appreciated their answers (each mentioned once). They liked that the teachers acted as tutors, although one participant would have enjoyed more direction by the teacher, specifically, concerning the home assignments. One participant found the teacher "a bit corny" and "trying too hard" [PA6].

*Q7: I found the teacher credible. (true/not true)
What makes you think that the teacher was/wasn't credible?*

All three teachers were found credible by all participants. The participants' perceptions were mainly based on the teachers' competence (14), which included factual and practical knowledge as well as enhanced teaching skills and teaching experience at secondary school. One participant [PA5] explained,

I think the teacher made the impression of having the skills and experience to lead this class (or rather in this case to hand over to us students); the teacher also conveyed an image that she had practical experience as school-teacher and was not only focused on academic aspects of teacher education something which I highly appreciated, especially in context of the content which seemed at first very theoretical but proved much more "hands-on" than expected.

Another one [PD4] said that they found the teacher credible "[b]ecause our teacher recently worked in a school which I always appreciate. Often I feel like university teachers have not been in school for a long time and that they only talk about research outcomes which are often not really feasible [*sic.*]."

In connection to the teachers' credibility, the participants described them as professional (3), well-prepared, helpful (each mentioned twice), reliable, innovative, good at explaining things, authentic, honest, friendly, genuine, supportive, respectful, calm, meticulous, and caring (each mentioned once). Further features and actions that made the teachers appear as credible were their use of reliable sources (3), willingness to share own experiences, being role models (each mentioned twice), admitting knowledge gaps, having transparent aims, treating problems confidentially, giving useful feedback, and responding to emails (each mentioned once). One participant noted that although the course was demanding, the teacher "only asked things of us which she would be willing to do herself" [PA5]. Two participants remarked that their teacher's research experience speaks for her credibility.

DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at the qualitative investigation of students' perceptions regarding aspects of their academic engagement (effort, dedication, learning gain) as well as attributes and actions concerning the teacher (caring, credibility, feedback, communication) in a preservice teacher education course conducted with PBL. The monotony of continuous remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on students' overall well-being and attitude toward studying (Amerstorfer, 2021). We presume that the distance learning mode that the pandemic enforced upon us also had a negative impact on the participants' perception of the PBL methodology.

Nevertheless, the study confirmed many of the positive effects of PBL as described in the academic literature (see section “Problem-based learning in foreign language teacher education”) and brought to light some of its drawbacks as well. It revealed new details about the influence of PBL on academic student engagement and student-teacher relationships. The gathered findings can be related to similar educational settings and may therefore be valuable for other teachers and researchers.

Academic Engagement in Problem-Based Learning

There is much teachers can do to increase the academic engagement of students, for instance, applying an appealing teaching methodology; choosing interesting, meaningful contents; offering authentic tasks with an attractive design; increasing student autonomy and self-regulation; fostering a motivating learning environment; and facilitating peer-support and teamwork (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003; Skinner and Pitzer, 2013; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020; see section “Academic engagement in tertiary education”). All of this can be implemented in PBL.

The study shows that academic engagement is linked to affective factors that concern the students as individuals (e.g., motivation, enjoyment) and members of a team (e.g., team spirit, fear of losing face). The data gathered in this study seems to suggest that the PBL approach increased the effort and dedication of most participants, which was mainly due to the rotating roles in PBL; the intense homework tasks (which the students themselves determined and allocated among group members); and the motivational effects of the course. Some aspects of the course were perceived as particularly motivating, for instance, teamwork, which increased active participation during class and intensified the dedication of individuals, the time pressure individuals experienced regarding the submission deadline of the term paper, and a professional interest in the PBL methodology.

The results of the study indicate that students realize the benefits of their academic engagement in PBL. The participants felt that self-regulated learning and a variety of information sources made it easier for them to memorize new knowledge. The authentic, interesting topics and the problem-solving set-up made them experience their learning gains as sustainable. They particularly appreciated the practical relevance of the course to real life as well as the transparent learning goals (which they often defined themselves) and learning how to achieve them (by following the step-by-step approach). Not only does the study endorse existing theories about self-regulated learning (e.g., that self-regulation fosters motivation and positive learning outcomes; Mercer et al., 2012; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), it also expands them from an individual to a group level.

Nevertheless, the PBL course did not increase the engagement of all students because some did not value the topics discussed or found the repeated step-by-step process for problem solving boring. Although this concerned only a small number of participants, we will try to offer a broader choice of topics in the future and consider including alternative problem-solving approaches to increase the attractiveness of the course design.

Teacher-Related Aspects Concerning Student Engagement in Problem-Based Learning

Students’ academic engagement depends, among others, on the attributes and actions of the teacher. The responses to the individual questions posed in this study’s questionnaire, which were characterized by much overlap and repetition, revealed a strong dynamic between the aspects of academic engagement and teacher caring, credibility, feedback, and communication style. The gathered data lend support to the fact that PBL establishes opportunities for teachers to display care for their students, for instance, by encouraging interaction, fostering engagement and learning gains, providing support on demand, actively engaging in lessons themselves, creating a positive, relaxed learning environment, showing genuine interest in the students’ lives beyond the classroom, and providing meaningful feedback (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004; Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2006; Moust et al., 2007; Amerstorfer, 2020; Christopher et al., 2020).

The teacher’s communication style seems to be a major factor for creating a learning environment in which students like to engage in academic activity. The study shows that a teacher’s communication style discloses information about their behavior and personality and that it is an indicator for caring and credibility. The latter does not only depend on academic education and experience. Not knowing the answers to all questions can increase a teacher’s credibility, as one participant noted. Alongside professionalism, positive interpersonal skills and other personality traits (e.g., respectfulness, authenticity) have been highlighted as important aspects of a teacher’s credibility.

Regarding feedback, PBL teachers are very mindful about giving feedback (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004; Moust et al., 2007; Yew and Goh, 2016). The constructivist philosophy underlying PBL expects them to hold back and avoid interfering during class as much as possible. However, when the involvement of the teacher is required, they carefully consider the content of their comments as well as the timing and manner in which they are communicated in order to achieve positive effects. As was rightly remarked by one participant, teacher feedback is based on expectations. This can concern content-related learning objectives in a course, students’ performance regarding the PBL methodology (e.g., preparation for class meetings, teamwork), and interpersonal behavior, such as respectful communication and mutual support in a team. The teacher’s expectations can further concern the whole class as well as individual students and can be based on records or observations of previous performance. It is important that the teacher communicates transparent feedback criteria in an unambiguous manner in order to clarify the feedback framework and to strengthen the effectiveness of the feedback. Overall, the study indicates that students understood and appreciated the teachers’ feedback. It further confirms that genuine, constructive feedback affects academic engagement in a positive way (Hattie, 2003; Gettinger and Walter, 2013; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning

Generally, the findings of the current study in a PBL context are in line with previous studies about student-teacher relationships in other university contexts (Anderson and Carta-Falsa, 2002; Fitzmaurice, 2008; Komarraju et al., 2010). Influences on student-teacher relationships from both the affective and the support dimension (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014) were evident in the students' qualitative responses. In a nutshell, the teachers were perceived as likeable people who are eager to support preservice EFL teachers in becoming confident and competent professionals.

The study confirms that students experience the overall PBL setup as more relaxed than lecture-type teaching or other teacher-centered approaches commonly applied in higher education. The hence comfortable learning atmosphere in PBL, its student-centeredness, and the corresponding behavior of PBL teachers promote the development of positive relationships between students and teachers. In PBL, teachers are not perceived as majorly superior to students or as the source of all knowledge. Rather, they function as facilitators or guides (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2004; Moust et al., 2007; Filipenko and Naslund, 2016; Ansarian and Teoh, 2018), which creates a feeling of closeness and supports positive relationship-building among students and teachers. The PBL teachers were consistently perceived as friendly and supportive while maintaining a high degree of professionalism. The participants noticed that the teachers tried to create a learning environment that promotes academic engagement and encourages sustainable learning as a group and individually.

The study reveals that the most important characteristic of a PBL teacher and crucial for the manifestation of positive student-teacher relationships in PBL is respect. Respect was emphasized in relation to all four teacher characteristics and particularly connected with autonomous, self-directed problem-solving and syllabus adaptation. Teacher caring and credibility, which are important ingredients of positive student-teacher relationships (see section "Teacher credibility and caring"), were also highlighted by the participants. They were repeatedly related to one another, which affirms the solid connection between them (Noddings, 1992; Noblit, 1993; Wentzel, 1997; Elizabeth et al., 2008; Pishghadam and Karami, 2017; Duffy, 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2018; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020), as well as in regard to teacher feedback and communication.

The collected data reveal that mindfulness and approachability are further teacher traits that enhance student-teacher relationships. Teachers can appear approachable in a literal sense (e.g., available via phone, responding to emails) as well as figuratively (e.g., sharing personal anecdotes). They can explicitly communicate a willingness to create and cultivate interpersonal relationships with students or imply the same, for instance, by demonstrating care about the students' learning for real life, which is the ultimate goal of PBL.

Another important finding regarding relationships is that students perceive their PBL teachers as role models, particularly if the teachers come across as authentic, genuinely interested

in individuals, welcoming diversity, and open for information sharing and communication. This insight may have been amplified by the fact that the participants were future teachers themselves. Experiencing what "good" teachers do may have increased their wish to become "good" teachers themselves, which does not only depend on the teacher but also on a multitude of contextual aspects inducing the student-centeredness of the PBL methodology. It seems that the wholehearted trust of the teachers in the students' abilities signaled to the students that they were perceived as competent, efficient problem-solvers and that their efforts were appreciated. This seems to have nurtured the self-confidence and academic engagement of the students, facilitated mutual respect and trust among them (which had positive ramifications on group dynamics and team efficiency), and contributed to positive student-teacher relationships.

A Critical Look at the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The instrument was an online form to collect student feedback, which, in our experience, needs to be simple and quick to fill in. Given the high return rate and the valuable insights we gained about the topics under investigation, we believe that the chosen format of closed-ended statements (to set the participants' minds on the individual topics and to gain a general direction of the students' perceptions), followed by open ended items (to obtain deep insights about the perceptions of individuals) was appropriate for the purposes of this study. However, critically scrutinizing the research instrument, we realize that the positively phrased statements in the questionnaire (see **Appendix 1**) may have been somewhat leading. Moreover, some participants would have preferred additional options to *true* and *not true*. In future studies, we would include a quantitative component that allows for more varied responses (e.g., Likert scale, slider bar).

Other weaknesses of the study arise from the fact that the researchers were the participants' teachers. Even though taking part in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and online, the participants may have (unconsciously) responded more positively in their feedback than they would have done if the data had been collected by an independent researcher. The positive student-teacher relationships in the PBL course and/or students' previous experiences with the teacher, which potentially concerns 8 students in group A, may therefore have affected the reliability of the findings. Similarly, having known and worked together with the students for a whole semester may have impaired the objectivity of the researchers during data analysis. The outcomes of the study should hence be viewed with caution because the gathered data may have been undermined by phenomena like researcher's paradox, subject expectancy, or halo effect, which could be prevented by including a third, independent researcher in the data collection and interpretation.

In retrospect, an overall different setup of the study may have led to clearer results regarding RQ3 as it was sometimes difficult to identify the exact influences on student engagement and student-teacher relationships. An experimental study with two parallel groups taught by the same teacher, who applies PBL

in only one of the two groups, could support a clearer distinction between PBL-related and other influencing factors. Ideally, the teacher would not have taught the students before and would be unaware of the aims of the study.

Academic engagement and student-teacher relationships in higher education are generally under-researched topics. The same is true for PBL – in itself and particularly in relation to academic engagement and student-teacher relationships. Questions that require further quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research are, for instance,

- How is academic engagement related to strategic learning?
- How does online teaching influence academic engagement/student-teacher relationships in PBL?
- How can academic engagement and positive student-teacher relationships be fostered in remote PBL?

CONCLUSION

In PBL, students do not simply co-exist in the classroom but intensely interact and cooperate with each other. Inspired by realistic problem scenarios, they plan and conduct individual and group activities in order to jointly arrive at commonly acceptable solutions. During the problem-solving processes, students develop knowledge and skills beyond the subject matter, which demands a high degree of engagement of individuals. They adopt specific roles within a team and make constructive contributions toward group goals with the ultimate aim of learning for life in a sustainable manner.

PBL may not be ideal for university students who prefer learning by themselves, need greater teacher guidance, or procedural freedom in problem-solving. However, the study confirms that PBL is overall perceived by students as an enjoyable teaching methodology. It provides a relaxed learning environment in which they enjoy engaging as autonomous

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actors in authentic, meaningful activities that lead to sustainable learning gains. It further provides conditions that foster positive relationships between students and teachers. Respect was the most crucial criteria mentioned in regard to positive student-teacher relationships. It traversed through the students' perception of teacher caring, credibility, feedback, and communication style like a golden thread.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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CA designed the study. CA, CF, and a third person collected the data. Both authors analyzed and interpreted the data, contributed to the composition of drafts, repeatedly revised these drafts, and approved the submitted version.

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Appendix 1

Feedback: Communicative Language Teaching in Practice, WS 2020/21

This questionnaire inquires about your learning experience in the course “Communicative Language Teaching in Practice.” By filling in this questionnaire, you give the teacher feedback on different aspects related to the course and her teaching. Your anonymous responses have no influence on your grade for this course and will be used for academic research, the revision of the course materials, and professional development.

Your opinion is important and much appreciated!

1) I put more effort into this course compared to other courses this semester.

true not true

Please explain why you put/didn't put more effort into this course.

2) I felt more dedicated to the work I did in this course compared to other courses this semester.

true not true

Please explain why you felt more/less dedicated to the work in this course.

3) I learned more in this course compared to other courses this semester.

true not true

Please explain why you learned more/less in this course.

4) I felt that the teacher cared about me.

true not true

What makes you think that the teacher cared/didn't care about you?

5) I appreciated the teacher's feedback.

true not true

What did/didn't you appreciate about the teacher's feedback?

6) I liked the teacher's communication style.

true not true

What did/didn't you like about the teacher's communication style?

7) I found the teacher credible.

true not true

What makes you think that the teacher was/wasn't credible?



The Academic Motivation and Engagement of Students in English as a Foreign Language Classes: Does Teacher Praise Matter?

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Given the undeniable role of English as a foreign language (EFL) students' academic motivation and engagement in L2 success, identifying the antecedents of these positive academic behaviors seems essential. Accordingly, many empirical studies have probed into the impact of students' personal factors on their motivation and engagement. Yet, not much attention has been paid to the role of teachers' communication behaviors, notably praise. Additionally, no review has been performed in this regard. The present review study intends to address these gaps by explaining teacher praise and its positive outcomes for EFL students' motivation and engagement. In light of the empirical and theoretical evidence, the role of teacher praise in improving students' academic motivation and engagement was proved. The paper concludes with some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: teacher praise, academic motivation, academic engagement, EFL classes, positive academic emotion

INTRODUCTION

Students' motivation and engagement as two prime instances of positive academic behaviors serve a facilitative function in their learning success (Martin et al., 2017). Accordingly, raising students' academic motivation and engagement has been among the top priorities of all effective instructors. However, many instructors, notably English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are still unaware of how to considerably enhance their students' academic motivation and engagement. In fact, how EFL and ESL students' academic motivation and engagement can be improved is not widely recognized (Henry and Thorsen, 2018). Students' academic motivation or motivation to learn generally refers to "their primary impetus for initiating learning as well as the reason for continuing the prolonged and tedious process of learning" (Ushioda, 2008, p. 21). More specifically, conceptualized language learners' academic motivation as the degree to which they strive to acquire a new language out of a desire to do so and the enjoyment they experienced in the process of learning. Besides, student academic engagement as another example of desirable academic behaviors pertains to "students' active, goal-directed, flexible, constructive, persistent, focused interactions with the learning environment" (Furrer and Skinner, 2003, p. 149). In the domain of language education, students' academic engagement refers to their active participation in learning and mastering a new language (Hiver et al., 2021).

As Irvin et al. (2007) noted academic motivation and engagement as two related constructs are of high importance for students' increased achievement, advancement, and academic success. Concerning the value of student academic motivation in instructional-learning environments, Froiland and Oros (2014) postulated that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of pupils can favorably influence their academic performance. In a similar vein, Martin (2013) also stated that the sense of enjoyment that highly motivated students experience in classroom contexts encourages them to enthusiastically pursue different stages of learning. This, in turn, contributes to desirable learning outcomes. In this regard, Howard et al. (2021) also illustrated the importance of motivation by referring to its positive effect on students' level of perseverance. They articulated that academic motives can empower students to resist the difficulties that they may experience during the learning process.

To shed light on the significance of student academic engagement, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) mentioned that students' active membership in instructional-learning contexts enables them to gain higher academic grades. Similarly, Finn and Zimmer (2012) submitted that students' degree of participation in educational contexts is closely related to their academic growth. To them, nothing like active participation in classrooms can facilitate students' educational advancement. Additionally, Philp and Duchesne (2016) also postulated that students' academic engagement can remarkably increase the likelihood of their academic success. Drawing on what has been mentioned regarding the centrality of academic motivation and engagement in students' educational success, investigating the determinants and predictors of these variables seems crucial.

Against this backdrop, numerous studies have inspected the impact of students' personality traits on their academic motivation (e.g., Komarraju et al., 2009; De Feyter et al., 2012; Hazrati-Viari et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2013; Guo, 2021) and engagement (e.g., Linvill, 2014; Kahu et al., 2015; Qureshi et al., 2016; Rostami et al., 2017). Several studies have also been conducted to examine the effects of teachers' personality traits on students' motivation and engagement (e.g., Gibbs and Powell, 2012; Sabet et al., 2018; Khalilzadeh and Khodi, 2021). Additionally, many empirical and theoretical studies have probed into the role of teachers' positive communication behaviors, including credibility (e.g., Imlawi et al., 2015; Derakhshan, 2021), immediacy (e.g., Dixson et al., 2017; Liu, 2021; Zheng, 2021), and confirmation (e.g., Shen and Croucher, 2018; LaBelle and Johnson, 2020; Gao, 2021), in promoting student academic motivation and engagement. Nonetheless, teacher praise as one of the most influential communication behaviors has received scant attention (Downs, 2017; Caldarella et al., 2021).

The concept of praise generally refers to "verbal or nonverbal actions indicating the positive quality of a behavior over and above the evaluation of accuracy" (Kalis et al., 2007, p. 23). Similarly, teacher praise pertains to any gesture or statement that instructors employ to admire their students' appropriate and favorable behaviors (Reinke et al., 2008). Jenkins et al. (2015) postulated that teacher praise is a "*feasible, nonintrusive classroom strategy*" that can be easily utilized by teachers in any instructional-learning environment. As Marchant and

Anderson (2012) noted, the verbal or nonverbal action used by teachers to applaud their pupils' positive behaviors may work as a stimulator, encouraging students to repeat the desired actions. They also suggested that teachers can inspire a feeling of mastery and accomplishment in their pupils by acknowledging their satisfactory behaviors. These positive feelings contribute to increased student motivation (Titsworth, 2000). According to Richard (2012), students' willingness to participate in classroom activities also improves when instructors praise their academic performance.

Despite the importance of teachers' verbal and nonverbal admiration in increasing students' academic motivation and engagement (Marchant and Anderson, 2012; Richard, 2012), a few scholars (Downs, 2017; Caldarella et al., 2021) have studied teacher praise in relation to these positive academic behaviors. Furthermore, no theoretical or systematic review has been carried out in this regard. Thus, to narrow the existing gaps, the current review study aims to provide a detailed description of these variables (i.e., teacher praise, student motivation, and student engagement), their theoretical foundations, and the existing association among them.

RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher Praise

The term praise comes from a Latin verb, namely "*pretiare*," which means "to value highly" (Burnett, 2002, p. 6). This construct is literally defined as "the expression of approval or admiration for one's behavior or characteristic" (Brophy, 1981, p. 5). In line with this definition, Burnett and Mandel (2010) conceptualized teacher praise as positive verbal or nonverbal actions through which teachers glorify students whenever they perform well. As clearly mentioned in this definition, like other communication behaviors such as immediacy, confirmation, and stroke (Han and Wang, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021), teacher praise can be both verbal and nonverbal. As Shernoff et al. (2020) noted, verbal praise refers to any positive comments that teachers offer to students due to their desired academic behaviors. Nonverbal praise also pertains to any gestures, including nodding and smiling, teachers use to exalt their pupils. Generally, teacher praise is of two types: "*General Praise (GP)*" and "*Behavior-Specific Praise (BSP)*" (Floress et al., 2017). GP means admiring students' behavior without mentioning which aspects of their performance were acceptable (Duchaine et al., 2011). In contrast, BSP, as the name speaks for itself, entails "approval with an explanation of the appropriate behavior exhibited" (Duchaine et al., 2011, p. 210).

Student Academic Motivation

The concept of motivation is generally conceptualized as a stimulating force that directs human behaviors (Brophy, 1983). Student motivation to learn, also known as academic motivation, is related to their motive "to make certain academic decisions, participate in classroom activities, and persist in pursuing

the demanding process of learning” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009, p. 2). Working on different types of student academic motivation, Brophy (1983) divided this construct into two broad categories, namely “*state motivation*” and “*trait motivation*.” State motivation refers to “students’ attitude toward a particular course” (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008, p. 56). Trait motivation, on the other hand, deals with students’ general tendency toward the learning process (Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005). While students’ trait motivation is typically constant during a whole course, their state motivation is open to drastic changes (Trad et al., 2014). As Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2020) mentioned, student state motivation can be dramatically influenced by their viewpoints and attitudes toward their instructors, course content, and learning environment. Similarly, Dörnyei (2020) also posited that how students perceive their teachers’ personal and interpersonal behaviors has a significant impact on their academic motivation. It implies that those teachers who behave appropriately in classroom contexts have a beneficial impact on their students’ state motivation (Cheng and Dörnyei, 2007; Bernaus and Gardner, 2008; Papi and Abdollahzadeh, 2012).

Student Academic Engagement

Student engagement, in a general sense, refers to the amount of time, energy, and effort that students willingly dedicate to educational activities (Appleton et al., 2008). Skinner et al. (2009, p. 495) conceptualized this construct as “the quality and quantity of students’ participation or connection with the educational endeavor and hence with activities, values, individuals, aims, and place that comprise it.” Despite the existing controversy regarding the terminology of this concept, many scholars referred to this construct as “*student academic engagement*” (e.g., Leach and Dolan, 1985; Greenwood et al., 2002; Brint et al., 2008). Other academics named this construct as “*school engagement*” (Jimerson et al., 2003), “*educational engagement*” (Wehlage et al., 1989), and “*study engagement*” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Similarly, there has been a long debate over the number and types of the components of this construct (Alrashidi et al., 2016). As an instance, Audas and Willms (2001) classified the components of student engagement into two broad categories, whereas Fredricks et al. (2004) divided this construct into three main dimensions (Table 1).

Despite all the aforementioned discrepancies, researchers have come to the conclusion that the construct of academic engagement is multidimensional and covers several aspects, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, working together to demonstrate students’ positive attitudes toward the learning process (Hiver et al., 2021).

The Impact of Teacher Praise on EFL Students’ Academic Motivation and Engagement

The impact of teacher praise on EFL students’ level of motivation and engagement can be readily illustrated through “*Emotional Response Theory (ERT)*.” In their theory, Mottet et al. (2006) asserted that the positive communication behaviors, including

TABLE 1 | Different dimensions of academic engagement.

Authors	Dimensions
Audas and Willms, 2001	Behavioral engagement: Taking part in educational tasks and activities Psychological engagement: Having a sense of identification, belonging, and inclusion in the learning context
Fredricks et al., 2004	Behavioral engagement: Active participation in learning activities Emotional engagement: Positive disposition toward instructors, classmates, and the learning environment Cognitive engagement: Mental efforts to learn the difficult and challenging content

praise, used by language teachers while instructing may result in learners’ positive responses such as happiness, L2 enjoyment, and pleasure. To them, those language learners who experience a sense of happiness, pleasure, or enjoyment in the learning environment are more motivated to pursue the learning process. Those who are sufficiently motivated tend to actively take part in classroom activities (Martin, 2007; Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Reeve, 2012). In a similar vein, drawing on the positive psychology movement (Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021), Xie and Derakhshan (2021) also illustrated the favorable association between teacher communication behaviors and students’ academic behaviors (e.g., engagement, motivation, etc.). They stated that, through effective communication behaviors, language teachers are able to create a pleasant educational atmosphere, wherein learners enjoy learning a new language. Having a sense of enjoyment is of high importance for students’ increased motivation and engagement (Kulakow and Raufelder, 2020; Pedler et al., 2021). All in all, based on what Mottet et al. (2006) and Xie and Derakhshan (2021) mentioned, teacher praise as an instance of effective communication behavior can considerably influence EFL students’ engagement and motivation.

A number of empirical studies have shed light on the extent to which teacher praise is linked to students’ academic motivation and engagement (Richard, 2012; Downs, 2017; Caldarella et al., 2021). As an instance, Richard (2012) examined the impact of teachers’ verbal and nonverbal praise on students’ engagement. In doing so, a group of American teachers and students took part in this inquiry. Some treatment sessions were run to observe the effects of teacher verbal and nonverbal praise on students’ classroom engagement. The analysis of the obtained data demonstrated that students’ participation in classroom exercises was positively influenced by their teachers’ verbal and nonverbal praise. In another study, Downs (2017) probed into the effects of teacher praise on student’ emotional behaviors, namely motivation and engagement. To this aim, 239 students were invited to attend some treatment session. The results of observations indicated that the verbal and nonverbal praise that teachers provided in treatment sessions favorably affected participants’ motivation and engagement.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

So far, various definitions of student academic motivation, academic engagement, and teacher praise, along with their theoretical foundations, were illustrated. Building upon emotional response theory and the positive psychology movement, the association between these variables was also explained. Additionally, a summary of the previous related studies was provided. Based on what has been reviewed in the current study, it is fair to conclude that teacher praise (verbal or nonverbal) is a strong antecedent of EFL students' academic motivation and engagement. This finding can be highly beneficial for all EFL teachers who struggle with their students' insufficient motivation and engagement. As noted by Mottet et al. (2006) and Xie and Derakhshan (2021), through admiring students' behaviors, teacher can dramatically enhance student' engagement and motivation to learn. The review's finding has an important implication for teacher trainers as well. An important reason underlying EFL students' lack of motivation and engagement is teachers' disability to

praise students' behaviors (Duchaine et al., 2011). Thus, to improve EFL students' motivation and engagement, teachers should receive adequate instructions on how to praise their students' academic performances. Put it simply, teacher trainers should teach EFL instructors all they need to know regarding this positive communication behavior.

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Exploring the Conceptual Constructs of Learners' Goal Commitment, Grit, and Self-Efficacy

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Although learners' success in learning has generally been attributed to cognitive factors, non-cognitive issues in education should be taken into consideration in the process of learning which affects learners' achievement. One of these issues, which become popular among researchers in the previous decade is grit, that is, posited as passion and perseverance thanks to its enduring quality and the other is self-efficacy. Another factor is goal commitment that talks about the way to reach a goal or insistent determinations to achieve a goal. The proposed review attempts to focus on these three factors in regulating students' learning achievement. Accordingly, some educational suggestions are offered for teachers, students, and syllabus designers.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators and instructive counselors have attempted to recognize and comprehend the fundamental aspects that bring about the achievement and failure of learners during the past decades (Vergara, 2020). The learning cycle is a continuous practice that includes an effort to endure, particularly despite hardships and disadvantages (Binning et al., 2018). Experimental studies confirm the significance of qualities other than intellectual capacity (Levin, 2013; Dweck et al., 2014; Heckman et al., 2014). Several non-cognitive factors in the instructive field, like self-assurance, grit, and self-efficacy, can bring about the ideal learning result (Alhadabi and Karpinski, 2020). Indeed, constructive features like grit and self-efficacy have been viewed among the most essential predictors of achievement in people (Miller and Kass, 2019). As learners perform better in a classroom setting, grit and self-efficacy have significant roles in their success. Learners' success is positively affected when educators can handle daily classroom activities, address learners' individual needs, and establish meaningful connections with them (Aloe et al., 2014; Zee and Koomen, 2016; Troesch and Bauer, 2017). Self-efficacy and grit share the trait of allowing an individual to cope with difficulty and persist despite obstacles. Excitement, motivation, effort, and optimism are also considered to be part of grit (Miller and Kass, 2019).

Indeed, self-efficacy is viewed as an eminent non-cognitive element, established in the social cognitive hypothesis developed by a notable psychologist of the 20th century known as Albert Bandura. Individuals' conviction regarding their capacity to succeed is known as self-efficacy. Individuals who consider themselves as well-organized attribute accomplishment to individual effort, while those with a low degree of efficacy ascribe it to external factors (Fathi and

Derakhshan, 2019; Fathi et al., 2021). On the one hand, individuals with a high degree of efficiency ascribe potential failures to a lack of individual effort. On the other hand, individuals who view themselves as inefficient, ascribe failure to their low capacities and capabilities (Malureanu et al., 2021). Based on Bandura's concept, it can be understood that belief in one's capacities leads to one perceiving assignments with more courage, being able to conquer them easily without any problems, which results in stress reduction and a decrease in the risk of nervousness (Malureanu et al., 2021). Self-efficacy (the person's assessment of his or her abilities) is a powerful indicator of educational performance, academic success, and many other key factors (Chemers et al., 2001; Feldman and Kubota, 2015; Fathi et al., 2020). Self-efficacy can be characterized as one's convictions regarding their ability to deliver specified degrees of performance that have an impression on events influencing their lives (Bandura, 2010). The term alludes to believing in one's aptitude to accomplish and execute the blueprints needed to reach success. Accordingly, self-efficacy alludes to one's view of their capacity to carry out an assignment or to take part in the action (Zwart et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is connected to the feeling of self-assurance in one's capacity and can be firmly identified with the interest to learn more or the craving to participate in assignments that are perceived as difficulties in contrast to assignments of general interest (Han and Wang, 2021; Malureanu et al., 2021). Mohammadyari (2012) stated that self-efficacy is directly associated with how much energy is spent in the learning process, perseverance, the kinds of tasks learners perform, and subsequently their performance. Honicke and Broadbent (2016) found a correlation between self-efficacy and academic success. When an individual is self-efficacious, he or she sets more ambitious targets, takes on greater risk, commits to their objectives more firmly, and strives to achieve them (Luszczynska et al., 2005).

Moreover, grit is regarded as a predecessor to self-efficacy (Usher et al., 2019) and it has been shown that learners with grit, persistence, and enthusiasm for long-term success, achieve more in education and health outcomes (Guerrero et al., 2016; Datu et al., 2017). The latest research has proved that grit, as motivation and commitment toward the accomplishment of long-term ambitions, plays a significant role in academic performance and educational success (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Grit can be characterized as acting enthusiastically and perseveringly to attain long-term objectives despite hardships (Duckworth et al., 2007). Therefore, individuals with more prominent degrees of grit are more committed when attempting to overcome hindrances. Moreover, they maintain their interest to accomplish their objectives regardless of failures, challenges, and/or absence of help (Arslan et al., 2013). The developing body of literature portrays grit's relationship with scholarly, individual, and behavioral paradigms.

A significant element of grit is goal-setting, which strives for longstanding objectives and it plays a noteworthy role in every aspect of life, and one of the most important prerequisites for setting goals is to be motivated to learn. Consequently, motivated learners are tended to view their education as a process toward attaining their aims and put forth an effort to

accomplish this (Zivanovic and Subotin, 2018). The goal-setting theory holds that when people are motivated to achieve their objectives, the association between goal and behavior (accomplishment) is the most influential (Locke and Latham, 2002). Commitment to achieving goals is necessary for motivation because goals cannot be accomplished without effort (Human-Vogel and Rabe, 2015). As well as a moral obligation, commitment is also a cognitive obligation that demonstrates responsibility and dedication to a particular purpose (Klein et al., 2012).

Commitment alludes to emotional factors including attentiveness, confidence, and acknowledgment of positive perspectives toward specific things (Kim and Ok, 2009). The general impression, fulfillment, sense of belonging, insight of value, and appreciation for a specific foundation are called institutional commitment (Meyer and Allen, 2004). Commitment is an issue of learners' perseverance in higher education (Strauss and Volkwein, 2004). To emphasize the important effect of commitment on the quest for the objective, Oettingen et al. (2009) characterized it as a prerequisite for objective accomplishment. Burkley et al. (2013) demonstrated that people with a high level of commitment exert more energy for objective fulfillment and devote more determination and effort, and are consequently bound to succeed. To emphasize the important effect of commitment on the quest for the objective, Oettingen et al. (2009) characterized it as a requirement for objective accomplishment. Burkley et al. (2013) demonstrated that people with a high level of commitment exert more energy for objective fulfillment and allocate more determination, and are consequently bound to flourish (Fishbach et al., 2006).

Grounded on the review of literature, the development of learners' success and their capability to preserve a constructive and dynamic setting is based on three important theories, namely self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985), Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), and grit theory by Duckworth et al. (2009). Although each variable was examined before, there is a paucity of literature about the relationship of these three constructs in learning contexts. To this end, the current review endeavors to inspect the role of learners' goal commitment, grit, and self-efficacy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-Efficacy

As asserted by Miller (2011), the idea of self-efficacy arisen from Bandura's original work in the social learning hypothesis, and within that hypothesis, Bandura portrayed learning as acquiring information intellectually through the processing of data attained by observing others. As stated by Miller (2011), the social learning hypothesis identifies three associated learning factors, namely, mental qualities, conduct, and environment. Through his work with the social learning hypothesis, Bandura started to notice that one's feeling of achievement and capacity to proceed despite challenging assignments assumed a critical part in learning. This led to Bandura developing the self-efficacy hypothesis. Self-efficacy is a strong factor in deciding how an

individual will act, think, and respond when confronted with difficult circumstances. It is fundamental in developing learners' character to enhance their studying process (Thompson and Verdino, 2019). The probability of success is enhanced when faced with obstacles and failures if a learner has high self-efficacy (Van Dinther et al., 2011). To develop emotional self-regulation skills, they must not become stressed and should have self-control so that they are not distressed with apprehension (Bandura, 2010). Self-efficacy is a dominant issue in defining how an individual performs, thinks, and reacts in case of challenging circumstances (Alavi et al., 2017; Downes et al., 2017). Self-efficacy is crucial in evolving learners' behavior to simplify their learning progression (Fan and Williams, 2010; Roddenberry and Renk, 2010; Van Dinther et al., 2011). Nonetheless, regarding scholarly functioning, self-efficacy levels allude to discrepancies across diverse degrees of assignments, like increasing the intricacy of math questions. Generalization relates to the transmission of self-efficacy convictions across exercises, like diverse scholastic topics. Levels of conviction that one can perform given assignments indicates the strength of perceived efficacy (Brouwer et al., 2010). Students with high self-efficacy are likely to make insistent determinations, conscientiousness, persistence, and grit (Lightsey et al., 2011; Raqshin and Nirjar, 2012; Datu et al., 2017). A typical trait of these learners is a desire to achieve excellent results, a higher enthusiasm toward learning, extensive reading, and researching, not easily disappointed, and view failure positively (Al Mutir, 2015; Shikalepoh, 2016). The ability to adapt to new circumstances and demands is enhanced when one has a higher sense of self-efficacy (Axford, 2007; Seifalain and Derakhshan, 2018; Han and Wang, 2021).

Grit

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) have provided a great deal to the advancement of constructive behavior as the end of the 20th century (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021) by encouraging different issues such as enthusiasm, motivation, and grit. Grit is portrayed through hard work in managing difficulties, maintaining exertion and interest over the years despite being confronted with failure, resilience, and challenges (Duckworth et al., 2007). Furthermore, grit echoes a mental variable based on positive psychology, which focused on persistence as a marker of long-term achievement and is related to accomplishing high-level objectives for long period (Von Culin et al., 2014; Duckworth, 2016). Furthermore, Grit is one of the qualities that assist a person with changing the perception that the determinant of progress is just knowledge. It portrays how one can accomplish long-term objectives by overwhelming hindrances and difficulties. In addition, it is one way to figure out, where one can invest their energy to survive when confronting difficulties in life (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015). Duckworth (2016) divided grit into two parts, namely passion and perseverance. Each one has both a single and aggregate impact on an individual's ability to develop and maintain grit. Grit has been acknowledged as a major predictor of success among individuals during the past two decades

(Duckworth et al., 2007; Maddi et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2014). Perseverance is observed when people persist and keep moving forward despite difficult circumstances, failures, or resistance. Learners develop grit by establishing a system for managing and moving past mistakes and rejections over time (Duckworth, 2016). Students learn how to distinguish between low-level and high-level targets and decide where to use their efforts. According to Duckworth (2016), grit is not a result of intelligence, but rather the eagerness to learn and grow through one's enthusiasm for a particular activity. According to Duckworth (2016), putting effort into people's skills allows them to develop faster. A hard-working mindset and a sense of commitment are traits of grittier people as they approach life as a test of endurance. People may experience challenges and hardships along the way, but grit implies that they can remain focused and keep striving until they reach their goal (Duckworth et al., 2007; Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth, 2014).

Goal Commitment

One's perseverance to accomplish a specified objective is known as goal commitment (Oettingen et al., 2009; Burkley et al., 2013). Researchers have stated that commitment to accomplishing an objective is what prompts an individual throughout the whole objective cycle to the achievement of that objective (Burkley et al., 2013; Mann et al., 2013). However, laying out a particular objective at the beginning does not mean one is committed enough to make a plan and act according to it to accomplish that objective. Since goal commitment is significant across the stages of the objective cycle, researchers have endeavored to distinguish the factors that decide why certain individuals are more committed to their objectives than others. How people regard their objective was the main focus of most researchers. For example, studies originating from the expectancy-value hypothesis have inspected the functions that objective expectancy (i.e., the perceived probability of objective achievement) and objective worth (i.e., perceived advantages of objective accomplishment) have in deciding goal commitment during the three general stages of the objective cycle (Brandstätter and Frank, 2002; Sun et al., 2014).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review attempts to focus on the thoughtful facet of three important factors in learning progress such as grit, self-efficacy, and goal commitment. The review of literature elucidates the prominence of non-cognitive factors in the route of learning. Centered on the review of literature, it can be clinched that students with high self-efficacy have greater objectives and are more dedicated to accomplishing them. Developing people's ambitions, choosing specific actions, applying a great deal of effort, and having persistence despite challenges are the results of their belief that they can succeed (Raqshin and Nirjar, 2012). Grit plays a major role in the achievement of objectives since it motivates learners to adhere to their plans and to be committed and perseverant in goal setting (Duckworth, 2016) and it is one

of the characteristics that can enable a learner to persevere in challenging circumstances, and it is enhanced by self-efficacy and it enhances commitment to a significant objective despite the disappointment. When a learner believes that they can accomplish their objectives with grit, their self-efficacy encourages them (Siah et al., 2019). Engaging educators in a discussion and creating a collaborative environment around grit factors can support learners' achievement. These courses should target learners directly as well since they are the principal agents of success and development. It is suggested that goal commitment should be the target for improving grit so policymakers and experts should make efforts to promote grit by setting the goals. The goal-setting theory suggests that individuals with a commitment to their goals do their best to show perseverance in achieving their objective and the progress of goal commitment is indispensable for success in the learning process. The intervention function of grit indicates that goal commitment and grit can be directed as key facts for those anticipating to develop learners' engagement, as well (Liu, 2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

In scholastic settings, learners who need scholarly self-efficacy cannot perform well, so they experience difficulty in continuing and being effective learners. Researchers have emphasized that the absence of one's confidence in their capacity to overcome difficult assignments eventually influences their degree of motivation and perseverance when confronted with misfortune. Self-efficacious individuals tend to take on more complex responsibilities. So the implication of this study is for teachers to create more ambitious settings and strive to achieve them (Luszczynska et al., 2005), which results in making a quick decision in case of setbacks and being focused on their objectives. Teachers should encourage high degrees of efficacy in learners because learners with high degrees of self-efficacy work hard to learn and accomplish. They have an undeniable degree of commitment, goal, and their perseverance in undertaking hard tasks consequently convert into higher levels of accomplishment (Duckworth and Gross, 2014). Students' self-efficacy is raised when they experience accomplishment by achieving the objectives they set. Students with low self-efficacy keep away from specific assignments or excuse themselves when they are not effective in accomplishing their objectives (Robbins et al., 2013). Moreover, by raising learners' awareness regarding grit and through grit training, teachers can enhance learners' abilities and can improve their self-confidence, and learners who have self-confidence are more probable to support their classmates in resolving difficulties and making decisions. If challenges and ambiguities are handled efficiently and effectively, learners are capable of accomplishing their objectives.

The consequence of the present review is for learners because by creating an environment that encourages self-awareness and grit, they can adopt more effective teaching methods and objectives, resulting in better learning achievement. High self-efficacy likewise permits them to choose challenging settings and investigate their current circumstances or make new ones. Therefore, it depicts confidence in their skill in managing a wide range of demands. According to Schunk et al. (2010), learners with objectives and a sense of self-efficacy for achieving them take part in exercises that they believe will prompt achievement and satisfaction. Students will probably analyze

their performances and progress as they work on the assignment once they commit to endeavor for an objective. Self-assessments of progress raise self-efficacy and maintain motivation. Learners who have higher self-efficacy are likely to exert the necessary energy and persevere in the face of educational difficulties. As a result, findings demonstrate that self-efficacy influences educational performance (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2006).

Higher educational organizations should put effort into assisting their learners with fostering the necessary information, abilities, and skills. Even though, competent practice generally relies upon obtaining information and abilities, it is clear that learners' self-efficacy plays an anticipating and intervening role concerning their accomplishments, motivation, and learning. Hence, it appears to be vital that administrators of higher education focus on learners' development of self-efficacy. Knowing the elements that affect the improvement of learners' self-efficacy can help higher education organizations in creating and arranging instructive projects that upgrade learners' self-efficacy. Thus, creating such a learning setting that stimulates grit and self-efficacy can be a valued issue to be taken into account by faculty members' instructional determinations.

According to Locke and Latham (2002), the objective-performance connection is greatest when individuals are profoundly dedicated to their objectives. Thus, regardless of whether an individual is viewed as gritty, their grit cannot add to their scholarly accomplishment if scholastic accomplishment is not their objective, or if their dedication to this objective is not strong. By creating an environment that encourages self-awareness and grit, learners can adopt more effective teaching methods and objectives, resulting in better learning achievement, and also by creating a supportive and autonomous educational setting, self-efficacy can be enhanced (Pekrun, 2006). So by developing learners' self-efficacy and grit, faculty members can ensure their highest levels of success. The development of self-efficacy and goal commitment should help learners to improve their presentation.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual analysis theoretically reviewed the three significant constructs in the non-cognitive issues in general education and this review posits that the non-cognitive variables should be given due attention in that they have also affected learners' achievement. In particular, grit that embraces passion as well as perseverance, self-efficacy that is about determining how an individual will act and goal commitment that is mainly concerned with the pathway to achieve a goal have been theoretically documented. Lastly, this conceptual analysis also attempts to make some important implications for some stakeholders, teachers, students, and syllabus designers.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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ESL/EFL Learners' Responses to Teacher Written Feedback: Reviewing a Recent Decade of Empirical Studies

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Teacher written feedback (TWF) has long been regarded as a necessary pedagogical tool for improving the writing proficiency of ESL/EFL learners, while student responses to this feedback can often reflect its effectiveness. This paper reviews 64 articles appearing in high-ranking journals during 2010–2021 in terms of research methodology, theoretical framework and main findings. Analysis of these articles reveals few studies adopted any theoretical frameworks to examine learner responses to TWF and suggests a need for longitudinal naturalistic studies adopting mixed methods and some theoretical framework such as sociocultural theory of mind (SCT) to better explain learners' dynamic engagement in response to TWF. The main findings of these previous studies reveal the diverse responses among learners at different language proficiency levels and in various sociocultural contexts. The results of the review indicate that future research could take classroom-based mixed-method research design to investigate learner variables.

Keywords: ESL/EFL learners' responses, teacher written feedback, English writing, empirical studies, review, sociocultural theory of mind

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Written Feedback (TWF) has been recognized as an important way to improve student learning (Hyland and Hyland, 2006a,b). In recent years, although educators have increasingly put effort into exploring different types of feedback, such as peer and computer-generated feedback (Diab, 2016; Lv et al., 2021), among all types of feedback, TWF remains highly valued by English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) learners regardless of their age and plays a central role in learners' language acquisition and writing development (Bitchener and Ferris, 2012; Ruegg, 2015; Lee, 2017). In second language (L2) education, how to effectively provide feedback to raise students' L2 writing proficiency has been a concern for many foreign language teachers and researchers (Sheen, 2007; Bitchener and Ferris, 2012; Kartchava and Ammar, 2014; Diab, 2015; Suzuki et al., 2019). The effective feedback may need to follow the Giving-Feedback-Guidelines which are "purpose of the feedback method," "how the feedback method works," and "strategies to engage with it" (Moser, 2020, p. 58). The third principle requires the engagement of the learners. Learner engagement in TWF equates to learner responses to TWF and generally involves three dimensions: affective engagement, cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement (Zheng et al., 2020b). Investigations of learner responses are not new (see Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Heift, 2004; Lee, 2008). Although many studies have examined the types, effectiveness, forms and the speech functions of teacher feedback from the teachers' perspective (Lee, 2019b; Yu, 2021), students' responses to feedback have

received less research attention. Reviews related to TWF have mostly focused on teacher written corrective feedback (WCF) (Chong, 2018; Li and Vuono, 2019; Mao and Lee, 2020); however, there are few, if any, reviews on ESL/EFL learners' responses to Teacher Written Corrective Feedback (TWCF) or TWF. Thus, the present review focuses on the studies that have investigated students' reactions to TWF. Furthermore, research on TWF and students' response to TWF need to consider the sociocultural context where teachers and students situate (Lee, 2014). Thus, taking a sociocultural perspective might be a way to study learners' dynamic and diversified responses after receiving TWF. As Han and Hyland (2019b) stated, "using a sociocognitive perspective can shed new light on individual variations in learner engagement by looking holistically at both the cognitive and the social aspects of language learning and language use" (p. 249). Accordingly, this review may show the need to apply sociocultural theory of mind (SCT) (Vygotsky, 1978) into the examination of learner responses to TWF.

To learn more about ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF on L2 writing, and to provide directions for future research in this field, the following research questions guide the current review:

- [1] What patterns emerge in terms of research methodology and theoretical frameworks in articles focusing on students' responses to TWF (2010–2021)?
- [2] How have ESL/EFL learners responded to TWF?
- [3] What factors have been found to influence ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF?

Thus, the present review mainly focuses on TWF, and to further narrow the catchment of studies, the review is confined to ESL/EFL students' English compositions. It first briefly explains the key term **learner responses/engagement**. It then presents the methodology for this review. Results of the review are organized according to the three research questions and some new insights are also discussed from the lens of SCT.

LEARNER RESPONSES

Ellis (2008) proposed a typology of TWF in which two directions were identified. One is the teacher's provision of CF (i.e., types of CF) and the other is the students' responses to this feedback (i.e., revision). The present review focuses on the studies that investigated the latter. Ellis' framework (Ellis, 2010) used the term "engagement" rather than "students' responses" for investigations on oral and written corrective feedback. Students' responses are more than responses to revision and can be divided into three dimensions: behavioral engagement (e.g., learners' uptake or text revision), affective engagement (e.g., learners' attitudes), and cognitive engagement (e.g., learners' perceptions/views of the CF). Based on Fredricks et al. (2004) and Ellis (2010), Han and Hyland (2015) redefined the framework and established a multi-dimensional framework of learner engagement with WCF by adding sub-constructs to specify each dimension. Behavioral engagement includes both revision operations and observable strategies on raising writing accuracy and language competence. Cognitive engagement comprises the feedback processing depth,

meta-cognitive operations and cognitive operations. Affective engagement also takes learners' immediate emotional responses and changes in their emotions into consideration. Later, a few studies also redefined the three dimensions in the learner engagement framework, particularly for TWCF, making only minor changes (Zhang and Hyland, 2018; Han and Hyland, 2019a; Tian and Zhou, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020a). Learner responses to some extent may be equal to learner engagement in TWF according to these studies. Although these definitions and dimensions provide directions for researchers to investigate teacher corrective feedback (both oral and written), they are not solely designed for teacher written feedback. Hence in the current review, learners' responses or engagement is defined as learners' direct responses to TWF and the following terms may be used to describe such responses, namely learner engagement, perceptions, preferences, views, attitudes, uptake, interpretation. These concepts can fall into the three dimensions that are utilized in the current review to explore learners' responses. In this review, generally, learners' cognitive responses refer to learners' noticing and processing of TWF, and the cognitive (e.g., understanding) and meta-cognitive strategies (e.g., evaluating and planning) that learners may have used. Behavioral responses were the directly observable and traceable behaviors after learners receiving TWF (e.g., revision). Attitudinal responses encompass the affect (e.g., feelings and emotions), judgment (e.g., personal and moral), and appreciation of TWF.

The studies on indirect responses (i.e., the effect of TWF, such as improvement in writing accuracy) are not included in the current review. The effect of TWF appears to be one aspect reflecting learners' behavioral responses; however, in these reviewed studies, learners' responses, which may be regarded as a passive response, is not the primary research focus; instead, studies focusing on the effects simplify the relationship between teachers and learners in which teachers are the only provider of feedback and learners are the only receiver. The results focusing on this aspect could only inform researchers and educators whether this type of feedback might work for certain group of students and naturally ignore the learners' thoughts behind their motive; thus, the focus of this review is on learners' responses.

METHODOLOGY

To address the three research questions, this paper reviews the empirical studies on ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF published during 2010–2021.

Guided by three research questions, a series of inclusion criteria for articles was established to identify journal articles related to TWF over the past 10 + years (Table 1). Specifically, only articles written in English containing empirical research published in SSCI-Index journals from January 2010 to September 2021 (the last date for the data searching was September 9th) were reviewed. In the articles, TWF (handwritten and/or electronic) on L2 writing were provided by the participating teachers and/or researchers. ESL/EFL learners' responses toward TWF, the theoretical framework and the

TABLE 1 | Inclusion criteria in the searching phase.

Criteria	
Year	2010.1–2021.9
Feedback providers	Teachers and/or researchers
Feedback receivers	ESL/EFL learners
Feedback type	Teacher written feedback (handwritten and/or electronic)
Language	Written in English
Publications	SSCI journals
Research	Empirical research
Articles	Full research articles (excluding conference articles, book chapters)

methodology of the research were also clearly stated and analyzed. Only articles in high-ranking journals were included.

To identify the journal articles that met the inclusion criteria, 10 academic databases were selected including Oxford Academic Journals, Cambridge Core, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, Taylor and Francis Online, EBSCOhost, SAGE, ERIC, SpringerLink, and Wiley Online Library. Multiple databases ensure that more relevant articles can be included. The keywords used for the literature search were: teacher written feedback + English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL)/L2 writing. During the search, the SSCI journals were checked through the Master Journal List in the Web of Science platform. The initial data searching included journal articles published between January 2010 and April 2021. Informed by the titles and abstracts of the articles, a total of 240 articles were first identified. To update the data, a second round of data searching was conducted to search the articles published between January 2021 and September 2021. The second search from January 2021 was mainly due to the lack of month selection in advanced research of some databases; thus, ensuring more relevant papers were included. After the second search, 56 articles were found. Altogether 177 articles were found (e.g., Xu, 2021; Zhang and Cheng, 2021). Next, articles that were mistakenly included in both search results were eliminated which left 160 articles. Using Mendeley, software designed for organizing research papers, all articles' publication dates were checked again since not all databases provided the choice to choose the month to search for articles. Besides 17 excluded articles that were discovered to be mistakenly selected in searching phrase, 96 articles were excluded mainly due to their research focus or content inconsistent with this review's purpose and paper selection criteria. These excluded journal articles were coded into eight primary themes: effects of feedback ($N = 47$); wrong year ($N = 1$); not ESL/EFL learners as participants (e.g., Spanish) ($N = 5$); a survey unrelated to any specific L2 writing courses or experience of receiving TWF ($N = 5$); unclear methodology description ($N = 3$); focusing on teacher written feedback practices or oral feedback or peer feedback ($N = 9$); automated writing evaluation ($N = 2$); others (little relevant to L2 writing or about ESL/EFL learner responses to TWF) ($N = 24$). Notably, a certain number of articles related to effects of

teacher written feedback were left out while some remained to be reviewed, because the primary or secondary focus of those reviewed articles were learners' responses to TWF.

After a more careful examination of the remaining 160 articles regarding the publication dates, introduction, research aims, questions, methodology and findings to eliminate irrelevant articles that might be mistakenly chosen in the searching phase, the research obtained the final sample of 64 relevant empirical studies highly related to ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF on L2 writing as the body of research for the synthesis.

Using a content analysis approach, authors reiteratively read the selected articles and coded them according to their themes and foci. With the help of Excel, the articles were then coded in response to the three research questions. The coding scheme for the research methodology was comprised of 10 categories of variables: research methodology, methodological designs, being naturalistic or not, case study or not, research country, educational level, course, duration, participants, and methods. As the authors tried to define the nature of the studies, it was found that not all the studies were purely qualitative, quantitative or mixed; therefore, the research methodology and methodology designs were coded based on Riazi et al. (2018) and Hyland (2016), respectively. Research methodology codes thus included qualitative, quantitative, mixed, eclectic (QUAL + quan, QUAN + qual, QUAL + QUAN); methodology designs codes were auto-ethnography, experimentation, case studies, quasi-experiment, and other designs. Some coded selected journal articles are presented in **Appendix I**.

RESULTS

The results of the review are presented in the following three sections concerning the research methodology, theoretical framework, and the synthesis of key findings from the selected articles.

Research Methodology

The results show that among the 64 articles, 34 were qualitative, seven were quantitative, six were mixed design, 10 were eclectic (QUAL + QUAN), six were eclectic (QUAN + qual), one was eclectic (QUAL + quan) (see **Table 2**). Among the qualitative studies, more than half of the articles ($N = 19$) described case studies and only one was auto-ethnography. More than half of the studies ($N = 36$) were categorized as other designs in which qualitative studies' number still outweighed the other types.

The number of naturalistic studies ($N = 52$) (i.e., classroom-based studies) was approximately four times the number of experimental studies (involving interventions). This may reflect the recent trend of researchers investigating teachers' feedback practices in real classroom contexts. Studies have shown that interventions are very useful when the effect of TWF is investigated, especially efforts to make comparisons between different feedback types (Bitchener and Knoch, 2009a,b, 2010). In the present review, intervention studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs were also with the examination of the feedback effects, such as the comparisons made between three types of directness forms (i.e., direct speech acts,

TABLE 2 | Coding frequencies.

	Auto-ethnography	Experimentation	Case studies	Quasi-experiment	Other designs	Total
Qualitative	1		19		14	34
Quantitative		4		1	2	7
Eclectic (QUAL + quan)					1	1
Eclectic (QUAN + qual)		2			4	6
Eclectic (QUAL + QUAN)		1			9	10
Mixed					6	6
Total	1	7	19	1	36	64

TABLE 3 | Research location and learners' educational levels.

Country	Educational level of the student participants			Total
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	
China	1	2	21	24 (37.5%)
U.S.			9	9 (14.1%)
Japan			3	3 (4.7%)
Spain	2	1		3 (4.7%)
UK			3	3 (4.7%)
Canada		1	1	2 (3.1%)
Iran			2	2 (3.1%)
South Korea		1	1	2 (3.1%)
Turkey			2	2 (3.1%)
Other countries			13	13 (20.3%)
Unknown	1			1 (1.6%)
Total	4 (6.3%)	5 (7.8%)	55 (85.9%)	64 (100%)

The other 13 countries were Australia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Malaysia, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Thailand, and Yemen, which had one paper each. Only one article did not state the research country.

indirect speech acts, and hedging) (Baker and Bricker, 2010), two feedback modes (i.e., computer-mediated and computer-generated feedback) (Sherafati et al., 2020), three focuses of comprehensive WCF (i.e., accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency) (Zhang and Cheng, 2021), and two feedback types (i.e., indirect coded correction feedback with and without short affective teacher comments) (Tang and Liu, 2018). Although these studies and other intervention studies may not take the learners' responses as their main research purposes, the findings related to responses were also important in these reviewed studies.

As **Table 3** shows, more than 85% of the studies ($N = 55$) were conducted at the tertiary level including both English major and non-English major ESL/EFL learners; very few were in secondary and primary schools. In tertiary education, the participants in most of the reviewed studies were undergraduates ($N = 45$); few studies ($N = 10$) had postgraduates as their participants (Rivens Mompean, 2010; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2010; Mirzaee and Hasrati, 2014; Kim and Kim, 2017; Xu, 2017; Green, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020b; Anderson, 2021; Pitura, 2021; Saeed et al., 2021). The number of studies situated in China was 24. In the studies located outside China where

TABLE 4 | Data collection methods.

Methods	Number
Semi-structured interviews with teacher(s)	9
Semi-structured interviews with student(s)	39
Verbal reports (e.g., think-aloud protocols)	10
Written reports (e.g., reflective accounts, written verbalization)	13
Peer feedback	5
Automated feedback	6
Questionnaire	25
Teacher-student writing conferences	7
Class observation (including field notes)	10
Class documents	8
Peer/pair dialogue recording	9
Other documents	3

English is the first language in local areas, such as the U.S., Australia and the UK, the participants were mainly international students who were ESL/EFL learners. A few studies were in Japan, Spain, Canada (Quebec), Iran, South Korea, Turkey and another 13 countries all of which share a similar English language learning context.

The data collection methods in the 64 articles (**Table 4**) were mainly determined by the specific aims of the research, although all the studies shared the same focus—ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF on English writing. The research methods covered in the studies included: semi-structured interviews with the teacher(s), students(s); learners' verbal reports (e.g., think-aloud protocols); questionnaire; class observation (e.g., field notes); and the content analysis of: written reports (e.g., reflective accounts, written verbalization), writing drafts, peer dialogues, teacher written feedback, peer feedback and/or automated feedback, questionnaire, teacher-student writing conferences, class documents (e.g., lesson plans, textbooks, grading rubrics, writing prompts, the syllabus, handouts, teaching slides), and other documents (response times, feedback requests and screen recordings) (see Baker and Bricker, 2010; Maas, 2016; Bakla, 2020).

Although the data analysis was not the focus of the present review, most of the studies used qualitative or qualitative-dominant methods and coded the various datasets; thus, only the methods for data collection are presented here.

Theoretical Frameworks

To investigate the learners' responses, most studies ($N = 39$) did not explicitly use any theoretical framework to inform their studies; only 26 studies were based on a certain framework.

To investigate learner engagement, nine qualitative studies (including eight cases studies) adopted and adapted the framework of learner engagement proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004) and Ellis (2010) and critically integrated the findings of some later studies as the analytical or conceptual framework to analyze learners' responses to TWF. Surprisingly, all nine studies were located in China's tertiary educational context, five of which were case studies focusing on how Chinese undergraduates responded to TWCF (Han and Hyland, 2015; Zheng and Yu, 2018; Han, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020a; Han and Xu, 2021). For example, Han (2019) took an ecological perspective to examine learners' engagement with TWCF and the close interactions between L2 learners and their surrounding environment. Using the learner engagement analytical framework, the other five studies explored learners' responses to supervisor feedback on their masters' thesis (Zheng et al., 2020b), collaborative writing and revision (Zhang Z., 2021), two feedback sources (i.e., both TWF and automated feedback) (Zhang and Hyland, 2018) and three feedback sources (i.e., TWF, automated feedback and peer feedback) (Tian and Zhou, 2020). As stated above, the framework of learner engagement was adapted to different but limited research foci.

Six reviewed studies based their research on sociocultural theory of mind, a theory arguing that learner development is a mediating process from object-regulation and other-regulation to self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978). These studies were also located in various universities, with three of them being case studies. One case study, also an auto-ethnography study, described a Chinese-L1 female PhD candidate's experience with a white New Zealand supervisor's feedback based on the Zone of Proximal Development, a concept in SCT (Xu, 2017). Another case study, Storch and Wigglesworth (2010), investigated the effects of peer discussion on learners' engagement with TWF through the lens of SCT. The third case study, Saeed et al. (2021), analyzed two female Malaysian postgraduates' behavioral responses (i.e., proposal writing revision) to supervisory feedback. Based on the sociocultural theory of learning, Kim and Emelianova (2021) tried to understand learners' engagement with teachers' indirect WCF in two different learning environments (i.e., collaborative revision and individual revision) and the influence of the environments on learners' writing accuracy. Two other studies integrated three theoretical frameworks to support their research. Mohammed and Alharbi (2021) used the mediation concept together with social constructivist theory and feedback dialogue models and frameworks to analyze learners' responses in the feedback dialogue and influencing factors. By taking a grounded theory approach that could be used when the responses were not analyzed within any theory that aimed at only one aspect or subcategory of the engagement framework, Mahfoodh (2017) also investigated EFL learners' emotional responses to TWF combining three theories (i.e., the cognitive process theory of writing, the socio-constructivism theory of learning, the sociocultural theory of learning) to inspect the data and establish

a model to depict the complex relationship between TWF, students' emotional responses, and students' success of revisions.

The remaining 11 studies also chose university students as their main student participants to investigate learners' responses to TWF by linking them to various theories, covering at various responses in their studies. The theories included: the noticing hypothesis and output hypothesis (Hanaoka and Izumi, 2012); a taxonomy of academic emotions (Han and Hyland, 2019a); self-regulated learning (Xu, 2021); a tripartite definition of written feedback (Chong, 2019); dialogism (Turner, 2021); systemic functional linguistics (Zhang X., 2021); ecology (Lee et al., 2021); L2 socialization theory (Anderson, 2021; Pitura, 2021); a socio-constructivist approach (Rivens Mompean, 2010); the framework of learning-oriented language assessment (Kim and Kim, 2017); and a second language socialization theoretical framework (Anderson, 2021).

Students' Responses to Teacher Written Feedback

Learners' responses vary when they are at different language proficiency levels and writing ability. Thus, how learner respond to TWF was reviewed according to the educational level they were at when they were participating in the studies from the three-dimension learner response model. In the following sections, the responses are revealed in the three dimensions.

Learners' Responses in Tertiary Education

Attitudinal Responses

Based on the findings of the reviewed studies, learners were found to commonly hold a positive welcoming attitude toward TWF, including learner-driven feedback (Maas, 2016) and teacher-dominant feedback given out of teachers' subjective judgment, such as written corrective feedback (Han, 2017; Xu, 2021). More specifically, learners' attitudes were reflected in their preferences toward diverse TWF.

Regarding feedback mode, ESL learners preferred electronic written feedback (computer-mediated feedback/e-feedback) (Chong, 2019), even when it was compared with digital audio and screencast feedback (Bakla, 2020). Although e-feedback is a relatively new mode of feedback appearing with the advancement of technology, EFL learners in Japan preferred handwritten feedback which was regarded as a cultural relic and custom, hoping it could be provided within one manuscript (Elwood and Bode, 2014). Face-to-face feedback was also more welcomed by EFL undergraduates in an English for academic purpose (EAP) program in a U.S. university in spite of the potential benefits of e-feedback (Ene and Upton, 2018). Six MA students who majored in ESL teaching argued that they preferred both oral in-class and written online out-of-class feedback on their master's thesis (Pitura, 2021).

The sources of feedback are fundamentally three: TWF, peer feedback and automated feedback (computer-generated feedback). Learners' preference was revealed mainly through comparison between these three sources. When comparing teacher and peer feedback, Chinese EFL learners valued both sources, but they attached greater importance to TWF for its higher perceived effectiveness and help in revision

(Lam, 2013; Tsao et al., 2017). When TWF was compared with automated feedback, such as Criterion, ESL learners' preferences showed a divergence that the trust and appreciation given to these two vary (Dikli and Bley, 2014). However, learners' preference was dynamic and could change at different stages of the writing process. For instance, Tian and Zhou (2020) found that in three essay cycles, one EFL learner initially strongly valued peer feedback and hated teacher feedback in the first two cycles, but he regarded TWF as the most helpful source in the third cycle. A similar preference change between automated feedback and TWF could also be found in this study. In Iranian EFL learners' writing experience, learners either support computer-mediated TWF or computer-generated feedback (Sherafati et al., 2020). In effect, preference was not always extreme and learners also expected to receive the combination of two sources, namely both teacher and peer feedback (Tsao et al., 2017).

Learners' preference for feedback type was related to the directness, focus, explicitness, correction and comments with specific features. Some learners preferred direct detailed feedback (e.g., direct corrective feedback) (Elwood and Bode, 2014; Niu et al., 2021) and others preferred indirect written feedback (e.g., indirect coded correction feedback or such feedback along with short affective comments) (Kim and Kim, 2017; Tang and Liu, 2018; Mujtaba et al., 2020). Similarly, no definite trend was discovered between the choice of selective (focused) feedback (Ferris et al., 2013) and comprehensive (unfocused) feedback (McMartin-Miller, 2014; Sherafati et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Zhang and Cheng, 2021), but feedback that pointed out learners' L2 writing shortcomings (Pitura, 2021), was informative on the content (Bastola and Hu, 2021) or provided metalinguistic explanations for grammatical and orthographic errors (Zhang et al., 2021) was preferred by a certain number of English language learners. Also, learners seemed to prefer WCF in general as written comments (Ene and Kosobucki, 2016), or with the feature being coded (Han, 2019), or being explicit and overt compared with three other WCF types (underlining, error coded, metalinguistic explanation (Zhang et al., 2021)).

The time of feedback has also been investigated recently. ESL/EFL learners usually receive asynchronous feedback and students' attitudinal responses vary. If synchronous and asynchronous TWF were compared, learners might prefer engaging in synchronous TWF, as shown in Ene and Upton (2018). The color in which feedback was given, however, seemed to be an issue of little concern, although Elwood and Bode (2014) revealed that male learners showed a slight preference for red over blue.

Within the attitudinal responses, emotional responses to TWF were significant. Various positive, negative and neutral emotions experienced by learners after receiving TWF were observed. These evoked emotions were either individual or social. Individual emotions were emotions specifically for the learners themselves. Positive individual emotions included feeling validated and respected, feeling of happiness, satisfaction, being pleased, and gaining reassurance while negative individual emotions comprised disappointment, feelings of

being misunderstood, being mistreated, anxiety, hopelessness, upset, uncertainty, worry, guilt, and self-consciousness (Han and Hyland, 2015, 2019a; Mahfoodh, 2017; Ene and Upton, 2018; Han, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020a,b; Anderson, 2021). A neutral individual emotion was relief (Han and Hyland, 2015, 2019a). Social emotions are emotional responses toward teachers and TWF. For teachers, learners were found to mostly show respect, trust, awe, and gratitude (Mahfoodh, 2017; Zhang and Hyland, 2018; Han and Hyland, 2019a; Tian and Zhou, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020a,b; Zhang Z., 2021), which can be categorized as positive emotions, although distrust may also happen (Li and Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020a). Emotions to TWF went in three directions. Positively, learners treated the feedback with appreciation, welcome, high value and contentment (Ene and Kosobucki, 2016; Zhang and Hyland, 2018; Zheng and Yu, 2018; Han and Hyland, 2019a; Zheng et al., 2020a; Zhang Z., 2021). Negatively, learners also experience emotions such as doubt, disagreement, rejection, slightly shocked, frustration, surprise, confusion, all of which resulted in little enthusiasm to revise (Mahfoodh, 2017; Zhang and Hyland, 2018; Zheng and Yu, 2018; Han, 2019; Han and Hyland, 2019a; Li and Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020a; Anderson, 2021). Social neutral emotions were mainly the acceptance of feedback (Mahfoodh, 2017). Learners' emotions were not steady all the time and could change from negative to positive (Han and Hyland, 2015) or to neutral (Zheng et al., 2020a) or from neutral to negative (Han and Hyland, 2019a). In sum, it was a dynamic process.

Cognitive Responses

Cognitive responses were split into three subcategories: noticing, processing, and cognitive/metacognitive operations. Noticing refers to the identification of the types of TWF, and information conveyed through feedback that might be useful for revision or individual language proficiency development.

Regarding noticing content, learners' attention was mainly on the lexical level, such as erroneous form (Yang and Zhang, 2010), and solutions for revision by comparing individual drafts with models or reformulated essays provided by teachers. The noticing speed and accuracy was also tested in one of the reviewed studies (Baker and Bricker, 2010) showing there was better speech and accuracy in positive feedback (compared with negative feedback) and direct feedback (compared with hedged comments), and better accuracy after negative comments that required text correction.

After noticing, learners usually need to process the feedback and perhaps hidden messages (Hyland, 2013); thus, different cognitive operations would be utilized. Cognitive operations are the cognitive or meta-cognitive strategies used in processing TWF. Cognitive operations mentioned in the reviewed articles including conceptualizing on details, reasoning, memorizing, activating previous knowledge, clarifying, questioning, confirming, and justifying (Han and Hyland, 2015; Buckingham and Aktuğ-Ekinci, 2017; Saeed et al., 2021). Meta-cognitive operations mainly concerned having planned steps to deal with teacher feedback, intentions and plans to make revisions, providing a correct form/response, informing of making a revision, prioritizing, evaluating, monitoring, letting it

go and moving on (Han and Hyland, 2015; Zhang and Hyland, 2018; Zheng et al., 2020b; Saeed et al., 2021). With the assistance of these operations, learners can process the feedback at different depths, either high or low. For instance, reformulation, a form of written corrective feedback, might require higher cognitive engagement than direct corrections (Kim and Bowles, 2019) while it was found to be lower than the editing processing (Storch and Wigglesworth, 2010). The cognitive engagement was different in processing various feedback types. For example, the processing difficulty level ranked from high to low was hedged comments, indirect comments and direct comments (Baker and Bricker, 2010). Processing is a dynamic process but it still has a result. According to the findings of the reviewed research, the outcome of processing included three layers of comprehension, namely understanding, misunderstanding (partially understanding) and no understanding.

Behavioral Responses

Attitudinal responses and cognitive responses are highly related to internal responses and behavioral responses are thus external responses. Behavioral responses reflected learners' revision operations, and other relevant sociocultural learning behavioral responses. Like cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement also requires revision operations. This review revealed that revision operations encompassed revision strategies and external resource utilization. Revision strategies generally were found to be dichotomous: change (modification) or no change (null text revision). A learner could simultaneously make use of all seven revision operations (i.e., correction, no correction, deletion, substitution, addition, rewriting, reorganization) in revising drafts (Zhang and Hyland, 2018). As for external resources, ESL/EFL learners mainly sought help from peers (Han and Hyland, 2015; Bader et al., 2019) and learning materials, such as online dictionaries (e.g., Youdao) and spelling check of word processing software (Han, 2019; Tian and Zhou, 2020), and a grammar book (Zheng et al., 2020a) while seldom asking additional help beyond TWF from their teachers.

Behavioral responses also reflected the uptake of feedback during revision, or the effort put into the revision. Feedback uptake in revision means the behavior of using feedback in revision and it varied with the types of TWF. Saeed et al. (2021) discovered that expressive feedback, such as praise, was a typical example that required no effort in revision while directive feedback's uptake in revision was relatively much higher than expressive and inferential feedback. Indirect coded correction feedback was also found to elicit learners' more revision efforts in the error reduction and improvement of writing performance. However, if the error correction was overt that most errors were explicitly identified, the uptake might be high but with limited engagement and the revision would become mechanic and less meaningful (Zhang and Hyland, 2018). Moreover, the uptake of TWF, peer feedback, and automated feedback in revision also varied from learners to learners as revealed in Tian and Zhou (2020). Learners also showed opposite incorporation tendencies when it concerned meaning-related and surface-level TWF.

In one of the reviewed studies (Baker and Bricker, 2010), the revision speed and accuracy was assessed. Direct comments

were found to have the highest accuracy when revised although the revision speed with this type of comments appeared to be the slowest. However, revisions after receiving indirect comments were faster than direct ones but with low accuracy. With different revision operations, feedback uptake and revision speed and accuracy, the outcome of the revision was either successful or unsuccessful (Zheng and Yu, 2018; Bader et al., 2019).

Social behaviors were also elicited by TWF. One EFL learner, Sissy, experienced feelings of being "misunderstood, mistreated, and unfairly critiqued" after receiving negative TWF; thus, she chose to marginalize herself in the college community that she belonged (Mirzaee and Hasrati, 2014). Students also tried to utilize feedback for their learning reflection.

Learners' Responses in Secondary Education

Five journal articles were highly relevant to learner's responses in secondary education. The results show that learners' responses were dynamic and varied. Learners held either positive or negative attitudes toward TWF (Kang, 2020); however, attitudes could change from negative (e.g., blame) to positive (praise) when learners received direct and indirect WCF (Simard et al., 2015). Regarding emotions, learners from an English medium secondary school in China were satisfied with TWF, particularly its range and depth (Lee et al., 2013). However, some learners might feel discontent with WCF when the right answers were provided (e.g., all the errors were corrected by the teacher) (Simard et al., 2015) or bored when they tried to engage in a particular type of TWF, model essays (García Mayo and Labandibar, 2017). Learners' cognitive responses included noticing and processing. Learners noticed the gaps between their written drafts and TWF and noticing primarily focused on lexical issues (García Mayo and Labandibar, 2017). Other than gap noticing, learners also noticed new ideas, expressions, solutions for previous and new writing problems by comparing models and self-drafts (Coyle et al., 2018). As for processing, indirect WCF seemed to be more difficult to interpret than direct WCF (Simard et al., 2015). Learners' behavioral responses were not the focus in this educational level studies. The result demonstrates their willingness to rewrite (Simard et al., 2015) and uptake the perceived features in the model essays (García Mayo and Labandibar, 2017).

Learners' Responses in Primary Education

Few articles ($N = 4$) were found highly relevant to the review topic. Mak (2019), one of the reviewed studies' results showed the different preference for WCF in two writing classes. One class preferred direct comprehensive WCF and another class preferred coded WCF. However, one class changed its preference from direct comprehensive feedback to coded WCF after the class adopted innovative feedback approaches. This study also revealed learners' preference on the color (i.e., less red ink) and clarity (i.e., less mess) of the feedback. Learners' cognitive responses were found mainly about noticing and processing. Through analyzing learners' pair discussions and interviews with learners, the current reviewed studies found that lexical features were the focus of the noticing (Coyle and Roca de Larios, 2020), although other features (e.g., content, sentential features) might also

be noticed to different extent (Luquin and García Mayo, 2021). Moreover, results concerning learners' behavioral responses primarily revealed the three revision operations (i.e., selective changes, unacceptable changes, no change) that learners had used related to the sentential level (Cánovas Guirao et al., 2015) and some learners were able to self-correct the errors if manageable TWF (i.e., coded and focused feedback) were provided (Mak, 2019).

Factors Influencing ESL/EFL Learners' Responses

In this review, ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF were closely related to various sociocultural factors. Inspired by SCT, although the influencing factors have been called individual/learner factors and contextual factors in other studies (Ferris et al., 2013; Han, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020a), this review used two new terms to describe these two categories respectively: intra-factors and inter-factors.

Intra-factors

Intra-factors are factors that can be controlled and regulated by the learners themselves. Personal factors may be factors limiting learner's engagement, including gender and age. Males showed a strong preference for red ink and minimal amount feedback while females cared little about the color of the feedback and preferred detailed feedback (Elwood and Bode, 2014); further, the younger the learners were, the more psycholinguistic constraints they might have (Coyle and Roca de Larios, 2020). Attitudinal-related factors were also significant for their effect on learners' preference (e.g., preference for writing), attitude (toward the writing tasks or to the feedback) and emotions (e.g., trust/distrust in the teacher, feedback, satisfaction with the first draft). Notably, language learning enjoyment also played a significant role in influencing learners' attitudinal and behavioral responses (Zhang et al., 2021). Another group of intra-factors were found to be willingness-related. This group of factors included motivation, willingness to make or avoid making mistakes, learner beliefs in their teachers' authority or responsibility, dependence on TWF and personal feedback focus (e.g., error focusing), and learners' eagerness to make changes. Capacity-related factors were also found to be significant. Most capacity-related factors were related to learners' language ability or language proficiency level, such as the ability to revise, linguistic competence (e.g., lexical or grammatical knowledge), processing capacity (particularly for younger learners), feedback literacy and the learning strategies learners use. Learners' learning experiences revealed some experience-related factors, namely learners' previous experience with L2 or feedback (e.g., failure) and revision achievement. Other intra-factors included self-consciousness-related factors (e.g., confidence) (Ferris et al., 2013) and goal-related factors (e.g., learning goals, expectation) (Han and Hyland, 2015; Turner, 2021).

Inter-factors

Inter-factors are related to the environment; thus, learners have weak control of them. Inter-factors can be further divided

into macro-factors and micro-factors. Macro-factors include four sub-categories.

The first category concerned feedback, which could also be said to be inter or intra, which depending on the influence occurred within or out of one type of feedback. Feedback-inter-factors are highly concerned with the feedback mode (with or without computer assistance), time (how fast learners could receive TWF, quantity (the amount of feedback), types (focused or unfocused, specific/detailed or general/summative, explicitness, directness, WCF, affective comments), usefulness/effectiveness, applicability (e.g., value for revision), form (e.g., color), place (within one page or in separate manuscripts), affective effect (being encouraging or discouraging), feedback language use (e.g., language complexity), depth, clearness, seriousness (i.e., how serious the error was for learners), correctness (e.g., whether the feedback was right or wrong), supportiveness and most importantly comprehensibility. Feedback-inter-factors were mainly source-related factors, i.e., influence from other feedback sources (i.e., peer feedback, autonomous feedback) together with TWF.

Another important factor was the teacher. Results showed that a healthy and positive teacher-student relationship could promote learners' positive engagement. Teachers' classroom instruction was also very important. For instance, shared understanding on feedback giving rationales (Mak, 2019) and the thoughts of the importance of the self-correction injected by teachers in class (Simard et al., 2015) seemed to be able to enhance learners' engagement.

The third category was activity-related factors. The task's nature might influence learners' focus, such as the close relation between the meaning-focused tasks and young learners' lexis focus when processing TWF. In some feedback processing tasks, young learners were required to take notes (i.e., write down anything they noticed when processing the TWF), which seemed to be another effective way to engage learners (García Mayo and Labandibar, 2017). The accessibility to TWF offered to peers gave learners' opportunities to engage more. Also, the use of correction code sheets also resulted in more successful revision responses (Buckingham and Aktuğ-Ekinci, 2017).

However, some activities disengaged learners as they responded to TWF. No requirement for revision, busy learning schedule, and the activities that were too long and boring might lead to limited engagement. Peers are of no less importance than teachers. When learners encountered difficulties in processing TWF, some of them would seek help from peers and the in-class peer discussion would also increase learners' engagement. However, activities that seemed to be encouraging might become discouraging by causing frustration, such as rebuttal writing tasks (Man et al., 2020).

Macro-factors are culture-related factors and environmental factors. Apart from the abovementioned cultural influences in Japan education, Chinese learners also confronted conflicts between western and eastern culture (e.g., Confucianism) which impacted their responses (Xu, 2017).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present review aimed to investigate ESL/EFL learners' responses to TWF in the last decade (i.e., 2010–2021) as well as shed light on possible future trends. The results are discussed with the help of the sociocultural theory of mind perspective; implications are also provided for future research regarding three aspects: methodology, theoretical frameworks, and students' responses to TWF.

Methodology

Most reviewed articles described qualitative or qualitative dominant studies; case studies were especially prominent, which indicates recent trends. Qualitative studies play a dominant role in investigating students' inner voices from various perspectives, which may be the reason there were few quantitative and mixed methods studies. From a sociocultural perspective, it is important to understand what makes TWF (e.g., CF) effective in learners' L2 development (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). Thus, it seems that studies with learners' self-reports can deeply reveal the complex connections between TWF and student engagement. A large number of studies were naturalistic, which indicates a focus on the sociocultural context of learners' responses. As SCT contends, the environment is the source of learners' mental development; thus, perhaps the more naturalistic the research context is, the more realistic the responses would be and the more reliable data are for shedding light on learner responses. TWF is not a static response to students' drafts. It is "always situated in an ongoing dialogue between teachers and students" (Hyland and Hyland, 2006c, p. 213). In other words, TWF is co-constructed in student-teacher interactions and its mediating role needs to be studied in various naturalistic contexts.

Participants in the reviewed studies were mostly undergraduates with few studies investigating students in secondary or elementary schools or postgraduates. Since students receiving elementary and secondary education are often beginners or low-intermediate ESL/EFL learners, how TWF scaffolds and mediates their writing and promote their language development is worthy of investigation. Even though postgraduates have reached a higher level of language proficiency, their language ability still differs from their peers who are native English speakers. The mediating role of the TWF also needs more attention. Learners can also be classified according to their learning styles, beliefs, motivation, gender, preference of different types of feedback (e.g., direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused or unfocused) by filling out a learner profile sheet (López et al., 2018) at the beginning of the research. Students' responses are dynamic and may change frequently by interacting with various sociocultural factors (e.g., classmates, teachers). Environment is the source of development, and ESL/EFL learners develop their L2 or foreign language mainly through environment-person interaction (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014). From an activity theory perspective, sociocultural factors cooperate with each other to ensure the successful operation of the learning activity (Yu, 2013). As a "highly complex concept," "learner engagement" is both "a process that can change during the course of time" and

"more a process which can result in an outcome" (Moser, 2020, p. 13–14). In other words, learners' responses are dynamic and need to be studied based on this nature. More longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the change of learners' responses as they produce multiple drafts in more than one cycle of feedback and revision (Tian and Zhou, 2020). Although one round of writing and feedback may be sufficient for understanding a learner's engagement with feedback, changes in responses toward feedback cannot be fully captured.

For data collection, various methods were used in previous studies. However, written reports or written verbalizations (e.g., journals, reflective accounts) or a combination of both verbal and written reports, and semi-structured interviews with both learners and their teachers (Lee et al., 2021) are all needed to make a study comprehensive. Classroom observations can also be used in the research to support the interview data (Storch, 2018). Even fewer studies have involved the methods summarized in Table 4. Because several studies mentioned the limitations of case studies where generalizations cannot be made (Shintani, 2016; Zheng et al., 2020a,b; Lee et al., 2021), future research should also involve more types of learners and take different learner variables into consideration. Teacher variables are also significant and more teachers' voices could be observed in future studies through interviews or written reports, such as diaries or reflective journals.

Most of the studies were conducted in China, which reveals a recent trend in Chinese education, particularly tertiary education where learners are viewed more as active agents in learning and their responses need to be considered to make teaching and learning more effective. This may lead to a break in the traditional idea that Chinese students learn without thinking critically. Most studies were located in ESL/EFL countries and they largely targeted international students. In the future research, more studies should be conducted comparing ESL/EFL learners across different countries.

Theoretical Framework

The typology of learner engagement put forward by both Fredricks et al. (2004) and Ellis (2010) has been used by a few studies as their analytical or conceptual framework to provide systematic directions for research on learners' responses to TWF as the results show. However, its function is limited and if researchers expect to gain a more thorough understanding of learners' dynamic responses, other theories need to be integrated. As the results revealed, SCT was applied in six reviewed studies and appears to be an appropriate theoretical framework to investigate the complex relationship between TWF and students' responses (Storch, 2018; Lee, 2019a). This theory regards TWF as a method for mediating students' learning. Through the lens of ZPD, teacher feedback helps learners realize the gap between their current writing proficiency and the level they are expected to reach (Vygotsky, 1978). TWF is thus seen as an "opportunity" to higher intellectual levels when learners realize its value and actively engage with the feedback (Lee, 2019a). Although a few

studies have investigated TWF based on SCT, the number is still very limited. Therefore, in future studies, researchers may consider exploring the mediating function of TWF and develop some L2 writing feedback activity models (e.g., Yu, 2013; Lee, 2014) by integrating the framework of learning engagement. However, few studies have explored students' responses to TWF by taking a SCT perspective. Thus, SCT can help theorize the framework of learner engagement. Other theories might also provide theoretical support and could be further explored.

Learners' Responses and Influencing Factors

The review results have explicitly shown the complexity of learners' responses to TWF and influencing factors. This review summarizes the findings related to learners' responses based on the educational levels of the learners they were at as they participated in the research and the concepts of learner engagement but with a newly adapted one for the current review.

Results reveal that attitudinal responses are mainly comprised of preference, emotions, attitudes and these three aspects influence each other. Due to individual differences and contextual influences, learners' responses varied and seemed to be hard to predict but some trends were still noticed and provided directions for future research. Regarding the findings on students' preferences for TWF, it would be useful to investigate different feedback modes (e.g., comparison between computer-mediated feedback, face-to-face feedback, handwritten feedback, screencast feedback), feedback sources (e.g., TWF, peer feedback, automated feedback), feedback types (e.g., directness, focus, explicitness, correction, or other features), and timing (e.g., synchronous or asynchronous feedback). Emotions were found to be diverse, mainly positive, negative and neutral with neutral emotions receiving little attention. The results show most changes were from negative to positive or to neutral, while few studies reported changes from positive to negative or neutral, which can also happen; thus, the influencing factors need to be explored to help learners maintain positive responses to TWF. Emotions and cognition together mediate language learning (Swain, 2013). Learners have been found to show more rounds of interplay between attitudinal and cognitive responses and each interaction between these two aspects might promote the understanding and uptake of the feedback (Li and Curdt-Christiansen, 2020). Furthermore, cognitive responses were found to contain three aspects: noticing, processing and cognitive/metacognitive operations. Although the reviewed studies found the focus, speed, accuracy of noticing (e.g., lexical level), various processing operations and the outcome of process, why learners notice and process in those ways remains to be answered. Furthermore, learners also differed in their behavioral responses to TWF, including revision operations, feedback uptake and other related social behaviors, such as seeking help from peers or even deciding to marginalize oneself in a community (Mirzaee and Hasrati, 2014). For future research, attention could be focused on these extra social behaviors.

Similarly, influencing factors were also found to be diverse and varied in different contexts. Taking the sociocultural perspective, learner development is a movement from "interpersonal to intrapersonal communication" (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014, p. 45). In other words, human development is a social-to-individual progressive transition during which knowledge is "recreated, modified, and extended in and through collaborative knowledge building and individual understanding" (Wells, 1999, p. 89). Full understanding of the knowledge needs to go through a convention, taking two planes (first on the "intermental plane" and then the "intramental plane") (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). Learners develop themselves from object-regulation and other-regulation to self-regulation that they can "voluntarily organize and control (i.e., mediate) mental activity and bring it to the fore in carrying out practical activity in the material world" (Lantolf and Thorne, 2012, p. 62). This is why the factors were divided into inter-factors and intra-factors. Although the reviewed studies' findings and discussions offered various influencing factors, how these factors influence each other and what role they play in those contexts have not been thoroughly revealed. Taking the SCT standpoint, intra-factors play a more decisive role so more research emphasis is needed on these factors, e.g., students' feedback literacy (Yu and Liu, 2021). As Maas (2016) advises, more studies are needed to investigate the relationship between the learner autonomy and self-assessment and factors affecting students' needs of TWF because they can improve their writing and language proficiency most when they receive "text-specific, relevant, and clear" feedback that respects students' writing drafts and individual responsibility, and gives students enough space to decide how they respond to the feedback (Goldstein, 2006, p. 203). From the sociocultural viewpoint, TWF should be "tailored, graduated, and contingent" to satisfy individual needs and scaffold language learning when it is necessary (Li, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Students' response to TWF is not a new topic; however, the term "learner engagement," another term for learner responses to teacher feedback in L2 writing, appeared about 10 years ago. Following the trend to investigate students' responses within this framework, the present study has systematically reviewed studies on ESL/EFL learners' responses (i.e., engagement) to TWF from 2010 to 2021. The number of studies in this area is growing but still limited. Drawing upon the findings of this review, teachers may gain a better understanding of their feedback practices and possible reaction from students. Researchers may also be inspired to further explore student responses and the rationale behind them by taking a sociocultural perspective. One limitation of this study concerns the reliability of the data as only one coder was involved in the whole data collection and analysis procedure. Despite the possible omission of some articles and the publication bias (only articles in high-ranking journals were reviewed), this review can still provide insights into what has been investigated and underexplored in recent years.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The terms learners' responses and learner engagement are used interchangeably in this review paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RY contributed to the design, data collection, data analysis of the study, and wrote the drafts of the manuscripts. LY guided RY through the writing process and helped RY revise the manuscripts. All authors have approved for publication of the review and are responsible for the review.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.735101/full#supplementary-material>

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The references with "" are the selected reviewed journal articles in this review.



Fostering EFL/ESL Students' Language Achievement: The Role of Teachers' Enthusiasm and Classroom Enjoyment

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Thanks to the inflow of positive psychology (PP) in language education in general and language learning in particular, extensive consideration has been drawn to the role of emotion in second language acquisition (SLA). Enjoyment as a mutual constructive sensation experienced by students has engrossed academic attention. Likewise, teachers are redirected as the most remarkable figure of any educational association, and their enthusiasm is substantial for students in the classroom. In line with the inquiries of teacher enthusiasm, principles of PP, and classroom enjoyment, the current review strives for this form of connection and its impacts on learners' achievement. Subsequently, the suggestions of this review for teachers, learners, and educator trainers are deliberated.

Keywords: positive psychology, classroom enjoyment, EFL/ESL students' language achievement, teachers' enthusiasm, constructive sensation

INTRODUCTION

A central objective of colleges is learners' achievement and success, whose administration routes should pay great attention to observing learners' educational performance. As a result, through institutional- and framework-level administration provisions, the quality of learners' education should be taken into consideration (Jones, 2013). Generally measured with tests, scholastic achievement alludes to what exactly is done under existing conditions that incorporates the most common way of editing and using the construction of information and capacities and a large group of emotional, inspirational, and complex factors that impact definitive reactions (O'Donnell and White, 2005). Academic achievement is defined as the perceived and assessed part of a learner's mastery of abilities and subject materials as estimated with legitimate and valid tests (Joe et al., 2014). Based on Nurhasanah and Sobandi (2016), there might be two kinds of factors, internal and external, which influence learning performance and learning success. In addition to issues, such as health, impairments, and cognitive elements (intelligence, aptitude, enthusiasm, concentration, motivation, and fatigue). While learners' academic achievement and success are influenced by many external elements, including family members, educational environments, and cultural considerations, learner performance and achievement will be affected by these two internal and external elements.

On the significance of feelings in language learning, a great amount of the literature mentioned that feelings assume an indispensable part in students' performances in a foreign language (MacIntyre and Vincze, 2017; Shao et al., 2019). There has been developing attention to feelings in language settings, all the more explicitly, in the way they influence language students' motivation, praise, interest, commitment, practice, accomplishment, and well-being (Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Dewaele and Li, 2021). Additionally, charged by the introduction of positive psychology (PP) in second language acquisition (SLA; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012) was the term "affective turn" (Pavlenko, 2013; Prior, 2019). Past research acknowledges the effect of negative emotions on language accomplishment (Ostafin et al., 2014; Ford et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, dependent on the PP development in instruction, there has lately been a growing extent of the literature on constructive emotions in SLA (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021) provoking analysts to move their enduring attention from negative emotions (L2 stress and boredom) to positive ones (L2 satisfaction; Khajavy et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dewaele and Li, 2021). As opposed to negative emotions, which trigger limited attitudes, positive emotions encourage the expansion of mentalities and discovery of inventive and novel notions, which can prompt the foundation of one's physical, mental, scholarly, and social assets (Fredrickson, 2004). Moreover, positive emotions are helpful for individual investigation, permitting one to procure new experiences and learn successfully (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Accordingly, the range of emotion has been extended past stress to incorporate happiness, love, pride, trust, guilt, disgrace, fatigue, outrage, disappointment, and so on (Kruk and Zawodniak, 2018; Pavelescu and Petric, 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2019). Among all types of emotions, either negative or positive inspected in the language research trend, Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) has been viewed as the most regularly knowledgeable emotional aspect for students (Piniel and Albert, 2018). Classroom enjoyment is perceived as the degree to which L2 learning is regarded as providing joy (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014), which is a constructive emotional state that consolidates challenge, bliss, interest, fun, feeling of pride, and feeling of importance. It happens particularly in exercises where students have a level of independence and when something new or difficult is accomplished (Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman, 2000). FLE had jointly caught great attention for its critical ramifications for L2 results (Jin and Zhang, 2018; Li et al., 2018). It was figuratively theorized as the emotional feet of each L2 student for their prevalence in the L2 learning setting (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016). In a foreign language setting, enjoyment was picked as a positive equivalent of the broadly studied negative emotion of FLA generally since it is a center part of the foundational notion of PP, i.e., flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Furthermore, supported by the broaden-and-build hypothesis, enjoyment is a progressive and emotion-focused action, one that decidedly impacts students' scholarly presentation and it is an idea that resounds with the arising field of PP (Pekrun et al., 2007; Pekrun and Perry, 2014). The primary principle of

broaden-and-build is that positive emotion, like enjoyment, can expand people's thought-action collections and create their mental versatility and individual assets (Fredrickson, 2003; Oxford, 2015). Regarding SLA, it is contended that students encountering constructive emotions will assimilate more information and will create more assets for more language education. Conversely, negative emotions will limit students' concentration and the scope of possible language input. Enjoyment, however, is effective in expanding students' thought-action collection to assimilate more in language learning and assist them with building language assets (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). In addition, according to the control-value hypothesis (Pekrun, 2006), FLE is a constructive accomplishment emotion with high motivation emerging from progressive learning action or assignment. It has constructive outcomes for different L2 learning results encompassing L2 motivation, commitment, and learning accomplishment (Li, 2020; Dewaele and Li, 2021). Since FLE urges students to be innovative and investigate a new language, it triggers foreign language learning (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016). Numerous past studies have additionally discovered that enjoyment is commonly connected with less stress and higher educational fulfillment (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2017). Latest movements in PP, nonetheless, have prompted an expansion of studies intended to stimulate the significance of language erudition being triggered by positive emotions, regarding the latter as an enhancer and the main impetus behind SLA (Oxford, 2015). It has been discovered up to date that FLE is positively connected with high scholarly achievement and proficiency in a foreign language (Hagenauer and Hascher, 2014; Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019).

Moreover, in comparison with classroom enjoyment, teacher enthusiasm had a noteworthy impact on student-perceived teaching quality. The attitude toward something, generally a nonverbal practice of expressiveness, is known as enthusiasm. Thus, it is characterized as learners' positive affective qualities, satisfaction, and joy during learning (Kunter et al., 2011). It is a quality-like, constant, and repeating feeling. Since enthusiasm pushes the learner to study and to receive the new cycle being experienced, it cannot be separated from a learning cycle. With enthusiasm, the learners show their delight in learning English by displaying their joyful facial expressions in the class and have a positive sentiment to learning a language. When learning something new like the English language, learners get excited. Enthusiasm can positively impact learners' results (Patrick et al., 2000). The greater the learners' enthusiasm in learning a language, the greater the results and the achievements they will encounter in learning.

Enthusiasm, as a significant quality for everyone, pays little heed to the type of work being done. To put it simply, an enthusiastic individual is a person who, in a real sense, is motivated by a strong force. Moreover, the motivated individual comes to perceive himself as a distinguished top pick of the divine nature. When this craze happens, which is the culmination of energy, each fanciful notion is accentuated (Nur, 2019). Educator enthusiasm could be characterized as the occurrence of assorted behavioral articulations, like, nonverbal (gestures) and verbal (tone of voice) practices (Keller et al., 2016).

The prior inquiries were conducted with respect to FLE in higher education (Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016; Elahi Shirvan and Talebzadeh, 2018; Li et al., 2018; Talebzadeh et al., 2020). In addition, former studies have presented that teacher enthusiasm is connected to diverse constructive consequences, such as students' enjoyment, interest, achievement, motivation, and vitality (Patrick et al., 2000; Kunter et al., 2013; Keller et al., 2014; König and Jucks, 2019). Although these investigations have been done in these domains, this review makes an effort to inspect the function of classroom enjoyment and teacher enthusiasm on learners' achievement in foreign language learning.

Teacher Enthusiasm

Perceived to be a fundamental component for enhancing teaching results is educator enthusiasm, which is quite possibly the main attribute of successful teachers (Kunter et al., 2011; Ruzek et al., 2016). Enthusiasm is a feeling based on sensory perception, providing the ability to detect, acknowledge, evaluate, or respond physically to something. A powerful stimulus can create excitement, which results in enjoyment or satisfaction in a particular activity. These definitions are described in terms of their causes and effects (Setianingsih and Nafisah, 2021). There is a theoretical explanation that enthusiasm promotes the attention of educators to their learners in the classroom (Kunter and Holzberger, 2014) and enhances constructive effect in learners by sharing emotive responses (Frenzel et al., 2018) resulting in improved learner relationships and a reduction in conflict (Kunter et al., 2013). Teacher enthusiasm is delineated as a nonverbal manifestation that the educator echoes (Baloch and Akram, 2018); teacher performances like presenting effective demonstrations, facilitating interaction, and communication (Hadie et al., 2019; Wang and Derakhshan, 2021); teachers' distinctive features in line with the constructive emotional state (Keller et al., 2018); and constructive emotive practices that the educator achieves while carrying out her/his responsibility (Keller et al., 2014).

Enthusiasm is an individual's feeling of getting energized, while acting and it is developed when she/he begins to be interested in the activity. Moreover, it can be characterized as a strong liking for a subject of matter, something, or activity, and a searing soul, fuel, or the blasting fire of something new. Learners regard enthusiasm as the focus of their learning and a prerequisite for their involvement (Pithers and Holland, 2006). Moreover, Kunter et al. (2011) categorized enthusiasm as an emotional-behavioral educator quality. The multiple-dimensional structure includes both a learner's sense of pleasure, enjoyment, and interest, as well as specific learning activities that promote these feelings in the educational setting. Moreover, it was found that teachers' enthusiasm for the subject was distinct from their enthusiasm for teaching activities. Keller et al. (2016) described educator engagement as both an emotional and cognitive quality consisting of a favorable psychological state, a sense of enjoyment, and happiness, as well as the exhibiting of specific behaviors (primarily physical) derived from them. Feeling enthusiasm and showing enthusiasm constitute enthusiasm, respectively.

By proposing that educator enthusiasm is the emotional experience of pleasure during learning as well as its actions or expression during education, Frenzel et al. (2009) developed this theory. Educators' expressions of enjoyment include smiles, widening eyes, and a mutable tone, and greater speed. Teacher enthusiasm that could be transferred to learners, boost their enthusiasm, participation, and commitment (Lazarides et al., 2019).

Enjoyment

Enjoyment occurs when learners perceive themselves to be competent at performing an educational task as well as recognizing the content of the learning process (Mierzwa, 2019). An enjoyment construct comprises five categories: behavioral, mental, emotional, expressional, and psychological (Hagenauer and Hascher, 2014). In the same way that the name implies, the affective component of enjoyment focuses on emotions, and in particular, on the sense of satisfaction and pleasure felt during the learning process. Additionally, the mental aspect of learning is concerned with evaluating the situation positively. Hence, enjoyment could be considered the feeling of accomplishment that arises when completing a challenging, complex task that encourages inquiry (Pekrun et al., 2007) and creates enthusiasm (Ainley and Hidi, 2014; Han and Wang, 2021). Moreover, the motivational aspect of enjoyment refers to learners' ability to feel good by encouraging them, emotionally and physically, to attempt more FL tasks in the future (Villavicencio and Bernardo, 2013). Since Broaden-and-Build Theory of constructive emotions of Fredrickson (2001) and the Control-Value Theory of emotions (Pekrun and Perry, 2014) both explain how positive emotions appear, it is logical to expect that FLE will perform similarly within the FL context and is deemed as a major source of positive achievement feelings that are directly linked with the enjoyment of flow.

The concept of FLE was introduced by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), explaining how the construct of enjoyment as a feeling associated with achievement could help learners develop resources to learn English more effectively (Pekrun, 2006), enhance their understanding, and improve their motivation in academic learning (Jin and Zhang, 2019). FLE is significantly affected by its educational process, such as the connections with thoughtful and cooperative classmates, as well as the communication with enthusiastic language educators that provide a variety of engaging and challenging classroom activities to engage learners (Pavelescu and Petric, 2018). There are two scopes of enjoyment in FLE: first, FLE is linked to the educator (teaching methods, encouragement, optimism, and educator acknowledgment); second, FLE is associated with the environment in FL education (social contacts, enthusiasm, and motivation; Li et al., 2018). A third dimension that is not less important than the two aforementioned is FLE-private coalescing with its contribution to personal development and personal progress. Among the sources of FLE-private, the following can be eminent: realizing one's progress, achieving great FL results, achieving success, and observing improvements in FL learning (Li et al., 2018).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review has provided some suggestions for language stakeholders. It can be of significance for educators, pupils, and educator trainers. Various studies have found that FLE is a motivational force that impacts language learning in several ways as it enables higher academic achievement, enhances motivation, and may even protect individuals against negatively framed views (MacIntyre, 2016). In this sense, FLE provides a useful experience for educational purposes and might be essential for learners to achieve full proficiency in multiple languages. Corresponding to the Control-Value Theory, learners' ability to internalize values of academic engagement and achievement is likely to be enhanced when their educators demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment regarding a particular subject or learning activity (Pekrun, 2006; Derakhshan, 2021).

The present review can be valuable for language learners as they can have less anxiety and become more confident and autonomous when facing challenges in the classroom when their educators are enthusiastic. It has been found that enthusiasm can have a major impact on educational success, so it is evident that enthusiasm has a significant effect on learners' performance and helps them to be successful in academic learning. The educator's enthusiasm ensures they intend to go above and beyond to fulfill their professional duties, as well as give the correct clues to their learners. As a result, an enthusiastic educator can be defined as one who seeks to accomplish the teaching and learning process effectively and performs his or her duty of supporting the learners as needed for successful teaching and learning. Furthermore, it is the teacher's concern to control the emotional atmosphere of the classroom, to nurture a positive sense among the students, and, ideally, to teach with excitement, enthusiasm, and interest (Dewaele et al., 2018).

The enthusiasm of the educators will make a difference not only on the learning side, but also during the educational

process since educators organize these activities (Bedir and Yıldırım, 2000). An educator should be enthusiastic when performing the teaching duties given to her/him. An educator should adjust the course and tone of voice according to the learners' interests and abilities during the presentation to ensure that the course is engaging for the learners and demonstrates their enthusiasm for the course (Keller et al., 2016).

Learners who are imitating an enthusiastic educator are likely to acquire the educator's outlook concerning interest, motivation, and beliefs, leading to enhanced knowledge and a positive attitude toward education (Keller et al., 2016). Developing excitement and enjoyment in teaching and the subject area should be a central element of educators' training. Additionally, an atmosphere that allows educators to maintain enthusiasm is necessary during their daily work. For example, educators can avoid stressful working conditions by reducing organizational workloads and management responsibilities. Finally, it may be possible to maximize learners' interest, motivation, and achievement by enhancing educators' enthusiasm. Throughout the course, letting the learners speak and share their perspectives, engaging, giving advice regarding the accuracy or errors of their statements, and addressing their mistakes are factors that contribute to the enthusiasm of the teacher that leads to students' achievement. To include the perspectives of other professionals in the field of education, it would be useful to conduct further research on the topic of teacher enthusiasm. Studies involving educators with different levels of knowledge, rather than just new educators, could help to evaluate enthusiasm levels. Additionally, investigators can conduct studies on a national and international basis, regardless of their academic background.

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The Role of Teacher Autonomy Support on Students' Academic Engagement and Resilience

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Learners have internal motivational resources that, when maintained, can enhance engagement, enthusiasm, resilience, and success. Learner engagement in educational tasks is a remarkable issue supporting the overall success of learners in higher education. Furthermore, building resilience in learners necessarily requires teachers' efforts. Therefore, teacher support for autonomy is critical for augmenting appropriate outcomes, and it is deemed as a strong predictor of learners' particular resources along with their motivational styles and educational achievement. As there is a dearth of studies that have considered teacher autonomy support and its noteworthy influence on learners' resilience and engagement, the current review endeavors to concentrate on this motivational style in higher education. Successively, several implications are offered to illuminate the issue for teachers, students, teacher trainers, and educational administrators.

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INTRODUCTION

Resilience is a notion in the positive psychology literature that highlights institutions' and people's strengths and self-restraint to adapt to unexpected circumstances (Cooke et al., 2016). Likewise, it has been characterized as the capacity to accomplish constructive results regardless of openness to difficulty like trauma (Yoo et al., 2013). It is additionally characterized as the capacity of learners to successfully deal with academic decline, stress, and tension in the learning cycle (Sabouripour and Roslan, 2015). As stated by King (2004), the manifestation of connections that energize enthusiasm for proficient practice and self-comprehension could foster resilience, and also it can be influenced by both internal and external factors. The internal elements, such as self-confidence or good feelings are associated with what is perceived by the people, and their curiosity or grit in achievement (Zhou and Lam, 2019). In contrast to internal factors, external ones come from outside the person that can impact scholastic resilience, taken from family, qualified educators, peer relations, and the community or individual social climate (Everall et al., 2006). Resilience is similarly defined as an individual characteristic that is both intrapersonal and relational and arises dynamically from the transaction of various variables (Ungar, 2012; Turner et al., 2017). Similarly, it can be regarded as a context- and function-explicit notion which goes further than the preservation of equilibrium, being committed, and has agency (Gu, 2018).

Alongside resilience, learner engagement is one more developing field of interest inside the global education domain that is the main construct of positive psychology (Yu et al., 2019; Han and Wang, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). The relation between resilience and learner engagement is reported in some studies as students with low degrees of resilience also had low degrees of engagement (Pidgeon and Keyes, 2014). One of the major problems for higher education in the 21st century is adequate learner engagement at the college level, as this idea identifies with quality assurance and improvement plans all over the world (Healey et al., 2014). Healey et al. (2014) maintained that learner engagement is an all-encompassing and multifaceted event that requires much more exploration to turn into a helpful policy for further developing learning in higher education. In the same vein, it has become essential to recognize the degree to which learners are involved and the successful instructive practices that strengthen engagement (Zepke, 2018; Kotera and Ting, 2019). Engagement, as aforementioned, is a dynamic and multi-layered attribute that can be influenced by different variables (Collins, 2014). Moreover, Guilloteaux (2016) grouped the impacting variables into phenomenological, individual-demographic, and informative variables.

People's resilience and engagement depend on the individual, community-level, and organizational variables (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2017). One such relational variable that has been regarded to affect learners' resilience significantly is social help. Some studies have demonstrated that social help might go about as a mediator between stress and resilience, while other studies demonstrated social help as relieving the adverse consequences of poor scholarly performance (Ozbay et al., 2007; London et al., 2011). A person with great social help can impact an individual's ability to deal with upsetting experiences, adapt well to these experiences, and positively address these difficulties (Saam, 2010). Social help alludes to comfort, care, appreciation, or help accessible to a person from an individual/group (Sarafino and Smith, 2014) that can be arisen from different sources, like family, companions, and other people in their social surroundings (Permatasari et al., 2021). Concerning learners, they need a good amount of social help to strengthen their resilience when confronting pressing factors or stress (Ozbay et al., 2007).

The learner-educator frame explicitly calls attention to the fact that the connection between educators and learners plays the double role of developing or blocking learners' student engagement and their learning motivation (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021). Analysts have utilized an assortment of motivational principles to clarify the variables influencing student engagement, including the hypotheses of self-determination, self-guideline, objectives, as well as anticipated value (Fredricks et al., 2016). The Self-determination Theory (SDT) proposed that learners are all the more naturally motivated when educators support their fundamental mental requirements for autonomy, capability, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000). For elevating learners' student engagement, a respectable educator-learner relationship is helpful in particular (Fredricks et al., 2016). In SDT, causal relations exist between mental

requirements, motivation, engagement, and scholastic accomplishment (Reeve, 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017).

What an individual does and says to determine, cultivate, and improve another person's interior motivational assets is known as autonomy support (Reeve, 2009), which alludes to how much the social setting elevates practices started by and aligned with a person's interests or wishes (Black and Deci, 2000). According to the SDT point of view, the volitional experience of motivation given to learners by an educator through class elements is known as teachers' autonomy support (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Teacher autonomy support is the provision of education through a relational nature of support (Assor et al., 2002; Reeve, 2016). Educators who use autonomy support as a relational educational style demonstrate less control and take better care of learners' necessities, thereby increasing learners' motivation and interest in the class (Chang et al., 2016; Pérez-González et al., 2019).

To examine how cultivating autonomy support permits the student to profit from various adaptive-related results, several studies have verified the utilization of SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Based on their outcomes, individuals have an inborn inclination toward development. Moreover, they actively seek to deal with their current circumstance by making use of associations that permit them to incorporate new and positive encounters in elevating their sense of worth. Learners' autonomy is increased when they are endorsed to regulate their conduct and when they believe that lessons are important to them (Wang and Eccles, 2016). Several examples of educator's autonomy-supportive practices include paying attention to what learners need to say about the educational cycles, recognizing their viewpoint, empowering learners' dynamic involvement, permitting learners to work in their specific manner, letting them control educational objects, conveying bases for learning capabilities, empowering independent work, and giving social awards to positive practices (Jang et al., 2010; Su and Reeve, 2011). Learners perceiving greater educator autonomy support report a more noteworthy feeling of competence, expanded self-guideline, commitment and scholastic motivations, and lower tension (Patall et al., 2010; Jang et al., 2012). Having additionally been discovered to upgrade learning-related results, like test performance for undergraduates, are autonomy-supportive class environments (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Through teacher autonomy support in their classroom, the learners' basic psychosomatic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are gratified, which consequently endorses their commitment in the classroom (Jang et al., 2016; Núñez and León, 2019). As stated by Reeve (2016), practically speaking, autonomy support includes a group of organized and mutually-strengthening educational practices, such as paying attention to learners' point of view, vitalizing learners' mental requirements during education, giving explanatory reasoning to educators' demands, recognizing and tolerating learners' demeanors of negative effect.

Learner academic achievement can be improved with autonomy-supportive teaching in higher education. An educational environment demands learners to be self-driven and self-determined which is more appropriate for students

(Seli and Dembo, 2019). Learners who are encouraged to promote their autonomy are provided with choices, receive adequate support, and have the freedom to make their own learning decisions (Reeve and Jang, 2006). A bulk of research has proved the constructive effect of teacher autonomy-support on learners' engagement (Chen et al., 2015; Hospel and Galand, 2016; Martin and Collie, 2019; Benlahcene et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020) and resilience (Reeve et al., 2020; Permatasari et al., 2021; Salazar-Ayala et al., 2021). Regardless of the abundance of research carried out on each construct so far on student engagement, resilience, and the function of teacher-autonomy support in higher education, one can notify plentiful studies each focusing on a specific concept. Nevertheless, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies to date have reviewed the aforementioned issue in learning and concurrently their association with each other has been not taken into consideration to date. In line with this aforementioned background, the present review sets about considering the issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner Engagement

Learner engagement refers to learners being enthusiastically engaged in the process of performing tasks (Lei et al., 2018). As stated by Chang et al. (2016), learners are interested in learning when they are participating in the educational system that is called engagement. Engaging learners on multiple levels, including intellectual, psychological, and emotional, is a multidimensional practice (Harbour et al., 2015; Datu, 2018; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). The engagement has been explored from three different angles: educational, learner, and educator. From the educational context, engagement is defined as the amount of effort, care, resources, and skills that students apply to do tasks in classrooms and outside, and the methods and techniques educators use to encourage learners to engage with educational activities (Kuh, 2003). Behavioral engagement corresponds to the learners' genuine disposition to participate in tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004; Bygate and Samuda, 2009). In recent studies, behavioral engagement has been viewed as learners' participation during learning activities, their level of engagement, and how actively they are involved in educational processes (Hiver et al., 2021; Sang and Hiver, 2021).

Students' psychological exertion and mental activity during the time spent on learning are known as cognitive engagement. Students are intellectually engaged when they display purposeful, specific, and maintained consideration to accomplish a given assignment or learning objectives (Reeve, 2012). Emotional engagement is viewed to have a significant effect on different elements of engagement on the grounds that the abstract mentalities or discernments students convey in a class or through related assignments are basic to different elements of engagement (Henry and Thorsen, 2020). Thus, affective (emotional) engagement alludes to students' perspectives toward the learning settings, the individuals in that unique setting, the assignments, and their cooperation in education (Skinner et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012). As asserted by Philp and Duchesne

(2008), social engagement holds a focal spot in language learning; indeed, the social part of engagement is characterized by considering the societal types of tasks and contributions that are perceptible in networks of learning, including association with questioners as well as the nature of such social connections (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011; Mercer, 2019).

Self-Determination Theory

An organismic-argumentative point of view that characterizes individuals as proactive beings who are inherently prompted to develop, work, and change inside their social environments is known as SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2000). SDT states that people have three major requests, namely, the necessity for autonomy, the requirement for capability, and the requirement for belongingness. How educators meet learners' essential requirements will impact the latter's prosperity, motivation, engagement, and accomplishment (Ryan and Deci, 2017; Núñez and León, 2019). SDT proposes that, aside from physical requirements like food and shelter, essential mental requirements of autonomy, relatedness, and capability are key assets on which an individual is reliant for flourishing (Ryan and Deci, 2020). As stated by Deci and Moller (2005), the requirement of competence is characterized in SDT as the sense of value, capacity, and accomplishment in one's communications inside a societal climate. Feelings of capability are experienced in settings that furnish people with promising circumstances and assets to communicate, enhance, and ace their abilities (Ryan and Moller, 2016). As declared by Deci and Ryan (2000), the feeling of connectedness or belongingness to an individual or a specific group is known as the requirement of relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000) that tends to be satisfied only when relationships are autonomous and genuine to oneself and others (Ryan and Deci, 2017). "Autonomy" is characterized as self-administering or alluded to as self-guideline, which is the method of self-directing one's practices and activities (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Because of its vital function in the fulfillment of different necessities, the requirement of autonomy has attained significant consideration. Moreover, it is portrayed by SDT researchers as a sense of preference, whereby one's activities are coordinated by oneself or self-supported as opposed to being externally controlled (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

Autonomy Support

Autonomy is attained from experiences and practices that are regarded as self-controlled, self-embraced, and are lined up with people's actual qualities and interests (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Practices and mentalities that are experienced through relational association can therefore be autonomy-supportive when they are regarded as advancing self-controlled decisions and motivations (Reeve, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2017). In young learners, autonomy support has been positively connected with self-controlled learning, profound data processing, persistence in defining and meeting objectives, higher scholastic performance, and well-being, and less tension in students (Kins et al., 2009; Kunst et al., 2019). As declared by Niemiec and Ryan (2009), inside the domain of academia, autonomy support elevates

intrinsic motivation which, thus, improves learners' learning, change, and performance in scholastic assignments (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Accordingly, autonomy support is a critical factor in the internalization and the quest for instructive objectives and scholastic performance. Three primary kinds of autonomy support have been proposed by Stefanou et al. (2004), namely, intellectual, procedural, and institutional. Intellectual autonomy support includes strategies that empower learners to have an independent mind, explore thoughts, and become independent students. Enhancing learners' ownership of form and presentation is procedural autonomy support. Institutional autonomy support empowers learners' ownership of the educational climate. Educators might utilize at least one type of these techniques, but a few researchers have proposed that, due to its function of cultivating learners' mental engagement and profound-level processing, intellectual autonomy support might be the most advantageous (Assor et al., 2002; Stefanou et al., 2004; Wang and Guan, 2020).

Resilience

Even though there is no concurred meaning, resilience is usually viewed as a paradigm, where internal assets and practices are encompassed to adapt to troubles and difficulties, thereby prompting a reinforced character and mental coping mechanism (Grant and Kinman, 2014). By reshaping one's viewpoints, resilience makes one pay attention to strengths and chances, as opposed to shortcomings and weaknesses (Russ et al., 2009; Harrison, 2013). Resilience can likewise be seen as a trait evolving from a resilient structure and contains three sets of associating constructs, in particular, internal assets, external help systems, and learned methods (Kostoulas and Lämmerer, 2018). Resilience, in the teaching profession, is an imperative key to comprehend both educating and learning procedures (Hui and Abdullah, 2020; Xue, 2021) and takes place when people link their assets with context-oriented ones and utilize successful techniques to overcome hardships and maintain their well-being (Greenier et al., 2021). In the territory of teaching and learning a language, resilience is a new issue that has been well-defined as a stress-managing aptitude (Connor and Davidson, 2003). In general, resilience is regarded as a persons' ability to rebound back from hardships and adjust to their setting as Martin and Marsh (2006) referred to resilience as a learner's capability to effectively cope with obstructions, contests, difficulty, and burden in the theoretical situation.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In light of this review, evidence is proved for the significance of autonomy support and its academic benefits in higher education. An important implication for teachers is that they should endeavor to represent autonomy-supportive instruction that is useful for learners in higher education. When educators establish a powerful class climate and allow learners to work following their arising interest and coordinated value, they

can assist their learners with satisfying their requirement of autonomy, thereby developing self-determined activities. Thus, in an autonomy-supportive class climate, learners have greater interest, more noteworthy energy, better relatedness, and less pressure. Furthermore, teacher autonomy support can be deemed as a learner-centered approach that arranges for the required support for teachers to increase their motivating styles. It is likely that during autonomy support, when the students are provided with clues and feedback, and they are praised by the teacher, they tried more to comprehend their task better and learn the lesson.

When the students are taught by autonomy-supportive teachers, positive academic outcomes are achieved including higher resourcefulness, more satisfaction, and determination, positive reactions, and enthusiasm that all necessary for their engagement in the process of learning and enhances their resilience because when teachers detect learners' desires, inclinations, and interests, bring them about by boosting and cultivating satisfactory classroom settings (Reeve and Jang, 2006; Hang et al., 2017). Educators are recommended to carry out autonomy support TAS by listening cautiously to learners and recognizing their point of view, giving them chances for dynamic participation, permitting them to work in their favored way, permitting learners to control educational objects, conveying a reasoning learning, providing encouragement, and praising as a reward (Kaur et al., 2014). Through autonomy support, the teacher can increase autonomy opportunities, which can be considered as an operative way of decreasing apprehension and depression in learners (Yu et al., 2016).

In particular, teacher autonomy support essentially elevates the requirement of autonomy, capability, and relatedness, accordingly making teenagers more engaged in and connected with their academic day-by-day activities. Thus, this upgraded academic engagement mitigates or counterbalances adolescent stress and sadness. Academic engagement is enhanced by fundamental mental necessities satisfaction, which leads to a decreased probability of stress and sadness. As a kind of autonomy-supportive practice to determine learners' mental necessities and incorporate them into the day's lesson, the educator can ask learners what they need. Another kind of autonomy-supportive practice is educators giving learners time to solve an issue in their specific way since the educator permits learners' interests and inclinations to direct their class activity. The educator who upholds autonomy is not only increasing the number of autonomous learners interested in the class but is also contributing to their mental and add social well-being, enhancing and expanding an adaptive and resilient practice despite age-related afflictions and others brought about by outer components (Salazar-Ayala et al., 2021). Using autonomy support as a relational educational style, educators exhibit less control and take care of learners' requirements, which can enhance learners' motivation and interest in their classes that prompt their engagement (Núñez and León, 2019).

The outcomes of the research could be useful for instructive psychologists, counselors, educators, instructive researchers, and educational program designers to put together a few projects to upgrade the adapting and resilience level of learners, which

directly affects their presentation and educational level. Generally, fostering resilience through autonomy support has significant implications in psychology in five principal roles, namely, evaluation, mediation, discussion, research, and preparation. Moreover, through this review, social and psychological researchers and learners may be likewise provided with certain attributes of character and practices among people who should be searched further.

Great degrees of social support are connected with both high resilience and more prominent psychological well-being (Bovier et al., 2004). Indeed, the execution of casual perceived social support intercessions inside the instructive climate might be altogether useful in developing resilience, enhancing the psychological health of learners, and possibly elevating learners' retention. Social support has positive impacts on students' engagement and resilience, demonstrating that the education staff ought to urge their educators to partake in society or institutional exercises or even practice their plans through remuneration frameworks to improve educators' contribution motivation and reinforce friendly bonds and supports by setting up rich and diverse companion-level social communities to offer adequate help when needed.

In addition, educational faculty could hold courses and workshops covering the hypothetical and pragmatic parts of emotional and educational support for educators to improve their capacity to offer support. Subsequently, students' engagement and resilience can be elevated by building up others' capability to give needed help and support in various circumstances. To

assist educators with understanding the advantages of autonomy support and implement it in their training, educator trainers should attempt to design projects. Completely developed and versatile autonomy-support training plans should be made promptly available to schools and educators. Besides, administrators and managers can create a more extensive context of a strategy that leads to educators feeling reinforced in their requirements of autonomy, capability, and relatedness; therefore, they are rendered to support the requirements of their learners. Further qualitative studies must be led for surveying the collaboration of various variables among learners to reach a more profound comprehension of the notion of resilience. Thus, in future investigations, it is recommended that analysts utilize longitudinal studies to uncover cause-and-effect relationships among factors. One more significant outcome of this contribution is the significance of autonomy support provided by educators in the social climate in which learners are involved. Expansion of the current research would be to explore the relationship of perceived autonomy support from educators with different indicators for college learners' scholarly change, like perspectives and observed control (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2016; Respondek et al., 2017).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Critical Thinking Ability and L2 Students' Classroom Engagement

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Critical thinking has been the focus of many studies considering the educational and social contexts. However, English as a foreign language (EFL) context is the one in which studies about critical thinking and its link to classroom engagement have not been carried out as much as expected. Hence, this study investigated to understand the association between EFL teachers' critical thinking ability and students' classroom engagement to get a broader understanding of the impact critical thinking has on students' success. To do this, firstly, both variables of this study are defined and explicated. Then, the relationship between critical thinking and students' classroom engagement is discussed. Finally, the implications of this research and also its limitations along with suggestions for further studies are put forward.

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INTRODUCTION

“Critical thinking enables individuals to use standards of argumentation, rules of logic, standards of practical deliberation, standards governing inquiry and justification in specialized areas of study, standards for judging intellectual products, etc.” (Bailin et al., 1999, p. 291). Paul and Elder (2007) conceptualized critical thinking as the art of analysis and evaluation, considering the point that it can be improved since a quality life needs the quality of thinking. Facione (2011) noted that happiness cannot be guaranteed even if good judgment is practiced and critical thinking is enhanced; however, it undoubtedly offers more opportunities for this goal to be achieved. It has been stressed that autonomy can be shaped through critical thinking ability and one's learning process can critically be evaluated (Delmastro and Balada, 2012). According to a study conducted by Marin and Pava (2017), English as a foreign language (EFL) critical thinker has the following characteristics: they are active, continuously asking questions, and seeking information which helps them build associations between L2 learning and other features of everyday life. They describe as people, having the capability to analyze and organize thoughts that can be expressed through speaking and writing. They almost always tries to put what has learned before into practice. Beyond doubt, in order to enhance critical thinking skill in EFL learners, teachers should consider the point that teaching is not just about grammar and vocabulary; instead, it concentrates on enhancing teaching, encouraging to be creative, encourage to learn independently, strategies for making decisions and evaluating himself. Similarly, opportunities must be provided by the educators to provide a learning environment in which autonomous learning, active engagement, reflection on learners' learning process, and L2 advancement are emphasized, for instance, task-based activities.

Thus, this study is different from other studies since the focus is placed on teachers' critical thinking ability to help students thrive rather than students' critical thinking ability. The reason is that differentiates it from the previous studies is that providing students with opportunities, in which thinking differently is appreciated, would be absolutely rewarding and it is the skill that should be much more highlighted in the studies. Therefore, critical thinking is a skill through which students' confidence can be raised, leading to their active engagement in the classroom and their being successful since they can see the issues from a different point of view and novel solutions to those problems can be proposed. In the current study, first of all, both teachers' critical thinking ability and students' classroom engagement have been discussed. Given that, the association between these two variables has been dealt with. Then, the implications and restrictions of the study as well as some recommendations for further studies have been proposed.

BACKGROUND

Teachers' Critical Thinking Ability

Critical thinking has attracted much attention since teachers' way of thinking and beliefs has a pivotal impact on what students achieve in terms of academic success and attainments. Dewey (1933, p. 9), who can be regarded as the father of modern critical thinking, conceptualized it as "active, persistent, and careful of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends." As defined by Chance (1986), critical thinking is conceptualized as the capability that one puts into practice to do the followings through this ability: facts which are analyzed, ideas that are generated and organized, opinions that are defended, comparisons that are made, inferences that are drawn, arguments which are evaluated, ideas that are organized, and problems that are solved. As stated by Vdovina and Gaibisso (2013), critical thinking is relevant to quality thinking that enables learners to communicate with others, gain knowledge, and deal with ideas, attitudes, and beliefs in a more skillful way. Based on what has been proposed by Shirkhani and Fahim (2011), critical thinking is an integral factor in many ways. The first reason that can be taken into consideration is that when language learners take responsibility for the way they think; they can evaluate the way they learn in a more successful way. Secondly, critical thinking causes learners to experience a meaningful process of learning in which learning a language is meaningful to them. Thirdly, critical thinking and learners' achievement are positively correlated. If the learners are shown how to think critically, they get proficient in learning a language. Likewise, Liaw (2007) study indicated that when the content-based approach is implemented in the class, it promotes EFL students' critical thinking skills. It should be noted that in a content-based approach, attention is focused on the content and what can be perceived through it.

Besides, as Davidson (1998) noted, "the English teachers are expected to provide learners with the ability to communicate with native speakers, valuing overt comments, clever criticism, and intellectual claims." In a similar manner, Meyers (1986)

proposed that teachers can facilitate critical thinking through the activities that are assigned, the tasks that are set, and the feedback that is provided. A study done in a Chinese context by Li and Liu (2021) put forward the taxonomy of critical thinking ability in the EFL learning context and in this study, five skills through which critical thinking can be practiced, were proposed: analyzing, inferring, evaluating, synthesizing, and self-reflection/self-correction (Wang and Derakhshan, 2021). Li (2021) also indicated that the development of critical thinking in international students can be facilitated by learning Chinese. According to a study done by Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010), a critical thinker has the following characteristics:

- problems are identified by them and relevant solutions are dealt with,
- valid and invalid inferences are recognized by them,
- decisions and judgments are suspended by them when there is not enough evidence to prove it
- the difference between logical reasoning and justifying is perceived by them
- relevant questions are asked by them to see if their students have understood
- statements and arguments are evaluated
- lack of understanding can be accepted by them
- they have developed a sense of curiosity
- clear criteria for analyzing ideas are defined
- he is a good listener and gives others feedback
- he believes that critical thinking is a never-ending process that needs to be evaluated
- judgment is suspended by them until all facts have been collected
- they seek evidence for the assumptions to be advocated
- opinions are adjusted by them when there are some new facts
- incorrect information is easily rejected by them.

Consequently, according to the characteristics mentioned above, teachers with the ability to think critically is good problem solvers and when facing a problem during the class, they can have greater reasoning skills so as to find a solution to the problem. They are curious and they also ask their students questions to create a sense of curiosity in them. Additionally, they do not accept the new ideas easily, instead, they analyze them and sometimes make them better.

Classroom Engagement

Engagement is an inseparable part of the learning process and a multifold phenomenon. Classroom engagement refers to the amount of participation that students take in the class to be actively involved in the activities and whether the mental and physical activities have a goal. Engagement itself is a context-oriented phrase which relies on cultures, families, school activities, and peers (Finn and Zimmer, 2012). It has been categorized into different groups: Behavioral engagement such as the amount to which students participate actively in the class; emotional engagement pertains to high levels of enthusiasm which is linked to high levels of boredom and anxiety; cognitive

engagement such as the usage of learning strategy and self-regulation; agentic engagement such as the amount of conscious effort so that the learning experience would be enriched (Wang and Guan, 2020; Hiver et al., 2021). Amongst the aforementioned categories, the one which is strongly important in the learning process is behavioral engagement in that it is relevant to the actual recognition of an individual's learning talents (Dörnyei, 2019). Another possibility that can be viewed is to consider engagement from two other aspects, internal and external. The former implies how much time and effort is allocated to the process of the learning. The latter entails the measures that are taken at the institutional level so that the resources would be dealt with along with other options of learning and services for support, encouraging the involvement in activities leading to the possible outcomes such as consistency and satisfaction (Harper and Quayle, 2009).

Much attention is deserved to be paid to engagement since it is perceived as a behavioral means with which students' motivation can be realized and as a result, development through the learning process can occur (Jang et al., 2010). Active involvement should be strengthened in L2 classes to prevent disruptive behaviors and diminish the valence of emotions that are negative such as feeling anxious, frustrated, and bored.

Regarding "classroom engagement," its opposite word "disengagement" can play a significant role in not engaging the students in the class, leading to them feeling bored and demotivated in the class, so from this aspect, it would be worth considering this phrase as well. It has been claimed by some authors (Skinner, 2016) that disengagement itself does not happen frequently in educational settings due largely to the fact that it is related to extreme behaviors, and it is when another phrase disaffection can be considered significant. Disaffection is characterized by disinterest, aversion, resignation, and reduced effort. Therefore, our perception of boredom as a complex emotion can be enhanced, and it can be dealt with more systematically if boredom is viewed through the following factors, disengagement, and disaffection (Wang and Guan, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2021). As Elder and Paul (2004) mentioned, students should be taught to actively make questions- that is a good emblem of engagement- which is a radical part of critical thinking. The more the students can question, the more they can learn. Some students get accustomed to memorizing the facts and have never been faced with the outcomes of the poor decisions they made since there is always someone to back them and they had better be challenged, being questioned by their teachers (Rezaei et al., 2011).

The Relationship Between Teachers' Critical Thinking Ability and Classroom Engagement

Critical thinking has been said to widen one's horizon because it may shape students' mindsets and help them take a look at items from a different viewpoint. When one has learned to think critically, they will never accept the *status quo* easily, he will welcome the opposing ideas and will evaluate the

arguments. In the EFL context, when a learner has the capability to think critically, or he has been taught to think critically, he always looks for reasons learning new materials and in this respect, his curiosity allows him to learn everything in depth and challenge his schemata to make a link between the newly learned ideas and the ones he has already known. Critical thinking is not a term that can be utilized just for the specific type of people; it can be taught and practiced to be enhanced. The way ideas can be generated and the way comparisons can be made is highly relevant to what has been called critical thinking. Different items can be conceptualized in different ways when we look at them through the lens of critical thinking; therefore, it can have a positive effect on students' mindsets and the way they live. From an educational point of view, the decisions that have been made by the students, the solutions that have been put forward to tackle a problem when it comes to a learning context, and the way through which their process of learning is ameliorated are all impacted by teachers' critical thinking. When teachers think critically and they strive to see different skills from a different point of view, it is where students' sense of curiosity is tickled and their imagination is stretched so as to think of things in a various way.

IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Critical thinking is believed to have an enormous effect on students' classroom engagement. As mentioned above, according to Dewey (1933), the more the students practice thinking critically, the more successful they are in terms of academic achievements because they can decide more rationally, and their problems can be addressed more sensibly. Attention should be paid that this study is of great significance for those people who are engaged in the learning process including those devising curriculums, develop materials, teachers, and learners. Critical thinking is a skill that should be developed in learners so that they would compare and contrast ideas, and as a result, decide wisely and accomplish what they have planned for. Accordingly, opportunities must be provided by the educators to provide a learning environment in which autonomous learning, active engagement, reflection on learners' learning process, and L2 advancement are emphasized, for example, task-based activities (Han and Wang, 2021).

Additionally, further studies can be done to find more about the variables in this study.

With regard to various age groups, the understanding of critical thinking might be different. Teenagers are said to start thinking critically and hypothetically; however, undoubtedly there is a big difference between what can be perceived about critical thinking by teenagers and adolescents in the educational contexts. Consequently, how different levels of critical thinking can be conceptualized in the learning context is one of the studies that can be conducted in the future. Secondly, teachers' success and well-being are also tremendously affected by the way they think. Therefore, from this point of

view, a study can be conducted in the future so as to find the correlation between teachers' critical thinking and other aspects of their lives. The reason why this study should be carried out is that considering the L2 environment, students' way of thinking is impacted by how they are treated by their teachers. Teachers are supposed to equip students with techniques through which the learning process will be facilitated and students' creativity will be boosted, therefore, it is what helps them to be critical thinkers both in the classroom context and out of it. Another line of research that is worth being done is that diverse activities that can enhance learners' ability of critical thinking should be categorized based on learners' characters. In a modern educational world where individual differences are emphasized, classroom activities should be classified, regarding the learning differences of the learners. Therefore, according to Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010); Vdovina and Gaibisso (2013), and Li and Liu (2021), teachers'

critical thinking ability play a vital role in how students are engaged in the class.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Students' Well-Being: The Mediating Roles of Grit and School Connectedness

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A remarkable point in previous decades in every aspect of life is well-being which is also effective in academic settings, and it is consistent with positive psychology, in which one can recognize how to make everything pleasing. Moreover, grit is another noteworthy point in the process of learning, which is at the center of researchers' attention in last years as a result of its long-term eminence. In addition, school connectedness is another important factor that was found to be positively related to students' well-being. Therefore, the current review endeavors to emphasize the mediating role of these two constructs, grit and school connectedness on students' well-being. Successively, some implications are proposed for educators, learners, teacher educators, and materials developers.

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INTRODUCTION

Positive Psychology (PP) has turned into a more popular issue in recent years, to encourage individuals to succeed and achieve (Lopez and Snyder, 2004; Wang et al., 2021) by focusing on the positive aspects of life (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 2011). The PP scholars cannot ignore the presence of difficulties, but primarily add the positive aspects namely energy, optimism, confidence, well-being, enthusiasm, imagination, pleasure, success, grit, endurance, good feelings, intelligence, kindness, self-respect, and sense of humor (Lopez and Snyder, 2004). Researchers are encouraged to examine emotions over a variety of timescales, such as near-term, second by second, as well as long-term, and years by year (MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014). The influence of well-being on life satisfaction has been identified by researchers using PP (Askill-Williams et al., 2013). According to the concept of subjective well-being (SWB), it is a degree of contentment among learners, which is individually determined based on their general satisfaction and other significant life aspects and their perceptions and feelings in terms of their well-being (Diener and Ryan, 2009). SWB has been characterized as the blend of significant degrees of life fulfillment, high self-announced positive affect, and low self-announced negative effect (Kansky and Diener, 2017).

Besides SWB, important outcomes have been linked to SWB in higher education, such as learning ambitions, educational participation, attending classes, choosing a field of study, learning success, and graduation (Nickerson et al., 2011; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021). So, not only enhancing learners' SWB is an important factor, but also it is essential to educational and personal success. Indeed, a learner's emotional connections are closely connected to their well-being. Social behavior and close relationships are common among those with high

positive affect (Eid et al., 2003). For ideal functioning, and well-being, grounded on Self-determination theory (SDT), three distinctive psychological needs, such as autonomy, relatedness, and competence are indispensable (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Among these needs, autonomy support refers to how much the setting allows learners to feel independent and able to determine their decisions without interference (Grolnick, 2003). This autonomy support can be provided from different sources such as parents, teachers, peers, and schools and since learners principally spend their adolescence at schools, it has a notable function not only in the society but also in the scholastic progress of students (Carney et al., 2017).

Aside from character and positive mental orientations, contextual variables impact the healthy growth of adolescents (Parker et al., 2015). Specifically, school is a significant setting in teenagers' day-to-day life, and their sense of connectedness to school impacts their perceived life quality, which is one of the aspects of well-being (You et al., 2008). Creating good connections at school and feeling associated with it are important for advancing positive scholarly results since it is an essential environmental setting for youths and their education (Furrer and Skinner, 2003). Learners who feel that they have received greater consideration and have a place inside the school experience more accomplishments and display less troublesome behaviors inside and outside of school (Brown and Evans, 2005). This idea is well-portrayed by school-connectedness as an indicator of instructive and societal results (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019) and it relates to how well learners can detect that they have a place inside schools or scholarly networks. Moreover, this construct encompasses learners' impression of how they are valued in school settings (Townsend and McWhirter, 2005). As a positive factor of well-being, school connectedness refers to the learners' feeling that educators and classmates (adults and peers) care about academic success and themselves as learners (Shochet et al., 2006). It corresponds with components like emotional well-being, scholastic motivation, and indexes of school performance (Kidger et al., 2012).

On the one hand, comprehensive exploration has discovered that school connectedness is a significant protecting issue for intellectual well-being and constructive youth growth (Lester et al., 2013) and it is related to learner's participation in tasks, scholastic performance, and social development (Watson, 2017). On the other hand, poor school connectedness is related to high-risk manners (Govender et al., 2013). Learners are bound to be successful when they feel associated with their school since that emotion brings about versatility, instructive motivation, enhanced school participation, and fewer interactive issues (Ernestus et al., 2014). As declared by Davis (2006), along with this structure, teenagers who take in a positive school climate and constructive associations with educators have higher grades, accomplishment test scores, scholarly self-efficacy, and school engagement. School connectedness has been connected to a scope of positive scholastic results, including learners' commitment, scholastic accomplishment, achievement prospects, self-efficacy, endeavor, and scholarly enthusiasm (Witherspoon et al., 2009; Niehaus et al., 2016).

Furthermore, another distinctive feature that is deemed as a part of disposition and consequently significant for an individual's life to grasp his/her aims is grit (Akgbag and Ümmet, 2017) and there is an increasing review of literature presenting its effect on well-being. Grit is considered by supporters as a good sign of educational and professional success across a wide array of careers (Duckworth et al., 2007; Maddi et al., 2012). Grit is divided into two factors: persistence of interest, a tendency to continue activities over a long time, and commitment of effort, a willingness to overcome challenges and persevere until success is achieved (Duckworth et al., 2011). Learners' performance and decisions in a variety of contexts are influenced by grit, which is defined as a personal characteristic (Reed et al., 2012). It becomes apparent as one grows and it can be promoted by developing passions, learning techniques, having a direction in life, and creating optimism (Duckworth, 2016). Students with more grit in academic situations are more likely to practice systematically and diligently, exhibit higher attendance rates, and are less likely to switch studies or fields. Additionally, grit tends to induce higher commitments, greater feelings of community, greater participation in extra-curricular activities and improves communication with educators (Bowman et al., 2015). It also produces different teaching methods that are less enjoyable to deal with complex problems (Duckworth et al., 2011). In particular, more gritted students stated that they are more likely to use their aptitudes as they are less motivated by temporary purposes and are less frustrated by obstacles and challenges associated with many types of performance (Credé et al., 2017). Based on the above-mentioned points and their significant effect on learning, the present review makes efforts to take grit and school connectedness together and examine how these issues can work as mediating functions on learners' well-being.

Grit

As stated by Duckworth (2016), grit as a cognitive trait has been predicted to be a tool for accomplishment in a wide variety of fields. Thus, grit has attracted significant interest among researchers. Persistence was originally conceived as a character strength, while being grouped with others by Seligman (2002). Grit has been extended, elaborated, popularized, and established by Duckworth et al. (2007). The capability to persist to accomplish a task despite the obstacles that may appear is tied to grit (Sturman and Zappala-Piemme, 2017). Duckworth presented the construct of grit, as passion and perseverance for long-term objectives (Duckworth et al., 2007). However, the persistence of passion did not guarantee success in educational performance or well-being, although dedication of effort was linked to these (Datu et al., 2017). Furthermore, across individuals throughout the world, the persistence of effort was associated with enhanced well-being and personal qualities, whereas persistence of interest, by contrast, was not positively related to these factors (Disabato et al., 2019). In collectivist settings, being consistent might not be important for learners, since continuously reflecting on individual beliefs and values in different circumstances can disrupt healthy personal interactions (Suh, 2007). Perseverance of effort requires endurance in difficult circumstances to accomplish long-term objectives (Duckworth et al., 2007), while flexibility

is considered as adjusting to changes in a process or objective-associated strategy based on context or environmental issues.

According to Hogan and Wong (2013), gritty learners often put in more effort, persevere, and participate in intentional activities to improve efficiency and achievement. Learners have limitations in terms of performance due to their inherent talents and capabilities and must strive to improve certain aspects of achievement on their own (Duckworth et al., 2011). Learners who are more confident and thoughtful are less frustrated by challenges or obstacles, more attentive to their goals, and more likely to succeed in performing duties and the correlation between grit and wellbeing as intensely influenced by the extent to which a person perceives their world to be meaningful and manageable (Arya and Lal, 2018). Contrary to this, learners with poor gritty tend to be less committed and hard-working, susceptible to distraction by new opportunities, incapable of setting long-term goals, as well as lacking enthusiasm and commitment for long-term projects (Bazelais et al., 2016).

Well-Being

Individuals' experiencing fewer negative emotions, more frequent positive emotions, and more fulfillment in their lives can be known as SWB (Diener, 2012). As it can be inferred from this definition, SWB has two aspects, namely, intellectual and emotional. While individuals' judgment concerning their life fulfillment is the intellectual aspect of SWB, known as satisfaction (Dorahy et al., 2000), the emotive aspect considers both the constructive and destructive emotions (Rask et al., 2002). SWB is thoroughly connected to how an individual assesses his/her own life regarding emotions and intellect (Diener et al., 2003). Thus, an individual's SWB is characterized by his/her internal proficiencies and estimated by his/her point of view. Diener and Ryan (2009) asserted that individuals with developed SWB are inclined to be more inspired, diligent, optimistic, and supportive; moreover, they live longer and their inclination of being egotistical and antagonistic is uncommon. Roberts (2009) mentioned that individuals who have high degrees of grit are effortlessly motivated for objective-oriented practices and resilient attributes in an objective-oriented disposition. For an individual to accomplish his/her objective, these qualities are viewed as the most crucial bases and as stated by Rajabi and Ghezelsefloo (2020), some issue such as job stress, anxiety, and depression can reduce the level of well-being. It can be summarized from these definitions that are possible for an individual who has a grit character quality to accomplish his/her objectives (Vainio and Daukantaitė, 2016). Therefore, individuals who accomplish their objectives with their grit practices are estimated to enhance their well-being.

School Connectedness

School connectedness is broadly connected to school-based adaptive results during puberty (Ciani et al., 2010). The cheerful, agreeable encounters of school connectedness have been decidedly associated with youths' motivated conduct, self-concept, scholarly achievement, improved social and emotional growth, and well-being (Cook et al., 2012). The absence of school connectedness might result in failure, low scholarly performance, high-risk

practices, and weak psychological well-being (Cook et al., 2012). School connectedness is broadly associated with school-based adaptive results during puberty. The cheerful, agreeable encounters of school connectedness have been decidedly associated with youths' motivated conduct, self-concept, scholarly achievement, improved social and emotional growth, and well-being (Walton and Cohen, 2011; Cook et al., 2012).

Regularly situated in talks of "school connectedness" are connections, both inside the school and toward instruction. Constant evidence demonstrates that "school connectedness" is associated with a constructive feeling of well-being (Rowe et al., 2007). It has been proposed, however, that as much as most of all school learners have a challenging feeling of school connectedness (Sulkowski et al., 2012), mainly due to differences with the overall "logic of education." This can prompt learners' withdrawal and tension with educators, reinforcing an absence of connectedness and affecting well-being (Patton et al., 2000). College graduates are known to possess greater grit than some undergraduates who did not finish college (Duckworth et al., 2007). Grittier learners might be better at managing their learning and tracking their progress toward completing or succeeding in a course.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

School connectedness and grit are significant concepts in the field of instruction. Studies have demonstrated that positive associations with educators can forestall or diminish teenagers' involvement in risk practices (Bonell et al., 2007). Therefore, educators and administrators should consider the results of the research if they wish to improve learners' well-being. The educational atmosphere has a significant impact on a learner's well-being, so it makes sense for educational institutions to use methods that are likely to enhance learners' engagement. Highly gritty people are especially prone to be encouraged to look for engagement. Based on the methods of happiness theory, individuals are motivated to seek well-being through engagement, significance, or delight. Von Culin et al. (2014) asserted that people with high degrees of grit were less probable to seek delight, and they proposed this was because of the transient quality of pleasurable encounters, which greatly opposes the long-term engagement of gritty people. According to SDT, social conditions that provide people chances to fulfill the three previously mentioned essential demands will cultivate enthusiasm and mental well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Hence, a school climate that fulfills learners' demands for relatedness, capability, and independence will improve their well-being. A strong feeling of belonging in the school resulted from close communications with educators, staff fellows, supervisors, cleaning staff, and teaching assistants.

This review can be insightful for learners since grit is an important quality as it allows learners to accomplish their objectives in a way that fits their personalities. Indeed, the traits of grit in students are essential for making wise judgments and the positive outlook of grit might give individuals a sense of motivation, which in turn might encourage them to pursue their goals. Having grit in a decision, performing it, and achieving their

targets, is seen as having a positive effect on individual well-being which is determined by the quality of their lives. Concerning the effect of grit on well-being, it can be stated that gritty people demonstrate consistent and persistent behavior to acquire long-term goals in their lives and can easily manage their emotions in case of facing obstacles (Duckworth et al., 2007; Roberts, 2009). Learners with gritty characteristics are persistent and flexible when faced with challenges (Bailly et al., 2012). Furthermore, they perform well under pressure and are not discouraged quickly. This makes them better equipped and capable of meeting their autonomy, expertise, and relationship needs. Consequently, their sense of well-being is significantly improved. Nevertheless, further experimental data are necessary to prove this conclusion. A receptive attitude toward their academic regulations also supported their sense of belonging to the institution as well as provided chances for making a significant improvement to their education (Yuen et al., 2012). The lack of safety in classrooms makes learners feel disconnected from their education, which reduces their motivation to pay attention or participate in academics, which adversely influences their educational performance. An improved sense of school connectedness could result in a positive impact on overall well-being and acts as protection contrary to emotional and psychological health issues in the future.

Regarding teachers, a comprehensive school counseling service should provide educators with relevant resources for educational enhancement so that they are equipped with the necessary expertise and abilities to regard the specific desires of learners in academic, psychological, and social domains. While at most colleges, advisor-to-learner relations are growing, it makes it

more difficult for the college counselor to promote academic connectedness among all learners. Educators and school staff can also work with educational psychologists to develop effective learning communities that promote learner engagement. Interestingly, one of the main aspects of the autonomous theory that supports the requirement for relationship or connection is the interaction between connectedness in education and interdependence (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to SDT, relatedness provides an important mechanism for integrating behaviors that are derived from extrinsic motivation and making them more autonomous. In this case, school officials who satisfy learners' need for relatedness can assist them in feeling more associated with their school members. The result will be better motivation for learners to conduct effective academic behavior. The academic connectedness of learners has been reported to lead to improved performance in class and reduce disruptions in the classroom (Jdaitawi, 2015). Also, to raise emotional well-being for higher education and other educational levels, intervention programs can be developed by material developers along with strategies designed to maximize learners' grit and comfort with their basic personal needs (Duckworth, 2016). Finally, to examine how school connectedness can be intensified, further research, principally experimental ones should be done in this regard.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Teachers' Use of Within-Class Ability Groups in the Primary Classroom: A Mixed Methods Study of Social Comparison

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It is common practice within primary classrooms for teachers to split children into different ability groups so that children of similar level are taught together. Whilst this practice is used across the globe, research is mixed on the benefits of such grouping strategy. This paper presents data collected from mixed methods research which investigated teachers use of grouping strategies and social comparison, the act of comparing oneself with others. It focuses on when, why and with whom children from different ability groups compare themselves and the impact this has on their self-perceptions. Drawing upon data from children aged between 10 and 11 years from 12 primary schools, social comparison was found to play a significant role in daily classroom life for some children. The study identified different strands of the social comparison process including acknowledgment, topic, target, and direction, and it revealed positive and negative effects of social comparison. A difference by ability group was identified. Children within the low ability group were particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of social comparison and found to engage in more frequent and intentional social comparisons which were heavily relied upon for self-evaluation and performance evaluation. The paper discusses the educational implications of social comparison regarding pupil ability grouping strategies, motivation, engagement, and academic performance. Implications for teacher education and professional development is discussed.

Keywords: ability groups, social comparison, self-evaluation, academic performance, teachers, engagement

INTRODUCTION

Many educational systems utilize grouping by ability in which children of similar attainment level are taught together and this practice is increasing internationally (Taylor et al., 2020). In England, grouping by ability is a highly prevalent practice in secondary schools (Taylor et al., 2020) and increasingly common in primary schools where it is encouraged by school leaders and seen as expected practice by teachers (Bradbury and Holmes, 2017). Some authors have suggested that this trend may reflect pressures on teachers to raise standards and meet targets (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018; Bradbury et al., 2021), however, the research for such positive outcomes of grouping is limited. Previous research on the motivation for grouping found that teachers like ability groups (Hallam and Ireson, 2007), pointing to the ease of teaching children of similar level of attainment in terms of differentiation, behavior management, and classroom management

(Muijs and Reynolds, 2005). While these reasons for grouping still prevail recent research suggests that teachers are conflicted about their use of grouping practices and concerned about its impact (Bradbury and Holmes, 2017; McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018). The research evidence appears to be at best mixed on the benefits of ability grouping strategies (Hallam et al., 2004) and at worst 'detrimental' (Liem et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2020) or even 'harmful' (Boliver and Capsada-Munsech, 2021), with researchers highlighting that there is little or no evidence for ability groups (Hattie, 2002, 2009; Marsh et al., 2014). A key issue is that grouping by ability is not simply based on attainment but rather formed through assumptions, bias and judgment by teachers which can lead to exclusion and inequality. Thus, grouping pupils by ability remains controversial (Hallam and Parsons, 2013; Francis et al., 2017).

Ability grouping strategies tend to involve either allocating children into *different* classes or allocating children to different groups within the *same* class. Grouping children into *different* classes is referred to as 'streaming' or 'setting.' Streaming' is where children are grouped across classes in a year level according to current attainment and this grouping remains constant across subjects. 'Streaming' therefore means that children are taught in the same group ('stream') for all/most of their subjects. 'Setting' involves allocating children to different ability 'sets' for different subjects, e.g., Mathematics and English, but this often doesn't involve all subjects across the curriculum. In contrast to setting and streaming, within-class ability grouping involves forming groups of children within their usual class for specific subjects or activities. Children of similar attainment levels are grouped together and tend to be allocated to specific tables so they sit/work together in their group. Within-class ability grouping means that all children within the class are taught by the same class teacher and tend to follow the same curriculum. Children in the different groups are given different levels of challenge, expectations, and support. The teacher may use different ability groupings for different topics, tasks, activities as well choose to utilize mixed-ability groupings where children are selected from different ability levels to form groups.

Pitfalls associated with the practice of streaming and setting have been identified including the negative impact on children's performance and self-concept (Marsh, 1984b; Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987; Liem et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2020) and although within-class ability groupings are common place in English primary schools (schools catering for children aged 5–11) some research has suggested there is a potential for negative effects on pupils assigned to the low-ability groups (MacIntyre and Ireson, 2002; Muijs and Reynolds, 2005; Boliver and Capsada-Munsech, 2021). This calls for teachers to consider the impact of the grouping strategies they are employing and the way they are assigning children to ability groups, yet research points to the arbitrary, unplanned, and less than satisfactory way groups are formed within primary schools.

Measures of prior/current performance are used by teachers to form groups and thus 'achievement' rather than 'ability' is sometimes used to refer to these groupings. That said, the assumption that groups are based solely on measures of attainment is far from accurate. Muijs and Dunne (2010)

examined how teachers decide upon ability groups and found that, although they were based to a large part on actual prior attainment, teachers were also influenced by factors such as special educational needs and social class. Thus, teachers add their own criteria to decide which ability group children should be allocated. This illustrates the subjective nature of grouping mechanisms and as such there is a danger of exclusion and inequality whereby teachers are forming groups on their own opinions (Campbell, 2014). Furthermore, given groupings are to a large extent imposed by the individual classroom teachers, children (i.e., the group members) tend to have no input into the formation, implementation or functioning of the groupings. Indeed, Kutnick (1990, p. 119) suggests that peer relations are defined by the "society and structured interactions" in which children are allowed to participate and the lack of choice and lack of empowerment for children in the decision-making process has implications for group interactions.

Social interactions in the classroom have long been known to be important for student motivation, learning, and academic performance (Juvonen and Wentzel, 1996; Buhs and Ladd, 2001). Children typically spend significant time interacting with their peers (Dijkstra et al., 2011), particularly near-seated peers (Van den Berg et al., 2012), and research shows the importance of classmates and friendships (Rambaran et al., 2017; Maunder and Monks, 2019) and liked-minded peers for belonging (Riley and White, 2016). Indeed, previous research has suggested that children spend more time interacting with their peers than in one to one or small group interactions with their teachers (Galton, 1989). Moreover, with the focus on collaborative group work and peer-led tasks in contemporary classrooms (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007; van Drie and Dekker, 2013), pupil-pupil interactions play an increasing role in teaching and learning.

Research on pupil-pupil interaction focusing on social comparisons (the act of comparing oneself with others) show that children compare their own achievements, abilities, or characteristics with that of their peers which leads them to feel more positive or negative about their own competencies. Such judgments of self in relation to others can have a significant impact on children's performance (Blanton et al., 1999; Huguet et al., 2001), self-evaluations (Frey and Ruble, 1985; Crabtree and Rutland, 2001), self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Webb-Williams, 2018), and a large body of work on the Big Fish Little Pond Effect (BFLPE) conducted by Marsh and colleagues (e.g., Marsh, 1984b; Marsh et al., 1995; Marsh and Hau, 2003) has shown social comparisons to be central to the formation of academic self-concept.

The classroom environment is the perfect context for social comparisons to occur as it provides an abundance of comparative information, as pupils work together and share ideas, allowing observation of information about peers including assignments, classwork, grades, discussions as well as teacher feedback. We know that this social comparative information is used by children to judge themselves, but questions remain about the underlying process. How is the social comparative information in the classroom experienced by children? Do children of different levels of attainment interpret the information differently? What impact does peer comparisons have on children's thoughts,

feelings and behaviors and how are these acted out in the classroom environment? The answers to these questions are pivotal to our understanding of social comparison processes in the classroom. If we can provide teachers with information to help them support social comparison, we can potentially create positive outcomes for children. This is particularly salient because when grouping by ability teachers instruct children to work together or sit together in groups giving little choice to the child over who they interact. This means that teachers have the power to alter pupil–pupil interaction and thus directly impact children’s social comparison processes. This raises questions regarding whether teachers plan for pupil–pupil interaction or whether they only plan for their own interactions with pupils. Previous research examining classroom groupings suggest that groups tend to be formed by teachers with little regard to the “social pedagogic potential” of the group (Blatchford et al., 2003, p. 156) and thus issues such as size, composition and pupil–pupil interaction, and friendships are often ignored (Gremmen et al., 2018).

To date social comparison, despite its long history of research, doesn’t appear to be a strong feature of educational practice. Some have suggested that inconsistent findings in research has made it difficult to provide useful suggestions for educational practice yet it is argued here that the reliance on large scale quantitative laboratory studies means that the findings are difficult to contextualize in real world classroom settings. Some authors have raised caution over generalization of forced hypothetical measures of social comparison given differences in findings between field studies and laboratory studies (Dijkstra et al., 2008; Gerber et al., 2018; Boissicat et al., 2020). Qualitative research could provide the missing contextual understanding and richness of data.

This paper addresses this gap by qualitative and quantitative data to explore the nature of social comparison in within-class ability groups in English primary schools. The aim is to understand the ways in which social comparison is experienced by children within different ability groups. If we can gain more information on how this powerful construct works in the classroom environment, we will be better placed to arm teachers with information to support ability grouping decision making.

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory, originally proposed by Festinger (1954), is concerned with the processes involved in comparing ourselves with others. Social comparison, therefore, can be seen as an examination of the accuracy of one’s self-beliefs and attitudes. In this way social comparison theory encapsulates an important aspect of human social life; that other people provide the standards against which one can judge oneself. Wood (1996) furthers this definition of social comparison as the process of thinking about information about one or more other people in relation to the self (p. 521). In this definition Wood (1996) expands the meaning of social comparison to incorporate comparisons with stereotypes and hypothetical characters.

People seek social comparison when it is not possible to base self-evaluations on objective non-social criteria, preferring to compare themselves with people that they identify as being

similar to themselves. In this way social comparison leads toward uniformity, that is, a difference of opinions or abilities tends to be accompanied by a change in oneself to be like others or change in others to be like oneself. Extending this theory, Brickman and Bulman (1977) showed that people not only seek social comparisons but also *avoid* them. In seeking social comparisons people gain valuable information and learn through observation of others. This “adaptive” consequence of social comparison contrasts with the “hedonic” consequences such as preservation of well-being which occur when people avoid social comparisons. Relating social comparison theory to the classroom context, it is easy to see why children may try to *seek* or *avoid* comparisons with particular peers and why knowledge of this, together with the knowledge that social comparisons can occur at the intragroup, intergroup and personal level (Guimond, 2006), would be important to teachers forming groups.

Social Comparison in the Classroom

In their review of social comparison in the classroom, Dijkstra et al. (2008) note the long history of social comparison research, yet the multiple transformations of the theory from Festinger’s (1954) original work. They highlight the move away from self-evaluation as the only motive for social comparison but that individuals hold many reasons for social comparison such as self-enhancement and self-improvement (Wood, 1989; Collins, 2000; Dijkstra et al., 2008). Moreover, over the past 40 years the research literature has provided strong evidence that social comparisons operate at multiple different levels within educational settings.

The Big Fish Little Pond Effect (BFLPE, Marsh, 1984a, 1987; Trautwein et al., 2009; Liem et al., 2013) has shown that students of comparable ability do better in lower-achieving classes or schools than in higher-achieving classes or schools. The understanding here is that children evaluate themselves more favorably against low-ability others than comparing to higher performing others which can lead to negative feelings about their own ability. Thus, it is better for a student’s self-evaluation and academic self-concept to be a big fish in a large pond than a small fish in a big pond. Considerable evidence of this phenomenon has shown it to be robust internationally across gender and culture, arguing it be a result of social comparison (Marsh, 1987).

While BFLPE operates due to social comparisons, inconsistencies with Social Comparison Theory led researchers to call for direct evidence of the social comparison processes within BFLPE (Dai and Rinn, 2008). Following the work by Huguet et al. (2009) BFLPE was shown to be routed in how students compare with their school or class taken as a whole. School or class level comparisons in the BFLPE operate by using a generalized frame of reference where individuals make comparisons to the average/general ability of their class or school. School/class comparisons can operate independently to local social comparisons which operate at the individual level using one or a few people in the immediate environment as the frame of reference. The Local Dominance Effect (Buckingham and Alicke, 2002; Zell and Alicke, 2010) has shown that local comparisons with a small number of individuals has a stronger

influence on self-evaluations than general comparisons with larger aggregates.

In addition to group and individual social comparisons, certain key elements of social comparison research appear to be significant when considering the decisions teachers make about ability-grouping namely are discussed below: (1) the negative and positive impact of social comparison direction and target and (2) social comparison and self-evaluation, and (3) the relationship between social comparison and performance.

Social Comparison and Self-Evaluation

Social comparisons have long been shown to be pivotal to self-evaluations. Crabtree and Rutland (2001) found that self-perceptions of competence changed significantly when the social comparative context was artificially altered. In the primary school classroom, the teacher may alter the social comparative context regularly by instructing children to work together in different groups for different subjects or activities. In doing so teachers alter children's self-evaluations, knowingly or unknowingly. The issue is that self-evaluations based on social comparison and normative information can have a negative impact self-evaluations and academic behaviors, e.g., effort and engagement and some research has suggested that this negative impact is particularly acute for low achievers (Levine, 1983). This may indicate that disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to the threat of comparisons and that they use strategies to protect themselves from this threat. Indeed, self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1988) assumes that all individuals try to maintain a positive self-evaluation and utilize alternative ways in which social comparative information is received and processed. According to self-evaluation maintenance theory, by altering ones performance, the relevance of the domain or the closeness of the comparison target one can protect one's self-evaluation. The more important or relevant a domain to one's identity the more likely one will suffer a lower self-evaluation. For example, if one attaches a high value to a particular domain and as such it is viewed as part of the individuals identity then that individual will hold a lower self-evaluation when a close friend achieves a higher accolade.

Direction and Target of Social Comparison

Previous research has tended to focus on who people seek to compare themselves with, the 'social comparison target' (SCT). For example, research conducted over two decades ago found that children at secondary school compare themselves upwards with a comparison target that slightly outperforms them (Blanton et al., 1999; Huguet et al., 2001). Research like this has provided many valuable insights regarding the affective consequences of social comparison and the direction of social comparison. The direction of social comparison (upwards, downwards, or horizontal) is a key concept within social comparison theory, e.g., Suls and Wheeler (2000). People who seek improvement make "upward" comparisons with people superior to themselves and people who seek preservation make "downward" comparisons with inferior others. However, researchers identified some time ago that social comparisons can result in positive and negative effects depending upon whether they are perceived as *contrasts*

or *assimilations* (Mussweiler et al., 2004). *Contrasts* occur when individuals emphasize the differences between themselves and the comparison target. Making contrasts in downward comparisons is likely to produce feelings of superiority and confidence whereas making contrasts in upward comparisons tends to lead to feelings of jealousy and inadequacy. *Assimilations* can also have positive and negative consequences. When individuals make assimilations they emphasize their similarities to the comparison target. Thus, upward assimilations are associated with learning and growth as individuals aim to be more like the comparison target. However, making assimilations with downward comparisons has the opposite effect since individuals focus on the similarities between themselves and the lower comparison target leading to increased anxiety and self-doubt. The direction of comparison could therefore give us important information about how children feel when assigned to different ability groups. Indeed, upward comparisons between groups (intergroup) can reduce group identification and lower self-esteem (Smith et al., 1994). In contrast, downward intergroup comparison can enhance self-esteem and increase group identification (Martinot and Redersdorff, 2003, 2006). It should be noted that according to some researchers (e.g., Hogg, 2000) these orientations can co-occur depending upon personal motives such as self-enhancement or self-evaluation.

Social Comparison and Performance

Social comparison theory also has important implications for task performance and some research has suggested that upward comparisons can enhance performance. For example, Blanton et al. (1999) found that upward comparison predicted academic performance in secondary school, Levine (1983) reported that social comparison affects aspects of performance such as attention and persistence, Monteil (1988) found that the performance of adolescents differed according to the amount of social comparative information given, and Vrugt (1994) found that high comparative evaluations were associated with less negative feelings about school which were associated with better academic performance. That said, the impact of social comparison on measures of academic performance has not been systematically studied (Huguet et al., 2001). However, it has been established that children pay more attention to how their performance compares to that of their peers than to how their performance compares to their own past performance (Ruble and Flett, 1988; Gremmen et al., 2018) which suggests that perceptions of performance rather than actual performance is important. Thus, with its implications for social interaction, groupings, self-evaluations and academic performance social comparison research can provide important educational implications.

Measurement of Social Comparison

One issue within the field concerns measurement of the construct. Researchers such as Ruble (1983) and Harter (1996) have suggested that people are reluctant to admit to engaging in social comparison which provides a difficulty in obtaining valid responses from participants. As Buunk and Gibbons (2000) note, it is most likely that there are a variety of factors resulting in

an individual's reluctance to admit that they compare themselves with others. It may be a cognitive lack of awareness, an issue of social desirability and/or it may be partly dispositional.

Further limitations of social comparison measures are that they have tended to focus on forced hypothetical social comparisons. These measures are forced because typically the researcher will present individuals with a task or a scenario, and then ask them to judge themselves relative to the performance of others on the task/scenario. Thus, individuals are forced to compare as they have no option but to answer, yet whether the individual would actually compare like this spontaneously is unknown. Thus, some researchers have cautioned about generalizing these findings and raise the issue that results from such designs may differ from studies examining everyday/spontaneous comparisons (Dijkstra et al., 2008; Gerber et al., 2018; Boissicat et al., 2020). Indeed, in a recent meta-analysis of 60 years of social comparison work Gerber et al. (2018) found differences in the findings from field studies to laboratory studies. Whilst reporting bias and potential halo effects of direct comparison measures (e.g., comparative ratings) may be small, there is an acknowledgment that these methods need more work to "evaluate their psychometric properties and construct validity in relation to social comparison processes" Marsh et al. (2014, p. 62). Moreover, forced comparisons conducted in a laboratory limit real world application (Wood, 2000), and researchers have therefore suggested employing a range of methods (Wood, 1996, 2000) and to introduce methods which reduce the social desirability effects (Light and Littleton, 1999). Moreover, measuring social comparisons that occur in daily life have been advocated to increase ecological validity and gain greater understanding of comparisons (Argio et al., 2019). While research of 'everyday' comparisons self-reports and daily diaries naturalistically have been conducted (Wheeler and Miyake, 1992; Möller and Husemann, 2006; Summerville and Roese, 2008; Argio et al., 2019) there remains a gap in the field as qualitative/mixed methods designs are still relatively rare in social comparison research within education.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

Given the research discussed above, the current study aimed to:

- (1) To gain an understanding of the nature of social comparison within primary school.
- (2) To understand the ways in which social comparison is experienced by children within different within-class ability groups.
- (3) To explore the effects of social comparison on children's self-evaluations.

To address these issues the present study employed a range of strategies to measure social comparison, focusing on social comparisons that occur in an everyday context in the natural classroom environment. By utilizing a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods the aim was to uncover the complexity of social comparisons in the classroom and provide rich descriptions of school children's experiences of social

comparison, thereby furthering our understanding of peer-peer interactions in ability groups.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected together in a parallel mixed model design (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Following the guidelines of mixed method design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017) the aim of this approach was to gather quantitative measures of social comparison together with qualitative data of children's experiences, explanations and understandings of social comparisons. The intent of the design was to gain a better understanding of social comparison in the classroom. Whilst the quantitative and qualitative measures weren't administered at exactly the same time, the minimal time lapse between the methods was such that the design was considered concurrent (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). The rationale for the use of mixed methods was threefold: triangulation (convergence of results from different methods), complementarity (elaboration/illustration of results from one method to the other method) as well as expansion of the breadth of the research by using different methods. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) suggests, the design of the study needs to match the research questions and as such many mixed methods studies are not designed with equal importance in the quantitative and qualitative aspects. In practice, one method often drives the study and the other method is used to confirm, explain, describe or expand the data collected using the other method. In the current study, the qualitative aspect of the study was given a dominant status (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The reason for such status lies in the aims of the study which focus on understanding and exploration of children's experiences of social comparison, and the extended (repeated) semi-structured interview data collection phase relative to the shorter quantitative phase. On considering the design matrix of mixed methods research the study can be categorized as 'QUAL + quan' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morse, 2009). The use of capitals denotes the priority of the qualitative aspect, the '+' denotes the concurrent mixed methods design, and the lower case denotes the supplementary nature of the quantitative data. That said the qualitative and quantitative data were concurrently collected and analyzed separately before being integrated in the interpretation phase. Thus, considering priority, implementation, and integration in the mixed methods design and given that the research questions aimed to explore children's experiences of social comparisons, the qualitative data in the present study was prioritized. Consistent with such mixed methods design (Zhang and Creswell, 2013; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017) the integration of the qualitative and quantitative data (the mixing) occurred during the results and interpretation stage and are presented in the Results narrative.

Participants and Procedures

Two hundred and forty-six children aged between 10 and 11 years (mean age 10.2 years; 117 girls, 129 boys) participated in the

study. The large majority of children (94%) were identified as White British. Children attended twelve English primary schools educating children aged between 4 and 11 years. Schools varied in size and included small and large schools (roll size ranged from 138 to 667). No relationship existed between the researcher and the participating schools. Schools were chosen according to geographical location (all schools were located in East Anglia in the United Kingdom) and all schools were identified as employing within-class ability grouping. In each school one Year 6 class (children aged 10–11 years) was nominated by the Principal to participate in the study. All children in that class whose parent/guardian had provided consent completed a social comparison questionnaire (described below). Stratified random sampling was used to select children for interview according to gender (boys, girls) and teacher assigned within-class ability grouping (high, medium, low). Each class teacher provided details of the within-class ability-groupings. While some teachers used more than three groups, all teachers allocated children to groups to the most frequent group the child was assigned which they classified as low-ability, medium-ability, and high-ability. One child from each of the three ability-groupings (high, medium, low) was selected from each school. Prior to commencement of data collection, each school received a list with the selected children. At this point teachers were asked to confirm availability and to check ability group assignment. In instances where a child was unavailable (e.g., illness or timetabled events) the pupil was excluded, and another pupil selected. In instances where teachers indicated that the child was not a good fit in the assigned group (low, medium, high) for example when a child was assigned as ‘medium’ ability but was not medium across all core subjects (maths, science, and English) another child was selected. Thirty-six pupils (18 boys, 18 girls) were involved in the individual interviews, three children from each of the 12 schools. The researcher visited each school three times over a 12-week period, administering all questionnaires in the first visit, and conducting all interviews in visit two and three. The study was conducted in compliance with the British Educational Research Associations Ethical Guidelines and appropriate ethical approvals and consents where obtained.

Instruments: Social Comparison Measures

Previous research suggests that a number of ways of accessing social comparison should be employed (Wood, 1996; Gerber et al., 2018). The current study included three categories of measurement in the quantitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews:

- (1) the *selection approach* examined the information children sought when making social comparisons,
- (2) the *reaction approach* examined the impact of social comparison,
- (3) the *narration approach* examined children’s everyday social comparisons.

Quantitative Instruments: Social Comparison Questionnaires

Paper copies of the quantitative questionnaire were distributed by the researcher during the first visit to each school. To reduce

potential misunderstanding of the topic, the researcher informed the children prior to the administration of the questionnaire that social comparison did not mean copying (see below). Children were asked not to discuss the questionnaire with others but to complete the questions on their own using pen or pencil. Children identified as needing support were helped with reading, understanding and/or writing by the researcher or teacher. Responses required an open written response, e.g., “Describe how you feel when your schoolwork is not as good as other peoples?” or required a response to a question using a Likert scale with content descriptors for each point for example ‘Do you compare your schoolwork with other people? (1 = Yes, 2 = No, 3 = Not sure). As mentioned above the social comparison questionnaire included questions across selection, reaction and narration categories.

Selection Approach: Quantitative

The techniques used with this study included a modified version of the rank order paradigm developed in seminal work by Wheeler (see Wheeler, 1991) and comparison target (Blanton et al., 1999). In the *rank order paradigm* participants were presented with information about the rank order of a hypothetical test. The children did not actually complete the test, as in the original paradigm. Instead they were asked to imagine a scenario in which they had been given the results of a test and asked to imagine they held the middle rank. Children were then asked to select one rank whose score they would like to know (1 = the top, 2 = just below top, 3 = above middle, 4 = just below middle, 5 = the bottom). In this way direction of comparison (up or down) was assessed. Next *SCT* was assessed using a free choice approach (Huguet et al., 2001) where children were asked to respond to questions about the pupil with whom they typically compare. Children were asked to circle the most appropriate. (1 = They are good at the subject, 2 = They sit next to me, 3 = They are the best in the class at the subject, 4 = They are bad at the subject, 5 = They sit next to me, 6 = They are the worst in the class at the subject, 7 = They help me, 8 = Other). Participants then described how good their SCT was compared with other classmates (1 = much worse, 2 = a little better, 3 = the same, 4 = a little better, 5 = much better).

Reaction Approach: Quantitative

To examine the impact of social comparisons, questions focused on affective responses to positive and negative assessments in relation to others. Participants described how they felt when their schoolwork was not as good as, or better than others. Responses were coded as 1 = positive, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral.

Narration Approach: Quantitative

The narration approach to measurement of social comparison refers to methods in which individuals report the comparisons they make during their everyday lives. Participants were asked whether they compared their schoolwork with others (1 = Yes, 2 = No, 3 = Not sure), how often they compared (1 = Never, 2 = Not often, 3 = every week, 4 = every day, 5 = All the time) and asked what subject they tend to compare (1 = Maths, 2 = English, 3 = Science, 4 = Sport, 5 = Other).

Qualitative Instruments: Semi Structured Interviews

The general aim was to understand children's experience of social comparison. Interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the children's responses. This ensured that pupils could freely explore, discuss and describe issues, observations and self-reflections as they desired. Every child was asked a similar set of semi-structured interview questions. As recommended by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), the funnel interview was used since it is directly applicable to mixed methods research. In this type of interview, the researcher mixes open and closed-ended questions, starting with broad questions and ending with focused issues. Interviews, which were conducted on school premises, tended to last no longer than 20 min and all responses were audio taped. All interviews included some 'get to know you' questions in order to build rapport between the researcher and participants. In order to remove potential issues due to social desirability and ensure children understood the terms used, any questions that directly asked about social comparison were accompanied with clarification of social comparison as opposed to copying. It was important that the children did not confuse comparison with copying. The latter is frowned upon in a school environment and thus any questions regarding this would potentially produce socially desirable answers rather than what children truly think, feel and behave. Of the 36 pupils interviewed, 12 pupils were in the "high" group, 12 pupils in the "low" group and 12 pupils in the "medium" group. Thus, an even number of pupils were interviewed at each ability group. Children were interviewed twice by the same researcher, with a 3-week break between interviews. The interviews were guided by children's responses and covered all three approaches to social comparison measurement (discussed above). The list below gives an indication of the questions asked:

- Do you compare your schoolwork with other children?
- Why do you compare and how often?
- What subject do you tend to compare more in?
- Why do you think you compare more in this subject?
- Who do you compare you work with and why this person?
- How does it make you feel when you compare with this person?
- How good are you at school subjects compared with this person?
- Describe what makes you think this.
- How good at work is this person compared with others in the group/class?
- What makes you think this?
- How good are you at school subjects compared to the others?
- How can you tell?
- How does it make you feel when you compare against someone who is better than you?
- How does it make you feel when you compare against someone who is worse than you?

Analytic Approach

The general aim was to understand children's experience of social comparison. Audio tapes of the interviews were transcribed.

Transcriptions and field notes were then analyzed using open coding to identify themes and look for patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Inductive and deductive approaches to analysis were utilized and coding involved two levels, a data driven level and a theoretically driven level. For the first level coding social comparison theory provided theoretical guidance (Festinger, 1954; Wheeler, 1991; Wood, 1996; Dijkstra et al., 2008). For example, 'target' (SCT) was coded when children referred to the person they compare with, and direction was coded when children mentioned the target's performance relative to themselves, e.g., 'he is above me in maths.' For the second level of analysis codes emerged that were not necessarily part of the theoretical framework. The two levels of analysis provided a balance of findings from both deductive and inductive approaches which are important for theory and practice.

Once codes were assigned, some of the data was quantified by counting frequency of occurrences to examine patterns within the sample and to reveal patterns within and across attainment groups. Children's narratives and responses were combined with the frequency counts to retain the rich description of the children's experiences. For example, it was determined that the effect of social comparison was the most frequently discussed theme amongst the children in the study, however the richness of the data provided greater detail about the range of effects, how children of different ability levels recalled these experiences and which experiences were particularly salient. After first-level codes were assigned to all transcripts, a number of interviews were reviewed together with the codes by a researcher independent to the study to check the accuracy of the coding and remove codes that were irrelevant or repeated. Codes that were similar and that were related to one another when then combined to create high-levels codes in tree-node/hierarchical axial format. This allowed for codes to be revised again. The final analysis consisted of a total of 41 codes and six tree-nodes (acknowledgment, frequency, topic, target, direction, and impact).

The study involved analysis of the qualitative interview data and analysis of the quantitative social comparison questionnaire. Scores were taken directly from the questionnaires and entered into SPSS and descriptive statistics were performed. Any written responses to questionnaires were coded and entered. On the rare occasion when an answer was ambiguous (e.g., when the pupil's handwriting was difficult to read) a second marker (a teacher) independently assessed the response. Given the core component of the study was qualitatively driven to explore and describe the nature of children's social comparisons, the point of interface of the quantitative component is in the Results narrative as is commonly seen in mixed methods research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

RESULTS

Considering the quantitative findings first, 71.1% ($n = 175$) of children acknowledged their engagement in social comparison, with 14.2% ($n = 35$) saying they do not compare and 14.6% ($n = 36$) saying they were not sure. Nearly half of the sample (48.8%, $n = 120$) said they engaged in social comparison

TABLE 1 | Reasons for selection of social comparison target.

Reason	N	Percentage %
They are a friend	121	49.2
They are good at the subject	78	31.7
They sit next to me	19	7.7
They are the best in the class	11	4.5
They help me	8	3.3
They are the worst in the class	5	2.0
They are bad at the subject	2	0.8
Other	2	0.8

TABLE 2 | Social Comparison Subject selection.

Subject	N	Percentage
English	31	12.6%
Maths	94	38.2%
Science	85	34.6%
Sport	24	9.8%
Other*	12	4.9%

*No common theme in 'other' category. Categories included art ($n = 5$), projects ($n = 4$).

TABLE 3 | Modified rank order paradigm: information children select to compare.

Score choice	% ($n = 246$)
Top score	38.2 ($n = 94$)
Just below top	11.4 ($n = 28$)
Just above middle	34.5 ($n = 85$)
Just below middle	10.1 ($n = 26$)
Bottom score	5.3 ($n = 13$)

infrequently. However, 40.2% ($n = 99$) stated that they would compare themselves to others every day. Friendship was provided as the key reason for selecting a social comparison target (see **Table 1**).

Maths and Science were the main topics identified by children as being the subjects in which they were more likely to compare (see **Table 2**).

Table 3 displays the information children seek when making comparisons. Using the modified rank order paradigm (see reaction approach above) **Table 3** shows the rank of the scores children selected to view. Aggregation of the ranks above the middle (top score, just below top, just above the middle) shows that 84.1% of the pupils compared upwards and choose to gain access to knowledge of scores above their current achievement level. Aggregation of ranks in the top bands (top score, just below top) shows 49.6% of children showed a strong upwards trend, while 44.6% choose to compare close to the middle (just above the middle, just below the middle) indication of horizontal comparison.

Analysis of the scores on the comparative rating question confirmed an upwards direction with the mean score of 3.61 (standard deviation 0.84) indicating that the social comparison target tended to lie between points 3 ("the same as the rest of the class") and 4 ("better than the rest of the class"). Thus,

TABLE 4 | Emotional response: judgments being better or worse than others.

Response	Worse than others	Better than others
Positive	3.7% ($n = 9$)	85.8% ($n = 211$)
Negative	58.9% ($n = 145$)	1.2% ($n = 3$)
Neutral	37.4% ($n = 92$)	13% ($n = 32$)

TABLE 5 | Overview of themes and sub-themes.

Theme	Sub-theme	Theme	Sub-theme
Theme 1: Acknowledgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure • Awareness • Conscious • Unconscious • Self/Others • Comparative information • Frequency of comparison 	Theme 4: Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upwards • Downwards • Horizontal • Assimilations • Contrasts
Theme 2: Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum area • Enjoyment • Perceived ability • Intentional • Encountered • Forced • Teachers 	Theme 5: Self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Help • Learning • Attainment • Competition • Self-improvement • Misperception
Theme 3: Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendships • Groups • Seating • Ability • Support • Similarity • Gender 	Theme 6: Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative • Double edged • Attitudes to school • Effect on self • Effect on peers • Effect on family

pupils chose to compare with a target who they thought slightly outperformed the majority of the pupils in the class.

Table 4 shows the effects of comparison where 85.8% of children held positive feelings when they were judged as being better than others, and 96.3% of children held negative or neutral feelings when their performance was worse than others.

Social Comparison Themes

The analysis presented below in **Table 5** focuses on the six strands of social comparison that were identified in the data analysis: (1) acknowledgment of social comparison, (2) comparison topic, (3) social comparison target, (4) direction of comparison, (5) self-evaluation, and (6) effects of social comparison. The discussion below considers the qualitative responses of children in different within-class ability groups and highlights of the richness of this data in elucidating the children's experiences of social comparison. The quantitative description is used to expand certain details of these results.

Theme 1: Acknowledgment of Social Comparison

When first asked, 75% of the children interviewed said they compared their schoolwork with others in their class. A similar response (71%) was evident *via* questionnaire. The following response was typical:

“yeh...I like to see whether people have the same ideas as me...I like comparing my work but I don't always do it” (boy, medium ability-group).

A difference according to ability groups was observed with 100% of the children assigned to the low-ability groups acknowledging their use of social comparison compared to 58% of those in middle group and 67% in the high group. Not only does this signal a difference in the quantity of social comparisons according to ability grouping but also a difference in the implicit/explicit quality of social comparisons according to ability appeared to be occurring. Although all pupils were able to talk of themselves in relation to others the low ability pupils used comparison more frequently, to a greater extent to judge their own performance and appeared to use social comparison in a more deliberate and explicit way.

Analysis of the interview data of those pupils who failed to immediately acknowledge their use of social comparison appeared to reveal an unconscious/automatic nature of social comparison for children in other ability groups. For example, despite denying that they used social comparison when asked directly, all pupils' responses to indirect questioning suggested that they did in fact compare. For example, the quotes below shows the different responses to interview questions from the *same* pupil. When asked “Do you compare your schoolwork with others?” the pupil's response was negative. Yet when replying to the question “How do you judge how good or bad you are at schoolwork?” the same child's answer showed that they compared often.

Do you compare your schoolwork with others?

Carol: *Not normally no*

How do you judge how good or bad you are at schoolwork?

Carol: *.....well....I know I have done my best and I can't do any more so I don't judge my ability on what others have done but I do like to see what others have done especially in science and I compare with them quite often.*

Theme 2: Social Comparison Topic

What is striking about the pupil's words quoted above is how the curriculum area in which she used social comparison was identified. Thirty-two of the 36 children interviewed spontaneously identified the specific subject or subjects in which they more likely to compare their work. As in the quantitative questionnaire, Maths and Science were nominated most frequently by pupils. Pupils of different ability groups appeared to be similar in their responses in that not only did the children identify a specific curriculum area but many of the pupils gave a clear reason as to *why* they were more likely to compare in this subject than in others. The reasons given fell into two categories; enjoyment (I like/don't like the topic) and perceived ability (I am good/not good at it), as illustrated by the quotes below. These findings relate to the Local Dominance Effect (Buckingham and Alicke, 2002; Zell and Alicke, 2010) (see section “Discussion”).

Sue: I compare sometimes in particular lessons more in English as I am not so good at English and other people are better than me.

Paul: Yes, in Art because most people are better than me.

James: I like to compare in lessons where maybe I could have done better, my weaker subject.

Sally: more in science. It is my strongest subject; I really like it and I want to do well.

Tom: I compare in all the subjects I don't understand. I get confused in English and it's boring and the teacher is rubbish so I don't like that subject and I compare in that.

Theme 3: Social Comparison Target

Children were asked to nominate one person that they normally compare their schoolwork with (SCT). This comparison is referred to here as an everyday ‘real’ comparison as children are not forced in selecting a preferred comparison given a hypothetical scenario but instead to select a person in their class that they actually do compare with; a real comparison. The nomination of one self-selected SCT allowed further examination of the qualities of self-selected comparisons.

Friendships were a key factor in the choice of SCT in both the quantitative questionnaire (see **Table 1**) and in the qualitative interviews, regardless of ability group. That said, the interviews revealed that other requirements of the comparison target were sought after in addition to friendship. Pupils wanted their SCT to provide help or be good at a particular subject.

Julia: she is a friend and she sometimes gets it right better than others.

Harriet: she is a close friend.....she struggles at maths and English but she is better at science.....well I think so. We do work well together.

Sam: he is a friend and he listens to me and says what I got wrong, others like Ben just mess around.

Whilst pupils were easily able to identify the SCT they compare with the most, in the interview's children's ‘free responses’ provided evidence of comparison with more than one SCT and occasionally different SCT's for different topics. No child referred to more than three SCT's. Seating/table assignment was a key influence on self-selection of the SCT as the quotes below illustrate:

Sarah: I compare to the person I sit next to who is a friend. I compare more if I sit next to a friend. Only if I get stuck will I compare with someone who is not a friend.

Jack: in science we can sit next to whoever we like...If I sit next to a friend I am more likely to compare although if I don't understand then I'd compare with someone in the group even if they are not a friend.

While ‘free choice’ self-selection of SCT was preferred by all children, it appeared that to some extent the SCT is a forced option rather than a deliberate choice in the groups. Many

pupils spoke of being allocated places by their teachers and as a result having to compare with the person sitting next to them. The forced comparisons were associated with lower frequency of comparisons as illustrated in the quotes above, with pupils saying they only compare if they are struggling and more likely to compare if they can choose a friend to compare with.

Theme 4: Direction of Comparison

As previously discussed, the direction of comparison can be upwards, downwards, or horizontal. That is, pupils can compare themselves with someone above their ability level, below their ability level or with someone at the same level of ability. Different methods were used to gauge direction of comparison. The reaction approach used comparative rating to ask pupils to rate themselves against others and thus explored pupil's perception of relative ability. It is important to bear in mind that this is not actual ability, but perceived ability as judged by each pupil. This method suggested that pupils compared themselves upwards (69%) or horizontally (25%) (25 pupils said they were the same as the rest of the class, 9 said better and 2 said worse). The quantitative questionnaire confirmed this upwards/horizontal finding. The mean score of 3.61 indicated that on the whole pupils said their comparison target was between "the same as the rest of the class" (point 3) and "better than the rest of the class" (point 4).

The selection approach confirmed the upward direction of comparison using the adapted rank order paradigm pupils were given a hypothetical scenario and asked to select a SCT based on rank (see quantitative measures for detailed description). When presented with this scenario 31 of the 36 children (86%) chose to view a score above their own (above the middle) and 5 chose to view a score below their own (3 of which were from the low ability group). Similar results were found quantitatively with 84% choosing to view above the middle rank (see **Table 3**). Due to the scenario forcing children to choose a different rank to the one they occupied there was no specific measurement of horizontal comparisons in this approach, however, aggregating scores around the middle revealed that 44.6% choose to compare close to the middle (indicating horizontal comparisons) 49.6% of children choose top bands indicating a strong upwards preference. Thus closer inspection suggests preference for upwards or horizontal social comparison.

The narration approach confirmed the upwards/horizontal direction with approx. half of the children comparing upwards and half horizontal. When asked about the ability level of their SCT, 47% ($n = 17$) of those interviewed said that their SCT was better than most of the class and 53% ($n = 19$) said that the SCT was the same as the rest of the class. Ability group did make a difference here. The SCT for low and high ability groups tended to be the same as the rest of the class whereas the medium ability groups tended to compare themselves with someone that they perceived to be better than the rest of the class. In other words, the direction of comparison was horizontal for the high and low abilities, and upwards for the medium ability children.

Theme 5: Self-Evaluation Performance Judgments

As discussed above, all children judged their SCT to be better than or the same as the rest of the class. These performance judgments not only provided an indication of the direction of comparison but also allowed one to explore how pupils judged performance. Three reasons were given by the pupils as to *how* they were able to gauge the ability of the SCT namely: knowledge of scores, observation of pieces of work, and viewing class discussions participation such as public questioning.

In terms of their own ability in relation to the rest of the class, the high ability group tended to judge themselves in the top two quarters of the class, the medium group judged themselves to be in the middle two quarters and the low ability group judged themselves to be across the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters. When asked *how* pupils gauge their *own* performance the response was varied and less certain than when asked about the SCT. Half the pupils couldn't seem to answer the question and gave vague responses. This is perhaps not unexpected. Pupils gauged others' academic ability on what they saw and heard in the classroom and as such they understood that this was how they judged others' ability. In contrast pupils could not state how they came to know things about themselves. By the age of 11 children would have had a wealth of experiences on which to base their self-perceptions and perhaps found it difficult to select one or two reasons. This occurred throughout the interview. Pupils were happy to provide a judgment regarding themselves but were either slow or unable to express how they came to that judgment.

Paul: I don't struggle but I am not really, really good.

Sue: I don't know. I know I am ok and so are the other people in my class.

To some extent the above implies that children are overtly engaging in social comparison and thus can describe the reasons for such a judgment but are unaware of the impact it plays upon themselves. The inference of deliberate comparison with others was confirmed when the discussion moved away from general judgments of ability to more specific judgments of pieces of work. Pupils were asked to think how they might judge their work in class if they were given a task to complete today. All pupils offered a more detailed account with pupils either describing how the teacher would say or do things that would inform them of their performance, how they would use the content of their own work to judge their performance or how they would compare their work with others to judge the quality of their work. Children in the low ability groups were more likely to refer to comparison with peers (83%) than children in the medium (42%) or high ability (33%) groups.

Theme 6: Effects of Comparison

All pupils identified the emotional impact of social comparison. Pupils' responses fell into three categories: dual emotions, confidence or negative emotions. Dual emotions refer to the differing emotions, both positive and negative, because of social comparison. Approximately 40% of those interviewed discussed the contented, pleased reaction gained from superior

performance compared to a comparison target (SCT) and the disapproving, anxious feelings exhibited as a result of inferior performance. Moreover, as the quote below highlights children are using the SCT as a way to judge the standard of their schoolwork as social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) posits:

William: Ok...if mine is just as good as his then I feel pleased because I know I have reached a good standard. If his is better than mine I feel jealous ...I think that I need to try better next time.

Scott: When I get a better grade, I feel sort of proud of myself, not like boastful or anything but happy.

The quantitative results highlight that comparing favorably evokes positive emotional responses in most children (see **Table 4**). 84% of children surveyed said they would feel positive if their work was better than their peers. For 14 of those interviewed, social comparison with their classmates produced only feelings of increased confidence. These pupils tended to mention the confidence and peace of mind gained through social comparisons in that they reduced the uncertainty involved in completing a piece of work at school.

Mark: More confident I suppose that he has the same ideas.

A small number of pupils (17%: 6 of the 36 interviewed) only saw the negative aspects of social comparison and discussed negative emotions exclusively. In contrast in the quantitative questionnaire only 1% of children reported negative responses to both upward and downward comparison (**Table 4**). The qualitative interviews did aim to unpack how the children experienced social comparisons and thus this difference can be explained methodologically. All of these pupils who spoke only of negative emotions from social comparisons were from the low ability group. Those children assigned to low ability groups experienced more feelings of negativity as a result of their social comparisons than those in medium or high groups.

Amy: It makes me feel stupid, jealous and frustrated.

Max: I just hate myself for being so stupid.

As the quote above illustrates, for some children within the low ability groups social comparison with others can be a terrible experience.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings presented here provide an indication of the vital role social comparison plays in the primary school classroom. Social comparison was found to be a highly prevalent practice experienced by *all* pupils regardless of ability group. These findings support previous research which shows that the classroom environment is the perfect place for comparisons (Dijkstra et al., 2008) given the extensive source of social comparative information (Levine, 1983; Buunk et al., 2005) and the evaluative atmosphere (e.g., Pepitone, 1972; Levine, 1983). While all children did compare, a difference according to ability group was evident with children assigned to the low-ability groups using social comparison more frequently, consciously

and deliberately. The reason for such a finding could lie in the underlying motivation for comparison. Researchers such as Kruglanski (1989) and Wheeler et al. (1997) have posited that uncertainty motivates comparison. Indeed, most of the pupils in the current study identified level of perceived ability as being one of the key motivators toward comparison. Individuals seek social comparison in situations when other routes to self-assessment are not feasible to reduce uncertainty and gain valid appraisals of themselves. It is possible, therefore, that children working in low ability groups actively seek comparative information in order to reduce uncertainty whereas pupils in high ability groups are either more certain of themselves or are able to use other forms of self-assessment. Indeed this finding resonates with research which has found that subordinate and dominant group status influenced the impact of social comparison on self-esteem and that dismissal of comparison information as a mechanism of self-protection was reserved for those of dominant groups (Martinot and Redersdorff, 2003, 2006). Thus, high ability group pupils as members of the dominant group, unlike the low ability subordinate group, appeared able to dismiss social comparative information.

Exploring children's acknowledgment/awareness of social comparison, the present study found that a large majority of children acknowledged their use of social comparison, with similar results exhibited on both quantitative and qualitative measures. Whilst it was not surprising that all children compared, the acknowledgment of such engagement was unexpected given previous research which had indicated that pupils were reluctant to admit to comparing themselves with others (Ruble, 1983). However, this may be explained methodologically. Previous research on social comparison has tended to involve quantitative measures only and/or laboratory settings (Wood, 2000). It is, therefore, possible that the informal, non-judgmental nature of the individual qualitative interviews conducted within the school setting in the present study may have contributed to this finding. Indeed, particular thought was given to the framing of the question regarding social comparison since pilot testing the meaning of comparison had revealed that pupils of 10 and 11 years of age did not differentiate between "comparison" and "copying." Copying is frowned upon in school and thus admitting to such an act would tend to have negative consequences. To avoid this, questionnaires and interviews included an everyday example of social comparison and a reminder that it did not refer to copying. This meant that pupils were able to discuss the act of comparing their work with others with a clear understanding of the meaning of comparison. This may have been an important first step for the children, enabling them to understand and discuss when, where and with whom they compared their work and the effects of such comparisons.

It should be noted that pupils who didn't immediately acknowledge their engagement in social comparison did so after a 'warm up' to the interview. For example, the same child would initially report not comparing with peers and then later in the interview describe their frequent use of social comparison. Reconciling this incongruence, it may be a social desirability response as discussed earlier or it could potentially signal an unconscious element of social comparisons.

As Wolff et al. (2020) note unconscious social comparisons have been reported in previous research (e.g., Mussweiler et al., 2004; Alicke and Zell, 2008) yet research is extremely limited to such an extent it is not mentioned in Gerber et al. (2018) recent review, thus further research on unconscious social comparisons is warranted. Alternatively, the ability for the children to ‘warm up’ to the interview could be the reason for the incongruence in response. As discussed above, a key strength of the qualitative aspect of this study was that it enabled exploration of social comparison within different ability groups in a safe environment for children to express themselves, without danger of influence of other children. This ‘safe space’ could have allowed children to overcome any initial reluctance to and feel comfortable to discuss their engagement in social comparison. This would be very reasonable given the negative emotional impact social comparisons can have on a child. Research conducted in naturalistic settings emphasizes understanding the context of the study and tailoring the design (Argio et al., 2019). The qualitative aspect of this study appears to have fulfilled this by allowing discussion and freedom for children to fully understand and engage in the topic, enabling us to gain greater knowledge about the nature of real comparisons in the classroom.

Findings in relation to *who* children compared with (the SCT) concur with previous research that has emphasized the salience of SCT’s (Blanton et al., 1999; Huguet et al., 2001; Liem et al., 2013). The findings here show that the SCT was chosen deliberately by pupils according to their qualities as a friend and characteristics which would render them helpful, supportive, or academically useful. Friendships thus are very important yet often overlooked or discounted when teachers form ability groups. Indeed, in the classroom environment children couldn’t always choose who they compared with and grouping, table assignment and seating impacted comparison frequency and comparison outcome. If children couldn’t compare with their self-selected/chosen SCT then the frequency and motive for comparison altered and consequently the impact of the comparison changed. This is important as it shows the influence teachers can have on social comparisons through grouping practices. Children’s ‘free’ responses (in response to open questions about social comparison) tended to focus on local comparisons with one or two friends. They didn’t actively seek comparisons with large number of peers or groups of children, and at no time did any pupil mention comparisons with the class. Children placed great emphasize on actively seeking social comparison with a select small number of other children and these social comparisons were very important to the children. These findings support the Local Dominance Effect (Buckingham and Alicke, 2002; Zell and Alicke, 2010) which shows that comparisons with few individuals has a greater influence on self-assessments than comparisons with larger aggregates. Indeed, the current study found that whilst pupils did talk about *what* they compare and *why* they compare, *who* they compare with was discussed by pupils far more and thus appeared to exert a greater influence on the child.

Examining *what* pupils are comparing, the present study found that children readily identified the curriculum subject they were more likely to compare and give reasons for their motivation to compare. These findings indicate greater reliance

on dimensional comparison than social comparison. According to dimensional comparison research (Möller and Marsh, 2013; Strickhouser and Zell, 2015; Wolff et al., 2018) individuals compare their achievements or abilities in one subject (e.g., science) to their achievements or abilities in other subject (e.g., maths). Dimensional comparisons are made between domains/subjects and social comparisons within the same domain. The findings here concur with that in found other studies of dimensional comparison with children feeling better about (liking) a subject in which their performance is superior. Moreover, a recent research on academic enjoyment (Boliver and Capsada-Munsech, 2021), determined that liking school subjects in ages 7–11 years was vital for academic achievement.

Overall, the findings here showed a preference to compare upwards, resonating with previous research in classrooms (Blanton et al., 1999; Huguet et al., 2001; Gerber et al., 2018). However, there was a strong (and near equal) preference for horizontal social comparison. The direction of comparison is important for children’s self-evaluation. As discussed in the introduction, according to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) people use other people as the standard to judge themselves against. Achieving a grade C could be viewed as being very good if one’s peers achieved grade E, but poor if one’s classmates achieved grade A. If a child compares ‘upwards’ with someone above themselves (e.g., the grade A classmate), they can either think they are not as good as the other child or identify with the other child and think they can improve. The findings here showed a convergent of results across different measures, when looking at the aggregates, confirming a tendency to compare upwards. However, the preference for horizontal comparisons was also strong and the interviews showed a slightly higher preference for horizontal over upwards comparison (horizontal 53%/upwards 47%). Unpacking this further we see a difference by ability group, with the high and low abilities engaging in horizontal comparisons, and the medium ability upwards comparisons. Of course, it is possible that this finding is due to reporting bias. High ability pupils may not have felt comfortable labeling their comparison target “worse” and low ability pupils may not have wanted to acknowledge their inferiority by admitting that their SCT was “better.” That said, given the ‘safe space’ of the interviews discussed above this seems unlikely.

Drawing on previous research on groups (Martinot and Redersdorff, 2006; Alicke et al., 2010; Martinot et al., 2020), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and self-evaluation maintenance theory (SEM) a more likely explanation explored here is that group membership is influencing children’s self-perceptions and psychological protection is at play impacting social comparisons. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) individuals can think of themselves in terms of an ‘individual’ self or their ‘group’ self. This can vary according to context and thus as individual can exhibit different aspects of the self in different settings. In some circumstances people may prefer to compare themselves with members of the same group (intragroup) especially if they compare favorably to the group as a whole to such an extent that they ignore any out-group standards and base their self-evaluation on their position within the group (Major, 1994). Indeed, Alicke et al. (2010) found that simply

dividing students into arbitrary groups produced a tendency for students to focus on local information to categorize their standing in a group which was used for self-evaluations. In the present study, the high ability pupils as members of the dominant group, are motivated to retain their position, they can dismiss comparison information and as there isn't a higher group, they compare horizontally with other group members. The medium ability aspires to be in the dominant group, assimilating to be like those above them and thus compare upwards. The low ability children, as members of the subordinate group cannot compare downwards as they occupy the lowest rank. The question is why aren't these children comparing upwards? Self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1988) assumes that all individuals try to maintain a positive self-evaluation and utilize alternative ways in which social comparative information is received and processed. While upwards comparisons can promote growth and learning and thus have positive impact, if an individual focuses on the contrasts (differences) between them and the target it can lead to feelings of inferiority, jealousy and inadequacy (see earlier discussion). Given the impact on emotional impact of social comparison found in this study, it is posited that the low ability pupils are actively seeking comparative information horizontally in order to protect themselves against the negative impact of 'unattainable' upwards comparisons. This resonates with research on psychological disengagement mechanisms with adolescents where students from disadvantaged groups discount or devalue grades or unhappiness due to a unfavorable social comparisons to protect themselves from negative outcomes (Martinot et al., 2020).

There is no disputing the emotional/psychological impact of social comparisons. All pupils were to some extent affected by comparisons with their peers, although this was more extreme and more frequent for those assigned to low ability. The mixture of emotions experienced by pupils through social comparison showed the turmoil and insecurity that some pupils faced on a daily basis. Having a child within the interviews admit to hating themselves because of comparisons with their classmates is an illustration of the profound negative impact it can have on a child's life yet it appeared that this was accepted as part and parcel of the social interaction that occurred within ability groups.

Limitations

Despite the strength of the mixed methods in the present study, there were limitations. Only 12 primary schools in similar geographical location were included in this study which narrows the cultural diversity and generalizability of the study. The qualitative, ecologically valid, naturalistic aspect of this study is its strength, designed to explore the nature of social comparisons in the classroom. The quantitative data enhanced the descriptions, enabled comparisons, and illustrated and confirmed the qualitative findings yet could have added more depth had the quantitative component been given more equal weight in the design. Moreover, the anonymous/de-identified design of the quantitative questionnaires (ethical requirements) did not permit direct matching to individual qualitative data which would have provided additional triangulation to support findings. Adapting the interview design so that the questionnaire

is completed during one of the interviews would overcome such a constraint. Alternatively, a sequential mixed methods design may have merit. Having the quantitative first and then using interviews to explain the data in a sequential explanatory design would allow selection of children on the basis of their responses.

Further limitations of the quantitative measures involve the use of rank order scenario. While it captured, upwards/downwards direction of social comparison and near/extreme ranks, the forced method required children to choose a different rank to the one they occupied which didn't permit measurement of horizontal/lateral social comparison. Given that horizontal comparisons were salient in the qualitative data, being able to capture this quantitatively would be beneficial. As discussed earlier, the measurement of social comparison is complex and one of the key criticisms of forced comparisons is that they don't relate to the 'real world' (Wood, 2000), with researchers cautioning against their generalization (Dijkstra et al., 2008; Gerber et al., 2018; Boissicat et al., 2020). Thus, the limitation of quantitative forced comparisons highlighted here concurs with previous research and leads us to advocate for mixed methods and qualitative research to build on the existing quantitative literature and forward the field.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented here provide evidence of the vital role social comparison plays in the primary school classroom. Social comparison amongst 10–11-year-old children was found to be a highly prevalent daily aspect of classroom life experienced by *all* pupils regardless of ability group. Children engaged in social comparisons at different levels, yet the importance of friendships and local comparisons (where children actively sought comparisons with a very small number of friends) were far more important to children (the Local Dominance Effect). The fluency with which children discussed comparisons with peers was staggering and tends to suggest a strong prevalence of this of method for self-evaluation. This was particularly salient for children assigned to low-ability groups who were more vulnerable to the negative effects of social comparison.

While all children compared, children assigned to low-ability groups used social comparison more frequently, consciously and deliberately, actively seeking horizontal intra-group comparisons. In doing so they avoided upwards comparisons thereby protecting themselves from unfavorable comparisons with others. One explanation explored within this paper is that group membership/group standing influences children's self-perceptions and self-evaluations to such an extent that psychological protection mechanisms kick in and alter/impact social comparisons processes. Yet it is forwarded here that while these strategies may provide psychological 'protection', they may also be the roadblock in the path to better outcomes for such children. Ability groupings mean that pupils are forced to compare with same level pupils. For low ability children, whilst this may 'protect' children from negative comparisons and self-evaluations, it means they miss out on comparisons with more able pupils. If we accept that social comparisons can facilitate

learning, encourage growth and self-improvement, then these children are missing out on the very practices that could support them. Seeing other children solve problems, explain their thinking and learning through shared discussion is vital and so limiting these opportunities for children appears to be misguided.

With some investment in understanding how better to group children (or not group children) and how to remove psychological roadblocks, teachers can set up classroom practices where children don't have to protect themselves. You only have to look at the affective reactions to social comparisons in this study to see the vital role they play in children's well-being and emotional stability. All pupils were to some extent affected by comparisons with their peers, negative and positive, although the negative impact was more extreme and frequent for those assigned to low ability groups. Pupil-pupil interaction in the classroom that leads a child to say they hate themselves clearly needs to be addressed.

Teacher education and professional development on this topic could help teachers to identify and support children that rely on self-evaluations of performance based on social comparisons and redirect them to teacher appraisal and feedback. Moreover, given that self-perceptions are related to actual performance, teachers should be alerted to the implications of social comparison for motivation, engagement and achievement. The argument presented here is that teachers need to put a greater emphasis on pupil-pupil interactions and social comparisons when forming within-class ability-groups. The collaborative nature of classrooms today means greater emphasis on talk and discussion for learning and thus greater availability of social comparative information. The groups children are assigned to influences what information children hear or see about their classmates and what teacher input/time they are allocated. Grouping practices including peer-peer interaction, seating, table allocation needs to be considered in terms of social comparison opportunities. Forced comparisons (comparisons chosen by the teacher as opposed free choice self-selected comparisons by

the child) altered the frequency and motive for comparisons and thus self-evaluations. Appropriate planning by teachers of these interactions is advocated which take account of the extent to which pupils of different ability groups process and utilize social comparative information and consider grouping children in different ways – so that children work in a range of groups and in particular consider friendships as a way to group children in primary classes. Thus, there is significant value in understanding more about how teachers can harness the power of social comparison to enhance outcomes for children. To achieve this further research is needed to understand the everyday social comparisons children make in the classroom. This study has provided evidence for the importance of capturing qualitative data and creating 'safe spaces' and including 'warmups' in the interview design. Thus, capturing social comparisons utilizing qualitative and mixed research methods in natural environments is advocated given the depth of understanding it affords.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of Cambridge. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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The Effects of Verbal Encouragement and Compliments on Physical Performance and Psychophysiological Responses During the Repeated Change of Direction Sprint Test

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The general and sports psychology research is limited regarding the difference between the effects of verbal encouragement (VE) or compliment methods during high-intensity functional exercise testing. The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of VE and compliments on the performance of the repeated change-of-direction (RCOD) sprint test. A total of 36 male students in secondary school participated voluntarily in the study. They were divided equally into three homogeneous groups [VE group, compliment group (CG), and control group) and performed a standardized one repetition RCOD. The RCOD (6 × 20 m with 25-s active recovery) test consisted of a 100° change in the direction at every 4 m. Outcomes included performance indices (fast time, average time, and total time), rating of perceived exertion (RPE), and feeling scale scores. VE and the compliment increased the performance indices and RPE compared with the control group. In conclusion, VE during the exercise testing would be more beneficial for optimal performance and RPE compared with the compliment and control groups. However, the moods, during RCOD, reproduce more positively during compliment conditions than the VE and control groups.

Keywords: verbal encouragement types, repeated sprint, physical performance, rating of perceived exertion, mood

INTRODUCTION

Verbal encouragement (VE) is a common method/technique used by coaches and teachers to improve the teaching-learning process (Aguiar et al., 2012; Halouani et al., 2014; Selmi et al., 2017; Belkhiria et al., 2018; Sahli et al., 2020). Theoretically, Wong (2015) defined encouragement as the expression through language to instill courage, perseverance, confidence, inspiration, or hope in a person(s) within the context of addressing a challenging situation or realizing a potential. It is a motivational tool and a procedure to encourage students and athletes to increase their motor tasks and physical fitness performances. The more VE is increased, the more the

physical performance increases at high-intensity exercise (Rube and Secher, 1981). The VE can be used to improve the performance of an endurance exercise (Rube and Secher, 1981). Sweeney (2009) considered a significant difference between encouragement and compliment. Encouraging is a source of internal motivation to reach optimal physical performance. Such expressions as “Well done, you are using good strategies,” “you are going to get there,” “I am proud of you,” and “you are capable” are some examples. A compliment is praising and congratulating someone through generating an external motivation to please another person. In terms of compliments, expressions such as “You are capable,” “You are really competent,” “You are too persevering,” and “I appreciate the way you do things” can be used. By complimenting someone, he/she can be more dependent and less reflective than others (Nelsen, 2012). Within the extant literature, the education engagement of students was found to be positively related to teacher care and their encouragements (Wang et al., 2021). In physical education, a teacher who compliments may exercise some kind of power over the student (Nelsen, 2012). However, by encouraging students, they learn more about how to think; they may possibly build their learning strategies while avoiding comparing themselves with each other (Nelsen, 2012).

Brandes and Elvers (2017) reported that the content of the behavior of different coaches could affect the load responses of players. For example, the VE, which includes advice, used by coaches could affect positively the reception and assimilation of feedback in players during training (Cook and Crewther, 2014; Mason et al., 2020; Díaz-García et al., 2021). In addition, previous studies observed that small-sided games with VE increase physical performance with an increase in heart rate, lactate, and rate of perceived exertion (RPE) levels in amateur soccer players (Smith et al., 1977; Rampinini et al., 2007).

Previous studies revealed controversial results regarding the effects of VE on physical exercise. It has been postulated that VE improves athletic performance during exercise (Andreacci et al., 2002; Obmiński and Mroczkowska, 2015). In fact, Andreacci et al. (2002) reported that VE, during a treadmill test, increased peak VO_2max and blood lactate concentration. Similarly, other previous studies obtained similar findings and observed the beneficial effects of VE on the performance of athletes compared with subjects without encouragement (Bickers, 1993). In contrast, Obmiński and Mroczkowska (2015) showed that maximal strength performance was not sensitive enough to external verbal stimulation among professional athletes. This corroborates with the study by Argus et al. (2011), who examined the effects of VE on upper-body performance in elite rugby players, confirmed this result. They reported a non-significant small effect of VE on strength performance.

Nevertheless, the VE strategy of the coaches (compliment) could differentially influence exercise performance, indicating the need to separately investigate each verbal strategy. Also, the effect of different VE strategies during short-term exercise as well as RPE and emotional responses of healthy male students in secondary school remains unclear.

In contrast, most sport modalities (e.g., team and individual sports) are characterized by change of direction (COD) as an

important factor related to the overall performance (Wong et al., 2012; Dellal and Wong, 2013). In fact, the COD is defined as a preplanned rapid whole-body movement with changes in the velocity or direction (Sheppard et al., 2006). Similarly, Wong et al. (2012) defined repeated change of direction (RCOD) such as a short-duration sprint with COD (10 s), repeated by short rest periods (<30 s).

To the best of our knowledge, no studies have investigated the effects of different types of VE on RCOD performance. Consequently, the main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of VE and compliments on the performance of the repeated change-of-direction (RCOD) sprint test.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

A total of 36 male students in secondary school (age: 17 ± 0.7 years; body mass: 63 ± 3.6 kg; and height: 168 ± 5.2 cm) participated in this study. The sample size of our study was calculated (G*Power 3.1 software, Germany) with assumed $\alpha = 0.05$ and an effect size (ES) = 0.2. The results revealed that 33 participants would be needed to reach 80% of statistical power. Therefore, we recruited a few additional participants ($n = 36$) to consider the potential drawing from the study. Students were divided equally into three homogeneous groups: VE group ($n = 12$), compliment group (CG) ($n = 12$), and control group ($n = 12$). There was no significant intergroup difference in age and anthropometric data (i.e., body height, leg length, body mass, and body mass index). Participants regularly participated in physical education classes including ball games, athletics, gymnastics, combat sports, music, and dance (5 h week^{-1}). All participants provided written informed consent before participating. None of the participants reported any recent history of hip, knee, or ankle injury. This study was conducted according to the latest version of the Declaration of Helsinki, and the protocol was fully approved by the Ethics Committee of the High Institute of Sport and Physical Education of Kef, the University of Jendouba before the beginning of the tests.

Procedures

Experimental Sessions

The week before the main experiment, RCOD procedure, instruments, and equipment were explained and practiced.

The study consisted of a randomized crossover design in which study participants, of all groups, underwent an RCOD test. Warm-up for RCOD was standardized to 10-min of running, including 3–5 min of light jogging, lateral displacements, dynamic stretching, and jumping. Immediately after the RCOD, the RPE scale (6–20 Borg scale; Borg, 1982) was used to measure the overall physical perceptions of exertion. Also, the feeling scale (FS) was used to measure the affective dimension (pleasure and displeasure), ranging from -5 (very bad) to $+5$ (very good) (Hardy and Rejeski, 1989). The order of group trials was randomized in order to avoid the possibility of systematic learning effects influencing.

Rating of perceived exertion was collected after the RCOD test using the Borg scale of 6–20 (Borg, 1982). Similarly, FS (Hardy and Rejeski, 1989) was collected after the RCOD test. This scale contained an 11-point single item scale ranging from +5 (very good) to –5 (very bad) with a midpoint of 0 (neutral).

Among the VE group, the following expressions were used: “Go, well done, everything is fine, this is great, don’t give up, great, courage, go ahead, try again, come on, you will get there, I am proud of you, trust yourself, and you can.” However, among the CG, the following expressions were used: “You are capable,” “You are really competent,” “You are too persevering,” and “I appreciate the way you do things.” Those encouraging expression types are frequently used in sport and physical education politics. Given that VE and compliments are both task- and environment-specific (Vallerand, 2004). However, no encouragement was announced to the control group. During the encouragement conditions, the same investigators were present during RCOD trials, and the same level of encouragement was given to participants. The VE or compliment was delivered between sprints (recovery time) to provide more frequent motivation. During the study period, all participants were instructed to maintain their usual physical activity routine. The RCOD test was performed in the same geographical location for the three groups at the same time of the day (± 1 h), for all groups, to avoid any potential diurnal variation of performance, and the participants were asked to follow their normal diet during the time of the study.

Repeated Change-of-Direction Test

The RCOD (6 \times 20 m with 25-s active recovery) test consisted of 100°COD at every 4 m (Figure 1; Beckett et al., 2009). Within each recovery period between sprints, students slowly walked back to the next start point and waited for the auditory signal given by the beeper (Sport Beeper Pro, Best Electronic, France). There was no encouragement between participants during RCOD. The RCOD performance indices were fast time (FT), average time (AT), total time (TT), and fatigue index (FI), as proposed by Glaister et al. (2008). The reliability of the test has been checked using the intraclass coefficient (ICC = 0.946; 95% CI: 0.937–0.951).

Statistical Analysis

Data were expressed as mean \pm SD. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess the normality. One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the differences in the performance indices, RPE, and

FS. Bonferroni *post hoc* analyses were used to locate differences among pairs of means when ANOVA revealed significance. ESs for statistical differences were determined. ES was assessed using the following criteria: ≤ 0.2 , trivial; > 0.2 – 0.6 , small; > 0.6 – 1.2 , moderate; > 1.2 – 2.0 , large; and > 2.0 , very large (10). The level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$. All analyses were carried out using SPSS 16 for Windows (SPSS, version 16 for Windows. Inc., Chicago, IL, United States).

RESULTS

Physical Performance

The RCOD performance indices (FT, AT, TT, and FI) were displayed in Table 1. The FT, AT, and TT indices with encouragement and CGs were significantly higher than the control group [$p < 0.01$; ES = (2.34–3.06)]. The AT and TT indices with encouragement were significantly increased than the CG (AT: $p = 0.028$, ES = 1.18; TT: $p = 0.024$, ES = 1.24). However, there was no significant change in FI between the three groups ($p > 0.05$).

Rating of Perceived Exertion and Feeling Scale

The RPE and FS values recorded after the RCOD are presented in Figure 2. A significant increase in RPE with encouragement group vs. control group ($p = 0.003$; ES = 2.34) was shown, as well as a significant increase in RPE with encouragement group vs. CG ($p = 0.001$; ES = 1.69). However, no significant difference between the CG and control group ($p = 0.584$; ES = 0.80) was observed in RPE. In addition, a significant higher FS score was recorded with the CG when compared with the control group ($p = 0.000$; ES = 3.34). The same difference was also observed between the encouragement group and the control group ($p = 0.010$; ES = 1.71) and between the CG and the encouragement group ($p = 0.001$; ES = 1.78).

DISCUSSION

This study is the first to investigate the effect of VE and compliments on the performance of the RCOD test. The primary finding of this study was that the use of VE and compliments increased the performance indices (FT, AT, and TT) and RPE compared with the control group. A significant improvement in

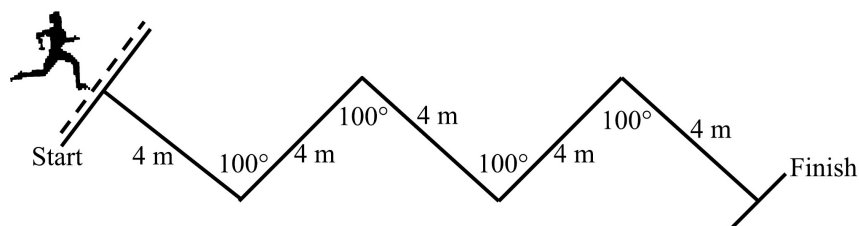


FIGURE 1 | Repeated change of direction test design.

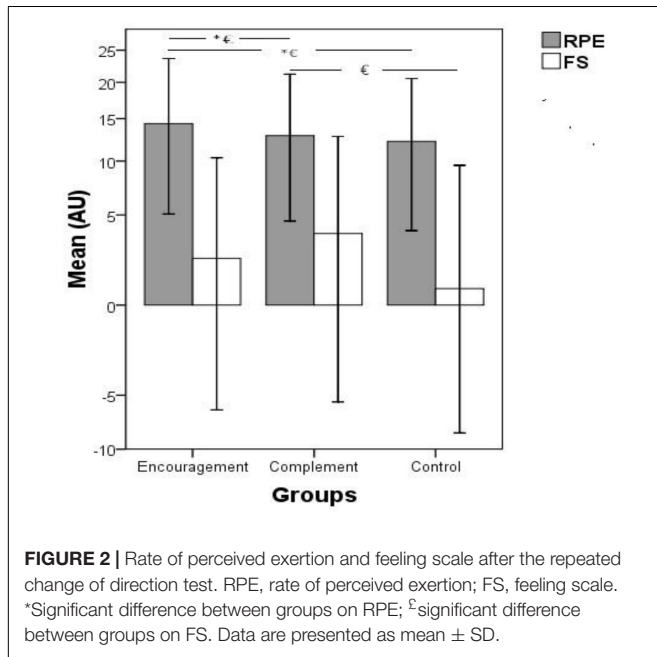
TABLE 1 | Mean values of performance indices for the repeated change of direction test.

	Encouragement group (EC)	Compliment group (CG)	Control group	P-value	Effect size
FT (sec)	5.92 ± 0.30 [†]	6.12 ± 0.21 [‡]	6.51 ± 0.19	0.001**	0.450
AT (sec)	6.14 ± 0.28 [€]	6.46 ± 0.26 [‡]	6.88 ± 0.21	0.000***	0.560
TT (sec)	37.03 ± 1.67 [€]	39.13 ± 1.71 [‡]	41.66 ± 1.35	0.000***	0.566
FI (%)	4.26 ± 1.63	6.65 ± 4.99	6.56 ± 2.07	0.158	0.142

Data were expressed as means ± SDs.

FT, fast time; AT, average time; TT, total time; FI, fatigue index; ES, effect size.

Highly significantly different between the three groups as $P < 0.01$; *strictly different between the three groups as $P < 0.000$; [†]significantly different between encouragement vs. control ($P < 0.01$); [‡]significantly different between compliment vs. control ($P < 0.05$); [€]significantly different between encouragement vs. compliment ($P < 0.05$).



FS was observed with the CG compared with the encouragement and control groups.

To the best of our knowledge, no studies were interested in examining the effect of verbal compliments on physical performance. Nevertheless, the present results are in line with some previous studies that have shown the beneficial effects of VE on physical performance. Edwards et al. (2018) observed that VE motivated subjects by improving their physical performance during aerobic and sprint exercises. They revealed that VE could improve motivation and stimulate subjects to maintain or increase effort investment during exercise. Similarly, Neto et al. (2015) observed that VE enhanced maximal oxygen uptake, the distances covered, and final heart rate during multistage 20 m shuttle run test. In a recent review, Midgley et al. (2018) showed that VE, every 20 s, increased time to exhaustion during maximal exercise testing more than VE every 60 or 180 s. This study was not specifically designed to encourage participants in regular moments during exercise, but we are concerned about comparing the use of compliment and VE during RCOD. Significant

improvements in FT, AT, and TT with VE more than compliment were observed.

As a result, by drawing on the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions and the significance of applying positive psychology sports research and practice (Wang et al., 2021), we make clear how the positivity of individuals through VE and compliment can result in the physical involvement of the students, the pleasure of learning, physical enjoyment, and well-being while performing physical exercise. The significance of applying positive psychology sports research and practice. Therefore, VE can improve the teaching-learning process, especially for high-intensity exercises (Sahli et al., 2020). Subsequently, potential theoretical and pedagogical implications of external motivation are drawn to enhance the quality and effectiveness of external motivation. Also, encouraging expressions, such as VE, are thought to be a suitable and powered factor not only to induce emotional states but also to subsequently affect performance or cognitive processing (Martín-Loeches et al., 2009). Therefore, it would be required to carefully study the effect of the different characteristics of the encouragement, for instance, the type (encouragement and compliment), expressions, tone, loudness, timing (warm-up, during exercise, and recovery), the language used, frequency of delivery, and the individuality of the participant (age, gender, and trainability). Taken into consideration by our study, these factors were controlled to clearly identify the difference between VE and compliment, physical performance and psychophysiological parameters. These factors support the notion that to optimize maximal test performance, VE should create an adaptive motivational climate during maximal testing by enhancing performance expectancies (competence), supporting autonomy (control), and avoiding controlled or coercive motivation (Midgley et al., 2018).

The results of this study showed a significant increase in VE on RPE during RCOD in comparison with the CG and the control groups. In other words, VE could increase effort investment during RCOD, which is proved by significantly higher maximal RPE. However, no difference was found between the compliment and control conditions. Our results were in line with the study by Andreacci et al. (2002) who observed that RPE significantly increased with VE condition, every 20 s during maximal exercise testing. They suggested that VE does increase effort investment during maximal exercise testing, evidenced by significantly

higher maximal RPE. However, the study by Moffatt et al. (1994) showed a reduction in RPE, during submaximal exercise, which delayed the attainment of maximal perception of fatigue with improvement in time to exhaustion of untrained individuals. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have reported the effect of RPE on repeated sprint ability; consequently, it would not be possible to interpret these findings by comparing them with other studies.

This study showed a significant improvement in FS under compliment condition compared with VE and control condition, as well as a significant increase in FS compared with the control condition.

In addition, McCaughtry (2004) insisted on the importance of considering the emotions of students as they learn to improve the teaching-learning process. The emotional factor becomes a determining one in educational learning. Studies conducted in this field consider that the quality of teaching is dependent on the degree of emotions of the students (McCaughtry and Rovigno, 2003; Sutton and Wheatley, 2003; McCaughtry, 2004; Owens and Ennis, 2005; Poulou, 2017). Some recommendations for future studies are suggested. First, the choice of the sample size must be more numerous to improve the statistical power (>90%). Second, in addition to VE, the use of visual feedback could be considered in anaerobic exercise.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of VE and compliments on performance and psychophysiological responses during the RCOD sprint test.

Our data suggest that VE increased the performance of RCOD besides providing the highest values of RPE and FS. In addition, VE can be more beneficial to improve physical

performance than compliment. However, the moods, during RCOD, reproduce more positively during the compliment condition than VE.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the High Institute of Sport and Physical Education of Kef, University of Jendouba. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

HS, MH, NJ, and MZ designed the study and drafted the manuscript. HS and FS performed the experiments. NJ and NO participated in the data analysis. HS, NJ, IO, NB, and MZ revised the critical manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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