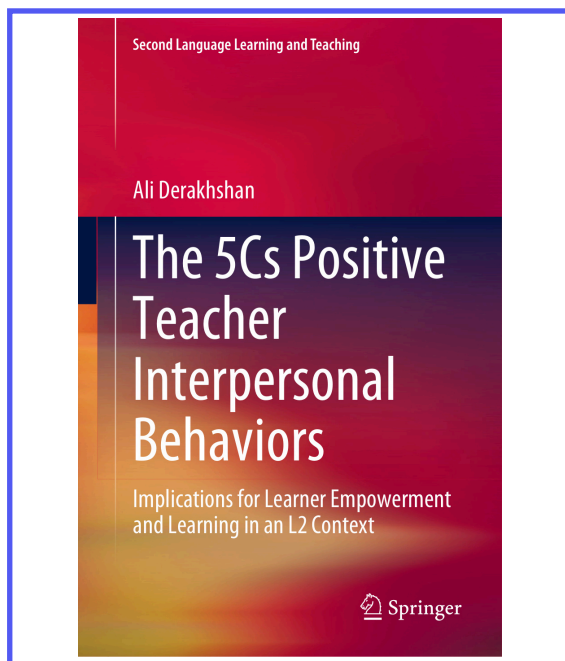




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Preface

The collective notion of teacher interpersonal behaviors is a well-grounded branch of investigation in instructional communication theorizing and research. However, not much research has been conducted in terms of its theorizing, research, and application in the domain of second/foreign (L2) language teaching and learning (Farrell, 2014). This neglected area of research in L2 education needs immediate attention in the coming years since teacher–student quality relationships are inherent to successful language teaching and learning processes (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). This is because in L2 classes, language is both the means and goal of classroom communication, and as a result, the instructor and students should participate in various instances of transactional and informational communication activities through and about the target language. Teachers’ *positive* communication behaviors derive from positive psychology (PP), a movement known and applied over the last 20 years by L2 researchers and practitioners (e.g., Gabryś-Barker, 2016; Wang et al., 2021), as well as the rhetorical/relational goal theory (Mottet et al., 2006) grounded in instructional communication research which is not much known in L2 education.

In brief, PP rests on three pillars of positive emotions and feelings, positive traits and characteristics of individuals, and positive institutions (Wang et al., 2022). Accordingly, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) posited that positive teacher interpersonal behaviors can be explained by drawing on these three tenets of PP as in the educational context, learners are more inclined toward experiencing positive feelings and emotions if there exist positive teacher–student interactions, and they are more likely to experience a positive, caring, and friendly classroom atmosphere which is inherent to establishing a positive institution. At the same time, rhetorical/relational goal theory “focuses on the rhetorical and relational goals that teachers and students have and how these goals guide the instructional communication that is transacted in the classroom” (Mottet et al, 2006, p. 260). Thus, this theory highlights the importance of teachers’ employment of various positive interpersonal communication cues to maintain quality communication and effective interpersonal relationship with students (Rudick & Golsan, 2014). Thus, in the case of this theory, topics of research focus on positive teacher interpersonal behaviors and their role in students’ academic outcomes.

There are various instances of teacher positive interpersonal behaviors, and in this book, five of them are attended to in the L2 instructional context. Specifically, *the additivity hypothesis*, that teachers' compliance with 5C interpersonal behaviors of their rhetorical and relational goals and meet students' relational and academic wants and needs such as learner empowerment and learning. First, learner empowerment, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), is considered an internal positive variable, characterized as a type of motivation, and central to empowerment is the notion that there should be a favorable and positive interpersonal relationship between the empowered (the employee/the learner) and the empowering (the manager/the teacher) persons if they are to be aligned together (Frymier et al., 1996), which highlights the role of teacher interpersonal behaviors in facilitating learners' empowerment. Second, instructional communication researchers have defined *learning* as a process encompassing the acquisition and attainment of affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes (Christophel, 1990). For years, instructional communication researchers have engaged in investigating the role of teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in students' learning outcomes. The teacher-behavior-student learning interface was important to such researchers because their goal was to explore how quality teacher-student interpersonal relationships can lead to better learning outcomes for students. Previously, instructional communication researchers, by drawing on the additivity hypothesis (Comadena et al., 2007), posited that the main effects of different teacher communication behaviors will combine to create an ideal learning condition for students. In this book, I extended this conceptualization of learning in terms of affective, behaviors, and cognitive constructs from instructional communication research to the real of L2 education and explored whether, as found in a large number of empirical studies in instructional communication, "5C" teacher interpersonal behaviors of clarity, credibility, care, confirmation, and closeness can predict EFL students' learning gains.

This book attempts to present theoretical and empirical evidence for the role of teacher interpersonal behaviors in L2 learners' learning outcomes. To this end, the chapters of this volume not only deal with theory but also present empirical studies which can offer practical evidence and advice to both language teachers and researchers. Thus, Chap. 1 attends to the underlying frameworks of this book by concisely describing PP in L2 education, rhetorical/relational goal theory, teacher interpersonal behaviors, and positive interpersonal relationships in L2 classes.

Chapter 2 theoretically and empirically reviews the nine concepts of care, clarity, closeness, confirmation, credibility, empowerment, affective learning, behavioral learning, and cognitive learning, which are the main foci of this book. In Chap. 3, I present the design of a study that I conducted in the Iranian L2 context to explore the role of "5C" teacher interpersonal behaviors in students' empowerment and learning outcomes. I wanted to see if the respective findings in the Iranian L2 education context support the application of PP and support instructional communication theories and existing empirical evidence. Chapter 4 presents the qualitative and quantitative results obtained through the conduction of the mentioned study, and Chap. 5

presents the discussion of these results against the theoretical and empirical backgrounds of the book. In the final chapter, some conclusions are made based on the theoretical arguments of the book as well as the results obtained in the conducted study. Next, the limitations in this fledgling line of research on teacher interpersonal behaviors in L2 education are discussed, and some fruitful pedagogical implications are mentioned highlighting how conducting studies in this area can bring about potential improvements in L2 policymaking processes, materials development, teacher education programs, teachers' practices, and on the whole, in L2 education planning, research, and implementation.

As the writer of this volume, I am confident that the present work will provide my audience with fruitful knowledge about positive teacher interpersonal behaviors and their application in L2 research and practice. I believe that this book can open new doors to novel and innovative research studies in L2 education around the globe.

Gorgan, Iran

Ali Derakhshan

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Underlying Frameworks



1.1 Introduction

It is quite unanimously believed by educational researchers that “the key figure in any learner’s educational life is the teacher” (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 72). A large body of theoretical and empirical research in the area of instructional communication has provided evidence that instructor interpersonal relationships with students and quality communication are among the strongest facilitators of a wide range of students’ favorable educational outcomes, including student motivation, involvement, interest, understanding, class attendance, empowerment, engagement, and learning (Frymier et al., 2019; Kim & Lundberg, 2016). Teacher-student interpersonal relationships and communication are significant because both teacher and students are key stakeholders in the classroom, being equally responsible for the effective enactment of the learning and teaching processes (Delos Reyes & Torio, 2020). Compared to general education, the ELT classroom is more relationship-based because language competence is effectively learned and used through communication. Thus, second/foreign language (L2) learning gains are enhanced when the teacher and students engage in meaningful interpersonal relationships and are in good rapport (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Shakki, 2022; Yoon & Kim, 2012).

This argument is supported by the rhetorical/relational goal theory, which posits that when teachers try to satisfy students’ rhetorical and relational goals and needs through teachers’ employing effective communication and interpersonal messages and cues, students’ favorable educational outcomes, such as motivation, engagement, empowerment, interest, achievement, and learning, improve (Houser & Hosek, 2018). Similarly, following the recent introduction of positive psychology (PP) to SLA (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014), it is argued that positive emotions, arising from a pleasant classroom climate and effective teacher-student interactions, are at the heart of effective second language learning and instruction (Dewaele et al., 2019; Joe et al., 2017). In the same vein, Benesch (2017) has argued that two types of emotions exist in English language classes; (1) negative teacher or student emotions, and (2)

positive teacher or student emotions. While negative emotions hinder learning, their positive counterparts are deemed to foster it. In this regard, due to the inseparability of cognition and emotion and their importance for language learning, Pishghadam et al. (2014) introduced Emotion-Based Language Instruction as a new outlook on bilingual education. Following this perspective, later, Pishghadam et al. (2016) introduced the concept of *emotioncy* in the domain of second language learning and teaching, which refers to “emotions that are evoked by the senses” (Azamnouri et al., 2020, p. 29). Emotioncy was found to predict cognitive load, sentence comprehension, and foreign language reading anxiety, among others, in the second language learning context (Azamnouri et al., 2020; Tabatabaee Farani et al., 2019).

It is also posited that due to the interpersonal and interactional nature of language learning and teaching and the importance of merging personally-meaningful identities and content, language instruction is considered an essentially emotionally challenging task (Golombek & Doran, 2014), which requires much emotional and interpersonal understanding of students on the part of language teachers (King & Ng, 2018). Therefore, establishing a positive relationship with students is not an easy task for many teachers, even those who are the most experienced (Strachan, 2020). Furthermore, despite the fact that the concept of teacher-student relationships has been the focus of much research to date in higher education contexts and communication education (Hoffman, 2014), attending to communication instances that allow teachers to establish positive, meaningful relationships with students in the L2 context is imperative as they are not much investigated yet.

One of the students' educational outcomes persistently found to be predicted by teacher communication behaviors is *learner empowerment* (Finn & Schrod, 2012). Empowerment originates from learners' motivation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Le-Thi et al., 2020) and is actualized when a positive relationship and good rapport exists between the empowering and the empowered persons. In the classroom context, the teacher is regarded as the empowering and the student as the empowered (Frymier & Houser, 1999). When students are empowered, they are more motivated to carry out educational tasks, feel more capable of pursuing educational goals, view education to be more meaningful, and feel to be more influential in their own and others' educational outcomes. Thus, it is hypothesized that empowered learners are more likely to attain better learning gains.

Five instances of teacher-student interpersonal behaviors, being firmly rooted in the instructional communication research and being labeled as “5Cs” in the current book, are teacher *care*, *clarity*, *closeness*, *confirmation*, and *credibility* variables. Supported by the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and the rhetorical/relational goal theory (Houser & Hosek, 2018), these are positive teacher-related variables, which show teachers' attempt to promote a pleasant classroom atmosphere and facilitate students' achievement of positive educational outcomes (Frymier et al., 2019; Mazer, 2013; Resnik & Dewaele, 2020). For instance, Khajavy et al. (2017) have reported that positive emotions and a pleasant classroom atmosphere can decrease anxiety and enhance willingness to communicate and enjoyment among students in EFL classes.

To start with, *care* is defined by Noddings (2012) as one's attention to or regard toward something or someone. Care can be explained in terms of the rhetorical/relation goal theory as caring is a "set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture and possibility" (Gordon et al., 1996, pp. xiii). Particularly, in the classroom context, teacher care pertains to teachers' interpersonal behaviors, which show their recognition and response to students' psychological, behavioral, and emotional needs (Noddings, 2012), and it is associated with other relationship-building variables and student-related outcomes such as empathy (Meyers et al., 2019), teacher-student rapport, and learning (Shakki, 2022). In the L2 context, only a few studies have examined the link of teacher care with teacher- or student-related factors such as teacher feedback, teacher's conceptions of intelligence (Derakhshan et al., 2019), students' willingness to attend EFL classes (Pishghadam et al., 2021), student engagement, and teacher-student rapport (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Shakki, 2022). No study to date has investigated the role of teacher care in L2 students' learning, which justifies one of the objectives of the present research.

The second teacher interpersonal behavior attended to in this research undertaking is teacher *clarity*. Clarity decreases students' cognitive loads, which in turn, expedites students' learning (Bolkan, 2015). As maintained by Sweller et al. (1998), the mental capacity of humans is limited, and teaching designs should be attuned to these constraints. When teachers want students to process information from an unorganized lesson or divide their attention to different learning stimuli, students' cognitive abilities become overloaded because students' attention is shifted from deep processing of information to cognitive processing of unrelated processes, like figuring out a confusing lesson (Mayer & Moreno, 2010). Therefore, instructor clarity is of paramount importance in order not to overwhelm students' working memory (Bolkan, 2017a). Research has approved the link of teacher clarity with student educational outcomes such as academic performance (Bolkan et al., 2016), learning (Bolkan, 2015), information-processing tendencies (Titsworth & Mazer, 2010), and empowerment (Finn & Schrod, 2012). In a meta-analysis study in the area of instructional communication research, Titsworth et al. (2016) have approved the predictive role of teacher clarity on students' affective and cognitive learning based on the cumulative results of studies in the area of communication education. However, it seems that clarity is an under-researched factor in the domain of L2 education. Thus, in this book, I extend the concept of clarity into the L2 context and examine its relation with L2 students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning.

The third interpersonal factor under investigation in this book is *teacher-student relational closeness*. Years of research in the realm of communication education have substantiated that quality teacher-student relationship and rapport brings about a wide range of positive student-related outcomes (Houser & Hosek, 2018; Shakki, 2022). When teachers create a classroom context where students are affectively close to the instructor and feel comfortable, the learning process is facilitated (Frymier et al., 2019). When teachers and students are in close interpersonal contact, they start "meeting each other, learning about one another, developing expectations, and focusing on achieving goals" (Claus et al., 2012, p. 167). It is argued that, in line

