

English Teachers' Classroom Interaction through the Eyes of Students¹ Öğrencilerin Gözünden İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Sınıf İçi Etkileşimi

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between English teachers' classroom interaction and students' attitudes toward learning English. A total of 509 students in 16 English teachers' classes (n=32) participated in the research, which took place at three Anatolia High Schools in a city in central Anatolia in Türkiye. To assess students' perceptions of teacher classroom interaction, Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) was used. Additionally, for the qualitative data collection, two open-ended questions were included to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions of the most liked and disliked aspects of teacher classroom interaction. To measure students' attitudes toward learning English, "Attitudes toward Learning English" scale was employed. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationship between learners' perceptions of their teachers' classroom interaction and their subject-related attitudes. Content analyses of the responses to the open-ended questions in the qualitative section provided further details about the most and least favored teacher behaviors. The findings hold important implications for English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms.

Özet: Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi etkileşimi ile öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye yönelik tutumları arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Türkiye'nin orta Anadolu bölgesinde yer alan bir şehirdeki üç Anadolu Lisesinde gerçekleştirilen araştırmaya 16 İngilizce öğretmenin sınıfındaki toplam 509 öğrenci (n=32) katılmıştır. Öğrencilerin öğretmenlerin sınıf içi etkileşimine ilişkin algılarını değerlendirmek için Öğretmen Etkileşimi Anketi (QTI) kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, nitel veri toplama amacıyla, öğrencilerin öğretmen sınıf etkileşiminin en çok sevdikleri ve sevmedikleri yönlerine ilişkin algıları hakkında daha derinlemesine bilgi edinmek için iki açık uçlu soru eklenmiştir. Öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlarını ölçmek için "İngilizce Öğrenmeye Yönelik Tutumlar" ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Korelasyon analizi, öğrencilerin öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi etkileşimine ilişkin algıları ile dersle ilgili tutumları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Nitel bölümdeki açık uçlu sorulara verilen yanıtların içerik analizleri, en çok ve en az tercih edilen öğretmen davranışları hakkında daha fazla ayrıntı sağlamıştır. Bulgular, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL) sınıfları için önemli çıkarımlar içermektedir.

Keywords: Teaching English, Teacher Classroom Interaction, Student Attitudes

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Öğretimi, Öğretmen Sınıf Etkileşimi, Öğrenci Tutumları

Introduction

Students often develop negative attitudes toward English due to unpleasant interactions with their teachers, such as public reprimands, unfair treatment, or being ignored. These experiences can significantly impact students' perceptions of the subject, as their attitudes may be shaped by their teacher's classroom interaction. On the other hand, positive teacher-student interactions can enhance students' interest in² and attitude toward the subject³. This underscores the value of a strong teacher-student relationship⁴, making it

¹ This study was adapted from the author's MA thesis.

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² E. Afari, J. M. Aldridge, B. J. Fraser & M. S. Khine, "Students' perceptions of the learning environment and attitudes in game-based mathematics classrooms", *Learning Environments Research* 16 (2013): 131-150.

³ F. Xie and A. Derakhshan, "A conceptual review of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in the instructional context", *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 708490. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.708490>

⁴ S. L. Prewett, D. A. Bergin & F. L. Huang, "Student and teacher perceptions on student-teacher relationship quality: A middle school perspective", *School Psychology International* 40/1 (2019): 66-87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034318807743>

important to assess teacher classroom interaction from the perspective of students⁵. Understanding students' views can help teachers improve their interactions and strengthen their relationships with students. *Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction* has been a widely recognized tool which has been used to measure teacher classroom interaction in different cross-cultural settings⁶. The primary goal of this study is to present a picture of English teachers' classroom interaction in EFL classrooms and to explore how these perceptions vary and relate to students' attitudes toward EFL. It also investigates the connection between teacher classroom interaction and students' subject-related attitudes in English classrooms.

This study makes a distinctive contribution to learning environments research by exploring interpersonal teacher behavior through the use of the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) within a Turkish EFL context for the first time. It also seeks to fill a research gap related to teacher-student interaction in Turkish classrooms. Moreover, the study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze how English teachers interact in the classroom. It aims to raise awareness of the significance of teacher classroom interaction in EFL settings and to provide practical insights for teachers on how to improve their classroom conduct. A qualitative question directed to participating students seeks to identify which aspects of teacher classroom interaction they like and dislike the most, as well as how these behaviors affect their attitudes, emotional reactions, and the extent they feel themselves belonging in the classroom environment. Specifically, the study investigates the following research questions.

1. What kind of relationship is there between English teachers' classroom interaction as perceived by students and their subject-oriented attitudes?
2. What patterns of teacher classroom interaction do the students like most?
3. What patterns of teacher classroom interaction do the students dislike most?

Literature Review

Over the last few decades, scholars in the domain of Learning Environment Research (LER) have emphasized the role of students' and teachers' perceptions of the teacher-student relationship in shaping the classroom climate and affective and academic outcomes⁷. Research evidence on learning environments has indicated that educational outcomes, such as subject-related attitudes and cognitive achievement are strongly influenced by how student perceive teacher-student relationship⁸. They have also demonstrated that teachers with more helpful, friendly, and understanding demeanor build a safe and warm climate in their classrooms in which learners feel welcomed, which, in turn result in more positive feelings and attitudes and higher academic gains on the part of the students⁹. Not only students' motivation, engagement, risk taking, and positive attitudes but also their creativity and collaboration will be facilitated when teachers care about the emotional aspect of the classroom, including teacher-student interaction¹⁰.

⁵ S. Moskowitz, J. M. Dewaele & P. Resnik, "Beyond the boundaries of the self: Applying relational theory towards an understanding of the teacher-student relationship as a driver of motivation in foreign language learning", *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning* 4/2 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/4/2/5>

⁶ P. den Brok, M. Brekelmans & T. Wubbels, "Interpersonal teacher behaviour and student outcomes", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 15 (2004): 407-422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450512331383262>

⁷ Q. Wang, K. C. S. Lee & K. E. Hoque, "The mediating role of classroom climate and student self-efficacy in the relationship between teacher leadership style and student academic motivation: evidence from China", *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 32/4 (2023): 561-571. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-022-00676-z>

⁸ M. Brekelmans, T. Wubbels & P. den Brok, "Teacher experience and the teacher-student relationship in the classroom environment", *Studies in educational learning environments: An international perspective*, eds. S. C. Goh & M. S. Khine, 73-99, (Singapore: World Scientific, 2002).

⁹ den Brok, Brekelmans & Wubbels, "Interpersonal teacher behaviour and student outcomes", 407-422; D. Henderson, D. L. Fisher & B. J. Fraser, "Interpersonal behaviour, laboratory learning environments, and student outcomes in senior biology classes", *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 37 (2000): 26-43.

¹⁰ A. Ghanizadeh, F. Moafian, "The role of EFL teachers' emotional intelligence in their success", *ELT Journal* 64/4 (2010): 424-435.

There has been a large body of research that have explored the relationship between teacher classroom interaction as measured by *Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction* and student attitudes toward subjects¹¹.

The studies consistently found significant relationships between teacher classroom behavior and student attitudes highlighting the crucial role of TIB in shaping students' attitudes¹² in classes ranging from vocational subjects to Physics. In one of these studies, it was indicated that teacher classroom interaction in Physics, specifically positive behaviors such as helpful/friendly, leadership, student responsibility/freedom and understanding were linked with better student attitudes, while negative behaviors like strict, admonishing, and uncertain were associated with negative attitudes¹³.

These results are in parallel with similar studies¹⁴ strong connections between teacher classroom interaction and affective student outcomes, especially with teacher proximity, which was positively related to students' pleasure, confidence, relevance, and effort. This aligns with other studies on teacher immediacy¹⁵. Amiryousefi et al showed that positive teacher behaviors, such as helpful/friendly and understanding were associated with higher student engagement and confidence¹⁶.

Method

Research Design

This research is based on a survey design. Surveys typically gauge data by means of quantitative or qualitative questionnaires or interviews or both. As the research investigates data which was collected from a large sample on a specific topic with the goal of describing the characteristics of a population, the survey research design via questionnaires was chosen for this study. This research employs mixed-method in terms of data collection and analysis. Mixed methods involve gathering, analyzing, and combining quantitative and qualitative data. The central idea behind the mixed-method approach is that using both types of data together offers a more in-depth understanding¹⁷.

The Setting and the Participants

The participants of the study were 509 English students in thirty-two different classes that were taught by sixteen English teachers' at three Anatolia High Schools. The students were from grades nine to eleven, with the gender distribution being fairly balanced: 45% boys and 55% girls. The study investigated classroom interaction of nine male and seven female teachers. Teachers who taught at a minimum of two different classes in grades 9 to 11 were subject of inquiry. In terms of grade levels, there were fewer 11th-grade classes (n=6) compared to 9th (n=13) and 10th (n=13) grade classes. Year of experience in teaching ranged from five to twenty-four years, with an average experience of 11.24 years. Fig. 1 below presents an overview of demographic information about the participants of the study.

¹¹ Henderson, Fisher & Fraser, "Interpersonal behaviour, laboratory learning environments", 26-43.

¹² D. G. Henderson & D. L. Fisher, "Interpersonal behaviour and student outcomes in vocational education classes", *Learning Environments Research* 11 (2008): 19-29.

¹³ den Brok, Brekelmans & Wubbels, "Interpersonal teacher behaviour and student outcomes", 407-422.

¹⁴ P. J. den Brok, "Teaching and student outcomes: a study on teachers' thoughts and actions from an interpersonal and a learning activities perspective" (Phd Thesis, Utrecht University, 2001).

¹⁵ P. O. Phondee, S. Sumalee & U. Koolsriroj, "The study of teacher immediacy behaviors and its impact on students' attitude in English as a foreign language (EFL) secondary class", *Journal of Educational Review Faculty of Education in MCU* 9/2 (2022): 210-220; W. Liu, "Does teacher immediacy affect students? A systematic review of the association between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation", *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713978>

¹⁶ M. Amiryousefi, Z. Amirian & A. Ansari, "Relationship between classroom environment, teacher behavior, cognitive and emotional engagement, and state motivation", *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning* 11/23 (2019): 27-56.

¹⁷ J. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods and Approaches* (Sage Publications, 2003).

Sample	Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Teachers	Gender		
	Males	9	56,25
	Females	7	43,75
	Degree		
	BA in Teaching English as a foreign language	13	81,25
	BA in English Language and Literature	3	18,75
	Average teaching experience	16	11,34 years
Classes	Grade		
	9th	13	40,63
	10th	13	40,63
	11th	6	18,75
Students	Gender		
	Males	230	45,19
	Females	279	54,81

Figure 1. Characteristics of the Sample.

Data Collection Tools

The “Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction”

To assess EFL students’ perceptions of teacher classroom interaction “Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction” (QTI) was used. The questionnaire includes 62 items, which were to the Turkish context was based on a series of pilot studies, which included testing the 64-item American version, translating and back-translating the items, and teacher and student interviews¹⁸. QTI allows researchers to explore student as well as teacher perceptions of teacher classroom interaction, thereby offering multiple perspectives. The instrument consists of eight scales answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The options ranged from “Never/Not at all” to “Always/Very”. A sample item from each scale is provided in the following figure.

¹⁸ S. Telli, P. den Brok, & J. Cakiroglu, “Students' perceptions of science teachers' interpersonal behaviour in secondary schools: Development of a Turkish version of the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction”, *Learning Environments Research* 10 (2007): 115-129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-007-9023-2>

Dimension	Typical Item
Leadership	Our teacher guides us.
Helpful/Friendly	Our teacher encourages us.
Understanding	Our teacher listens to our problems.
Student Freedom	Our teacher tolerates interruptions in class.
Uncertain	Our teacher does not know how to react to disruptions.
Dissatisfied	Our teacher says our questions are silly.
Admonishing	Our teacher interrupts class to remind rules
Strict	Students are afraid to give a wrong answer when they are asked a question.

Figure 2. The dimensions of QTI Turkish version and a sample item for each.

“Attitudes toward Learning English” (ALE) Scale

Attitudes toward Learning English (ALE) scale developed and validated by Atay and Kurt¹⁹ was used to investigate student attitudes toward English lessons. ALE is a one of the sub-questionnaires in Robert C. Gardner's comprehensive “Attitude Motivation Test Battery” (AMTB)²⁰.

Open-ended question

A qualitative question was given to students alongside the two previously mentioned instruments to explore which teacher behaviors they liked and disliked the most, and the reasons behind their preferences in order to reach in-depth insight into students' perceptions of teacher classroom interaction, including how they interpret liked and disliked behaviors, their emotional responses to these behaviors, and how these behaviors shape their opinions about their teachers' classroom conduct. This open-ended question also aimed to address the limitations of the highly structured nature of the QTI, as it allowed for the possibility of identifying behavioral patterns not covered by the 62 items in the QTI.

Procedure

To ensure validity, QTI was administered at a minimum of two different classes which were taught by one same teacher. These classes were selected from different grades whenever possible. Qualitative data were collected from all participating students. To collect data on learner perceptions of English teachers' classroom interaction, convenient and multistage sampling was adopted for the aims of the current study. Since students in similar classes or with the same teachers tend to share experiences, multistage sampling often results in more homogeneity compared to random sampling. Teachers, classes, and students were selected in a step-by-step manner. School types where English classes hold an important place in the curriculum were selected. To specifically contribute to English Language Teaching (ELT) research, the study focused on schools with language classes, whose graduates pursue ELT or related majors in tertiary level.

After receiving official permissions, the researcher visited the schools, informed the school administrations and EFL teachers, and obtained necessary logistical support, such as student lists and

¹⁹ D. Atay & G. Kurt, “The socio-educational model of second language acquisition: The Turkish context”, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2 (2010): 3088-3093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.470>

²⁰ R. C. Gardner, *Social Psychology and Language Learning: the role of attitudes and motivation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).

teacher schedules. To address potential issues, slight adjustments were made in terms of wording, timing, and student comprehension of the questionnaire items based on the feedback received by means of a pilot study which was performed in three classes at another same type of high school. School visits were arranged with the administration's approval. The researcher explained the study and instruments to teachers, who then scheduled the questionnaire administration, typically within two weeks. The researcher personally administered the instruments in each class, ensuring students understood the instructions and guaranteeing confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations were taken into account within the scope of this study. Participants were ensured that their individual responses in the questionnaires were going to be treated highly confidential and would by no means shared with any third party and prior to data collection, participants provided *informed consent form* upon being briefed about the research aims and ethical considerations.

Data Analyses

Data from teacher and student variables were analyzed through SPSS 20. For all related variables, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated, with the exclusion of incomplete data. Simple

Findings for QTI and ALE

The results affirmed the reliability of OTI and ALE. The reliability of QTI scales ranged from .70 to .87 (student freedom and helpful/friendly dimensions, respectively). These findings were in keeping with those obtained other relevant studies²¹. The reliability for ALE scale was also satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93.

QTI scales are theoretically capable of yielding a potential mean score which range from one to five, as it is aggregated out of 5-point Likert scale. The researcher appealed to expert feedback by two academics in applied linguistics, two experts in educational sciences, and a statistics expert, each of whom was affiliated at a different university in Türkiye. Based on their feedback and the previous research the mean score ranges for QTI were interpreted as follows:

Mean range	Range level	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	very low	very negative
1.80 – 2.60	low	negative
2.60 – 3.40	moderate	moderate
3.40 – 4.20	high	positive
4.20 – 5.00	very high	very positive

Figure 3. The score range for the interpretation of QTI and ALE.

In general, students reported experiencing high levels of positive teacher-student interaction in their English classrooms. Conversely, they noted low levels of negative teacher-student interaction, as indicated by the last four scales of the QTI that assess negative behaviors. As shown in Fig. 4, leadership was the

²¹ Telli, den Brok, & Cakiroglu, "Students' perceptions of science teachers' interpersonal behaviour in secondary schools", 115-129.

most frequently reported pattern of teacher classroom interaction ($m=4.07$), while uncertainty was the least perceived teacher behavior, with a mean score of 1.65.

Dimension	Mean
Leadership	4,07
Helpful /Friendly	3,86
Understanding	3,93
Student Freedom	3,06
Uncertain	1,65
Dissatisfied	2,03
Admonishing	2,27
Strict	2,93

Figure 4. Findings for the scales of QTI.

Attitudes toward Learning English (ALE) scale revealed an average score of 3.90. This indicates that students who were involved in this study hold positive attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. The correlation analyses indicated positive relationships between students' attitudes toward learning English and their perceptions of teacher (a) leadership, (b) helpful/friendly and (c) understanding behavior, and (d) student freedom at significant levels. These findings, which align with previous research confirm the supportive role of positive teacher-student interactions in shaping students' attitudes²². To illustrate, Quek et al reported significant correlations between two QTI scales, namely leadership and uncertain, and students' subject-related attitudes in a study which was carried out in Singapore²³.

QTI Scale	Relationship with ALE
Leadership	0.41*
Helpful/Friendly	0.50*
Understanding	0.45*
Student Freedom	0.11*
Uncertain	-0.28*

²² S. Telli, "Students' perceptions of their science teachers' interpersonal behaviour in two countries: Turkey and the Netherlands" (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2006); P. den Brok, vd., "Secondary teachers' interpersonal behaviour in Singapore, Brunei and Australia: a cross-national comparison", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Education* 26 (2006): 79-95.

²³ C. L. Quek vd., "Secondary school students' perceptions of teacher-student interaction and students' attitudes towards project work", *Learning Environments Research* 10 (2007): 177-187.

Dissatisfied	-0.42*
Admonishing	-0.29*
Strict	-0.05

*Significant at the .05 level ($p < .05$, two-tailed), $N = 509$

Figure 5. Results of correlation analyses between QTI scales and ALE.

Findings for the Qualitative Questions

In order to support the quantitative data, the study included a qualitative section in which students answered a question inquiring them to determine what they liked and disliked most about their teacher's behavior in the EFL classroom. (What do you like and dislike most about your English teacher's behavior in class? Explain giving reasons.) The aim of this question was to gain deeper understanding about students' perceptions of teacher classroom interaction to complement the quantitative evidence gathered by means of QTI. After conducting a thorough content analysis, the teacher interpersonal behaviors reported by students were grouped into two main categories: the types of teacher classroom interaction students like and the types of teacher classroom interaction students dislike, as described and exemplified below by means of sample quotations from student responses.

The Types of Teacher Classroom Interaction Students Like

Humoristic / witty

Smiling / cheerful / good humored

Understanding / Tolerant

Trustful

Attentive / Caring / Interested

Fair/ Just

Helpful / Friendly

Authoritative

The sample responses presented in this section were extracted out of a large pool of student answers. Recurrent responses, very similar remarks were not given for multiple times for the same types of teacher behavior. Instead, aspects of teacher classroom interaction were exemplified with the most typical responses. Each student response is given with the corresponding participant's code next to it; i.e. the individual code randomly assigned to each participating student.

Below are some sample responses for each type of teacher classroom interaction that students reported that they favored.*

Humorous/Witty

Humorous teacher behavior has been noted to have a soothing and motivating effect on students.

"When we get bored, he brings us back to the class by making jokes." (92)

"Jocular. I become more interested in the class." (127)

"That he makes a joke when the class slows down is ideal for restarting." (393)

"He makes us laugh by telling stories from his life. He is jocular."" (130)

"Witty and jocular. Time passes quickly in class." (182)

Authoritative

Students value teacher in-class authority and consider it as a vital requirement for maintaining a positive learning environment.

“He has authority in class. This provides a more comfortable class environment.” (301)

“He completely dominates the class, making it easier for us to understand the lesson without any issues. He is authoritative, and our attempts to disrupt the class are unsuccessful.” (486)

“Authoritative. He doesn’t allow anyone to disrupt the class. This helps us stay focused.” (370)

“His being the only authority in class makes it easy for me to understand the lesson.” (255)

“She is very authoritative.” (323)

Smiling / cheerful / good-humored

Students generally reported that they liked smiling teacher manner because it enables them to behave comfortably in class, and easily adapt to the lesson.

“He always has a smiling face. This always makes me think positive things about him.” (165)

“She has a smiling face. We don’t feel bored.” (80)

“I like when he has a smile, he is jocular and he likes to make witty remarks. I like this, because our classes don’t become boring.” (120)

“He is not boring, has a smile on his face, we don’t get bored.” (131)

“She is very cheery.” (168)

Understanding / Tolerant

The student responses demonstrated that students believe tolerant and understanding actions by teachers contribute a lot to their well-being and interest in English classes.

“He is sympathetic and he tolerates jokes.” (390)

“He gives us enough time to speak about class problems.” (78)

“He has a high awareness where to give a break during lessons. He does not let us feel stressed and exhausted. He is sensitive about the psychological conditions of his students.” (219)

“He is sympathetic: he does not easily get angry about unimportant things. He makes an effort understand our actions.” (43)

“He does not exert pressure on us, he cares about his students and listens to their questions with attention.” (125)

“When we lose attention or become distracted, he intervenes to take a 3 minute conversation with us so that we can concentrate again.” (366)

Fair / Just

Students always expect fair treatment from their teachers. Following are some selected student responses.

“He has a fair approach toward everyone. He allots balanced opportunities to students to have a say in class.” (56)

“He makes sure everyone participates in class.” (140)

“He is just and he puts an end to my bad thoughts about the class.” (127)

“He treats everyone equally in class.” (468)

“He treats everyone justly and fairly, I like that he doesn’t treat any student in an unjust way.” (484)

“He pays almost equal attention to each of us. This increases our willingness to participate in class activities.” 79

“We all feel self-confident. Because he gives every one of us equal right to participate.” (274)

Interested / Caring / Attentive

Students reported that it is important for them to observe that their teachers are interested in their needs and expectations. For example, they report that they like their teachers’ learning their names in a short time. Otherwise, they state that they perceive themselves as unimportant when their teacher does not know their names but knows the names of a few others.

“My teacher makes good eye contact. He looks interested, so these make me participate and not lose my interest.” 34

“He listens to us. Our self-confidence goes up and we feel relaxed to ask questions.” (362)

“He is doing his best to ensure that we learn. This shows that he gives importance to us.” (163)

“He asks our opinions.” (142)

“He learns everyone’s name in a short time. I listen to classes more willingly when a teacher addresses me by my name at the very beginning.” (486)

“He considers us dear, and doesn’t look down on us. He appreciates us as individuals.” (265)

Friendly / Helpful

Students reported that they feel happy when their teachers approach them in a friendly and helpful manner. Some sample student responses were provided below.

“He relates his memories. This makes the class more enjoyable and we feel closer to him.” 487

“He cares about us because when we feel sad or disappointed because of a low grade in the exam he tells funny things.” (7)

“Our teacher shares her personal stories about her life with us.” (36)

“Our teacher is approachable. We feel relaxed and confident to initiate a chitchat in class. He is also willing to allow for a two-minute chat to increase our attention and interest when we get bored.” (19)

“He approaches us as if we are friends. I participate in class more easily when I observe this attitude in my teacher.” 118

Trustful

Students look for mutual trust between their teachers and themselves as indicated in some of the sample responses given below.

“He trusts us.” (173)

“I trust him. He is friendly.” (188)

“Our teacher is a person who we could trust. I can easily talk about my problems with him.” (90)

“She trusts us.” (491)

“She is very open toward us. This makes us understand our mistakes.” (220)

The Types of Teacher Classroom Interaction Students Dislike

Discriminating / unjust

Sarcastic

Admonishing

Inattentive / Unresponsive

Humiliating / Ridiculing

Strict

Inconsistent

Disinterested

Self-conceited / boastful

Ill-humored / aggressive

The following quotations, on the other hand, represent typical teacher classroom interaction patterns that students find undesirable.*

Unjust

Student answers to open-ended question indicated that they cannot tolerate their teachers' unjust treatment of their classes.

“Our teacher is annoyingly unjust.” (61)

“I do not think that my teacher is just while he assesses our oral performance during classes and exams.” (92)

“Certain students spoil classes but he does not care about their spoiling actions. He lets them act as though there is no teacher in class.” (230)

“Our teacher is biased against certain students in class. In case of an unwanted situation she always assumes that specific students are guilty.” (146)

“He discriminates against some students. There are some students who do not participate at all. But the teacher likes them more than the ones who participate.” (342)

Disinterested / Inattentive

Students hold negative ideas about teacher disinterested behavior in classroom, which has been reported to lead to lower student performance.

“That she doesn't care about whether we learn or not puts me off and makes me unwilling to learn English.” (117)

“He does not let me participate although he notices I raise my hand. This curtails my participation.” 365

“She puts no effort to make us learn, and never forces us to study.” 293

“He is being too relaxed. This makes us too relaxed, too.” 320

“When I greet him, he pretends not to see me and doesn't respond.” 132

Sarcastic

Students feel that a teacher's sarcastic behavior negatively impacts both their interaction with the teacher and their emotional comfort in the classroom.

“He often uses sarcasm and mocks us during lessons.” (123)

“Sometimes, he makes sarcastic comments toward me, which I find unpleasant.” 207

“His sarcastic jokes often make me lose interest in the lesson.” (11)

“He belittles us and is often sarcastic.” (58)

“Occasionally, he says very harsh things that leave us unable to respond, which makes me lose interest in his classes.” (190)

Angry/Aggressive

Students noted that interactions with angry or aggressive teachers distract from the lesson and decrease motivation.

“He can be too aggressive at times, making it difficult for us to feel comfortable because we’re worried he’ll get angry with us.” 113

“She becomes extremely angry sometimes, and this takes my focus away from the lesson.” 8

“When she yells because she’s angry, it makes it hard to concentrate.” 26

“She gets angry over the smallest things and seems to have a constant bad mood.” 221

“She is very aggressive in class and gets upset over the smallest mistakes.” 310

Humiliating

Students view humiliating behavior from their teacher as particularly damaging to their mental and emotional well-being in the classroom.

“He insults us deeply and disrespects us.” 55

“I really don’t like how he criticizes me openly in front of the whole class.” 61

“His harsh jokes discourage me from participating in the lesson.” 132

“He often mocks students. I avoid raising my hand in class because I’m afraid he’ll make fun of me.” 202

“She treats us as if we’re incapable and know nothing.” 110

Strict

Students express dissatisfaction with teachers who are overly demanding or put excessive pressure on them through assignments.

“She punishes the whole class for the actions of just one student.” (80)

“He doesn’t understand us and is too strict with his teaching.” (91)

“He assigns too much homework, and I can’t complete it all, which negatively affects my performance.” (166)

“Sometimes she is very strict and almost always angry. She rarely smiles (281)

“She is very strict about our appearance, especially our clothing and hairstyles.” (311)

Inconsistent

Students see inconsistency in a teacher’s reactions as unfair and confusing, leading to a lack of clarity in how they should behave.

“He completely ignores things that he once reacted violently in past situations. So I can’t figure out how to behave.” (49)

“His behavior is inconsistent. He expects us to laugh at his jokes, but we feel the opposite.” (283)

“He gets angry for no apparent reason and then suddenly smiles, which makes me unsure of how to act in class.” (144)

“He may unexpectedly get angry.” (95)

Self-conceited / boastful

Students have stated disapproving remarks for boastful teachers.

“He boasts about the fact that he knows everything better than us all the time.” (53)

“He is being very spoilt. He regards us inferior and bosses off.” (127)

“He is very boastful about himself, which really annoys me.” (133)

“He is very pompous and self-conceited.” (240)

“We cannot communicate, there is nothing in common between us and our English teacher.” (345)

* The answers, which were originally in Turkish, were translated into English by the researcher and another expert in English.

Qualitative data gauged from students show that students appreciate teachers who are friendly, smiling, fair, and humorous, and who pay attention to student feelings and thoughts. These patterns of interpersonal behavior, as reported by the students, help create a safe, comfortable environment conducive to participation and a sense of belonging in English as a foreign language classrooms. These findings are compatible with those in Yan's study, in which she examined Chinese EFL students' perceptions of classroom justice and the impact of teachers' caring and immediacy and found that behaviors such as smiling, making eye contact, and using humor—collectively referred to as teacher immediacy—enhanced students' academic engagement, reduced anxiety, and increased their attention in class²⁴.

Likewise, Luo and Derakshan examined the role of classroom climate and teacher-student relationships in EFL students' perceived learning outcomes and highlighted that a positive classroom climate, characterized by teacher academic and emotional support, mutual respect, and task-related interaction, fosters engagement, enthusiasm, and language development among learners²⁵. This supportive environment enhances students' motivation, satisfaction, classroom participation, and well-being, while reducing anxiety and fear.

These behaviors contribute to a positive classroom climate, fostering a sense of closeness and psychological safety among students. On the other hand, students dislike teachers who lose control in classroom procedures. Students also express strong disapproval of discriminatory or unfair treatment by teachers, as it negatively impacts their emotional well-being, participation, and trust in the teacher. Students expect fair and equal treatment, and any form of bias or favoritism undermines their sense of trust and belonging. As noted by Tsai, teachers' favoritism toward students may lead to students favored consulting more and comfortably with their teacher on academic, emotional, and friendship issues while distancing those who are neglected by their teachers²⁶.

²⁴ P. Yan, “Chinese EFL students' perceptions of classroom justice: The impact of teachers' caring and immediacy”, *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 767008. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.767008>

²⁵ T. Luo and A. Derakhshan, “Examining the role of classroom climate and teacher-student relationships in EFL students' perceived learning outcomes: A self-determination theory perspective”, *Learning and Motivation* 88 (2024): 102062. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lmot.2024.102062>

²⁶ Y. Y. Tsai, “Does undue preference lead to unfairness? The impact of teacher favoritism on teacher treatment and student achievement”, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 101 (2022): 101941. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2022.101941>

According to the students' responses to the qualitative question, the desired traits of an English teacher can be summarized as follows: Authoritative and slightly strict, yet friendly without being overly familiar in class; helpful, attentive, and showing concern for students' emotional well-being; witty, using jokes to engage students and maintain their attention; consistent, responding similarly in like situations; and fair, offering equal opportunities to all students without discrimination. Good teachers avoid humiliation, insulting reactions, bullying, or admonishment, and refrain from expressing anger or aggression and are not sarcastic, self-centered, or demeaning. They are good-natured, smile often, show understanding behavior, and maintains immediacy and friendliness in an attempt to create a supporting and comfortable classroom environment where students feel that their expectations and emotions are cared about sensitively.

Discussion and Conclusion

In parallel with the above mentioned research evidence from subjects other than English, the findings obtained in the current study has highlighted - for the first time in Turkish EFL context - the significance of English teachers' classroom interaction in fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing students' well-being, and their attitudes toward learning English. Students' perceptions of teacher behaviors serve as valuable feedback for teachers, encouraging self-reflection and improvement²⁷. When teachers are aware of how they interact with students, it can improve both their teaching effectiveness and relationships with students. Feedback from students allows teachers to make adjustments, such as promoting fairness or enhancing interpersonal skills. English teachers, for instance, can adopt strategies to exhibit more leadership, friendliness, and understanding, which can improve students' attitudes toward learning. Conversely, avoiding negative behaviors like uncertainty or harshness can contribute to a more positive classroom atmosphere.

This study offers a unique contribution to the field of learning environments research (LER) by focusing on interpersonal teacher behavior by utilizing Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction in Turkish EFL setting for the first time. It also aims to address the gap in research concerning teacher classroom interaction within the Turkish cultural context. Additionally, the study employs both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the classroom interaction of English teachers. The findings may serve as valuable feedback for English teachers, helping them reflect on and enhance their relationships with students in the classroom. This study highlights the role teacher classroom interaction plays in shaping students' perceptions about and attitudes toward learning English as well as their interest in and desire to learn English. Likewise, Rasyid reported that interpersonal communication is facilitative in EFL teaching and foster learning. Teacher classroom conduct plays a critical role in shaping students' social, psychological, and instructional experiences in learning English²⁸. The way a teacher interacts with students influences their emotional well-being and attitudes toward the language, which in turn impacts their overall learning outcomes. A teacher's behavior and conduct are essential in establishing a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe, supported, and respected. This environment of emotional safety encourages students to participate without fear of making mistakes, which is particularly important in English classes where it is taught as a foreign language given the fact that making mistakes is an inevitable part of the language learning process. Teachers who demonstrate patience, kindness, and empathy foster a space in which students can take risks with the language, knowing that they will be encouraged rather than ridiculed.

²⁷ S. Moskowitz, J. M. Dewaele, & P. Resnik, "Beyond the boundaries of the self: Applying relational theory towards an understanding of the teacher-student relationship as a driver of motivation in foreign language learning", *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning* 4/2 (2022). e429622. <https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/4/2/5>

²⁸ M. A. Rasyid, "Interpersonal communication that inspires in EFL teaching", *ELT Worldwide* 2/2 (2015): 345575. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v2i2.1686>

When students feel emotionally safe and comfortable, they have lower language anxiety and higher levels of self-confidence and willingness to engage in classroom activities. Supportive teacher-student relationship helps students feel more comfortable in expressing themselves and asking questions, which is vital for learning a language. Teacher classroom conduct profoundly affects students' well-being and their attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, enthusiasm, clear communication, and culturally sensitive practices create an environment where students feel supported and motivated to learn. This, in turn, encourages students in learning English, thereby leading to better attitudes toward the subject. A teacher's conduct is, therefore, not just about imparting knowledge; it is about fostering a psychologically and socially conducive environment for language acquisition. In conclusion, it is of great significance that EFL teachers should integrate positive interpersonal behavior in their classroom, such as being approachable, humorous, and fair to foster a motivating and enjoyable learning environment.

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