Exploring Where Perceived Teacher Enthusiasm and Learner Engagement Meet in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

Teacher Enthusiasm (TE) and Learner Engagement (LE) have recently appealed to educational researchers. Nonetheless, their association and potential impacts have not been sufficiently dealt with in the field of second language (L2) research. The present mixed methods study sought to explore the intersection of perceived TE and LE in L2 classroom. To this end, 87 Iranian intermediate L2 learners completed a self-report questionnaire on perceived TE and their own engagement. Next, two focus-group interviews were conducted with a total of 12 respondents. The quantitative data were used in a correlational analysis to see if any relationship exists between perceived TE and LE. The qualitative interview data were analyzed through thematic coding analysis to extract the significant themes regarding how perceived TE may affect L2 learners' engagement. Results demonstrated that the two variables are significantly correlated. Moreover, the qualitative data yielded three main themes indicating that perceived TE led to L2 learners' enjoyment and excitement, positive appraisal of teacher quality, and feelings of security and confidence. Thus, emotional consequences seem to be dominant links between the two variables. Additionally, it was found that personal vision and self-set goals are significant antecedents of engagement that may even outdo perceived TE.

Keywords: teacher enthusiasm, learner engagement, emotions, perceived teacher enthusiasm

Introduction

During the last decade, research on Teacher Enthusiasm (TE) has gained momentum in the field of second or foreign language (L2) learning and teaching. An increasing number of studies have been devoted to investigating the nature of TE and its associations with other teacher / learner variables (e.g., Cui et al., 2020; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Frenzel et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2018). This growing attention is due to the conviction that TE characterizes effective teachers (Lazarides et al., 2018, 2019) and is a major factor in promoting learner motivation and positive emotions (Fauth et al., 2019; Frenzel et al., 2018; Keller et al., 2016, 2018; Wang & Derakhshan, 2021). Moreover, scholars have found significant links between TE and several other variables such as learner enjoyment (Frenzel et al., 2009), interest (König, 2020), autonomy (Cui et al., 2017), recall (Moè, 2016), learning and academic achievement (Burić, 2019; Kunter et al., 2013). TE has also been reported to boost teacher emotions and wellbeing (Burić & Moè, 2020).

Very recently, L2 researchers have demonstrated interest in scrutinizing the potential links between TE and another newly popularized language learner characteristic i.e., Learner Engagement (LE) (Dewaele & Li, 2021). LE is understood as learners' active involvement and participation in academic activities (Dörnyei, 2020). As Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) state, LE is the external manifestation of motivation realized in learners' behaviors and actions. LE focuses on the quality of (dis)engaged learners' thinking, feeling, participation, and performance during learning. Research suggests that LE highly influences learners' expended effort, achievement, enthusiasm, and attention (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Quin, 2017).

Generally, a number of studies have suggested that teacher emotions or motivational practices can affect learners' engagement (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2020; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Lazarides et al., 2019; Oga-Baldwin, 2019). However, the association between TE and LE remains underresearched. The scarcity of studies on this subject is especially felt in the field of L2 learning and teaching. Therefore, further scrutiny is required to uncover the minutes of the association of these two factors in the L2 classroom. Moreover, if there is a connection between them, how significant and crucial is the connection? What are the potential experiences or emotions at the intersection of TE and LE? Also, it is necessary to clarify the degree to which TE can effectively get language learners engaged with their learning activities in the classroom. Thus, the present study aims to examine the relationship between TE and LE and explore the underlying emotions that link TE to L2 learners' (dis)engagement.

Literature Review

Both concepts of TE and LE have been theorized and undergone scholarly research independently. However, scant attention has been directed toward their potential linkage. In the following section, the existing literature on each of them is reviewed separately and then, research studies that have delved into the interface of TE and engagement or other relevant emotions are examined.

Teacher Enthusiasm

Kunter et al. (2008, p. 470) defined TE as "the degree of enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure that teachers typically experience in their professional activities." Despite this seemingly straightforward definition, there has been a long dichotomy over how TE can be best understood and defined. In fact, one strand of research has consistently examined TE as an internally experienced feeling, thus focusing on teacher enjoyment and positive emotions (Keller et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013). The second line of research employed a different definition which puts emphasis on displayed enthusiasm as perceived by students. From this perspective, teachers' excitement and enthusiasm are expressed via visible behavior and is perceived by students by means of verbal and non-verbal instructional behaviors (Lazarides et al., 2018; Patrick et al., 2000). Keller et al. (2016) offered a new definition which incorporates and combines both strands. Nevertheless, Keller et al.'s (2018) enquiry suggested that the two dimensions do not necessarily co-occur.

Previous studies indicate that TE is closely connected to a variety of desirable outcomes. For instance, learners' interest (Keller et al., 2014), achievement, and academic success (Kunter et al., 2013), students' perceived learning support (Lazarides et al., 2019, 2021), self-efficacy (Burić & Moè, 2020), motivated behavior and active learning (König, 2020; Lazarides et al., 2018; Patrick et al., 2000), and enjoyment (Frenzel et al., 2009) are associated with TE. Moreover, some studies have suggested that enthusiastic teachers are more likely to employ high-quality methods and techniques of teaching (e.g., Baier et al., 2019; Kunter et al., 2008).

Learner Engagement

Ellis (2019, p. 48) contends that engagement is "the major force of learning." As Mercer (2019) maintains, engagement is characterized by action that is its defining feature distinguishing it from motivation. Engagement is about learners' active participation in and commitment to learning activities (Zhou et al., 2021). Such a proactive devotion and involvement bring about desirable outcomes in terms of meaningful learning and academic achievement (Hiver et al., 2020; Oga-Baldwin, 2019). It has been suggested that engaged students invest more attention, concentration, persistence, and behavioral self-regulation resulting in heightened learning and success (Lambert et al., 2017; Svalberg, 2017). Therefore, LE is deemed to be an essential component of learning in general and L2 learning in specific, especially because successful learning of a second language requires learners' persistence and ongoing practice of language use (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

Engagement can appear at various layers or levels including community, school, classroom, and tasks (Shernoff, 2013) meaning that LE can be scrutinized within different timescales and scopes. Besides, Engagement is understood as multidimensional or multifaceted construct which is comprised of several components. According to Philp and Duchesne's (2016) seminal work, LE is composed of four components: behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. A number of studies have demonstrated that LE is manifested in these

four interrelated dimensions (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Henry & Thorsen, 2020; Lambert et al., 2017).

Behavioral engagement refers to learners' observable participation in learning activities, which, in the case of L2 learners, is normally materialized through quantity of learners' production, voluntary involvement, persistence and time management, and even hand-raising (Böheim et al., 2020; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Emotional engagement is the affective quality of learners' participation. It is simply learners' feeling about the learning situation, activities, and the people involved (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Whether facilitative (e.g., enjoyment, enthusiasm, interest) or debilitative (e.g., boredom, anxiety, frustration), emotions influence learners' performance (Dao, 2021; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Oga-Baldwin, 2019). Cognitive engagement is understood as processes of mental activity and investment. Cognitively engaged learners put attention and thought into their learning. These include deliberate and directed attention aimed at accomplishing goals (Svalberg, 2009, 2017). Cognitive engagement is crystalized in acts of questioning, hesitation, repetition, private speech, non-verbal communication, and also, intensity and quality of interaction which is manifested in learners' exchange of ideas, provision of feedback, and explanation (Baralt et al., 2016; Hiver et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2017). Finally, closely associated with emotional engagement, social engagement highlights the role of social context and communities of language learners. It puts emphasis on the contextual factors such as patterns of interaction, role of peers, and role of teachers (Hiver et al., 2021; Svalberg, 2009). Research suggests that social engagement supports constructive rapport, communication and feedback quality (Lambert et al., 2017; Maronski & Toth, 2016).

Intersection of Teachers' Enthusiasm and Students' Engagement

Engagement is said to heavily depend on context (Baralt et al., 2016). Similar to any other learner variable, LE does not unfold in a vacuum. A multitude of contextual, cultural, instructional, social etc. variables are simultaneously at work and constantly interact with LE (Shernoff, 2013; Zhou et al., 2021). Research has demonstrated that contextual factors and personal factors fall into a dynamic and robust interaction that can finally give rise to LE (Mercer, 2019; Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Qiu & Lo, 2017; Svalberg, 2017). Supporting the same notion, a number of studies showed that contextual factors such as school discipline, classroom practices, and teacher behavior management have a crucial impact on LE (Bru et al., 2021; Larson et al., 2021; Ruzek et al., 2016).

TE, too, is one of those variables that can potentially influence engagement. Some studies have suggested that enthusiasm exuded by teachers in the classroom is contagious and affects students (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al.., 2009). Furthermore, Lazarides et al. (2018, 2019, 2021) indicated that TE can be transmitted to students and bring about enhanced emotions, motivation, and engagement. In a specific case, Lazarides et al. (2018) noted that perceived TE is significantly connected to mastery goal orientation of students, a finding that is further corroborated by Frommelt et al. (2021). In the same vein, König (2020)

reported that perceived TE has a bearing upon learners' enjoyment, motivation, and higher rating of teachers' instructional quality. Additionally, a couple of studies indicated that learners' perception of TE is closely related to their interest in the subject-specific content (Frommelt et al., 2021; Mahler et al., 2018). Dawaele and Li (2021) examined the relationship between students' perceived TE and their emotions and engagement. They found significant positive correlations between the variables and concluded that perceptions of TE and LE are closely associated. Moreover, they posited that emotions such as enjoyment and boredom significantly mediate this association. Likewise, Cui et al. (2020) observed that TE as perceived by learners is negatively associated with class-related boredom. Moskowitz and Dewaele (2021) maintain that desirable emotions and enjoyment of enthusiastic teachers are carried over to their students, thus affecting their performance positively. This explanation drew on Oga-Baldwin (2019) and Philp and Duchesne's (2016) ideas that highlighted a link between positive emotions and engagement. They held that students' perception of their teachers' behavior and feelings lead to emotional judgments and evaluations that, by themselves, bring about (un)desirable consequences in students' performance including (dis)engagement. Thus, the existing body of research suggests that emotions mediate the relationship between TE and SE, meaning that perceived TE spawns positive emotions that ultimately encourage improved engagement.

Taken together, there are implications of a significant relationship between TE and LE. Although the previous studies are indicative of a connection between the two variables, the literature on this subject is at its infancy and requires additional confirmation. Thus, further investigations, especially in the field of L2 learning and teaching, can help provide more evidence to substantiate this link. Moreover, the quality and importance of the relationship and emotions through which TE influences LE awaits deeper explorations. The existing literature has fallen short of an explanatory illumination of the underlying emotional factors that activate the association of TE and LE. Therefore, it seems warranted that in-depth inquiries explore the nature and quality of the association and shed some light on the emotional factors that arise and influence the potential connection. Therefore, the present study seeks to explore this relationship via focusing on the following research questions:

1. Is there any statistically significant correlation between L2 learners' perceived TE and engagement?

2. What are the emotions that mediate the relationship between TE and LE?

Method

Participants

A total of 87 (male = 39, female = 48) Iranian EFL learners took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 17 to 33 years (mean = 20.33). They were attending intermediate English courses at two private language institutes in Mazandaran, Iran. The participants were recruited through convenience sampling and joined the study

within six intact classes (3 all male, 3 all female). Each class incorporated between 12-15 individual students. Each of the classes was taught by a different teacher, hence a total of six teachers (3 male, 3 female). All of the teachers held Master degrees in TEFL from domestic universities and their years of teaching experience ranged from 6-11 (mean = 8.5). The teachers were 27-39 years old (mean = 34.15). The classes met twice a week in sessions of 90 minutes.

Materials and Instruments

The Questionnaire

For measuring LE and perceived TE quantitatively, a self-report questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire contains two sections. The first part comprises four multi-item scales with a total of 28 items. One of the scales, adopted from Dewaele and Li (2021) is used to measure students' perceived TE (4 items). The other three scales, adopted from Hiver et al. (2020), focus on engagement: behavioral engagement (8 items), emotional engagement (8 items), and cognitive engagement (8 items). Respondents are supposed to respond to items by selecting a number on a six-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the present study, the four subscales yielded adequate indexes of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha for them was calculated to be .81 for perceived TE, .81 for behavioral engagement, .83 for emotional engagement, and .86 for cognitive engagement. The second part of the questionnaire collected respondents' demographic information such as their age and gender.

Focus-Group Interview

For gathering qualitative data, two focus-group interviews were conducted. A purposive sample of 12 participants took part in the interview. The interviewees included two students from every class: students who scored the highest on perceived TE scale and those who got the highest mean scores on LE. Those with high perceived TE mean scores (n = 6) and high LE mean scores (n = 6) participated in separate focus-group interview sessions. The main purpose of the interview was to explore students' feelings and ideas concerning TE and how their perception of TE affected their engagement and performance. It was intended to look for potential links between perceived TE and LE. After a few prompt questions, the researchers let the respondents express their thoughts freely and openly. They were reassured that the content of the session would be kept confidential and used only for this specific study. Their consent was also obtained for recording the session. The interviews were conducted in Persian to maximize comfort of expression. The sessions took around 90 minutes to complete.

Procedure

The present mixed-methods study is based on an explanatory sequential design (Ary et al., 2019), whereby qualitative data collection follows collection of quantitative data. First, after explaining the aims of research and receiving the students' consent, the quantitative questionnaire was administered to the six classes. This was performed during the fifth week of their academic term when the students

had already attended nine sessions. The administration took about 25 minutes on average. The researchers were personally present to respond to potential problems though none arose. Next, the two interview sessions were held to collect the qualitative data. The interviews were conducted by the researchers and were accomplished two days after the administration of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were subjected to correlational analysis by using SPSS version 20. Also, the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding analysis via an inductive approach. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model, first of all, the recorded data were listened to and transcribed carefully. Then, the transcribed passages were read and reread in order for the researchers to gain familiarity with the data and begin to notice ideas and patterns embedded in them. Second, the researchers read through the data set and highlighted the meaning-carrying elements of the text which were related to the research goal. Following that, the initial codes were produced from the data and the extracts related to each code were marked. Third, the researchers used the list of codes to look for potential themes that could incorporate several codes and yield an overarching category. At the fourth phase, the emerged themes were thoroughly reviewed to see if all themes were compatible with the codes and the raw data. The purpose of this stage was to refine themes by deleting candidate themes that could not find enough support and breaking too large ones down into separate themes. Fifth, final refinement was conducted. Each theme was checked and matched with the relevant extracts to make sure that it made a suitable and proportionate representative for the data. Finally, in the sixth phase, the final report was prepared and the most appropriate extracts that best illustrated and exemplified the finalized themes were selected to bring them to life in the write-up.

Results

Answering the First Research Question

The descriptive statistics for the obtained quantitative data are presented in Table 1. As indicated by Table 1, all the scales enjoyed above acceptable reliability estimates.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Data

	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Perceived TE	87	3.17	0.84	0.81
Behavioral engagement	87	3.82	0.70	0.81
Cognitive engagement	87	4.09	0.81	0.86
Emotional engagement	87	3.60	0.69	0.83

To see whether there is any association between students' perceived TE and their LE, a correlation analysis was run. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was utilized to ensure the normal distribution of the data (see Table 2). After checking the assumption of normality, a Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between perceived TE and LE. There was a positive and statistically significant correlation between the two variables ($r = .53$, $n = 87$, $p = .000$). Therefore, it can be said that perceived TE and LE are closely associated with each other. The results of correlation are summarized in Table 3.

Table 2

Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistic	Sig.
Perceived TE	.131	.098
LE	.202	.144

Table 3

Results of Correlation between Perceived TE and LE

		Perceived TE	LE
Perceived TE	Pearson Correlation	1	.532[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	87	87
LE	Pearson Correlation	.532[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	87	87

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Answering the Second Research Question

The qualitative interview data were used to answer the second research question. After the analysis a number of recurring and prevalent themes emerged. These themes and concepts represent learners' emotions and thoughts about the impact or influence of teachers' enthusiasm on their own learning engagement. In fact, the analysis of the data demonstrated how learners' felt about the effectiveness and importance of perceived TE in their performance and engagement. The themes are presented in the following section and are exemplified by drawing on interviewees' quotations. In order to protect their anonymity, pseudonyms are used instead of respondents' real names.

Enjoyment and Excitement

Enjoyment and excitement were recurring themes in respondents' statements. Students from both interview groups expressed their joy and elation at their

teachers' enthusiasm whenever experienced and perceived. Being a strong subsequence of TE, the concepts of enjoyment and excitement have been repeatedly mentioned as the first outcome of TE in the classroom. In this regard, Dara's description is relevant:

> Whenever he [the teacher] shows his enthusiasm through facial expression, gestures and verbal passion, I think, immediately… the whole class members follow him with similar excitement. Personally … in such cases, I start to enjoy the session greatly. He delivers the lesson with such happiness and positive feelings that you develop the same emotions right away. Then, whatever the subject … even grammar which I least like, you enjoy the process and have fun.

However, there were contradictory ideas regarding the actual influence of the enjoyment created by TE on engagement. Some of the interviewees stated that the experience enjoyment and excitement did not have a lot to do with their engagement. For example, Shirin, one of the students who got a high LE mean score, believed that enjoyment may not be necessarily an antecedent of her engagement:

> … yes, I remember the occasions when my teacher's performance causes a lot of joy and excitement. I like that very much. Her emotional performance enthralls me greatly and I enjoy it. But … I don't think that if her enthusiasm fades away, my engagement and motivation would follow it. Irrespective of her mood and excitement, I stick to my own goals and plans… I am studying to prepare for the IELTS test... and this is the only important thing.

This perspective was further consolidated when Sahand, a learner with high perceived TE score, confirmed that enjoyable and excitement did not necessarily lead to engagement with the material:

> In response to this … I should say … when my teacher teaches passionately, he becomes funnier and pours his excitement and joy over us. I always enjoy it. It is fun, but sometimes I just focus on his funny performance and enjoy. However, if the stuff is not interesting or I consider it less relevant, I can hardly concentrate on it. For example, once he was such a passionate and funny teacher and then assigned us to pairs to make up a conversation and perform it. My partner did the whole thing and I just read my lines.

Evidence of Teacher Quality

Another frequent theme relates to students' perception of teachers' quality and effectiveness. In many instances during the interviews, respondents mentioned that they make judgments and evaluations based on their teachers' enthusiasm. Whether animated or lethargic, teachers seem to have been assessed by students based on the amount of exuded passion and enthusiasm. Respondents from both interview groups almost unanimously maintained that TE is a reliable evidence of teacher quality and expertise. Concerning this issue, Sara said:

> Willingness to teach and work with students is a requisite for any teacher. What use is a teacher if s/he behaves like any reluctant employee at a governmental office? No matter how much s/he knows, s/he can't be called a good teacher unless he creates interest and motivation in the classroom… and shows great happiness about it. So… when my teacher shows energy and willingness, I make sure that s/he knows the job.

Bahman was another interviewee who affirmed the significance of TE as a characteristic of effective teachers. He belonged to the group of highly engaged learners. Yet, he believed that his engagement was not totally dependent on the TE:

> I recognize a skillful teacher from his / her ability to get students concentrate on the task at hand. Language lessons and materials are tough and require sustained energy. Thus, knowing the rules and vocabulary or speaking fluently … are not the whole story about good teachers. Skillful teachers transmit happiness … energize learners and encourage them to keep going.... I think even if the teacher is like that … there is no guarantee that students keep working hard… there must be … purposeful students who have a vision … who feel the need to work hard… and understand a necessity to learn. It is too much to expect teachers to set such goals for learners.

Security and Confidence

As another affective dimension, feeling of security and confidence was a recurrent theme. Several respondents confirmed that TE influences and, to a great extent, determines their level of confidence and security. The interviewees indicated that teachers who act enthusiastically minimize their students' inhibition and self-defense. This takes place via establishing a nonthreatening and secure atmosphere where students dare to express themselves and take part in activities without fear of reproach and embarrassment. Therefore, level of engagement is improved. Behnam elaborated on this issue:

> [Authoritative] teachers are scary. One of my previous teachers was unkind, easily irritated and strict. Nobody would volunteer. I seldom raised hand... I don't remember his smile. However, this term, our teacher enters the room with a big smile, looks kindly at pupils and chats … friendly. You feel eager to get involved, participate, communicate and enjoy the company. You think if you stay aside, you will feel to have missed something good.

Feeling of security leads to more comfortable atmosphere which encourages learners to take risks more confidently and dare to act even though a possibility of making mistakes exists. This is obvious in Mahnaz's description of her enthusiastic teacher:

> My teacher *is* [emphasis is original] enthusiastic. She carries an air of willingness with her. She is friendly and energetic. She seems to be enjoying her job and duties. Sometimes … I feel she is more interested and motivated than all of us. The positive mood and energy of the class activate us. I am assured that we have the right to try and test and make erroneous sentences.

She supports us in every condition. There is no fear of making mistakes. Thus, I work energetically.

Discussion

The present study was designed to explore how L2 learners' perceived TE might be related to and influence their engagement. The first research question focused on the potential relationship between the two variables. As the statistical analysis indicated, there was a significant relationship between them. It seems that when L2 learners perceive their teachers' practice as enthusiastic, they tend to engage more in learning activities. This finding can be corroborated by findings of some previous studies (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Frenzel et al., 2009; Lazarides et al., 2018, 2019, 2021; Mercer, 2019; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021). As these studies have hypothesized, this significant association might appear as a result of contagion of emotions from enthusiastic and passionate teachers to their students. Enthusiastic teachers exude emotions and feelings that can be transmitted to students in the classroom. The resulting positive atmosphere and mood alongside decline in potentially negative emotions such as anxiety, fear or boredom lead to an engaging setting where individuals are persuaded to participate more vigorously and engage in further interaction. This interpretation is substantiated by some other research studies (Becker et al., 2014; Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

The second research question addressed the potential underlying reasons or mechanisms which affect the interface between perceived TE and LE. Analysis of the qualitative data yielded three major themes as mentioned by the respondents to be salient issues in association of the TE and LE. These themes included enjoyment and excitement, evidence of teacher quality, and security and confidence. The first theme, i.e., enjoyment and excitement, indicated that from respondent' perspective, TE brings positive emotions of joy, happiness and elation to the classroom. As a matter of fact, respondents believed that these emotional states are transmitted from enthusiastic teachers to students. This finding is in line with those of Becker et al., (2014), König (2020), Frenzel et al. (2009), Moskowitz and Dewaele (2021) who stress the contagious nature of enjoyment and excitement. Although there is general agreement on this issue, the data of the present study also indicated that engagement is not totally dependent on transmitted enthusiasm and enjoyment. Some respondents confirmed that their previously set goals and clear purposes keep them on the track and will not let their engagement loosen or weaken. Even though they maintained that teachers' enthusiastic practice gave them pleasure and enjoyment, they insisted that their gritty and strong determination is the main driving force behind their engagement with the learning activities. This is a novel finding which deviates from previous studies (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2021; Frommelt et al., 2021; Mercer, 2019) that found contagious enjoyment and pleasure to lead to engagement.

Evidence of teacher quality was the second obtained theme. The interviewees insisted that exhibited enthusiasm is a sign of teacher expertise and quality. This belief of theirs can gain support from Moskowitz & Dewaele (2021) who held that students prefer happier teachers and evaluate them positively. Similarly, Lazarides et al. (2021) agree that students' perceived TE is a key factor in deciding about teacher

instructional quality. It is noteworthy that some respondents' comments put emphasis on the significant role of self-set goals and determination. This belief was expressed that in absence of clear purpose and vision it is unlikely that sheer TE have the potential to motivate and galvanize learners to take action. The significance of L2 learners' vision construction and its effectiveness in motivating them have already been cogently argued and evidenced (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Safdari, 2021).

The third major concept was security and confidence. Just as positive emotions such as enjoyment are expected to stay and proliferate in light of TE, negative emotions like anxiety and fear are anticipated to decline and fade. Respondents said that perceived enthusiasm makes them more confident and secure in the classroom, hence bringing about their enhanced participation and engagement in activities. This is also in line with findings of several other studies (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2021; Lazarides et al., 2019; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011; Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). According to the qualitative data, this may be rather interpreted as absence of negative emotions which typically impede involvement and engagement.

As far as the qualitative data are concerned, two significant points can be discussed. First of all, taken together, the themes represent L2 learners' emotional reactions to and appraisals of their classroom learning experience as much as they are related to perceived TE and LE. Whether positive or negative, learners' perception of their teachers' enthusiasm has had a number of consequences which gave rise to their ultimate emotional appraisal and judgment. The mediating role of such emotional appraisals were observed and evidenced in a number of research studies (e.g., Dao, 2021; Dewaele and Li, 2021; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011). Thus, drawing on the current findings and similar evidence found in the literature, it seems a reliable stance to state that perceived TE primarily affects learners' emotions bringing about emotional repercussions and, then, the resulting emotions can robustly mediate and regulate the intersection of TE and LE. The second major issue relates to significance of learners' own determination and persistence regardless of perceived TE. This new observation may bear some enlightening implications. It indicates that although perceived TE is certainly effective in giving learners a pleasant and positive classroom experience and let them enjoy a funny and joyful atmosphere, other personally-relevant variables such as self-set goals, personally meaningful purposes, and vision might possess the potency to outdo it and exercise greater and more enduring impact over learners, which transcends transient emotions that are bound to a limited context such as the classroom.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study was conducted with the aim of exploring the interface of perceived enthusiasm of teachers and L2 learners' engagement with classroom learning activities. Results indicated that perceived TE is connected to and influences LE via emotional arousal and stimulation. It was found that emotional consequences of perceived TE, including L2 learners' enjoyment and excitement, judgment of teacher quality, and feelings of security and confidence affect LE. Nevertheless, from the observed results, it can be contended that there might be

other factors that exert stronger influence on LE including personal vision and self-set goals.

The present findings suggest a number of pedagogical implications. First, it is evident that the enthusiasm expressed and exuded by teachers in their performance creates strong emotions among students and has considerable impact on their evaluation of the pedagogical context and quality of instruction. Thus, it seems necessary that teachers pay special attention to how they appear to their students. Mere possession of knowledge and skill does not guarantee learners' trust and acceptance; secure atmosphere, confidence, and enjoyment are also indispensable ingredients for success. Thus, educators may decide to underscore the value of training novice teachers to understand the significance of enthusiasm as a pedagogical tool and learn how to communicate with optimum level of vitality and passion. Second, enthusiasm, notwithstanding its importance, is not the only antecedent of academic engagement. Self-determination and personally important goals matter a lot in this regard. Therefore, helping L2 learners to set self-concordant aims and make clearer personal visions can be highly effective and may even outdo the potential vigor of other contextual factors including enthusiasm of the teacher.

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