

## Relationship between Teacher Verbal and Non-verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation in EFL Classes

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**Abstract:** Verbal and non-verbal immediacy are recognized as important inputs to enhance learning outcomes. The study aimed in the main to determine the association between teacher immediacy and student motivation. This descriptive correlational study examined the utilization of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and the relationships between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation for learning English. A sample of 123 student participants were drawn from two primary second cycle schools. The participants self reported the perceived levels of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors influencing students' motivation for learning English, and self-rated their resulting motivation. A sample of 8 teachers also self-rated the level of verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors that they display in the classroom: The results indicated that teachers' utilization of verbal immediacy was low, while non-verbal immediacy was high. The results of the correlation analysis indicated both teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy were positively associated with student motivation for learning English. In particular the positive relationship between teacher non-verbal behaviors and student motivation for learning English was significant. Findings of this study suggest that students' motivation for learning English is likely enhanced when the teacher utilizes verbal and non-verbal immediacy in the classroom. The results yield important insight into ways teachers can analyze and reflect on classroom communication methods. This study also provides useful, descriptive data indicating the need and direction for future research.

### Introduction

Interaction is one of the most important processes in the classroom. Effective communication between teachers and students enhances teaching and learning. Especially in a context where students learn English as a foreign language, it involves a lot of direct contact between teachers and

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students. In addition to this, because learning a second language effectively requires a supportive atmosphere, it is important to establish a kind of classroom community in which students feel free to communicate using the target language. Thus, developing a friendly relationship with their students is a valuable contribution that teachers can make; and to do so teachers should consider how they can communicate in ways that help their students learn. The communicative student-teacher relationship is critical to the learning-teaching process, and an important variable of this relationship is immediacy (Andersen, 1979). Liando, (2010) also reported that one of the instructional communication behaviors that are essential in EFL classes is teacher immediacy.

Anderson (1979) introduced teacher immediacy, a concept which describes communication behaviors that reduce the perceived distance between the students and teachers, in instructional communication. Teacher immediacy can be portrayed as verbal immediacy and non-verbal immediacy. Verbal immediacy is characterized as stylistic differences in expression from which like - dislike is inferred. Verbal immediacy refers to calling students by name, using humor, and encouraging student input and discussion. Non-verbal immediacy behaviors are abbreviated forms of approach and avoidance (Saechou, 2005). Non-verbal immediacy includes behaviors such as smiling, gesturing, eye contact, and physical proximity.

The use of immediacy behaviors affects the learning of students. Rocca (2007) reported that there is a positive correlation between teacher immediacy and other classroom variables. The teacher immediacy behaviors motivate students to work harder and students perform better in the classroom (Chritophel, 1990). In other words, whenever students feel a desire or need for learning, they are motivated, and this motivation plays a large part in students' interest and enjoyment of school and study (Martin, 2003).

Most of the research into the effects of teacher immediacy on the learning of students in the classroom setting has been based on immediacy as a whole,

not separated into verbal and non-verbal. Hsu (2006) investigated teacher non-verbal behaviors in relation to student motivation for learning English, and reported that student motivation for learning English is likely enhanced when teachers utilize non-verbal immediacy behaviors. However, her study only considered teacher non-verbal immediacy excluding teacher verbal immediacy. The most recent research stated that verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors of teachers were considered as qualities of best EFL teacher characteristics in an Indonesian context (Liando, 2010).

The issue of teacher immediacy behaviors has not received any attention in Ethiopian education. Since teaching EFL involves a lot of direct contact between teachers and students, teacher immediacy behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal, are considered essential. They are essential to enhance student motivation in the otherwise difficult EFL classroom.

When the learning of a second language takes place at home with the support of the neighborhood and local schools, it seems to be learned with relative ease, sometimes automatically. But when the process happens in the classroom, the school social context and the special conditions under which such learning takes place have a decisive influence (Gardner, 1985).

Rost (2006) stated that virtually in every language learning setting, but particularly in EFL settings, learners cannot make and sustain sufficient progress in the second language because they do not receive enough instruction, not nearly enough attention in class, not nearly enough input or meaningful interaction or opportunities for serious output. Some studies in language immersion have estimated that a typical learner needs a minimum of four hours a week of quality contact with a language in order to make progress. Even if this estimate is not true for all learners, it is clear to most EFL teachers that learners need more language instruction than teachers can provide in their classrooms. Learners of a second language need more quality instruction - input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output (Krashen, 1982) not only to make progress, but in order to maintain a

sufficiently strong connection to the language and to build their own motivation for learning (Rost, 2006).

The issue of motivation, particularly in EFL settings, is so important that other considerations about teaching methodology seem to pale in comparison (Liando, 2010). It is important to think about motivation as the essence of language teaching because of the stark realities of learning English for most of our students. As Rost (2006) stated all of the conditions that contribute to successful second language acquisition are lacking in most EFL contexts: there just is not enough English input in the environment, there probably are not enough opportunities for interaction with English speakers, there usually are not enough strong role models promoting the learning of English, and there may not be widespread enough social acceptance for the idea of becoming proficient in English. Because of these adverse conditions, a learner has to have extraordinary motivation in order to succeed at learning English. However, teachers often forget that all of their learning activities are filtered through their students' motivation. Without student motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class. When teachers learn to incorporate direct approaches to generating student motivation in their teaching, they will become happier and more successful teachers. Rost (2006) described that the central core of motivation is what might be called "finding passion", and all successful learning, not only language learning, is somehow connected to a learner's passion. One way of generating passion in learners is through the psychological principle of "immediacy" - using oneself as a model of enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

In Ethiopian English language teaching (ELT), the idea of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy appears new. Literature reviewed indicates that this construct has not been touched upon. Thus we do not know the degree to which (ELT) teachers employ verbal and non-verbal immediacy and whether at all they apply them. Neither do we know how self-aware teachers are of their classroom communicative behavior and how they think it affects learner motivation. It is, therefore, important to fill the knowledge gap by studying

teacher immediacy behaviors and the association with student motivation. In this study, the researcher attempted to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent ELT teachers of the second cycle display verbal immediacy in classroom instruction?
- To what extent ELT teachers of the second cycle display non-verbal immediacy in classroom instruction?
- Is there a significant relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation?
- Is there a significant relationship between teacher non-verbal immediacy and student motivation?

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

### ***The Concept of Immediacy***

The concept of immediacy which was originally developed by a social psychologist Albert Mehrabian is defined as one of communication behaviors which “enhance closeness to and non-verbal interaction with another” (Mehrabian, quoted in Velez and Cano, 2008; Averbeck, Mothland, and Alfiya, 2006). Mehrabian originally emphasized non-verbal immediacy but later he developed taxonomy of verbal components as well (Allen, Witt, and Wheelless, 2006).

In terms of his principles of immediacy, Mehrabian noted people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer (Mehrabian, cited in Rocca, 2007). Immediacy has been linked to motivational trait of approach-avoidance in that, People approach what they like and avoid what they do not like Mehrabian cited in Velez and Cano, 2008). Baringer and McCroskey (2000) also confirm that immediacy coincides with the idea of liking and disliking, and stated that individuals tend to shy away from those whom they dislike and try to spend more time with

those whom they like. Using immediacy behaviors, then, bridges the psychological distance between two persons or groups (Allen, Witt, and Wheelles 2006). Thus, employing immediacy in a classroom setting is important for teachers, students, and the learning process (Zuria and Mohammad, 2007).

### ***Teacher Immediacy***

Anderson (1979) introduced the application of immediacy to educational settings and defined it as the idea that a teacher, through the use of certain cues, could reduce the perceived distance between teachers and students and thereby influences certain classroom outcomes, especially students learning. The theoretical thinking posits teacher immediacy, a communication behavior perceived by students, generates increased involvement and enthusiasm for the material and instruction (Allen, Witt, and Wheelles, 2006). Teacher immediacy behaviors convey teacher warmth, communicate positive relational affect, signal approach and availability for communication, and create increased physiological arousal in receivers (ibid).

Teachers who convey immediacy in the classroom contribute to interpersonal attraction through proximity and reinforcement (Richmond and McCroskey, 1995). Teacher immediacy behaviors, such as appropriate eye contact, the use of gestures, movement about the classroom, smiling, vocal varieties, and the use of humor, are considered to be highly effective teaching behaviors. Early research conducted in the field of education labeled these behaviors as “teacher enthusiasm” or “teacher expressiveness” (Abrami Leventhal, and Perry, 1982), while communication researchers have chosen to label them as “immediacy behaviors” (Anderson, 1979). On the contrast, non-immediacy behaviors convey lack of enthusiasm and expressiveness, such as “low eye contact, a distal position, backward body lean, and the absence of smiling and touch, communicated greater detachment (Sanders and Wiseman, 1990). The immediacy concept, thus, can be used to describe positive teacher’s characteristics. Immediacy

perceived by the learner in a learning environment can be viewed as an indicator of reduced feeling of isolation Bozkaya and Aydin (2008). Learners must interact with teachers and others as a social entity, “real person”, to avoid the feeling of isolation.

Based on Mehrabian’s immediacy taxonomy, teacher immediacy can be categorized as verbal and non-verbal behaviors which occur during student-teacher interaction that would create physical and psychological closeness between teachers and students (Bozkaya and Aydin, 2008). Teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors have significant effects on learners’ feeling of satisfaction regarding the teachers and the learning environment (Anderson, 1979). Bozkaya and Aydin (2008) also stated that teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors reduce the psychological distance and improve learners’ performance.

Researchers have found that teacher immediacy plays a considerable role in instruction; in particular such behaviors motivate students with low involvement in learning (Christophel, 1990; McCroskey and Richmond, 1986). Studies also have shown that students have a higher tendency to comply with teachers who engage in high immediacy behaviors as compared to teachers with low immediacy behaviors. In general, teacher immediacy enhances teaching effectiveness and positive student-teacher classroom interactions by arousing students’ attention and increasing students’ positive feelings toward teachers (Flora and Wang, 2010). Hence, in order to help students develop a positive attitude toward learning English as a foreign language, English teachers should use both verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors in their classrooms (Tsiplakides, Areti, and Keramida, 2010). If teacher immediacy behavior predicts the level of student learning, teachers need modifying their instructional communication behaviors to improve the outcomes of the learning. Teacher immediacy, thus, represents a behavior that teachers can be trained to exhibit and increase. Immediacy is categorized and investigated under two sub factors as verbal and non-verbal.

***Non-verbal Immediacy***

Non-verbal immediacy has been a major area for communication research for more than forty years in the United States, and is defined as communication behaviors that enhance closeness (Priby, Sakamoto, and Keaten, 2004). Non-verbal immediacy is also perceived as a relational language to convey affective feelings of warmth, closeness, and belonging (Richmod, Gorham, and McCrosky, 1987), and has been defined as the implicit use of closeness-inducing behavioral cues (Anderson, 1979). Mehrabian, (quoted in Velez, and Cano, 2008) stated:

People rarely transmit implicitly [non-verbally] the kinds of complex information that they can convey with words; rather, implicit communication deals primarily with the transmission of information about feelings and like-dislike or attitudes. The referents of implicit behaviors, in other words, are emotions and attitudes or like-dislike (P.3).

Non-verbal immediacy is recognized more as a psychological trait because it involves behaviors like eye contact, body posture, gestures, physical proximity, touching, and smiling. Researches suggested that such non-verbal cues increase the sensory stimulation of interlocutors which in turn lead to more intense, more affective, more immediate interactions. Andersen (1979) suggested that non-verbal behaviors such as facing toward someone, standing close to someone, and touching form the immediacy among individuals. In the same vein, nodding to approve, smiling, and intentionally using gestures and stressing some words, as well, are acknowledged as non-verbal immediacy behaviors.

When people are more immediate, they are more likely to communicate a close distance, smile, engage in eye contact, use direct body orientation, use body movement and gestures, touch others, relax, and be vocally expressive (Anderson, 1979). The non-verbal immediacy construct, hence, is based on



the idea that teacher non-verbal behaviors promote feelings of arousal, liking, pleasure, and dominance. These feelings are mediated through actions such as eye contact, body position, physical proximity, personal touch and body movement (Rocca, 2007) to arouse students' attention and interest during instruction. The majority of non-verbal immediacy of teachers' focus on behaviors such as eye contact, gestures, body position, smiling, vocal expressiveness, movement and proximity (Hus, 2006; Priby, Sakamoto, and Keaten, 2004; Liando, 2010).

Non-verbal immediacy has been shown to increase student motivation, cognitive learning, affective learning, and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness (Hus, 2006; Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001; Liando, 2010). Research indicates that students were more likely to comply with the requests of teachers who were more immediate non-verbally than less immediate teachers. Non-verbal immediacy is associated with approachability and availability for communication, and also with increased sensory stimulation, interpersonal warmth, and closeness (Andersen, 1979). Teachers who do not exhibit non-verbal immediacy behaviors frequently are thought to be projecting avoidance, dislike, coldness, and interpersonal distance (Kearney, et al, 1988).

Teachers create more impression through non-verbal immediacy in the classroom than the knowledge of subject matter and verbal fluency. There is a language of body expression and motion that plays a pivotal role in the language classroom. Research studies conducted in classroom environments also suggest that non-verbal behaviors send clear and distinct messages (Negi 2009). Moreover, these non-verbal messages can be a more explicit and candid means of determining intent than merely the spoken word alone (Hybles and Weaver 1986). Furthermore, Hsu (2006) indicated that non-verbal behavior often influence the demeanor of teachers and students. Actually the success of both the student and teacher depends upon the effective communication between them in the class, but communication becomes handicapped without the proper use of non-verbal behaviors. In this regard, Saechou (2005) points out that the body language

of teachers is the most important thing in the class; it is the way teachers use their eyes, the distance they stand from their students, the way they touch or refrain from touching their students, all of these unnoticeable things in the class carry important signals which create a profound effect on their students' feelings of welcome and comfort with the teachers. In general, it is true that non-verbal behaviors account for a large part of meaningful human communication. (Hybles and Weavers, 1986) pointed out actions, such as facial display, eye contact or body language etc. speak louder than words and often help others make accurate judgments about our thoughts, feelings and intentions because they set the scene for total communication and provide significant information about others emotional states. Velez and Cano, (2008) also confirm 93 per cent of the emotional meaning is transmitted through non-verbal behaviors. Thus, we can say that even if we speak with our vocal organs, we converse with our entire bodies; conversation consists of much more than a simple interchange of spoken words (Liando, 2010).

### ***Verbal Immediacy***

Verbal immediacy refers directly to stylistic verbal expressions used by teachers to develop with in students a degree of like or dislike towards the teacher (Velez and Cano, 2008). Verbal immediacy in instruction refers to communication behaviors such as calling students by names, asking for students' feedback about the lessons, referring to the class as "we" and "our", and engaging in conversations with students before and after class (Rocca, 2007).

Anderson's (1979) study on the teacher immediacy included behaviors such as talking about experiences that have occurred outside class, communicating with learners before and after classes, using humor to attract attention, encouraging learners to actively participate and ask questions, addressing learners by name, praising learners' work or comments, and providing feedback on learners' work. Her results suggest that these types of behavior also contributed significantly to students' affective learning.

Depending on the words selected, verbal immediacy serves to improve psychological feeling of closeness among individuals. For example, instead of word like “you” and “me”, using the word “us” enhances feelings of closeness and association (Gorham, 1988). Learners in such a teacher’s class are expected to possess positive attitudes toward learning and display more interaction with the teacher. Increased interaction between learners and teachers, in return, positively affect second language learning.

Verbal immediacy has been shown to be highly correlated with non-verbal immediacy (Edward and Edwards, 2001), and was associated with effective teaching (Liando, 2010). Furthermore, verbal immediacy has shown relationships with student motivation, perceived cognitive, affective learning, and increased student willingness to participate in and contribute to class discussions (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001; Saechou, 2005; Bozkaya and Aydin, 2008).

When verbal immediacy is applied to teaching, it appeals to increase student cognitive, affective and behavioral learning (McCrosky and Gorham, 1987). The combination of both verbal and non-verbal teacher immediacy appears to increase student liking for teachers, decrease student apprehension, and increase overall student liking for the course and subject matter (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001).

Teacher verbal immediacy is most often expressed through the use of praise for student efforts, humor, and self disclosure, willingness to meet and interact with students (Edward and Edwards, 2001; Gorham, 1988). In addition, verbal and non-verbal immediacy is based on approach-avoidance conflict and has been shown to increase student motivation. Student motivation has been identified as a critical component to student success (Bromphy, 2004). Hence, to be effective, teachers must understand and recognize their ability to either positively or negatively affect student motivation.

### ***Student Motivation and Teacher Immediacy***

Gardner (2001a) defined motivation as the driving force in any situation. Arkes (1981) also defined motivation as the process that initiates, directs and sustains behavior to satisfy physiological and psychological need. The motivated individual expends effort, is persistent and attentive to the task at hand, has goals, desires, and aspirations, enjoys that activity, experiences reinforcement from success or disappointment from failure, makes attributions concerning success or failure, is aroused and makes use of strategies to aid achieving goals (Gardner et al.2003).

Student motivation can be conceptualized as students' energy and drive to learn, work effectively, and achieve to their potential at school and the behaviors that follow from this energy and drive (Martin, 2003). Motivation plays a large part in students' interest and enjoyment of school and study.

The research on motivation defines motivation as an orientation toward a goal. Motivation provides a source of energy that is responsible for why learners decide to make an effort, how long they are willing to sustain an activity, how hard they are going to pursue it, and how connected they feel to the activity.

Whenever students feel a desire or need for learning something, they are motivated. Using the best curriculum, technology, and assessment will not make a difference if the students do not want to learn (Hsu, 2006). The effectiveness of teaching will not happen until teachers direct their students' hearts back to learning.

Teachers' behavior is the most essential component in student motivation that should be emphasized (Frymier, 2001). Rusell (1971) indicates teachers are the most influential determiners of students' learning motivation. Students' learning attitude and learning motivation are influenced both by their perceptions of teachers and directly by teachers' actual behaviors (Allen et al., 2006). When students perceive their teachers are providing

clear expectations, contingent response, and strategic help, they are more likely to exert more effort and be persistent. In other words, they are more motivated to learn. Students feel happier and more enthusiastic in class if they experience teachers' warmth and affection. When teachers focus their attitudes and actions upon this concept of teaching, they begin to see themselves differently. They become instruments, dynamic, and influential, whereby the conditions develop to maximize the likelihood that motivation and learning will occur (Russell, 1971).

A substantial amount of research has focused on the relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning. A meta-analysis conducted by Witt et al. (2004) suggested that, teacher immediacy, in general, facilitated student learning, and Allen et al (2006) subsequent meta-analysis found that teacher immediacy first influenced students' affective learning and followed by their cognitive learning. Moreover, when students were emotionally and psychologically connected with teachers and classroom environments, they were more motivated to be active rather than passive learners. Hence, teacher immediacy appears to arouse students' learning motivation, and in turn, motivation leads students to perform desirable behaviors and achieve positive learning outcomes (Rocca, 2007). The term "motivated cognition" used by Covington (1983) emphasizes that cognitive learning is subordinate to motivation. Confirming this, Christophel (1990) claimed, "The underlying implication of student motivation appears to lie in the process of 'how' students are taught, rather than 'what' they are taught". Hence, affective learning refers to "students' motivation to learn" (Rodriguez, Plax, and Kearney, 1996, P. 293; Frymier, 1994), where as cognitive learning focuses on how much information students have learned or lost (Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, and Plax, 1987). Cognitive learning is not necessarily equivalent to teacher-assigned course grades or limited to students' recall of specific content, but it can be measured by 'learning loss,' a concept developed by Richmond et al. (1987) to determine the difference between students' responses to the questions "How much did you learn in this class?" and "How much did you think you could have learned in this class had you had an ideal instructor?"

While many other factors could contribute to students' motivation for learning English, teacher immediacy behaviors are found to have a significant correlation with students' motivation for learning (Zuriya and Mohammad, 2007). Students' affect and motivation for learning reflect on their initiative to participation in the classroom when teachers are responsive and caring (Hsu, 2006). When students are not affectively prepared, their learning will not bring about a positive learning outcome to the affective filter being high (Krashen, 1982, 1997).

So far, studies have shown the significant role of teacher immediacy in increasing students learning. Particularly, related to English language teaching (ELT) Hsu (2006) suggested that using non-verbal teacher immediacy enhances students' motivation. In addition, Liando (2010) suggested that best English language teachers employ verbal and non-verbal immediacy in their classroom. However, although a reasonable amount of studies on teacher immediacy behaviors have been conducted, most of them highlighted in this section were done abroad, and involved tertiary students. There are no local studies directly addressing on the association between immediacy and motivation in the ELT environment.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

Quantitative methodology is one of the three standard methodologies that can be used independently or in combination with qualitative methodology depending on a researcher's orientation. Reflecting the positivist orientation, a quantitative study is focused on the control and measurement of participants and quantitative data are analyzed statistically to analyze among variables in a study (Decoster and Lichtenstein, 2010). According to Scholl (2008) the principal function of quantitative methodology is comparison and measurement. This study falls within the quantitative category of correlational studies which seek to find associations between the variables of a study. As a project in quantitative EFL, the purpose of this study was, first,

to examine to what extent English language teachers display verbal and non-verbal immediacy in their classrooms, and second, to explore the relationship between both teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation. To do so, a descriptive survey study design was employed because this method helps to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions (display of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy), and determining the relationships that exist between the predictor and criterion variables (teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation). As employed in this study, correlation of course does not prove causation.

### ***Participants***

The main sampling criterion for this study was to give participants equal chance to participate in the study in order to obtain reliable data. The whole participants in this study were 131 grade 8 students and grade 8 English teachers. The reason this study focused on this group is that with an advent of adolescence, in particular, academic tasks may often appear unappealing and uninteresting. Hence, extrinsic factors play an important role in aiding motivation (Arkes, 1981). The study involved 123 grade 8 students, and 8 grade 8 English teachers who were selected from two primary schools in Adama city: 'Adama Kutir Hulet' and 'Adama Kutir Arat'. Whilst Adama was selected conveniently, the schools were selected randomly out of ten primary schools in the city. Student participants were 123; 66 students from 'Adama Kutir Hulet' and 57 students from 'Adama Kutir Arat'. Among the whole population, 13% of students from each school had been selected applying simple random sampling based on Sharmas' (2000) suggestion that reports 10-20% of accessible population can be taken as a sample in descriptive survey study. For teacher participants, available sampling was used since the teachers were small in number in both schools. Hence, four teachers from 'Adama Kutir Hulet' and four from 'Adama Kutir Arat' were selected to participate in the study.

No demographic data was available on the participants because extreme caution was taken to insure participation since student evaluations of their teachers, and teachers self rating of their own behavior was involved. However, the overall calculated data observed from each school shows almost a balanced gender (52% female, 48% male students in 'Adama Kutir Hulet' primary school, and 50.9% female, 49.1% male students in Adama Kutir Hulet' primary school). Regarding the students' age the average ranges between 14-16 years. Table 1 presents statistics of the participants.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of participants**

| Sample schools      | Student Participants |                   | Teacher Participants |                   |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                     | Population (100%)    | Sample Size (13%) | Population (100%)    | Sample Size (13%) |
| 'Adama Kutir Hulet' | 510                  | 66                | 4                    | 4                 |
| 'Adama Kutir Hulet' | 436                  | 57                | 4                    | 4                 |

### ***Instrumentation***

Three instruments were used to assess the teacher immediacy behaviors and student motivational state for learning English: verbal immediacy scale, non-verbal immediacy scale, and student state motivation scale.

Verbal immediacy scale measured students' perception of their teachers' verbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom while non-verbal immediacy scale measured non-verbal behaviors. Teacher verbal immediacy behavior was measured by utilizing a 17 item Likert scale verbal immediacy scale which was primarily developed by Gorham (1988), and adapted from Velez and Cano (2008). An item "Is addressed by his/her first name by his/her students" was deleted from the original instrument because there is no such a culture in Ethiopian context. Thus the final version consisted of 16 items.



Teacher non-verbal immediacy scale which consists 10 items on a Likert scale was developed by Thomas, Richmond, & McCroskey (1994), and adapted from Hsu (2000) was used to measure teacher non-verbal immediacy behaviors. Because the Amharic translation of item 9, “Touches students on the shoulders or arm while talking to them” has a connotative meaning, it was slightly modified as “pats students shoulder or arm to encourage students when talking to them”. As Vijver and Leung (1997) stated, changing questions into more easily understandable phrases that contain the substance, if not the exact words, is a valid translation method. Both the verbal and the non-verbal immediacy scales rated 1(never) to 5(very often).

Student state motivation was measured by student motivational state questionnaire developed by Guilloteaux (2007). The student motivational state questionnaire assesses the students’ situation – specific motivational disposition in relation to their current English course. In other words it does not include items seeking to tap more general attitudinal or motivational factors, such as the incentive values of English proficiency or integrativeness. It consists of three sub-scales which assess the students’ attitudes toward their current English subject (Attitude toward the subject), their perception of their ability to cope with English learning and achieve the desired goals in terms of English proficiency(Linguistic self-confidence), and their general level of anxiety when they have to use English in their current class (L2 classroom anxiety). This questionnaire consists 20 items rated 1(not at all true) to 6(very true) on a Likert scale.

All the instruments were translated (for student participants) into Amharic by an English language expert and back translated into English by three graduate colleagues to insure linguistic and conceptual equivalence.

All the instruments underwent piloting before administered. In the previous study the alpha reliability of verbal immediacy scale was .84, and .86 for non-verbal immediacy scale. The student motivational state questionnaire

alpha reliability was calculated for each subscale: Attitude towards the subject .85, Linguistic self-confidence .80, and L2 classroom anxiety .63.

In the present study, the internal consistency of the scales was assessed with the use of Pearson product moment formula. Results revealed .86 for verbal immediacy, and .70 for non-verbal immediacy scale. The reliability of each subscale under the student motivational state questionnaire was .64 for attitude towards the subject, 1.0 for linguistic self-confidence, and .62 for L2 classroom anxiety. The internal reliability of the instruments is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Internal reliability of the instruments**

| Instruments                       | r   |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Verbal immediacy scale            | .86 |
| Non-verbal immediacy scale        | .70 |
| Student motivational state scale: |     |
| • Attitude towards the course     | .64 |
| • Linguistic self-confidence      | 1.0 |
| • L2 classroom anxiety            | .62 |

### ***Procedures of Data Collection***

Data was collected in the second semester, a month later after the first semester break, to insure that students had been very well acquainted with the class and the teacher immediacy behaviors. After approved by the school administration, at first, the researchers oriented the participants briefly about the study, and urged to ask questions about anything they found unclear. The participants appeared to show more interest when they were reminded in the instructions that the researchers were researching how English learning could be made more interesting in Ethiopian primary schools. Then, student participants were asked to rate on a Likert scale (never-very true) to measure their perception of verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors of their English teachers. Regarding the student

motivational state scale students were told to rate on a Likert scale (not at all true-very true) how much they are motivated for learning English. The questionnaires took 15-25 minutes to complete. Teacher participants responded only on two scales: verbal immediacy scale and non-verbal immediacy scale. They were given the questionnaire and returned back within 2 to 3 days.

### ***Data Analysis Procedures***

Various Descriptive statistical procedures (mean, standard deviations) were utilized in this study to assess the existing teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy. In addition to investigating means, correlation coefficients were analyzed to inspect the relationship between both verbal and non-verbal immediacy and student motivation with the P value of .05 accepted as the level of meaningfulness. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS15.0).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Results***

Based on the pre-established objectives of the study, four basic research questions were stated in the introductory part of the present study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze research questions 1 and 2, and correlation analysis was used to analyze research questions 3 and 4.

### ***Descriptive Statistical Results***

The first research question asked to what degree English language teachers display verbal immediacy behaviors in their classrooms. The result from the analysis of students report was statically non-significant, ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=1.35$ ). This result revealed that English language teachers' use of verbal immediacy in the classroom is low. Findings from the teachers self rating, ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ), however, was statistically significant. The result indicates that

teachers use more verbal immediacy in the classroom (see Appendices A and B).

The aggregate mean and standard deviation of students' response and teachers' response is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of verbal immediacy**

| Source of data | Mean | SD   | N   |
|----------------|------|------|-----|
| Students       | 2.97 | 1.35 | 123 |
| Teachers       | 3.25 | 0.99 | 8   |

The second research question examined to what degree English language teachers display non-verbal immediacy in their classrooms. Results obtained from both students report ( $M=3.28$ ,  $SD=1.40$ ), and teachers self-rating, ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=.963$ ), were statistically significant. The results showed that English language teachers displayed high non-verbal immediacy in the classroom (see Appendix B).

The aggregate mean and standard deviation of students' response and teachers' response is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of non-verbal immediacy**

| Source of data | Mean | SD   | N   |
|----------------|------|------|-----|
| Students       | 3.28 | 1.40 | 123 |
| Teachers       | 3.16 | 0.96 | 8   |

## Results from Correlation Analysis

To answer research questions 3 and 4, Pearson Correlation was utilized to examine the relationship between teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors and student motivation for learning English.

Research question 3 addressed the relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation for learning English. The result indicated the relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation for learning English was significantly and positively correlated,  $r(123) = .328; \alpha = .05$ .

This positive relationship indicated that student motivation for learning English was likely to increase when students observed their teachers demonstrate verbal immediacy behaviors while teaching English. This result is consistent with the existing research on teacher verbal immediacy behaviors (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2000). Since students learn most from teachers who are warm, friendly, immediate, and approachable (Comstock, Rowell, Bowers, 1995), and students in the classroom where teachers use high immediacy behaviors perform better than students who are observing teachers with low immediacy behaviors (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001), the results are generally in agreement with the relevant literature.

Research question 4 explored the relationship between teacher non-verbal immediacy and student motivation for learning English. The result revealed that students' perceptions of teacher non-verbal immediacy were related positively to their self-reported learning motivation though it is statistically non significant  $r(123) = .186; \alpha = .05$ . The correlations between teacher verbal immediacy, teacher non-verbal immediacy, and student motivation are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Correlations between Teacher Verbal Immediacy, Non-verbal Immediacy and Student Motivation**

| <b>Variables</b>     | <b>Motivation</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Verbal immediacy     | .186              |
| Non-verbal immediacy | .328              |

## **Discussion**

The main purpose of this study was to explore whether or not English teachers display verbal and non-verbal immediacy, and to examine their relationship with student motivation.

First, this study introduces the concept of employing verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom. The results from students' response suggest that English teachers' use low verbal immediacy, while the teachers reported their use of verbal immediacy in the classroom is high. This variation may result from the assumption that using teacher's report on their own behavior is believed to be less accurate, particularly, on the aspect of their non-verbal immediacy behaviors (Gorham, 1996). Most researchers prefer using student's perception of teacher immediacy rather than using teacher's self-rating approach to access teacher immediacy behaviors (Chesebro and McCroskye, 2000; Hsu, 2006; Flora and Wang, 2010). Subaham (cited in Zuria, 2007) also suggested that researchers use student's perceptions approach in evaluating teacher's effectiveness behaviors because student's perception of teacher's behaviors can determine student's behaviors (motivation, emotions, perception, attitude, values, beliefs and norms) toward other learning factors in school, hence, this method is reliable. Based on this premise, teachers' use of verbal immediacy in English classes is low though teachers consider themselves verbally immediate.

This is an interesting finding in this study that highlights awareness to English language teachers. Verbal immediacy strongly correlates with positive perceptions that interpret verbal immediacy as a sign of affect (Liando, 2010). When students are not affectively prepared, their learning will not bring about a positive or productive learning outcome due to the affective filter being high (Krashen, 1982). Hence, teachers are expected to use more verbal immediacy in their classrooms since it helps students to communicate and participate in the instructional process. When teachers apply verbal immediacy in their instructional communication, students are more likely to continue interaction with the teachers. Students in the classroom where teachers use high immediacy behaviors perform better than students who are observing teachers with low immediacy behaviors (Baringer and McCroskey, 2000).

Another potential explanation may lie in the concept of non-verbal immediacy. English language teachers may display high non-verbal immediacy behaviors in their classrooms because we can not control all of our non-verbal behaviors; we often send out information we are not even aware of (Hybels and Weavers, 1986).

The present study indicates that both student perceptions and teachers self-rating of teacher non-verbal immediacy are high. Higher levels of non-verbal immediacy would contribute to a positive reinforcement that creates a motivation for the student to interact with the teacher and creates a sense of reward or positive valence. The likely result of high immediacy is an increase in the desire of the student to perform the role of student or learner in the classroom. Mehrabians' principle of immediacy supports this idea, "People are drawn toward persons or things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer: and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer (Mehrabian cited in Rocca, 2007).

Second, this study represents the significance of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy to students' motivation for learning English. The study indicates that student perceptions of teacher verbal immediacy are

correlated positively and significantly with motivation for learning English. Students reported more motivation when taught by a teacher perceived to be more verbally immediate. The findings suggest that student motivation for learning English is likely to increase when teachers demonstrate verbal immediacy while teaching. Findings from research question 4 also suggest that there is a positive relationship between teacher non-verbal immediacy and student motivation to learn English.

Teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors contribute to positive interpersonal relationships with students. The results are in accord with the literature which generally supports that students are less anxious and more self-initiated in the learning process where they feel that they are supported and accepted; concurrently, students' motivation for learning is increased (Witt and Wheelless, 2006). An important implication gleaned from this study is that teachers should be aware that their verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors effectively and powerfully enhance students' motivation for learning English. Therefore, teachers should be more sensitive in their English classrooms, knowing that their verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors could bring a positive influence—lessen students' anxiety on English learning- resulting in an effective outcome, enhancing students' motivation.

### **Conclusions**

This study examined the topic of teacher immediacy, the communication behaviors that enhance physical and psychological closeness with another. The study assessed the utility of teacher verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors and the association between student motivation for learning English, and related the information to teacher effectiveness, student motivation, and instructional communication in the classroom.

Based on the findings, the answer to the first research question should prompt teachers to reflect on their classroom communication because teacher verbal immediacy positively motivates students to learn English. The



correlations highlighted in the results yield important clues as to students' perceptions of teachers' instructional communication. Students will have a greater likelihood of motivation for learning English when the teachers demonstrate verbal and non-verbal immediacy. Based on this research, it appears that the verbal and non-verbal behaviors of English teachers may be related to certain aspects of student motivation. Although a multitude of other variables may affect the interactions between students and teachers, insight into verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors allows teachers to give specific detailed thought to their instructional communication.

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Appendix A: Descriptive statistics of verbal immediacy behavior scale for students' responses.

| <b>Variables</b>   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>N</b> |
|--|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Asks questions or encourages students to talk.   | 3.56        | 1.34      | 123      |
| Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topics.   | 2.95        | 1.37      | 123      |
| Praises students work, action or comments.   | 3.61        | 1.32      | 123      |
| Asks questions that solicit view points or opinions.   | 3.04        | 1.38      | 123      |
| Refers to class as "our" class or what "we are doing.  | 3.21        | 1.38      | 123      |
| Addresses students by names.   | 3.37        | 1.38      | 123      |
| Invites students to telephone or meet him/her outside of class if hey have questions or want to discuss something.           | 1.54        | 1.08      | 123      |
| Uses humor in class.   | 2.17        | 1.35      | 123      |
| Provides feed back on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.                                  | 2.59        | 1.37      | 123      |
| Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan. | 2.94        | 1.36      | 123      |
| Gets into conversation with individual students before or after class.   | 2.41        | 1.20      | 123      |
| Students address him/her by name.  | 3.27        | 1.61      | 123      |
| Uses personal examples or talk about the experiences he/she has had outside of the class.                                    | 2.94        | 1.35      | 123      |
| Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.                                | 3.46        | 1.39      | 123      |
| Asks questions that have specific, correct answers.  | 3.92        | 1.17      | 123      |
| Has discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.                       | 2.55        | 1.42      | 123      |

Appendix B: Descriptive statistics of verbal immediacy behavior scale for teachers' responses

| <b>Variables</b>  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>N</b> |
|---|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Ask questions or encourage students to talk.  | 4.13        | 1.12      | 8        |
| Ask how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topics.   | 2.50        | 1.41      | 8        |
| Praise students work, action or comments.   | 3.50        | 1.51      | 8        |
| Ask questions that solicit view points or opinions.   | 3.88        | .641      | 8        |
| Refer to class as "our" class or what "we are doing.  | 3.50        | .93       | 8        |
| Address students by names.  | 3.75        | .71       | 8        |
| Invite students to telephone or meet him/her outside of class if hey have questions or want to discuss something.     | 3.75        | 1.03      | 8        |
| Use humor in class.   | 1.63        | .74       | 8        |
| Provide feed back on students individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.                      | 2.75        | .87       | 8        |
| Get into discussions based on something a student bring up even when this doesn't seem to be part of my lecture plan. | 3.50        | 1.07      | 8        |
| Get into conversation with individual students before or after class.   | 2.63        | .52       | 8        |
| Students address him/her by name.   | 2.88        | .84       | 8        |
| Use personal examples or talk about the experiences I have had outside of the class.                                  | 2.75        | 1.38      | 8        |
| Call on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.                          | 3.38        | 1.30      | 8        |
| Ask questions that have specific, correct answers.  | 3.25        | .71       | 8        |
| Have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.               | 3.50        | 1.06      | 8        |



Appendix C: Descriptive statistics of non-verbal immediacy for students' responses

| Variables  | Mean | SD   | N |
|--|------|------|---|
| Gestures while talking to class.                               | 3.44 | 1.44 | 8 |
| Uses monotone/dull voice when talking to the class.            | 3.66 | 1.36 | 8 |
| Looks at the class while talking.                              | 4.17 | 1.14 | 8 |
| Smiles at the class while talking.                             | 3.49 | 1.41 | 8 |
| Moves around the classroom while teaching.                     | 3.91 | 1.37 | 8 |
| Looks at board or notes while talking to the class.            | 2.80 | 1.50 | 8 |
| Has a relaxed body position while talking to the class.        | 3.63 | 1.45 | 8 |
| Uses a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class. | 2.11 | 1.43 | 8 |
| Pats students on the shoulder or arm while talking to them.    | 2.81 | 1.48 | 8 |
| Sits or stands behind desk while teaching.                     | 2.79 | 1.45 | 8 |

Appendix D: Descriptive statistics of non-verbal immediacy for teachers' responses.

| <b>Variables</b>  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>N</b> |
|---|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Gesture while talking to class.                               | 3.63        | .92       | 8        |
| Use monotone/dull voice when talking to the class.            | 2.88        | 1.35      | 8        |
| Look at the class while talking.                              | 2.25        | 1.03      | 8        |
| Smile at the class while talking.                             | 3.75        | 1.03      | 8        |
| Move around the classroom while teaching.                     | 1.75        | .87       | 8        |
| Look at board or notes while talking to the class.            | 4.50        | .76       | 8        |
| Have a relaxed body position while talking to the class.      | 3.75        | .87       | 8        |
| Use a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class. | 2.38        | 1.18      | 8        |
| Pat students on the shoulder or arm while talking to them.    | 4.38        | .52       | 8        |
| Sit or stand behind desk while teaching.                      | 2.38        | 1.06      | 8        |