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Iraqi EFL Learners' Conceptions of Strokes With Respect to Teachers' Age

Salman Hintaw Abdulhussien^a, Reza Pishghadam^b and Moein Sakhtkar Haddadi^b

^aUniversity of Al-Ameed, Karbala, Iraq; ^bFerdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

ABSTRACT

This article describes how the transactional analysis concept of strokes can contribute to our understanding of educational psychology and the dynamics in educational settings between teachers and students. Teachers' stroking behavior may be influenced by several factors, including gender, age, and culture. The study described here investigates the differences among Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' conceptions of types of strokes based on the age of their teachers. Five hundred Iraqi teenage learners responded to a 32-item scale. The results of repeated measures ANOVA manifested that there was not a significant difference in the students' perceptions of overall kinds of strokes given by young and older teachers. However, two sub-scales of strokes—verbal conditional positive and verbal conditional negative strokes—were perceived significantly differently between older and younger teachers. Finally, and importantly, verbal conditional negative strokes turned out to be less unpleasant than unconditional ones regardless of the teacher's age, denoting that if the teacher is to give negative strokes, students prefer conditional ones.

KEYWORDS

Transactional analysis; stroke; stroke quotient; young teachers; older teachers; Iraqi EFL learners

Interactions in a language class serve as the major medium of learning and also contribute to creating an understanding of roles and relationships adopted by teachers and students in classrooms (Hall & Walsh, 2002). Teacher-student interactions can be understood from a psychological point of view. One tool that enables us to delve into both the uniqueness and the commonalities of human interactions is transactional analysis (TA) as originally introduced by Eric Berne (1958).

A central concept in TA that directly pertains to teacher-student interactions is strokes. A stroke is a unit of recognition or a "fundamental unit of social action" (Berne, 1964, p. 15). More simply, every action that observes others' presence is a stroke. We need strokes to maintain physical and psychological well-being. Strokes are exchanged within three domains: verbal or nonverbal, positive or negative, and

conditional or unconditional. Verbal stroking might include saying hello or a lengthy lecture, whereas a smile or a frown are examples of nonverbal strokes. Positive strokes create a pleasant experience for the receiver, but negative strokes are unpleasant and painful experiences. Conditional strokes refer to what people do, whereas unconditional strokes refer to what people are (Stewart & Joines, 1987). Pishghadam and Farkhondehfal (2017) defined the terms *stroker* and *strokee* as the persons who give and receive strokes, respectively.

As with other abstract concepts, stroke is interpreted differently from person to person in terms of quality and intensity. The term *stroke quotient* refers to the fact that a stroke (e.g., a handshake from a teacher) might be perceived as an intense, negative stroke by an Iraqi student but a fairly normal, positive stroke for a European student. Another factor that complicates exchanging strokes is what Claude Steiner (1971) called the *stroke economy*. He believed that people set debilitating restrictions on exchanging strokes as suggested by their parents or the society to which they belong.

Thus, given the subjective nature of strokes and the factors that affect strokees' perceptions (e.g., gender and age of the stroker), our study aimed to analyze Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes through the spectrum of stroke theory, giving the role of stroker to the teacher and strokee to the student. Because both giving and receiving strokes is affected by contextual factors, we thought it useful to study strokes in different cultures, which can improve and deepen our understanding of the concept. In addition, strokes in educational settings are crucially important, and teachers should strive to create stroke-rich environments in classrooms (Freedman, 1999).

Therefore, after reviewing the related literature and finding what gaps exist, of the many contextual variables available, we selected age to investigate. Accordingly, our research is carried out, first, to design and validate the Age-Related Stroke Quotient Scale (ASQS) (Sakhtkar Haddadi, 2017) and, second, to investigate Iraqi students' perceptions of different kinds of strokes received from their teachers with regard to the age of the teacher. Specifically, the study focused on the following research questions:

1. What is Iraqi students' stroke quotient in the case of young teachers?
2. What is Iraqi students' stroke quotient in the case of older teachers?
3. Is there any significant difference between students' stroke quotient in relation to the age of the teacher?

In our study, the definition of "young" and "older" teachers was not determined by predefined age ranges but was instead left to the students' perceptions and common understanding. There were three reasons for doing it that way. First, students do not usually know their teacher's exact age. Second, the students' responses to the questionnaire were not about a particular handful of teachers who could be identified. Third, to reach a consensus on the definition of young and older is not easy because of the lack of clear-cut objective criteria for such ages.

Review of Relevant Literature

Strokes and Related Concepts

Arguments may arise as to whether the idea of stroke is the restatement of other concepts, such as immediacy and feedback, so it is crucial here to provide a clear definition. Similar to the idea of stroke is the concept of *immediacy behaviors* as originally proposed by Albert Mehrabian (1968). He used this term to refer to those communication behaviors we use to signal closeness, a willingness to communicate, and positive feelings for another person. He later advanced the *immediacy principle*, which states that “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, 1971, p. 1).

With this in mind, it is necessary to make some distinctions between stroke and immediacy. First, immediacy is concerned only with positive signals of our communicative behaviors and is specifically classified into two types: verbal and nonverbal. The second distinction lies in the underlying objective and approach of this concept toward interactions; immediacy involves expressing warmth and closeness in order to create stronger bonds, whereas stroke is about acknowledging someone’s existence. In addition, immediacy behaviors may encompass a group of students—for example, when the teacher shows a sense of humor in class—whereas a stroke is individualized.

Another relevant idea about a stroke is feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) identified four levels of feedback, including feedback about the task, about processing of the task, about self-regulation, and about the self as a person. Among these four levels, feedback about the self as a person is related to the concept of stroke because it is at the personal level and is directed toward the self. It conveys positive and negative evaluations about the student, such as “You are a great student” and “That’s an intelligent response, well done” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, it is also different from a stroke, which is the recognition of a person by other people (here, the recognition of the student by the teacher), whereas feedback is a kind of reaction to others’ actions that mainly serves to bring about a positive change in learners’ performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014).

Strokes in Education

In the past few years, a spotlight has been turned on the concept of stroke by EFL researchers. A pioneering study by Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) propelled other scholars into measuring strokes with other variables within EFL contexts. They validated the Student Stroke Scale (SSS) (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014) for evaluating the stroke richness of educational environments and then conducted a correlational investigation into the relationship between strokes and motivation. In fact, their study was based on the idea that the more strokes, the higher the motivation (Francis & Woodcock, 1996; Freedman, 1999). Their findings agreed with previous theories on this relationship.

Later, designing and validating the Teacher Stroke Scale (TSS) and examining its relationship with burnout, Yazdanpour (2015) maintained that the number of positive

or negative strokes teachers receive would affect their outlook on their jobs and their students. Further, a stroke-rich environment in which the teacher feels valued and recognized seems to be crucial for the development of teachers' efficacy and well-being.

In a mixed-method study, through the already validated Student Stroke Scale (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014) and observation, Irajzad et al. (2017) examined the stroking behavior of English, Persian, and Arabic school teachers in Iran. They maintained that English teachers tend to have more positive interaction with their students as compared to their peers in Arabic and Persian classes. This might be due to the fact that more English teachers are women as well as to the individualistic nature of the English culture as compared to the collectivistic nature of Arabic and Persian cultures and the inherently communicative approach adopted in English textbooks.

Rajabnejad et al. (2017) examined the role of teachers as strokers in students' willingness to attend classes and found that nonverbal strokes and valuing as two sub-components of strokes could be positive and significant indicators of students' willingness to attend classes.

Irajzad and Shahriari (2017) looked at strokes from a socioeconomic point of view and showed that teachers are likely to stroke high socioeconomic status (SES) students more frequently. Their study also revealed that strokes positively and significantly correlate with students' grade-point average (GPA).

Similar to our study, developing a new stroke scale based on Iranian EFL teachers' gender and age, Sakhtkar Haddadi (2017) provided fresh insight into teacher-student relationships. The results revealed that no pattern of positive strokes was significantly favored by learners in four cases of young male teachers, older male teachers, young female teachers, and older female teachers. However, verbal conditional negative strokes were significantly different from other types of stroke in all cases, which suggests that they are less aversive than unconditional ones if the teacher is to give negative strokes.

Methodology

Participants

Five hundred students (female = 274, male = 226) were asked to take part in this quantitative study. The participants were selected from adolescents ages 12–18. This was to take into account the homogeneity of the sample. In addition, we assumed that younger children may not be able to express their perceptions regarding strokes clearly in a quantitative form. Learners who were native Arabic speakers were chosen from six state schools (secondary and high schools) located in Karbala, Iraq, through convenience sampling. Prior to the study, they were ensured that all of the information obtained in the study would be kept confidential and only used for research purposes. The entire data collection procedure was implemented under the supervision of our Iraqi colleague, Mr. Hintaw.

Instruments

To determine learners' stroking preferences, the Learner Stroke Quotient Scale (LSQS) designed by Sakhtkar Haddadi (2017) was adapted. The scale, which was employed in a concurrent study to examine Iranian students' stroke quotients with regard to teachers' gender and age, was first translated from Persian into English and then into Arabic. On a Likert-type scale, each item described an example of a stroke type and was measured by students on a continuum with -10 and $+10$ at each end. On the scale, -10 denotes the most intense negative stroke, $+10$ the most intense positive stroke, and zero the stroke with insignificant intensity.

The logic behind each item was to present a type of stroke to the participants, namely, verbal unconditional positive (VUP), verbal unconditional negative (VUN), verbal conditional positive (VCP), verbal conditional negative (VCN), nonverbal positive (NP), and nonverbal negative (NN) strokes. Hence, the researchers assumed the six types of stroke as the proposed constructs for validation. The questionnaire was validated through confirmatory factor analysis, which will be discussed thoroughly later in this paper. Since the new Arabic instrument dealt only with the teacher's age, it was called the Age-Related Stroke Quotient Scale (ASQS). (To access the English version, go to <http://pishghadam-center.ir/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Age-related-1.pdf>)

Procedure

The study was conducted during the academic year of 2016–2017. The ASQS was initially piloted by asking some EFL scholars to go through the scale and check the comprehensibility of the items. To administer the ASQS, the researchers gave a brief overview of the study, addressing any concerns that students might have. The students were assured of the confidentiality of their data and were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire for the sake of anonymity. The sample included both males and females at different levels of language proficiency in order to further generalize the findings and, therefore, ensure their transferability. Those students who agreed to participate were given 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data in this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21) program. Initially, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to check the validity of the ASQS. Then the reliability of the validated questionnaire was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability estimate. Descriptive statistics and repeated measures ANOVA were used to address the research questions.

Results

Reliability of the ASQS

To examine the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha was used. The reliability coefficient was .89 for the scale, which is quite satisfactory. It should also be noted that because two items were deleted after the pilot study, the numbering of the items in the questionnaire changed in the final draft.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the ASQS for the Young Teachers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. VUP	500	8.20	21.00	16.370	2.49
2. VUN	500	1.00	19.20	7.52	3.28
3. VCP	500	10.00	20.20	17.50	2.87
4. VCN	500	1.25	21.00	12.17	4.33
5. NP	500	3.40	21.00	16.28	3.34
6. NN	500	1.00	19.50	7.83	3.04

1. VUP: Verbal/Unconditional/Positive Stroke
 2. VUN: Verbal/Unconditional/Negative Stroke
 3. VCP: Verbal/Conditional/Positive Stroke
 4. VCN: Verbal/Conditional/Negative Stroke
 5. NP: Nonverbal/Positive Stroke
 6. NN: Nonverbal/Negative Stroke

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Subscales of the ASQS for the Older Teachers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. VUP	500	7.00	21.00	16.14	2.54
2. VUN	500	1.00	20.40	7.64	3.31
3. VCP	500	7.60	21.00	14.79	2.74
4. VCN	500	1.00	20.75	9.63	3.96
5. NP	500	5.00	21.00	15.83	3.14
6. NN	500	1.00	20.50	8.07	2.97

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the subscales of the ASQS for the young teachers. Since the students were required to measure the strokes on a continuum ranging from -10 to +10, we entered the data into SPSS ranging from 1 to 21 (1 = -10, 11 = 0, 21 = +10).

Among the six subconstructs of strokes, verbal unconditional negative strokes (VUN) have the lowest mean score (7.52), and verbal conditional positive strokes (VCP) have the highest (17.50). The total mean of learners' reports in the ASQS for the young teachers is 12.02 with a standard deviation of 1.88.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of the subscales of the ASQS for the older teachers.

Among the six subconstructs of strokes, verbal unconditional negative strokes (VUN) have the lowest mean score (7.64), and verbal unconditional positive strokes (VUP) have the highest mean score (16.14). The total mean of learners' reports in the ASQS for the older teachers is 11.90 with a standard deviation of 1.92.

Validity of the ASQS

To examine the validity of the ASQS, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used. Based on the CFA analysis, the association between each subfactor of the proposed model was analyzed.

Among the 6 items of the verbal conditional positive (VCP), one item (13), and among the 5 items of the verbal conditional negative (VCN), one item (24) were not significant, and it was decided to delete those items. To check the model fit, goodness of fit indices including $\chi^2/2/df$, GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were used (**Table 3**). As the table

Table 3. Goodness of Fit Indices

	χ^2	Df	X2/df	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable Fit			< 3	> .90	> .90	> .90	< .08
Model	356.37	125	2.85	.921	.96	.820	.070

shows, all the indices except CFI (.820) are within the acceptable range. Therefore, the scale enjoyed validity.

Case of Older Teachers

The result of a repeated measure ANOVA showed that there is a significant difference between the six subconstructs of strokes in the perceptions of Iraqi EFL learners if the teacher is older ($F = 982.93$, $\text{Sig.} = 0$, $p < .05$).

To determine which pairs of means differ from each other, a posthoc test was run. The pairwise comparisons for the six subconstructs of strokes for the older teachers indicate that there are significant differences between all pairs (Table 4).

The order of means of the stroke types in the case of older teachers is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{VUP} > \text{NP} > \text{VCP} > \text{VCN} > \text{NN} > \text{VUN} \\ & 16.14 > 15.83 > 14.79 > 9.63 > 8.07 > 7.64 \end{aligned}$$

Case of Young Teachers

Using a repeated-measures ANOVA test, a significant difference was found between the six subconstructs of strokes in the perceptions of Iraqi EFL learners if the teacher is young ($F = 1082.784$, $\text{Sig.} = 0$, $p < .05$).

To know which pairs of means differ from each other, a posthoc test was run. The pairwise comparisons for the six subconstructs of strokes in the case of the young teachers reveal that there are significant differences between all pairs except 1 and 5 (VUP and NP) ($p = .557 > .05$) and 2 and 6 (VUN and NN) ($p = .074 > .05$) (Table 5).

The order of means of the stroke types in the case of the young teachers is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{VCP} > \text{VUP} = \text{NP} > \text{VCN} > \text{NN} = \text{VUN} \\ & 17.50 > 16.37 = 16.28 > 12.17 > 7.83 = 7.52 \end{aligned}$$

A Comparison Between the Young and Older Teachers

To find out whether Iraqi students' perceptions of strokes differ significantly in the case of young and older teachers, an independent-samples *t*-test was performed for overall stroke and its six subconstructs. The results are presented in Table 6.

A Levene's test indicated homogeneity of variance on stroke and its subscales. As indicated in Table 6, there is a significant difference between two subscales of strokes for the young and older teachers: VCP ($p = .000$, $t = 14.867$) and VCN ($p = .000$, $t = 9.301$). However, there is not any significant difference in overall strokes: ($p = .375 > .05$, $t = .888$).

Table 4. Pairwise Comparisons for the Six Subconstructs of Strokes for the Older Teachers

(I) factor1	(J) factor1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a
VUP	VUN	8.551*	.194	.000
	VCP	1.356*	.127	.000
	VCN	6.691*	.206	.000
	NP	.368*	.141	.009
	NN	8.180*	.198	.000
VUN	VUP	-8.551*	.194	.000
	VCP	-7.195*	.189	.000
	VCN	-1.860*	.147	.000
	NP	-8.183*	.211	.000
	NN	-.371*	.134	.006
VCP	VUP	-1.356*	.127	.000
	VUN	7.195*	.189	.000
	VCN	5.335*	.183	.000
	NP	-.988*	.161	.000
	NN	6.824*	.183	.000
VCN	VUP	-6.691*	.206	.000
	VUN	1.860*	.147	.000
	VCP	-5.335*	.183	.000
	NP	-6.323*	.230	.000
	NN	1.489*	.162	.000
NP	VUP	-.368*	.141	.009
	VUN	8.183*	.211	.000
	VCP	.988*	.161	.000
	VCN	6.323*	.230	.000
	NN	7.812*	.224	.000
NN	VUP	-8.180*	.198	.000
	VUN	.371*	.134	.006
	VCP	-6.824*	.183	.000
	VCN	-1.489*	.162	.000
	NP	-7.812*	.224	.000

Discussion

Regarding the case of older teachers, the order of priority of strokes was found to be:

$$\text{VUP} > \text{NP} > \text{VCP} > \text{VCN} > \text{NN} > \text{VUN} \\ 16.14 > 15.83 > 14.79 > 9.63 > 8.07 > 7.64$$

As mentioned earlier, there is a significant difference between all pairs. Based on this pattern, it could be claimed that, for Iraqi learners involved in this study, verbal unconditional positive strokes were the most favorable type of stroke and the least preferred one turned out to be the opposite, verbal unconditional negative strokes, when their teacher is older.

Concerning the case of young teachers, the order of priority of strokes was found to be:

$$\text{VCP} > \text{VUP} = \text{NP} > \text{VCN} > \text{NN} = \text{VUN} \\ 17.50 > 16.37 = 16.28 > 12.17 > 7.83 = 7.52$$

This pattern shows that for students, verbal conditional positive strokes are the most pleasant ones when the teacher is young. It suggests that students would rather be stroked on what they do than what they are by a young teacher. What needs to be taken into consideration in this analysis is that participants responded to the scale regardless of the teacher's gender. Since the sample was almost equally split into two

Table 5. Pairwise Comparisons for the Six Subconstructs of Strokes for the Young Teachers

(I) factor1	(J) factor1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a
VUP	VUN	8.868*	.192	.000
	VCP	-1.098*	.143	.000
	VCN	4.272*	.225	.000
	NP	.085	.144	.557
	NN	8.627*	.202	.000
VUN	VUP	-8.868*	.192	.000
	VCP	-9.966*	.192	.000
	VCN	-4.597*	.154	.000
	NP	-8.784*	.224	.000
	NN	-.241	.135	.074
VCP	VUP	1.098*	.143	.000
	VUN	9.966*	.192	.000
	VCN	5.369*	.198	.000
	NP	1.182*	.180	.000
	NN	9.725*	.189	.000
VCN	VUP	-4.272*	.225	.000
	VUN	4.597*	.154	.000
	VCP	-5.369*	.198	.000
	NP	-4.187*	.253	.000
	NN	4.356*	.179	.000
NP	VUP	-.085	.144	.557
	VUN	8.784*	.224	.000
	VCP	-1.182*	.180	.000
	VCN	4.187*	.253	.000
	NN	8.543*	.238	.000
NN	VUP	-8.627*	.202	.000
	VUN	.241	.135	.074
	VCP	-9.725*	.189	.000
	VCN	-4.356*	.179	.000
	NP	-8.543*	.238	.000

Table 6. Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test Between Young and Older Teachers' Scores in Strokes

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
VUP	1.346		.179
VUN	-.558		.577
VCP	14.867		.000
VCN	9.301		.000
NP	2.122		.034
NN	-1.192		.233
Total Stroke	.888		.375

groups of females and males, and the teacher's gender was unknown to the students, they might have unconsciously assigned gender to their perception.

With respect to the religious context of the city the students inhabited, it is possible to hypothesize that they tend to draw more positive implications from conditional strokes when stroked by a young teacher. Hence, they might feel more comfortable receiving positive strokes on their actions from a young teacher. What reinforces this hypothesis is that some items of the scale dealt with touch and spatial invasion from the teacher, which is in line with the finding of Henley and Harmon

(1985) on the link between immediacy and dominance behaviors. They held that touch, pointing, and spatial invasion can suggest more dominance for males and greater sexuality for women. Such interpretations as sexuality and dominance may not be easily assumed appropriate in the religious context of Karbala.

Looking at this finding from the perspective of gender identity in cultures offers some useful insight to our discussion. For example, Hofstede et al. (2010) described a masculinity-femininity polarity with a performance or achievement focus (masculine) in contrast to an empathic or relationship focus (feminine) (p. 136). Note that in this context, these terms are not used to describe male or female behavior but aspects of a society or culture. Thus “femininity” or “masculinity” can play a key role in education (p. 158). In a “masculine” culture, as is the case for Iraq, excellence is always praised, and the best student is considered to be the norm. In a “feminine” culture, the average student is the norm, and teachers look for certain traits or features in weak students that could be praised as well. Teachers, as a result of their authority or perhaps their Parent ego state, are more likely to be tough, assertive, and ego oriented in masculine cultures. Moreover, the academic performance of learners is deemed to be of key importance in the dominant competitive atmosphere of masculine education. However, teachers’ friendly behaviors, as well as their sociability, and learners’ social skills are the most significant features in feminine education. With that in mind, it could be hypothesized that Iraqi students are more familiar or comfortable with those strokes that are directed toward their actual performance in the classroom, and Iraqi teachers, because of their tendency to give priority to accuracy, might lean toward conditional strokes.

On the other hand, verbal unconditional negative strokes and nonverbal negative strokes were scored the least by the learners. The reason students assigned almost the same score to negative unconditional strokes in the case of both young and older teachers might be attributed to the fact that such unpleasant strokes are targeted at their personality, and the students are not likely to prefer them regardless of the teacher’s age.

Regarding the last research question of the study, which examined whether students’ stroking preferences differ significantly between the young and older teachers, we found that there are significant differences between two subscales of strokes: VCP and VCN. However, there is not a significant difference between the overall stroke scores of the two cases. As can be seen in Table 1, the mean of VCN for the young teacher is 12.17 (i.e., +1 on the scale), and it did not turn out to be as negative as was assumed it would be. One possible reason for this unexpected finding is that since teenagers formed the majority of the sample, in their perception, the authority of a young teacher might not have been as established as that of an older teacher. Another possibility is that teenagers may feel closer to young teachers and thus will not take it to heart when stroked negatively on their actions. Similar studies have previously reported that age can play a significant role in students’ evaluation of their teachers, revealing that students expect less friendliness from older teachers than younger teachers (Goebel & Cashen, 1979; Wilson et al., 2014).

The masculine context of education in Iraq may also explain this finding. Since students study in a competitive environment and their primary purpose is to perform

better academically (Hofstede et al., 2010), being negatively stroked on their performance is not necessarily presumed to be an unpleasant experience but rather a fair assessment from the teacher that could bring about progress and better academic outcomes. The noticeable difference between VCN and VUN in the case of a young teacher denotes that verbal conditional negative strokes can be assumed to be less aversive than VUN. So, if the teacher is to provide negative feedback, it could be more advisable to direct the stroke to the action itself rather than to the person. It is also in line with the humanistic approach of teaching that holds the view that it is important to respect students.

Comparing the two sets of subconstructs for young and older teachers, the highest scored type of stroke in the case of an older teacher is VUP, whereas it is VCP in the case of a young teacher. To explain this, we need to adopt a TA view of strokes. Based on Berne's (1964) description of TA, in our daily transactions we tend to switch between one of the three ego states (Parent, Child, and Adult). We also assign one of these ego states to the interlocutor. The nature of a classroom leads us to place ourselves as students in a Child-to-Parent relationship with our teachers because it is the teacher giving students assignments, making corrections, and controlling the authority most of the time. Therefore, teenage students may be more likely to develop Parent-like impressions of their older teachers and more willing to receive unconditional strokes because they are accustomed to receiving such strokes from their real parents.

The discrepancy in means of VCP between two cases of young (mean = 17.50) and older (mean = 14.79) teacher suggests that VCP strokes may be more pleasant for teenagers in the case of a young teacher as compared to an older one. This proportion is also true for VCN when comparing the two sets of subscales between young and older teachers, which implies conditional strokes, negative and positive, are generally valued higher in the perception of teenagers when the teacher is young.

Finally, VCN in both cases received higher scores than the other two types of negative strokes (NN and VUN), which is in line with the finding of Sakhtkar Haddadi (2017). Thus, we can claim that verbal conditional strokes are more welcome to Iraqi students if the teacher strokes them negatively.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of the study described in this paper contribute to the fields of transactional analysis as well as to language teaching in several ways. First, a better understanding of strokes and related factors in specific cultures can raise teachers' awareness and eventually lead to positive changes in teachers' performance and better pedagogical outcomes in their students. Teachers, by being aware of the strokes that their students expect, can lower the affective filter that is thought to be a major obstacle to learning (Krashen, 1985). Second, policy makers, education planners, and supervisors can employ the findings in this study in pre- and in-service training programs to instruct teachers on how to create stroke-rich environments and also how to communicate with their students effectively in particular cultures.

Other scholars could benefit from the study by recognizing culture as a critical factor in stroking behaviors and preferences of both students and teachers. They can

replicate this study in other cultures to see if similar results will be obtained. Future research can examine whether or not teachers' gender, as another contextual variable, will yield different results for students' stroking preferences. Moreover, researchers can adopt a cross-cultural approach to strokes and investigate differences in students' perceptions of strokes based on the masculinity-femininity aspects of the culture (Hofstede et al., 2010).

It is advisable to recognize some limitations of this study. First, the data was gathered from public schools, and hence the findings may not be generalized to private language schools because they follow different educational agendas and policies. Furthermore, due to the use of convenience sampling, it is sensible to interpret the data with caution. The authors also suggest that to discover additional underlying reasons for the findings, an interview phase be added to the present study.

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Notes on Contributors

Salman Hintaw Abdulhussien did his MA in applied linguistics at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM), Iran. As a lecturer, he currently teaches English at the University of Al-Ameed, Faculty of Dentistry. His research interest is psycholinguistics. He can be reached at University of Al-Ameed, Najaf Highway, Karbala, Iraq; email: hintaws@gmail.com.

Reza Pishghadam is currently the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM), Iran. He is a professor of language education who teaches neuropsychological and sociopsychological aspects of language education and is a professor by courtesy of educational psychology who teaches intelligence courses. Over the last 10 years, he has published more than 200 articles and books in various domains of psychology and language education and has participated in more than 20 national and international conferences. In 2007, Reza was selected to become a member of Iran's National Foundation of Elites. In 2010, he was classified as the Distinguished Researcher of Humanities in Iran. In 2014, he also received the Distinguished Professor Award from Ferdowsi Academic Foundation, Iran. In 2017, he was selected as the best professor of the year at FUM, and in 2019 he received the FUM Award for Teaching Excellence. He was the Vice Dean for Research and Technology, Faculty of Letters and Humanities from 2014 to 2017 and the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, Faculty of Letters and Humanities from 2017 to 2018. He is also the editor in chief of the *International Journal of Society, Culture, and Language* (IJSCL). Reza can be reached at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Azadi Square, Mashhad, 9177948974, Iran; email: pishghadam@um.ac.ir.

Moein Sakhtkar Haddadi is a graduate of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM) in applied linguistics who carried out his MA thesis on transactional analysis and teacher-student relationships. His field of research is psycholinguistics. Moein can be reached at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Azadi Square, Mashhad, 9177948974, Iran; email: moein.sakhtkar@yahoo.com.

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