

# Approaching Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) through Teacher Verbal Immediacy: A Case from Grade-6 Primary Students in Jiangsu, China

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of instructor verbal immediacy on primary school students' foreign language enjoyment (FLE), highlighting its significance in cultivating pleasant emotions and augmenting motivation in language acquisition. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach to examine data from 100 sixth-grade students and two English instructors in Jiangsu Province, China, applying the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), classroom observations, and the rapport-management model. Research demonstrates that educators exhibiting high verbal immediacy—evidenced by initiating dialogues, providing feedback, and employing humor—substantially enhance students' Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) across four dimensions: illocutionary, discourse, participation, and stylistic. Quantitative study indicated that students instructed by educators with elevated verbal immediacy scores reported increased levels of FLE, but qualitative data underscored the significance of interactive and engaging pedagogical methods. The research finds that instructor verbal immediacy cultivates positive teacher-student connections, increases classroom engagement, and boosts students' pleasure of foreign language acquisition. These findings augment the literature by filling gaps in primary school EFL environments and offer pragmatic methods for educators to improve teaching efficacy. The paper recognizes limitations, such as the small number of participants and geographical emphasis and suggests future research to investigate varied demographics and the evolving nature of FLE over time.

**Keywords:** foreign language enjoyment (FLE); verbal immediacy; FLE scale; classroom observation; rapport-management models



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## INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology has emerged as a new and independent field in humanistic psychology for the past few years (Fredrickson, 2009). According to Dewaele et al. (2017), positive psychology was first introduced into Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in 2014. The vigorous development of positive psychology has led to a "positive turn" in the study of second language acquisition, and more and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the positive emotion of foreign language learners and its influencing factors. Scholars started to shift their attention from negative emotions in SLA such as anxiety and worry to positive emotions including love, pride, enjoyment, and flow (Dewaele and Macintyre, 2014). It should be

noted that learners with positive emotions are more aware of language input as well as linguistic forms and become adept at employing various strategies to solve problems (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017; Boudreau et al., 2018). In addition, according to Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), positive emotions can enhance learners' ability to resist frustration and abundant activities among peers and teachers can strengthen social ties. As one of the most common positive emotions experienced by learners in the learning process, foreign language enjoyment can promote students' foreign language learning and play an important role in influencing students' communicative intention in class and predicting students' academic performance. Foreign language enjoyment is influenced by internal and external

factors (Li et al., 2018). Among them, the internal factors include the learner's character, foreign language level, foreign language learning attitude, and so on. External factors include teachers, classroom environment, social and cultural background, etc. Internal causes of foreign language enjoyment include learners' sense of achievement. Besides, teacher's encouragement and cooperation between classmates are the main external causes. Hsu (2010) who introduced the application of teacher immediacy to educational environments stated that teachers, with the help of some concrete cues, are able to make teachers and students psychologically closer. She asserted that teacher verbal immediacy, as an interpersonal behavior perceived by students, greatly enhances students' academic engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm.

Teacher immediacy is an essential external element affecting foreign language education. Teacher immediacy denotes actions that diminish the psychological and physical gap between educators and learners (Richmond and McCroskey, 2000). It includes vocal and nonverbal communication actions that promote psychological intimacy. Verbal immediacy include initiating dialogues with students, using students' names, providing commendation, and delivering criticism (Witt and Wheelless, 2001). Nonverbal immediacy includes activities such as eye contact, smiling, gesturing, and adopting a relaxed body position (Andersen, 1979). These actions not only augment the learning experience but also substantially boost students' motivation and emotional well-being.

Hsu (2010) asserts that educators utilizing linguistic immediacy are more effective in engaging pupils, enhancing their academic motivation, and fostering passion for learning. Empirical research indicates that teacher immediacy has a positive correlation with students' academic achievement, involvement, and emotional stability in second language acquisition environments (Richmond and McCroskey, 2000; Dewaele et al., 2017). Although significant, research on teacher immediacy has been concentrated on secondary and university education, with few investigations in

elementary school contexts, especially within Chinese EFL classes. Nevertheless, empirical studies on teacher verbal immediacy in FLE and investigations targeting Chinese primary EFL learners are quite a few. Besides, domestic researches focused more on the research on teacher discourse in college English classrooms and seldom involved research on teacher discourse in primary school English classrooms. What is more, there is a lack of discussion on the teacher discourse system.

**Statement of the Problem.** To enrich the literature on foreign language enjoyment, this research aimed to analyze how teacher verbal immediacy affects FLE among Chinese primary school students by adopting the foreign language enjoyment scale, classroom observation, and rapport management model. This research will also help to understand the structural components of teacher verbal immediacy and how this influences students' FLE. Given the above objectives, the following are the research questions of the study:

1. Is there any difference in the foreign language enjoyment (FLE) of the primary school students with the same English proficiency level?
2. What are the differences in the verbal immediacy of the students' teachers?
3. How does teachers' verbal immediacy affect their students' FLE?

## LITERATURES

**Foreign Language Enjoyment.** Enjoyment is "a sense of novelty and of accomplishment" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and is conducive to one's long-term development and well-being (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Csikszentmihalyi (2014) stated that foreign language enjoyment (FLE) refers to "good emotional states coming from breaking through homeostatic limits and stretching beyond oneself to accomplish something new or even unexpected, especially in the face of some difficult tasks" (p.201). According to Piechurska-Kuciel (2017), students with high FLE levels

have more confidence in their foreign language learning abilities, and strongly believed that they will be able to overcome the difficulties during their learning process. Meanwhile, students have a favorable attitude to speaking the language. FLE is a kind of feeling more intense than language anxiety in learners who focus too much on teacher's professional competence (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014).

Li et al. (2018) found that there are some internal and external causes of foreign language enjoyment among learners. Internal causes of foreign language enjoyment include learners' sense of achievement when encountering troublesome activities and satisfaction in successfully solving the difficulties. According to Dewaele & Macintyre, (2014), investigations have shown that females tend to get more enjoyment in the FL class than males though they suffer from more mild anxiety. It proves that high spirit helps students to acquire and use foreign language more effectively. Individuals with higher foreign language enjoyment are more likely to capture the pleasure of foreign language learning, and their foreign language learning process is more sustainable. According to the control-value theory, individuals with a higher sense of positive academic emotions tend to have a stronger sense of "controllability" over the learning process (Pekrun & Frenzel, 2007). Although this sense of controllability is a prerequisite for positive emotional experience, it does not disappear with the generation of emotions but interweaves with emotions throughout the entire learning process. Learners with rich positive emotional experience are more confident and have higher self-evaluation of academic performance, while learners who frequently suffer from negative emotions are more likely to negatively evaluate their self-evaluation. At the same time, learners with stronger self-confidence and higher self-evaluation of academic performance are also more likely to experience the joy of foreign language learning, and less likely to feel anxious or bored.

It should be noted that teacher's encouragement and cooperation between

classmates are the main external causes. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) claimed that positive attitudes are closely related to foreign language enjoyment. Positive attitudes are mainly determined by foreign language teachers especially teachers' utterance in the educational context and the time teachers communicate with learners. According to Finn and Schrodtt (2012), students' perceptions of teacher verbal behaviors influence students' sense of achievement both directly and indirectly. What's more, clarity and immediacy increase students' perceptions of understanding (PIU) and reduces their perceptions of misunderstanding (PIM). Teacher clarity reflects the fidelity of instructional messages. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), teaching effectiveness largely depends on teacher clarity. Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) concluded that if teachers convey messages in a clear way, students' foreign language enjoyment will be greatly enhanced. Powell and Harville (1990) asserted that teacher clarity is reflected in some communicative behaviors including boosting students' motivation to raise questions, using original knowledge to elicit new knowledge and checking student understanding. Interactive behaviors derogatory to clarity include ambiguity, vagueness, hedging, bluffing, insufficient examples, mazes, and uncertainty (Powell and Harville, 1990).

However, some further researches about the category of teachers' encouragement and interaction are still in scarcity. In fact, teacher's encouragement mainly comes from the teacher's immediacy (Witt and Wheelless, 2001). Up until now, few scholars have studied teachers' immediacy. Although scholars have found some influencing factors of foreign language enjoyment through research, due to different investigation environments and survey objects in China and abroad, the influencing factors of foreign language enjoyment may not be one of China's learners' foreign language enjoyments. Investigations and researches are needed to determine whether these factors affect the pleasure of foreign language learners in China. Secondly, although Chinese researchers have conducted a study on the enjoyment in English

classes of primary school students in China, they only conducted a survey on the enjoyment in English classes of primary school students in a certain region and did not conduct a comparative study on the enjoyment in English class of primary school students in different regions. Based on summarizing previous studies and aiming at the deficiency of foreign language pleasure studies at home and abroad, the author conducted a survey and comparative study on the degree and influencing factors of urban primary school students' pleasure in English classrooms in China.

**Teacher Immediacy.** Teacher immediacy is considered an essential predictor of teaching effectiveness. According to Richmond and McCroskey (2000), immediacy means the communicative behaviors that play a role in the psychological affinity between people while teacher immediacy refers to the perceived physical or psychological intimacy between teachers and students. Besides, teacher immediacy comprises verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors which can make communicators physically and psychologically closer (Alberts, 2009).

On one hand, verbal immediacy represents the degree of intensity and directness between a speaker and the object about which he speaks, as assessed by the message itself (Richmond and McCroskey, 2000). Witt and Wheelless (2001) also suggested that verbal immediacy refers to starting conversations with students before, after, or outside of class, complimenting students, and calling students by names in class. Teachers communicate with students humorously. What's more important, students can feel the teacher's willingness to communicate with them. Verbal immediacy requests that teachers ask questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions and give feedback on students' work in time. Ballester (2015) claimed that "verbal teacher immediacy refers to verbal messages that show empathy, openness, kindness, reward, praise, feelings of inclusiveness, humor, personal knowledge and willingness to engage students in communication, among others" (p.11).

On the other hand, Andersen (1979) found that nonverbal immediacy behaviors include eye gaze, smiles, nods, relaxed body posture, forward leans, movement, and gestures. Besides, he introduced teacher nonverbal immediacy in the classroom and concluded that students' effective learning can be achieved if teacher nonverbal immediacy is involved. Some investigators also considered teachers' non-verbal immediacy as a predictor of learners' foreign language enjoyment. Teacher immediacy is operationalized as a series of nonverbal behaviors such as direct eye contact, facial expressions, vocal variety, movement, and the use of technological tools (Andersen, 1979).

**The Role of Teacher Verbal Immediacy in Learner Foreign Language Enjoyment.** Up until now, studies on the relationship between teacher verbal immediacy and learners' foreign language enjoyment are quite a few. Traditionally, scholars are mainly concerned with the negative emotions of language teachers, especially foreign language anxiety in various cultural backgrounds. However, in the past few years, Positive psychology has emerged as a modern educational approach and provided sound learning contexts for educators and learners (Jiang, 2020). Therefore, foreign language learning experienced a positive rebirth, transiting from focusing too much on negative emotions to positive emotions (MacIntyre and Sarah, 2014). With the continuous development of positive psychology, foreign language education has also shown a positive turn. More and more scholars have begun to shift from the traditional single negative emotion research to overall positive and negative emotion research. Some researchers found a positive correlation between teacher verbal immediacy and students' learning. Park (2016) believed that teacher verbal immediacy enables teachers to engage students on a personal level. Titsworth et al. (2013) conducted a study on Emotional Response Theory (ERT) and assumed that if a teacher is nonimmediate, unclear, and non-supportive, students will feel more anxious, hopeless, and bored. They found that teachers'

communicative behaviors can alleviate students' negative emotions.

According to Jiang and Dewaele (2019), Chinese EFL learners' enjoyment is influenced by teacher-related variables, and foreign language anxiety is affected by learners' internal variables. Moreover, teacher-related variables mainly come from teachers' verbal immediacy. Dewaele et al. (2017) found that verbal immediacy is an essential predictor of learners' foreign language enjoyment. Anderson and Meng (2015) argued that learners' positive emotions can be reinforced by the teacher's verbal immediacy. Titsworth et al. (2010) indicated that teacher verbal immediacy can reduce the extent of learners' emotional anxiety and increase learners' pride, hope, and joy. Richmond and McCroskey (2000) stated that when teachers behave more immediately, students tend to show more affection for the class as well as higher levels of motivation. According to Titsworth et al. (2013), positive emotions include enjoyment, hope, and pride which are associated with students' academic success. What's more, the state of hope is closely related to college grade point average (GPA) and the likelihood of graduating from college (Titsworth et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the emotions of enjoyment and pride are conducive to students' performance on midterm examinations (Pekrun et al., 2009). Hsu (2005) concluded that there is a close correlation between learner motivation and a teacher's verbal immediacy. He believed that learners with strong motivation have more energy and determination to perform better and make more achievements in the educational aspect. Hsu (2005) regarded motivation as an essential predictor of learners' foreign language enjoyment.

Given that, it is assumed that teacher's verbal immediacy, as a form of encouragement, may affect students' FLE. Nevertheless, empirical studies on teacher verbal immediacy in FLE are comparatively lacking. Our search of major academic databases such as ERIC, Linguistics, Language Behavior Abstracts, and Web of Science with the keywords of language enjoyment produced a limited number of hits.

Besides, associating FLE with learner variables, researches were carried out with different demographic variables (e.g., Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014), and various populations include Japanese, British, and Spanish high school learners as well as Chinese secondary and tertiary EFL learners. Nevertheless, investigations targeting Chinese primary EFL learners are quite a few. What's more, domestic research on teacher discourse started late, and initially focused on the research on teacher discourse in college English classrooms and seldom involved research on teacher discourse in primary school English classrooms. Besides, domestic research on teacher discourse has shown great vitality in the early 21st century. The empirical research on teacher discourse has become more in-depth and detailed. Many researchers have analyzed teachers' discourse from the perspectives of second language acquisition, pragmatics, and cognition. There are four domains related to teacher verbal immediacy and students' Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)—illocutionary, discourse, participation, and stylistic, and they interact to establish a holistic framework for teacher verbal immediacy. Collectively, they augment students' Foreign Language Enjoyment by alleviating psychological hurdles, promoting participation, and cultivating a good learning atmosphere. Educators who proficiently amalgamate these areas enhance students' motivation, emotional health, and general pleasure in acquiring a foreign language. However, it is worth noting that there is a gap in the domestic research on teacher discourse from the four domains, and there is a lack of discussion on the teacher discourse system. Therefore, this paper observes and analyzes the use of teacher discourse in primary school English in terms of the 4 domains, which have certain significance. It is innovative and can provide a new perspective for domestic teacher discourse research.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design.** This research used a mixed methods approach to investigate the influence of instructor verbal immediacy on primary school students' Foreign Language Enjoyment

(FLE). The integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies facilitates a thorough comprehension of the phenomena by triangulating data from several sources, hence assuring reliability and validity. To answer the first research question, Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) was used. To answer the second research question, classroom observation was used. Quantitative research was reflected in FLES while qualitative research was in classroom observation.

**The Setting and Participants.** The participants of this research included teachers and students. The students mainly came from Jiangsu Province, which is the strongest educational province with its per capita GDP ranking first in China. It is also one of the provinces with the highest level of comprehensive development in China. Its educational level has reached the “upper-middle” level. There are 167 colleges and universities as well as 15 double first-class colleges and universities, of which 11 colleges and universities are 211 engineering universities. Besides, according to Denham and Brown (2010), as a special group, primary school students are in a critical period of growth with extremely obvious emotional characteristics. Young and psychologically immature, pupils are easily influenced by teachers. Therefore, the participants of the study were 100 Grade 6 students from a public primary school in Jiangsu Province in Southeast China. Employing purposive sampling, the respondents were 112 males (56%) and 88 (44%) females and aged between 10 and 12 years old. Students in Grade 6 who would face junior entrance examinations soon had tougher tasks in learning English. Besides, the students followed the same curriculum in the same syllabus. After 6 years of English learning, their grades on the final examination were nearly the same which meant they were at the same instruction level. Every day, they had one English class which lasted for 40 minutes. In addition, English was the only foreign language learned by the students.

To better investigate the difference in verbal immediacy of students' corresponding teachers, the researcher invited 2 full-time foreign

language (FL) teachers to participate in the research. Their age ranged from 28 to 30 years old. The 2 teachers, though both as normal undergraduates, had different teaching styles. Table 1 describes the detailed information of the 2 teachers.

Table 1  
*Teachers' background information*

	Teacher A	Teacher B
Gender	Female	Female
Age	29	30
Teaching experience	7 years	8 years
Education Background	Bachelor	Bachelor
English Proficiency	TEM 8	TEM4

**Research Instrument.** To yield the necessary data of the study, the following research instruments were used:

1. *The foreign language enjoyment scale (FLES).* According to the Chinese version of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES) Li et al. (2018) originating from Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) of Dewaele and MacIntyre, (2014), 21 items were used to measure an overall feeling of FL classes. It enjoyed great popularity in many researches since it has psychometric properties for its high reliability and validity. Besides, the scale was proved to be suitable for Chinese students. The 21 items were coded on a 5-point Likert format from '1 (Strongly disagree)' to '5 (Strongly agree)'. The final scores ranged from 21 to 105. Students with higher scores have higher levels of enjoyment in learning foreign language. Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) designed the FLES, the first survey of the foreign language class anxiety and foreign language class pleasure of foreign language learners in 90 different countries in the world. The study found that there was a moderate relationship between foreign language anxiety and foreign language pleasure. Students with higher foreign language proficiency have higher foreign language pleasure and less foreign language anxiety.

In reference to the study, before the survey, FLES was piloted with 30 elementary school students in Grade 6. The 30 students had nearly the same age, English level and cultural background with the main participants in the research. Besides, the proponent interrelated FLES with 30 students' self-evaluation of their FLE levels according to a 0–100 interval. The retest reliability was .83,  $p < .001$  over a 15-day interval in a sample of 36 Year-1 Chinese high school students.

2. *Classroom observation.* To find out if there is any difference between teachers' verbal immediacy and students' foreign language enjoyment, the researcher conducted classroom observation to effectively collect data through class with a clear purpose and then do corresponding research according to the data. Classroom observation is a tool to do research in the classroom because of its convenience, rationality and scientific. Classroom observation can help observers to capture effective information, and it is widely recognized. It is also a scientific research tool, different from ordinary daily observation since classroom observation is objective, reliable and systematic. In the process of classroom observation, listening to the class will be synchronized with data collection. The author should make sufficient preparations, consider all kinds of situations that may occur in the class comprehensively, and take corresponding measures and means to ensure the authenticity, reliability and accuracy of the experimental data.

During the observation, the researcher listened to and recorded 3 periods of their lessons which lasted for 120 minutes. Before observation, consent was obtained from the 2 teachers to record the period. The classroom observation table included the time, proportion and content of the teachers' explanation, students' autonomous learning and teacher-student, student-student interaction. Besides, teachers' verbal immediacy and students' perceived pleasure were observed and measured with the help of the observation table and timing tools. Then, the proponent sorted out the table and

content of the original observation materials, encoded and classified the sorted data, and established the corresponding database for qualitative analysis.

**Data Collection.** The questionnaires were agreed upon by English teachers and students at a primary school. Paper-based questionnaires were adopted to collect data from the participants based on the 21 question items. As known to all, mobile phones are banned in primary schools in China. The questionnaires were anonymous, and respondents assured that they followed the instructions from the first author and offered their honest answers. Students were informed that their results would be used for the present research. In addition, students were divided into two groups on a scale and requested that they finish the questionnaires in 15 minutes. Finally, a total of 105 responses were collected, of which 100 were valid (95.20%). Meanwhile, with the consent of 2 English teachers, observation was done in each class for 120 minutes. Three researchers selected and analyzed nearly 250 pieces of corpus about teacher immediacy according to keywords and the internal consistency was 95%.

**Data Analysis.** There were 4 steps employed in analyzing the data. To answer Question 1, SPSS version 27 was used to access the levels of FLE. Descriptive analyses of the variables were conducted. To answer Question 2, the proponent rewrote the classroom observation corpus and observed the difference in teachers' verbal immediacy. Teachers' verbal immediacy includes commending students, calling over the students' names, showing humor, being ready to engage in conversations with students before, after, or outside of class, throwing out questions and drawing out students' ideas, and giving feedback on students' work (Witt and Wheelless, 2001). Teachers' discourse is the key to the success of language teaching since teachers' discourse occupies a large part of the time, which is crucial to the organization of classroom teaching and students' language learning. To some extent, the quantity and quality of teachers' discourse determine the quality of classroom teaching, because all the

teaching content must be effectively communicated through teachers' discourse to achieve the ideal teaching effect. The observation and research of teachers' discourse are of great significance to the improvement of teachers' professional consciousness, classroom teaching quality, and students' English language level.

What is more, the investigator invited his workmate to cooperate on the activity and they used relevant phonetic software during observation, collected verbal information, and conducted immersive classroom observation. Using audio and video recordings, the investigator transcribed the recording results using the Praat phonetics software tool, with a total of 33,310 words, including linguistic information and non-linguistic information, such as the intonation, repetition, and pauses of the teacher's speech. ELAN such as video and audio analysis software were employed to help capture information and make all data information into charts or tables. The author used the video recording software to save the teacher's class video recording to the computer, imported the class video through VLC media player software, and generated an audio track file in wav format that matches the video. Besides, the author put the class video and the audio file in wav format on the same folder. Then, open the ELAN software tool and import video and audio files.

After the import is complete, the feature level that needs to be analyzed in the video file on the ELAN interface was added (starting conversations with students, commending students, calling over the students' names, showing humor, throwing out questions, drawing out students' ideas, giving feedback on students' work). Next, watch and analyze the entire video and audio files in ELAN, and manually mark the video or audio that meets a certain feature value. The analysis is completed before saving the analysis result as an elf file. Use ELAN's multi-file statistics tool to import the leaf file that needs to be counted, and check the number of times and duration of the corresponding feature level according to the set level label to obtain the characteristic statistics

of the teacher's teaching results. The feature-level statistical data of different teachers' teaching videos were compared and analyzed, and targeted analysis was carried out.

To answer Question 3, the investigator employed a rapport management model for corpus analysis (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). Rapport means a friendly relationship in which people understand each other very well, and rapport management reflects how people manage or mismanage relations with other people. According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), different people hold different rapport orientations. There are 4 types of rapport orientations, namely, rapport-enhancement orientation (to improve the harmonious relations with other people), rapport-maintenance orientation (with a desire to maintain friendly relations), rapport-neglect orientation (failing to show interest or concerns in the relations), and rapport-challenge orientation (with a desire to challenge or damage harmonious relations).

Besides, there are 5 dimensions of rapport management, which are face sensitivities, personal interests, rights and obligations, emotions, and interactional wants. Once a speaker has identified specific relationship management dimensions, he will resort to various pragmatic strategies or guidelines. In other words, various interpersonal management strategies need to be represented by language selection in different domains. There are 5 domains including speech act domain, discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain, and non-verbal domain (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). The non-verbal domain is not mentioned since the research is mainly about verbal immediacy.

For the statistical treatment, descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) were used to compare FLE levels of students across different teachers. Independent t-tests were used to examine whether there was a significant difference in FLE scores between students taught by Teacher A and Teacher B. Significance testing (p-value analysis) were used to determine whether teacher verbal



immediacy had a statistically significant effect on students' FLE levels.

## RESULTS

Students' Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) Condition. The table below shows the result of SPSS27 and compares the different FLE of 2 teachers.

Table 2  
*The Result of SPSS 27*

	Class	N	Teacher	Score	Sig.
FLE	One	52	A	86.4423	0.016
	Two	48	B	66.4375	

The 100 participants from 2 classes were investigated on their FLE levels. There were 50 students in each class and Table 3 provides descriptive statistics of different FLE levels in different teaching immediacy. The Foreign Language Pleasure Scale is a tool used to measure an individual's level of pleasure in learning or using a foreign language and it is a 5-point Likert-type scale with 21 items. Thus, the participants' score ranges from 21 to 105. Sample items of the Foreign Language Enjoyment scale include According to different situations, I can use English flexibly. We have a common background and like joking with each other. We have a good class atmosphere. From the table above, we can see that the mean score of the 2 groups is: Teacher A: (M = 86.4423), and Teacher B: (M = 66.4375). It can be shown that Teacher A's FLE level is much higher than that of Teacher B's. The data also shows a significant effect of immediacy difference on the level of students' FLTE ( $P=0.016 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the research is of great statistical significance. It can be proved that teachers with high immediacy can greatly enhance students' FLE levels.

The Comparison of Teacher Verbal Immediacy. Witt and Wheelless (2001) asserted that teachers' verbal immediacy includes 7 aspects such as commending students, calling over the students' names, showing humor, being ready to

engage in conversations with students before, after, or outside of class, throwing out questions and drawing out students' ideas and giving feedback on students' work. Teachers A and Teacher B show different verbal immediacy in these 7 aspects. The general quantity of Teacher A's verbal immediacy is much higher than that of Teacher B's. In addition, in the aspect of starting conversations with students, commending students and throwing out questions, Teacher A behaved better than Teacher B obviously.

Table 3  
*The comparison of 2 teachers' verbal immediacy*

Indicators	Teacher A	Teacher B
starting conversations with students	141	90
commending students	150	84
calling over the students' names	132	93
showing humor	135	87
throwing out questions	145	88
drawing out students' ideas	143	94
giving feedback on students' work	142	76
Total	988	612

The Role of Teachers' Verbal Immediacy on Teacher-Students Rapport. Two teachers with different verbal immediacies were selected as the objects of classroom observation. The author recorded their classroom expressions and classified them according to 4 domains including speech act domain, discourse domain, participation domain, and stylistic domain. Domains may overlap.

In Domain 1 (illocutionary domain), Spencer-Oatey (2005) stated that some illocutionary acts including requests, suggestions, offers, and compliments tend to threaten people's faces, so speakers should use appropriate linguistic strategies to improve the atmosphere and behave politely.

### Extract 1 (T1)

Teacher: Hey, Andy, could you please sing a song for us?

Student: But I can't sing, teacher.

Teacher: It doesn't matter, any song is ok, I will support you anytime you need me.

Student: Ok, I will sing a birthday song because I can only sing that.

Teacher: That's ok, just go ahead. Believe in yourself!  
 Student: Happy birthday to you...Happy birthday to you.  
 Other students: Hahahahaha...

In Extract 1, the teacher found that a student fell asleep when teaching a language point. He started conversations with students and called over the students' names to arouse students' interest. Some appropriate requests such as "please", "Go ahead", "sing a birthday song" and "Believe in yourself!" alleviated the face-threatening atmosphere. Thus, a friendly relationship between teachers and students was established.

#### Extract 2 (T1)

Teacher: Boys and girls, Let's play a guessing game !  
 Student: What guessing game?  
 Teacher: Look at the sentences and just guess what animal it is.  
 Student: What prize will you give us if our guesses are right?  
 Teacher: You can get any notebook you like.  
 Student: Ok, ok, it sounds interesting.

In Extract 2, the teacher presented new words about animals and wanted to check whether students could memorize them. To avoid the mechanic drill, the teacher adopted another method called a guessing game. The teacher used some illocutionary words such as "let's", "look at" and so on. Therefore, students were more active when playing games, which could help them to master new words more efficiently.

By calling over the students' names such as "Boys and girls" and drawing out students' ideas, the teachers can greatly improve students' FLE levels.

In Domain2 (discourse domain), Spencer-Oatey (2005) states that, the speaker chooses the discourse content, the structure of an interchange, including topic choice, and the organization and sequencing of information to make conversations with students smoother.

#### Extract 3 (T1)

Teacher: Do you know Spiderman?  
 Student: Yeah! Of course!  
 Teacher: Do you want to watch Spiderman?  
 Student: Wow! That's very nice!  
 Teacher: But keep quiet when watching it.  
 Student: Sure, we can do that.

In Extract 3, the teacher presented a new word called "spider". He converted the topic to Spiderman and students became extremely excited. Creating a topic means that the teacher guides the students to use their imagination and enter the situation set by the teacher to think about the problem through language description and setting up plots or fragments related to the teaching content. Teachers need to start from the teaching content, connect with the real life of international students and the topics that international students are more concerned about, and create vivid and specific situations with a strong sense of substitution, to attract students' attention and resonate with them. The teacher should talk about topics that students are familiar with and are interested in before class and use these topics to introduce new knowledge points and pave the way for the explanation of new content. This method can reduce students' unfamiliarity with the classroom, guide students to transition to the state of English learning, and gradually switch from the native language thinking mode to the English thinking mode.

#### Extract4 (T1)

Teacher: Do you have pets?  
 Student 1: I have a dog, a very cute dog.  
 Teacher: Does it often bark?  
 Student1: No, it is very docile.  
 Student 2: I have a parrot and it can talk.  
 Teacher: What does it eat?  
 Student 2: It eats a lot of fruits such as mangoes and apples.

The teacher describes different animals and then asked her students about their pets. The students were very interested in this topic so most of them raised their hands to share their pets. Here, teachers' immediacy in discourse domain was reflected in throwing out questions and starting conversations with students.

In Domain3 (participation domain), Spencer-Oatey (2005) stated that the procedural aspects of an interchange, such as turn-taking and the inclusion/exclusion of people present and the use or non-use of listener responses.

#### Extract5 (T1)

Teacher: Now, let's practice in pairs. Discuss with your partners about your favorite animals.

Student: Ok, shall we talk about the reasons?

Teachers: of course, you need to give the reason why you like the animal most. I will show you an example, Nancy, try to make dialogues with me.

Nancy: Ok.

The teacher has presented all the language points and students have finished all the listening and reading practices. Now, the teacher wanted to check whether students could produce. By using some immediacy phrases such as "practice in pairs", "discuss with your partners", "give the reason" and calling over the students' names such as "Nancy", students were actively participating in the class.

#### Extract 6 (T1)

Teacher: Can you describe these animals with their colors, sizes, and so on with the help of the keywords and pictures?

Students: We will have a try.

Teacher: What's the color of this animal?

Students: Black.

Teacher: How about size?

Students: large.

Teacher: .....

The teacher asked her students to describe the features of some animals. By throwing out all kinds of questions such as "What's the color of this animal?" and "How about size?", students gradually engaged in class.

In Domain 4 (stylistic domain), Spencer-Oatey (2005) introduced the general character and attitude of the teacher, hushed or conversational.

#### Extract7 (T1)

Teacher: What do you call a deer with no eye?

Student 1: No eye deer (No idea).

Student 2: Hahaha...

The teacher is good at using a phrase with double meanings. No eye deer has double meanings. When the teacher skillfully used the homophonic, the students immediately understood and laughed happily. By showing humor, the teacher greatly enhanced students' FLE levels.

#### Extract8 (T1)

Teacher: Do you like horses?

Student: Yeah. Because it can do many things for people.

Teacher: Right. We should learn from horses. They do so many things for people, and we can say they can hold their horses.

Student: I see...

Here, the word "horse" has double meanings. One is an animal and the other is patience. The students were able to be aware of the double meaning and learned a lot from this conversation. Showing humor, as a form of verbal immediacy, promoted the relationship between students and students.

## DISCUSSION

This research mainly adopts a mixed method to investigate the teacher's influence on primary school students' foreign language enjoyment (FLE), aiming to find out how teacher' verbal immediacy affects primary school students' foreign language pleasure and teachers and provide teachers with practical strategies in terms of developing a positive learning atmosphere.

The first research question compared the FLE levels of different participants. As shown in the result of the FLE scale, different participants had different FLE levels. In all, students scoring high on FLE showed a stronger interest in learning English and actively participated in class activities. During its process, the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale was adopted since it has been proven to be the most practicable method for Chinese primary school students. Besides, I used

Spss(27) to collect the data from the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and the retest reliability was .83.

The second question answered the differences in the verbal immediacy of corresponding teachers. Classroom observation was employed to investigate the 2 teachers' classroom discourse. The result was of statistical significance since the learning backgrounds of the students in 2 classes were nearly the same and the significance value was below 0.05. Then, students with a relatively high level of FLE were selected to investigate the factors affecting FLE levels. The teaching content and objectives were the same and two teachers used the Oxford addition for Grade 5 students. The whole class both lasted for 120 minutes, and positive classes were selected for data analysis.

The results show that teachers' immediate behavior directly affects communicative intention, which is consistent with the conclusion of some qualitative studies. Teachers' communicative behavior outside the classroom can effectively narrow the distance between teachers and students and give students a full sense of safety and psychological preparation to participate in classroom interaction. It also suggests that immediate teacher behavior, such as encouraging smiles and eye contact, or small talk after class, can help students overcome their fear of communicating in English.

On the other hand, these immediate actions can guide students to control their own will and stimulate their learning motivation. When teachers respect and acknowledge students' spontaneous responses, and allow students to freely choose topics of interest, their class participation is greatly improved. Teachers' effective communicative behavior plays the role of buffer or transition, which helps students to adjust their efforts with the help of teachers. This kind of effective assistance can be the cognitive and emotional attention of teachers in the process of teaching guidance, to create a positive, friendly, and safe learning situation. English teaching is not only a process of

teachers imparting subject expertise and cultivating students' subject cognitive ability, but also a process of mutual emotional exchange and communication between teachers and students. Teachers' positive emotions will drive students' positive emotions, which will help reduce students' negative emotions in language learning, such as anxiety, so that the barrier effect of emotional filtering will be greatly weakened, and students' classroom participation will be improved, thereby promoting the expansion of their resources and constructs that promote individual development.

To answer question three, the author explored some factors influencing students' FLE levels. Overall, there are 2 types of factors including individual-related factors and teacher-related factors. It was found that students with strong motivation and interest in learning English were able to perform better in class compared with the students who were too shy or afraid to behave themselves in class. They were not willing to participate in group activities and raise their hands to answer questions. There are some other external factors, especially teacher-related factors influencing students' FLE. Overall, the most important factor is the verbal immediacy of teachers, and the author classified the influence into 4 domains including the speech act domain, discourse domain, participation domain, and stylistic domain proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2005).

Teacher's verbal immediacy, through 4 domains, influences the relationship between students and teachers and proves to be the most effective predictor of foreign language enjoyment. The speech act domain also referred to as the illocutionary domain means a teacher gives an order or a promise so the students can get them to catch up with the class schedule. It was concluded that the teacher with high immediacy perform more gently and the way of giving an order is more acceptable for students. Teachers' verbal immediacy also includes throwing out questions and use some expressions about verbal immediacy such as "*please sing*", "*go ahead*" and so on. The second domain is the discourse domain which means

the teacher starts a new topic that can elicit students' interest. A teacher with high immediacy is good at converting a new topic flexibly. Students' FLE level will be greatly enhanced if they discuss a new and interesting topic. In domain 3, Teacher A used lots of forms of interaction, including pair work, groupwork, role-play, and so on to enable students actively participate in the class. Teacher A does well in taking advantage of all kinds of classroom skills and expressions such as *"practice in pairs"*, *"discuss with your partner"* and *"give the reason"* to make students active in class. Verbal immediacy includes starting conversations with students, commending students calling over the students' names, and giving feedback on students' work. The last domain is the stylistic domain. It refers to the general character and attitude of the teacher: serious or joking. All kinds of classroom games were employed so that the students won't become very bored. The teacher is good at showing humor and using the skill of "a phrase with a double meaning" to make students actively participate in class.

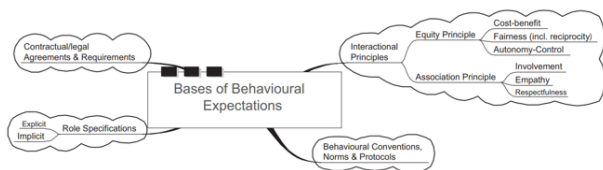


Figure 1  
*Bases of Behavioral Expectations*

According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), as is shown in Figure 1, there are mainly 3 aspects including behavioral expectations, interactional wants, and face sensitivities. These 3 elements, if managed well, can contribute to harmonious interpersonal relations. Students' FLE level can be greatly enhanced if a harmonious interpersonal relationship between teachers and students is developed. As is shown in Figure 1, behavioral expectations, as the most important element in rapport management, are based on contractual agreements or requirements, interactional principles, behavioral conventions, norms & protocols, and role specifications. Spencer-Oatey (2005) believed that conventions and protocols are typically contextually based and exist across a range of domains including the illocutionary

domain, the discourse domain, the participation domain, and the stylistic domain. As it was mentioned before, teachers' verbal immediacy can influence students' FLE levels through 4 domains. Hence, it is concluded that teachers' verbal immediacy can enhance students' FLE levels by increasing students' behavioral expectations through 4 domains.

**Conclusion.** This research studied the relationship between teachers' verbal immediacy and students' FLE, adopting classroom observation and foreign language scale. The result of the research showed that teachers with high verbal immediacy tend to increase students' FLE.

The research enriched the literature in four aspects. Firstly, the relationship between teacher's verbal immediacy and students' FLE is analyzed from the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics, which furthers the study of linguistics. Secondly, the participants of previous studies are mainly middle school or high school students, but this research considered primary school students since they are more sensational and have a strong potential for learning English. Therefore, this study contributes to the participants of the research on teachers-related factors influencing students. Last, the research analyzed how teachers' verbal immediacy affects primary school students' FLE levels by adopting the FLE scale, classroom observation, and rapport-management models. Teachers' verbal immediacy, belonging to external factors, influences students' motivation of learning English in 4 domains including the illocutionary domain, the discourse domain, the participation domain and the stylistic domain.

This study also has some limitations. First, the classroom discourse of the two teachers who were investigated may not be complete and diversified. Concerning this, in the future, the author will investigate more teachers to collect more classroom discourse. Second, 105 participants were investigated from a primary school in Jiangsu Province. Since the size and type are limited, the result couldn't reflect the overall situation. Hence, in the future, the author

will expand the participants to more grades, schools, and regions. Third, this study only focuses on the static state of foreign language enjoyment. More attention should be given to the dynamic change of learners' pleasure in foreign languages in future studies. If time and conditions permit, attention should also be paid to the continuous changes of learners' enjoyment in foreign languages from grade one to grade six, to better study the influence of foreign language enjoyment on students' learning process. What's more, a larger sample size study is needed to improve the reference ability of the study. At the same time, the classroom activities that affect the pleasure of foreign languages can be further studied.

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