EFL Teacher Verbal Aggressiveness and Student Intrinsic Motivation and Social-Affective Strategy Use: Investigating Possible Relations

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author PM wrote the first draft of the manuscript, took care of the literature review and edited the manuscript. Author AB designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Authors PM and AB performed the statistical analyses of the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The study examined the relations among perceived English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' verbal aggressiveness and students' intrinsic motivation and social-affective strategy use. The sample consisted of 148 Greek-speaking undergraduate students (aged 18-23 years old) attending EFL courses. Three types of questionnaires, an adapted version of the Verbal Aggressiveness Questionnaire, the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, and the Strategy Inventory Language Learning were used to collect data. The results supported the internal consistency of the instruments. Correlational analysis indicated that perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness was positively correlated with students' pressure/tension ($r=.78$) and negatively related to enjoyment/interest ($r=-.93$), competence ($r=-.88$), effort/importance ($r=-.64$), affective ($r=-.92$) and social strategy use ($r=-.94$). Based on the results of the present study, it can be alleged that the teacher behavior can exert great influence on student feelings, attitude to the lesson, strategy use and, consequently, the

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language learning process. The findings and implications of the contribution of teacher behaviour to the EFL student language learning as well as future research suggestions are further discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Classrooms constitute complex societies, let alone [1]English as foreign language (EFL) classes where students usually feel more anxiety than when attending courses conducted in their native language [34]. In classrooms, teachers are the leaders and responsible for establishing a positive relationship with their students in order to provide the proper learning opportunities and motivation [98]. In a supportive classroom climate where a teacher establishes an atmosphere of warmth, safety, and acceptance, students feel more motivated and self-directed, while positive instructional and learning outcomes are likely to occur [2,77]. In fact, the way teachers communicate with students is likely to exert great influence on the learning process, students' motivation and behavior [74,98]. Researchers suggested that teachers' verbal aggressiveness negatively influenced students' attendance and participation in the learning process [75]. Similarly, it was found that teacher verbal aggressiveness was negatively related to student motivation, satisfaction, and learning [54,55,90,91,92]. In addition, it was shown that motivation and other affective factors can influence the language learning strategy use [70].

While a number of studies stressed that teachers' behavior was of great importance for developing students' affective learning and improving achievement (e.g., [34,38,40,41,59, 90,91]) there is dearth of research, especially second language (L2) research, on exploring the relations between EFL teachers' aggressive communication, and students' motivation and social-affective strategy use. Social and affective strategy use, particularly, have attracted limited attention from researchers [66]; in fact, some studies highlighted that social and affective strategies were often ignored when compared to cognitive and metacognitive strategies [15,30,63, 66,86,87].

In this way, the main purpose of this study was to examine the impact of perceived EFL teachers' aggressive communication on students' motivation and social and affective strategy use. More specifically, the study aimed to encourage L2 researchers and educators to address the importance of teachers' behavior, students' motivation, and social and affective strategy use, which is an area the teacher should first intervene in order to establish positive frames of mind in students and assist them in coping with the stress often caused by a low command of EFL.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Verbal Aggressiveness

Verbal aggressiveness is defined as an attack on an individual's self-concept rather than attack the person's position on a topic with the aim of inflicting psychological pain [35]. The intention of verbally aggressive individuals is to cause psychological pain, such as humiliation, embarrassment, and other negative feelings about the self, which sometimes results in physical attack [71]. More often than not, verbally aggressive messages involve character and competence attacks, physical appearance attacks, racial attacks, threats, teasing or cursing [35].

[56] identified six categories of teachers' behavior (misbehaviors, non-immediacy, attacks on students' competence, criticism of students' behaviors, attacks on students' personal attributes, and student discouragement from participation). However, in a more recent study [57] identified 9 types of verbally aggressive messages used by instructors: competence attacks, work ethic attacks, swearing, threats, character attacks, nonverbal behaviors, teasing, background attacks, and physical appearance attacks. A number of studies examined the impact of teachers' verbal aggressiveness in the classroom. To begin with, research indicated that teachers' verbal aggressiveness is negatively correlated with students' attendance and participation in the learning process [58,75], student motivation, satisfaction, and learning outcome [3,8,9,54,55,90,91,92], students' perceptions of the teacher [7,58,85,96], student-teacher communication [6,10,14,76] and classroom climate [60,5]. Teachers' aggressiveness at school have been also explored [11,12,13,53].

A lot of language learning research focused on examining the learner characteristics that are related to success in language learning, some of which may hinder or facilitate the learning process [50]. Aggressiveness, which impedes the learning process, is one of the least studied personality traits, as few studies focused on aggressiveness in the field of L2 learning (e.g., [34,83]). More specifically, it was revealed that aggressive individuals were more likely to face problems in L2 learning and score low in both receptive and productive skills [47]. Moreover, it was shown that aggressive students were less willing to communicate in French as their L2 than non-aggressive [46]. Similarly, [83] examining the possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' aggressiveness and oral proficiency showed that aggression, particularly, verbal aggressiveness and anger had negative effects on students' oral proficiency. However, studies focusing, particularly, on teachers' aggressiveness in the L2 classroom are even fewer in number; [34] probed into EFL teachers' misbehaviour in the classroom and its impact on students' perception of teachers' credibility and student motivation.

2.2 Motivation

Motivation is seen as an internal feeling, which directs and stimulates someone's actions [78]. Motivation, a complex psychological construct, enjoys a considerable amount of research in the fields of psychology and education due to its great contribution to language learning and L2 learning, particularly [19,26,84]. Prominent in this field is the work of [27,28,29], who viewed motivation from a socio-educational perspective, distinguished integrative motivation (integrating into the target culture) from instrumental motivation (emphasizing academic achievements) and indicated a strong relationship between learner motivation and language achievement. In a similar manner, another distinction has been drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by [18,81] in the context of self-determination theory; the former refers to reasons for L2 learning that stem from individual's inherent joy and interest in doing an activity, while the latter refers to individual's involvement in an activity for extrinsic reasons, such as good grades or avoidance of punishment. Some researchers [31,80,45] identified four dimensions of intrinsic motivation: enjoyment / interest, effort / importance, competence, and pressure / tension. [81] supported that intrinsic motivation is highly

important for self-determined and autonomous behaviour. More specifically, research indicated that intrinsic or integrative motivation is positively associated with L2 achievement [19,20,24,25, 29,43,93]. In addition, a considerable number of studies showed that highly motivated students reported using more learning strategies [22,39,70,94,97].

[21] held that "a student's total motivation is most frequently a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation", which, "depends greatly on the context, people involved, and specific circumstances" (p. 320). In this way, motivation is considered to be contingent on situational and other factors. Associating motivation with other factors, such as, personality, beliefs, attitudes, learning setting, and teachers' behaviours reflects the process model of motivation which regards motivation as a 'dynamic, ever-changing process' (p. 66) [20]. Regarding teachers' behaviour, in particular, it is supported that teachers are responsible for triggering and maintaining student motivation. Namely, students who experience a positive relationship with teachers and enjoy a supportive classroom environment are more motivated to learn and tend to work harder in classrooms [59]. Whenever students have the will or need to learn something, they are motivated to do so. To put it differently, when students are not affectively prepared, they will not experience a positive or productive learning outcome due to the affective filter being high [36,37]. Research supported that teachers' behaviour seems to influence students' motivation in learning [1] and L2 students' motivation, particularly [34,38,42,95] pointing to the use of certain motivational strategies in the language instruction to enhance L2 students' motivation [16,51,52].

2.3 Language Learning Strategies

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing research interest in the use of learning strategies in the field of language learning, which was accompanied by a shift in the research focus from the methods of teaching to learners' characteristics and their impact on the process of L2 learning [17,72]. It is supported that L2 learning occurs via strategic behavior, as strategies constitute "the raw material without which L2 learning cannot take place" ([44], p. 332). [17] defined learning strategies "as those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or

foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language" (p. 4). According to [64], learning strategies "are specific actions or behaviors accomplished by students to enhance their learning" (p. 11).

L2 learning strategy research started with the behaviors of 'good language learner' studies in the 1970s [61,79,88], while more recent trends investigated the strategies used by more and less successful learners using interviews, written questionnaires or classroom observations. Overall, data from such studies have indicated that good language learners deploy more or different strategies from their poor counterparts, which provided the underpinnings for strategy instruction [72]. In addition to the language proficiency level (e.g., [32,94], research investigated other factors affecting L2 strategy use, such as, age (e.g., [48,73], gender (e.g., [39] and motivation (e.g., [70,94].

Questionnaires "constitute the commonest type of gathering information about language learning strategies", as they allow researchers to "gather information from a large sample of respondents relatively easily" ([72], p. 135). The most-widely used questionnaire in the field of L2 learning is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by [64] in an attempt to provide a comprehensive inventory of strategies. In particular, it includes six strategy groups: a) memory strategies (such as, grouping or using mental linkages to help learners remember information more efficiently), b) cognitive strategies (such as, summarizing or taking notes to help learners use their metal processes to understand or produce language, c) compensation strategies (like guessing or deploying synonyms to compensate for gaps in knowledge), d) metacognitive strategies (like planning and evaluating their learning to control their cognition), e) affective strategies (such as, lowering your anxiety or encouraging yourself to help learners manage their emotions), and f) social strategies (like asking questions or cooperating with others to enable students to learn with others [64].

Regarding social and affective strategies, which constitute the focus of the study, they can facilitate message delivery for teachers through social interactions while lowering students' affective filter through creating a positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom [64]. More specifically, the contribution of social

strategies to language learning was mainly acknowledged when [64] distinguished them from affective strategies and created a separate classification of social strategies (recently renamed as socio-cultural-interactive strategies, [68]), as opposed to the taxonomy of socio-affective strategies proposed by [62]. Since language learning is a form of social behavior involving interaction with others, social strategies contribute to this process. According to [64], social strategies consist of three subcategories: asking questions, cooperating and empathizing with others; each subcategory includes two specific strategies respectively: asking for clarification or verification and asking for correction, cooperating with peers and cooperating with proficient users of the new language, developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

Considering affective strategies, they can help learners control their emotions, attitudes, and motivations enhancing, thus, their learning, since affect, particularly, positive emotions and attitudes, play a crucial role in L2 learning [69]. Based on [64], affective strategies consist of three sets: lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, and taking your emotional temperature; the anxiety-reducing set comprises the strategies of using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or mediation, using music and laughter, the encouragement set involves the strategies of making positive statements, taking risks wisely, and rewarding yourself, while the third set includes the strategies of listening to your body, using a check list, writing a language learning diary, and discussing your feelings with others.

Despite the theoretical basis of the contribution of social and affective strategies to the L2 learning process, there are relatively few studies focusing on social and affective strategy use, since the specific strategies are often ignored in relation to cognitive and metacognitive strategies [15,30,66,87]. More specifically, [63] explored the effectiveness of training in metacognitive and socio-affective strategies on EFL students' writing skills indicating that the training contributed to improved written proficiency. [23], who applied explicit training in social and affective strategies to EFL beginner students in Colombia, suggested that EFL students can become more interested in language learning by enhancing their awareness of paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of their learning process. Concurrently, [86] examined the effects of socio-affective strategy

training on EFL Malaysian students' strategy use in listening comprehension tasks showing that the experimental group outperformed the control group on specific categories of strategies. [82] explored the relationship between EFL teachers' social and affective strategy use and students' academic achievement showing a significant association between these variables. [89] examined the impact of a treatment based on social and affective strategy use on Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability indicating improvement. [33] explored only the reported social strategy use among India's Malayalee undergraduate students through an adaptation of the SILL pointing to a less than optimal use of social strategies.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

Allowing for the theoretical framework discussed above, this study intended to examine the relations among perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness and students' motivation and socio-affective strategy use. Despite the contribution of teachers' behavior, students' motivation and socio-affective strategy use to the learning process, there is a dearth of research on the relations of these variables; there is a lack of studies on aggression in education, in general, and in the field of L2 learning, in particular, and on social and affective strategies, as the existing literature mainly addresses the theoretical framework of the importance of social and affective strategies. In fact, some studies indicated that learners rarely deployed social and affective strategies [15,30,86,87], while other studies highlighted that the specific strategies were often ignored in relation to other categories of strategies, such as the cognitive ones [63,66]. Allowing for the contribution of the teacher verbal aggressiveness and student intrinsic motivation and socio-affective strategy use to the learning process, the relationship among these variables becomes more important for L2 contexts, as learning a L2 can place even greater demands allowing for dual language involvement, language deficiencies, and inappropriate use of strategies, which render learning less efficient.

Based on the theoretical underpinnings and the purpose of the present study, the following research hypotheses were formulated to direct the course of the study: a) It was hypothesized that students' perceptions of EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness would have a negative correlation with students' enjoyment/interest, effort/importance, competence but a positive correlation with students' pressure/tension and b) It was assumed that perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness would negatively relate to students' social and affective strategy use.

4. METHODS

4.1 Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 148 Greek undergraduate students (39 males and 109 females), 18-23 years old, (*M*=20.3, *SD*=.68) coming from the University of Thessaly in central Greece. More specifically, undergraduate students of the Physical Education Faculty, the Department of Early Childhood Education, and the Department of Primary Education participated in the study. All the participants had Greek as their mother tongue, while they were attending EFL courses at tertiary education. The participants came from various regions of Greece and belonged to different socio-economic status.

4.2 Procedure

The participants completed questionnaires referring to the EFL teachers' behavior and students' intrinsic motivation, and socio-affective strategy use. The completion of questionnaires lasted for 20-30 minutes approximately and flowed freely. Throughout the procedure, anonymity of the participants was ensured. Furthermore, student participation in the process was voluntary, while those who did not wish to take part did not have to do so. Before completing the questionnaires, participants signed a consent form. The study was conducted in accordance to the best practice, ethics, and code of conduct. Anonymity, discretion and official rules have been observed. The participants were convinced of the security and protection of their personal data. Their voluntary and willing cooperation was assured.

4.3 Instruments

Verbal aggressiveness. The Greek version [4], which was used to assess EFL teacher verbal aggressiveness, relied on the theoretical framework and the Verbal Aggressiveness Questionnaire (20 items) developed by [35]. Preliminary examination [4] supported the psychometric properties of the instrument. In particular, confirmatory factor analysis indicated satisfactory fit indices (confirmatory factor analysis: .97, SRMR: .02), and internal

consistency of the scale (α = .96). The scale consisted of eight items (e.g., 'the teacher insults students,' 'the teacher makes negative judgments of students' ability'). Participants were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree.

Intrinsic motivation inventory. The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory [45,80], a 20-item version first used in Greek physical education settings [31], included four subscales: enjoyment/interest (5 items, e.g., 'the lesson was a very interesting experience'), effort/importance (5 items, e.g., 'I tried very hard during the lesson'), competence (5 items, e.g., 'I think I did quite well in the lesson'), and pressure/tension (5 items, e.g., 'I felt pressure during the lesson'). Participants were asked to respond to the items based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

Social and affective strategy inventory. Social and affective strategy deployment was assessed through an adaptation of [64] SILL, 7.0 version for speakers of other languages learning English. It is based on frequency counts that can delineate the strategic behavior of L2 learners. As mentioned above, the instrument was divided into six factors to offer an adequate number of items in each subscale to facilitate comprehension of the learning strategies used by EFL learners including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. More specifically, part E and F of [64] SILL, which refer to the use of social (6 items, e.g., 'I practice English with my fellow students', 'I ask questions in English') and affective strategies (6 items, e.g., 'I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English', 'I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake'), were used in the study. The SILL, which was translated and adapted for the Greek population by [94], was used for the purpose of the study. Internal consistency or reliability in terms of the social strategies subscale was .64, which is quite satisfactory, while the affective strategies subscale was .55, which is seen as marginal reliability. Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never or almost never) to 5 (almost or almost always).

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis included the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0). The level of statistical significance was set at .05. Cronbach's α reliability analysis was used to examine the internal consistency of the factors of each questionnaire. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the correlation between the subscales of the questionnaires.

5. RESULTS

Cronbach's α reliability analysis for the 8-items Verbal Aggressiveness Scale [4] was very high (.96). The factors of enjoyment/interest (α = .95), competence (α = .55), effort/importance (α = .64) and pressure/tension (α = .92) for the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory [31] showed a satisfactory or high level of reliability. A similar level of reliability was also noted for the Learning Strategies Inventory [64]; in particular, the factors of affective strategies (α = .94) and social strategies (α = .93) were high too (see Table 1). At the same time, Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the variables.

Concurrently, a correlational analysis was conducted (see Table 2). As can be seen, there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' verbal aggressiveness and pressure / tension (r=.78), while there was a significant negative relationship between teachers' verbal aggression and enjoyment / interest (r=-.93), competence (r=-.88), effort / importance (r=-.64), affective strategies (r=-.92), and social strategies (r=-.94).

6. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine the relations among perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness and students' motivation and socio-affective strategy use. According to the results of the study, it was shown that perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness was negatively correlated with students' enjoyment/interest, effort / importance, competence, social and affective strategy use but positively correlated with students' pressure / tension.

Based on the findings, it seems that factors, such as student motivation and socio-affective strategy use, are influenced by the quality of the relationship that the students and teachers have with each other. Namely, students who experience a positive relationship with teachers and enjoy a supportive classroom environment are more motivated to learn and tend to work harder in classrooms [2,55,57,78]; on the

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha

	M (SD)	Cronbach's α
Verbal aggressiveness	3.07 (1.07)	.96
Enjoyment/interest	3.22 (1.19)	.95
Competence	3.04 (.78)	.55
Effort/importance	2.99 (.39)	.64
Pressure/tension	3.01 (.33)	.92
Social strategies	2.84 (1.17)	.93
Affective strategies	2.92 (1.14)	.94

Table 2. Correlation analysis results

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Verbal aggression	1.00						
2. Enjoyment/interest	-.93**	1.00					
3. Competence	-.88**	.88**	1.00				
4. Effort/importance	-.64**	.69**	.64**	1.00			
5. Pressure/tension	.78**	-.72**	- .71**	-.53**	1.00		
6. Social strategies	-.94**	.92**	.89**	.69**	.82**	1.00	
7. Affective strategies	-.92**	.89**	.83**	.63**	.86**	.93**	1.00

*** p<.001*

contrary, students who are not affectively prepared will not enjoy or be interested in the lesson and will not experience a positive or productive learning outcome due to the affective filter being high [36,37].

When teachers use aggressive language, they are likely to damage students' perceptions of teacher supportiveness, which is indicative that verbal aggressiveness is detrimental to developing an appropriate environment for the promotion of learning and individual growth. Research suggested that teachers' verbal aggressiveness was negatively related to student motivation and participation in the learning process [54,55,75,90,91,92], which is verified by the results of the study. Overall, the results of the study seem to be in agreement with the tenor of previous research literature asserting that teachers' behaviour seems to influence students' motivation in learning [1,2,77], particularly, L2 students' motivation [34,38,42,95]. Concurrently, the results of the study support previous studies pointing to the use of certain motivational strategies in the language instruction to enhance L2 students' motivation [16,51,52].

At the same time, the study showed that perceived EFL teachers' aggressive behaviour influences not only students' motivation but also students' social and affective strategy use, which supports the tenor of previous research showing that motivation and other affective factors can exert great influence on the language learning

strategy use [70]. The above finding of the study is also concurrent with previous studies indicating that highly motivated students reported using more strategies [22,39,70,94,97]. The few studies focusing on social and affective strategies suggested that EFL students can become more interested in language learning and enhance language achievement by raising awareness of the importance of paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of their learning process [23,82,86,89]. In this way, it is likely that students who derive pleasure from the lesson deploy more social and affective strategies, which help them reduce anxiety, develop social skills, try harder in the classroom and, eventually, improve L2 achievement [68].

It is also worth mentioning that this study contributes and extends L2 research, since it represents an exploratory attempt to establish a link among perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness and students' intrinsic motivation and socio-affective strategy use, since there is a dearth of research on the associations of these variables. More specifically, there is a dearth of L2 research on aggression and social and affective strategy use; some studies indicated that learners rarely deploy social and affective strategies [15,30,86,87], while other studies highlighted that the specific strategies are often ignored in relation to other categories of strategies, such as the cognitive ones [63,65,66]. Thus, the findings of the study raise an

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awareness of the connection among teachers' verbal aggressiveness and student intrinsic motivation and socio-affective strategy use aiming to encourage L2 researchers, teachers and learners, to address the contribution of affective factors to L2 learning achievement; it is an area the teacher's intervention should come first in order to establish positive frames of mind in students and assist them in coping with the stress caused by a low command of EFL. Namely, the relationship among these variables becomes more crucial for L2 contexts, as learning a L2 can place even greater demands allowing for dual language involvement, language deficiencies, and inappropriate use of strategies, which render learning less efficient. Last but not least, while most studies focusing on instructional communication included American students (e.g., [57,58,75], this study involved non-American participants, particularly Greek undergraduate students, which contributes to further validating the findings of USA-based instructional communication research.

An important implication gleaned from the study is that teachers should be aware of the contribution of their behaviour to student motivation, social and affective strategy use and, overall, EFL language achievement. Namely, the results of the study can effectively guide EFL teachers to avoid adopting an aggressive behaviour, since it brings about negative outcomes in the learning process. On the contrary, EFL teachers and educators should be concerned about the different ways to better motivate students to learn the target language. EFL teachers should deploy various teaching methods and activities to cater for students' personality traits and needs and, above all, create a relaxed and comfortable classroom atmosphere in which students can develop a deeper understanding of the nature of EFL learning and be better prepared and motivated to work hard. Concurrently, the results of the study address the critical role of social and affective strategies in the learning process, which have been rather neglected [15,30,63,66,86,87], implying that EFL teachers should promote the use of the specific strategies in classrooms aiming at helping students understand the social and affective side of their learning process. Therefore, it is highlighted that social and affective strategies should be definitely integrated into classrooms to help learners reduce anxiety about EFL learning, promote their social skills, organize their efforts more effectively, and become more independent and

self-regulated in and outside of EFL classrooms [68].

7. CONCLUSION

All in all, the perceived EFL teachers' verbal aggressiveness was positively correlated with students' pressure / tension and negatively related to enjoyment / interest, competence, effort / importance, affective and social strategy use. The teacher behavior seems to exert strong influence on student feelings, attitude to the lesson and strategy use. Therefore, the language learning process is influenced by these factors.

The quality of the relationship between students and teachers is a noticeable determinant of student motivation and socio-affective strategy use. In this way, the learning process seems to be person-dependent rather than formalized. Namely, the belief in people and personal relations appears to be stronger than any other belief in knowledge. The verbal style (aggressive or not) and subsequently the personality of teacher in the educational context can be of greater importance for the learning effectiveness than any other teaching process or method. Task-orientation without attention to relation quality seems to be a utopia.

8. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has some limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, regarding the sample of the study, a larger number of participants could be included coming from different universities. There was also a disproportionate ratio of male and female students (39 and 109 respectively), which did not allow the researchers to explore gender differences in motivation and strategy use. Similarly, a future sample can be collected from more faculties and learning subjects (e.g. physics, philosophy, etc).

Another limitation of the study lies in the way of collecting the data, which is limited to students' self-reports casting doubt on the validity of the research data. Psychometric and perceptional implications are raised as well. In this way, qualitative methods of data collection, such as student interview, should have been used to triangulate research data [49]. Hence, the generalizability of the results of the present study should be determined in subsequent research. Future research should be conducted involving a larger number of participants not only from

tertiary education but also from secondary and primary education in order to establish the links among L2 teachers' aggressive behaviors and students' motivation and social and affective strategy use; in addition, the above variables should be investigated in association with L2 achievement and particular skill performance.

In spite of the limitations mentioned above, the present study contributes to L2 research literature, as it brings to the forefront the importance of teachers' aggressive behavior, student motivation and social and affective strategy use for the L2 learning process, which have often been neglected.

NOTE

1. The difference between the terms foreign language (FL) and L2 has to do with the place where the language is learned and the social and communicative functions it serves [67]. Namely, a FL is learned through private tutoring in a country in which daily communication in the target language is limited, as it is not officially spoken in that country; on the contrary, a L2 implies learning the target language in a context in which that language is necessary for daily communication and interaction, as that language is spoken in that country [67]. In this way, EFL is an acronym deployed for English as a foreign language and denotes the use of English in a non-English speaking area.

Nonetheless, during the last few years the term L2 has prevailed throughout literature referring to either a L2 or a FL regardless of the context in which the target language is learnt and used [67]. Therefore, it should be noted that, though the researchers are aware of the difference between a FL and L2, they adopt the terms L2 and EFL, as they are widely used in literature.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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