



## The Association between Learners' Perceptions of EFL Instructors' Interpersonal Behavior and their English Language Achievement

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**Abstract:** The present study scrutinized the association between learners' perceptions of EFL instructors' interpersonal behavior and their English language achievement in Amhara regional state public universities, Ethiopia. In this correlational research, 177 participants who were first-year English Language and Literature students were selected using purposive and random sampling. The data were gathered through a questionnaire and an English language achievement test. Besides, the data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics, and multiple regression. The findings showed that understanding behavior was perceived as the frequent interpersonal behavior of EFL instructors followed by strict, student freedom, and leadership behavior, respectively. Apart from this, uncertain behavior was found to be the least perceived behavior in the classrooms. In addition, the findings indicated that instructors in the sample areas were less prevailing but more cooperative in the communicate process with their learners. In line with relationships, it was found that optimistic and noteworthy correlations between students' English achievement and their teachers' understanding and leadership behavior. In the case of its contribution, understanding followed by leadership interpersonal behavior was found to be the most prevailing and substantial variable on the learners' English achievement. It was, therefore, recommended that instructors should be given training continuously on instructors' interpersonal teaching behavior and its relationship to students' language learning.

**Keywords:** EFL Instructors, English Language Achievement, Learners' Perception, Instructors' Interpersonal Behavior.

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## Introduction

The English language plays a significant role in international interaction since it is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. The Ethiopian government has scrutinized the language as a keystone of worldwide communication (MOE, 2009). It has been offered as a subject as of grade one to the freshman university education in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, English language proficiency is key to promoting professionalism, securing a better job, and studying abroad. Consequently, there is a demand to improve English language teaching in the formal education system, especially at Ethiopian higher education institutions. Accordingly, creating a dependable relationship between teachers and students is important to develop the practice of English language teaching. Specifically, in English as a foreign language setting where the teaching-learning practice takes place in the classrooms with little or no environmental support, teachers' and students' interpersonal behavior is not optional. At the onset, a good teacher-student interpersonal relationship is believed to give a desirable classroom environment for learners' engagement in learning activities (Maulana, et al., 2011).

Education occurs best in an environment of positive relationships in which learners feel appraised, recognized, and regarded (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Derakhshan, 2022a; Haber, 2011; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Moreover, Haber (2011) stresses that English as a foreign language teachers' interpersonal teaching behavior is desirable for effective language teaching-learning processes. Effective teaching cannot be achieved through only subject matter knowledge and using active learning methods. Rather, it is achieved through positive relationships between the teacher and the students. Thus, it forth comes that teachers' care, concern, and good rapport with students that ensure the smooth functioning of the teaching-learning process are paramount as content and pedagogical conceptions (Derakhshan, et al., 2022a; Shakki, 2022). Accordingly, EFL teachers' interpersonal teaching behavior and their relationship with learners make the teaching-learning process more effective and efficient (Derakhshan et al., 2019). It is expected that a thorough exploration of the nature of communication between teachers and students would give teachers a clearer picture of teacher-student interaction (Perry et al., 2004; Mahle, 2011; Maulana et al., 2012).

Moreover, studies pointed out that the way teachers affiliate with students and control classroom learning processes is connected with the cognitive and affective development of students (Derakhshan et al., 2022b). Classroom interaction is a converse process where teachers' and students' behavior influence each other. To find a fair view and obtain a comprehensive image of teachers' interpersonal behavior, students' perceptions of the teachers' interpersonal behavior appear to be necessary (Bogale & Wale, 2024). Besides,

considering the perceptions of students on teachers' interpersonal behavior gives a careful and reflective understanding of the teaching-learning situation in EFL classrooms (Brok et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the relationship between students' perception of teachers' interpersonal behavior and their English achievement is determined by proximity (i.e. the extent to which teachers cooperate with their students) and influence (i.e. the amount of control) in the interaction. Accordingly, studies on students' perceptions of proximity and influence dimensions of teachers' interpersonal behavior indicated that students' perceptions of the two dimensions were found to be lower than their teachers' interpersonal behaviors. Relating to the two major dimensions of interpersonal behavior, studies conveyed that most learners perceived their instructors as more cooperative than dominant (Wubbels et al., 2006; Wei et al., 2009; Zhu, 2011; Bogale & Wale, 2024). On the contrary, American teachers were perceived as lowest on both dimensions while Bruneian teachers were conversely perceived highest on the influence dimension. Concerning subscales, the major persuading interpersonal behaviors of university teachers in Iran, Singapore, and Brunei as perceived by students were found to be friendly, understanding, and leadership (Liberante, 2012).

Similarly, Wei et al. (2009) pointed out that understanding the behavior of teachers was perceived most frequently while uncertain was the least from the other teachers' behavior by learners at secondary schools in Chinese EFL classes. Apart from these, most of the eight types of teacher-interpersonal behaviors (i.e. strict, understanding, constant, leadership, student freedom, influence, uncertain, and proximity) were found with a similar rate of occurrences that took place in Australian and American EFL classes (Stronge et al., 2011). In line with the rapport between English language teachers and their students' performance, studies have been looked over again. Thus, it is justified that students' perceptions of teachers' influence correlated positively with their test results (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Fraser, 1998; Fisher & Swindells, 1998; Fehintola, 2014).

In contrast, there was no significant correlation between the two dimensions and cognitive outcomes (Wei et al., 2009). Leadership, strict, understanding, and welcoming behaviors were positively related to students' achievement while dissatisfied, uncertain, admonishing, and student freedom behaviors were found negatively related to students' achievement (Wubbels et al., 2006; Ramos & Fisher, 2013; Perry et al., 2004). Besides, in the study which was done by Rickards and Fisher (2000), only uncertainty was correlated negatively and pointedly with students' English achievement at Middle East Technical

University. In other terms, empiric justifications of teachers' interpersonal manners, interactions between these behaviors and learners' English achievement, and the extent to which instructors' interpersonal behaviors predicted students' English achievement. All in all, while the current study focuses on interpersonal behavior in teacher-student interpersonal relationships, its theoretical framework was drawn on the integration use of broaden-and-build theory, and rhetorical and relational goal theory as it is discussed below.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The broaden-and-build theory and the rhetorical and relational goal theory offer valuable insights into the dynamics of teacher-student interpersonal relationships, shedding light on how positive communication and interactions can contribute to students' academic success and emotional well-being (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). The broaden-and-build theory, developed by psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, is related to the concept of positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships in the educational context. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire, leading to increased creativity, resilience, and overall well-being. Over time, these broadened mindsets can build enduring personal resources such as social connections, coping strategies, and skills. The broaden-and-build theory emphasizes the role of positive emotions in broadening individuals' perspectives and building personal resources. The theory suggests that positive interactions and emotional experiences expand students' cognitive and social capacities, leading to enhanced learning and well-being. Hence, English language teachers can apply the broaden-and-build theory by creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. By fostering positive emotions through encouragement, praise, and constructive feedback, language teachers help their students develop a broader mindset, increase resilience, and improve academic performance.

By creating a supportive and engaging classroom environment, teachers can help students explore new ideas, think creatively, and approach learning with curiosity and interest (Derakhshan et al., 2022b). This can lead to expanded thinking and a broader understanding and use of English language skills. In the same manner, positive teacher-student relationships can contribute to the emotional resilience and social connection of students. When students feel valued, supported, and understood by their teachers, they are more likely to develop emotional resilience and coping skills. This can help them navigate challenges, setbacks, and stressors in their academic and personal lives. When students experience positive interactions with their teachers, it can lead to a sense of belonging and connectedness with their peers.

This can create a supportive network for students, enhancing their overall well-being and English language academic success.

Through positive teacher-student relationships, teachers can encourage a growth mindset in students. By providing constructive feedback, encouragement, and support, teachers can help students develop a belief in their ability to learn and grow. This can lead to increased motivation, perseverance, and a willingness to take on challenges (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Positive teacher-student relationships have been linked to improved academic performance. When students feel supported and encouraged by their English language teachers, they most likely engage in learning, participate in class, and strive for academic success. Thus, the broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive teacher-student relationships can create an environment that fosters broadened thinking, emotional resilience, social connections, and academic success. By leveraging positive emotions and interactions, teachers can contribute to the overall well-being and growth of their students.

Besides, the rhetorical and relational goal theory, developed by Daniel J. O'Keefe, is a framework that focuses on the communication goals that individuals have in their interpersonal interactions (Derakhshan et al., 2022a; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). It underlines how people balance two types of goals in their communication: rhetorical goals and relational goals. The rhetorical and relational goal theory highlights the dual nature of communication goals in teacher-student relationships. Hence, the theory offers insights into how teachers effectively communicate with their students to achieve both rhetorical (task-oriented) and relational (interpersonal) goals. It underscores the importance of achieving both instructional (rhetorical) and interpersonal (relational) objectives to support students' academic growth and emotional connection.

The rhetorical goals in teacher-student relationships focus on the instructional and academic aspects of communication (Derakhshan et al., 2022b; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Teachers aim to convey information, explain concepts, provide feedback, and guide students toward learning objectives. The rhetorical goal theory emphasizes that effective communication should be clear, informative, and tailored to the educational needs of students. Teachers can achieve these goals by using instructional strategies that facilitate learning, such as providing clear explanations, using visual aids, and encouraging student engagement. Besides, the relational goals centered on building and maintaining positive interpersonal connections. Teachers seek to establish rapport, trust, and a supportive environment where students feel valued and understood. The relational goal theory

underscores the importance of warmth, empathy, and approachability in communication. Teachers can achieve these goals by actively listening to students, showing empathy, demonstrating respect, and creating opportunities for open dialogue.

The theory emphasizes the importance of balancing both rhetorical and relational goals in communication (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Teachers need to effectively convey academic content while also nurturing positive relationships with their students. By recognizing the dual nature of their communication goals, teachers can create an environment that supports both learning and emotional well-being. Understanding the unique needs and preferences of individual students is crucial for achieving both rhetorical and relational goals. Teachers can adapt their communication styles to accommodate diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences. By being responsive to students' individual needs, teachers can foster a sense of inclusivity and respect within the classroom. In addition, the theory stresses that constructive feedback and encouragement can serve both rhetorical and relational goals. By providing meaningful feedback on academic performance and offering words of encouragement, teachers can support students' learning while also reinforcing positive teacher-student relationships. Consequently, the rhetorical and relational goal theory provides a framework for teachers to navigate their communication with students, ensuring that they effectively convey academic content while also fostering supportive and positive interpersonal relationships. By integrating both instructional and relational strategies, teachers can create a classroom environment that promotes learning, engagement, and emotional well-being.

Finally, the integrative use of the broaden-and-build theory, and the rhetorical and relational goal theory in English language classrooms, help to build positive classroom interactions and achieve academic and emotional goals (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2022b; Pishghadam et al., 2021). In other terms, both theories underscore the significance of positive interactions in teacher-student relationships. Teachers can leverage the broaden-and-build theory by infusing their interactions with positivity, warmth, and encouragement, which can contribute to students' emotional well-being and cognitive growth. On the other hand, by integrating the rhetorical and relational goal theory with the broaden-and-build theory, English language teachers can strive to achieve academic objectives while also promoting students' emotional resilience and positive outlook. This integrated approach can lead to a supportive learning environment that nurtures both cognitive development and emotional flourishing. In summary, the broaden-and-build theory and the rhetorical and relational goal theory offer complementary perspectives on teacher-

student interpersonal relationships. By combining these frameworks, language teachers can create an environment that fosters positive emotions, supports academic growth, and nurtures strong interpersonal connections with their students, ultimately contributing to holistic student development.

### **How positive psychology can make a difference in students' emotions?**

Positive psychology makes significant differences in students' emotions by promoting well-being, resilience, and a positive mindset (Derakhshan, 2022a; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2022a; Derakhshan et al., 2022b). It can positively impact students' emotions by cultivating positive emotions, building resilience, enhancing self-efficacy, fostering positive relationships, encouraging mindfulness and self-awareness, and promoting strengths-based approaches. For instance, positive psychology emphasizes the cultivation of positive emotions such as gratitude, joy, hope, and optimism. By incorporating practices such as gratitude journaling, mindfulness, and positive affirmations, students can learn to focus on the positive aspects of their lives and experiences, leading to improved emotional well-being (Wang et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2022a; Derakhshan et al., 2022b).

Similarly, it also helps students develop resilience by teaching them coping skills, problem-solving strategies, and a growth mindset. By fostering resilience, students are better equipped to navigate challenges, setbacks, and stressors, leading to a more positive emotional outlook. Besides, positive psychology encourages the development of self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks. By nurturing a sense of competence and mastery, students can experience greater confidence and a more positive emotional state. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of positive relationships and social connections (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2022b). By promoting empathy, kindness, and communication skills, students can develop supportive and fulfilling relationships with peers and adults, leading to increased emotional well-being.

Likewise, it also encourages practices such as mindfulness meditation and self-reflection, which can help students become more aware of their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This heightened self-awareness can lead to better emotional regulation and an improved ability to manage stress and anxiety. Lastly, it also focuses on identifying and leveraging individual strengths and talents (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Derakhshan, 2022b;

Wang et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2022a). By encouraging students to recognize and utilize their strengths, educators help them experience a greater sense of purpose, accomplishment, and positive emotions.

Overall, positive psychology provides a framework for educators to support students' emotional well-being by fostering positive emotions, resilience, self-efficacy, positive relationships, mindfulness, self-awareness, and strengths-based approaches (Wang et al., 2022; Derakhshan, 2022a; Derakhshan et al., 2022b; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2022a; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). By integrating these principles into teaching practices and classroom environments, educators can make a meaningful difference in students' emotional experiences and overall mental health.

Although various studies (including, Derakhshan, 2022a; Wang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Ramos & Fisher, 2013) were carried out on teachers' interpersonal behavior, there were no local studies conducted on EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior in Ethiopia. Thus, English language teachers' interpersonal behavior, in Ethiopia, is still unknown because the findings made outside the country may not be discernible to Ethiopia as perception and communication are sensitive to the perceivers' cultural and educational backgrounds (Fisher & Swindells, 1998). Accordingly, it seemed important to investigate if Ethiopian EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior is shared due to cultural differences as compared to other nations. Furthermore, the relationship between students' perceptions of EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior and their English achievement was not as such computed statistically to see whether there were significant differences or not on the views of EFL students. This appeared that the empirical explanation of Ethiopian English language instructors' interpersonal behaviors and their relation to students' English achievement was deficient.

This study, therefore, aimed to examine learners' perceptions of English language instructors' interpersonal behaviors and their English achievement in Amhara State public universities, Ethiopia.

## Research Questions

The present study was designed to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) What are learners' perceptions of their EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors?
- 2) What is the association between learners' perception of EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors and their English language achievement?



3) What is the extent to which EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors foretell the learners' English language achievement?

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Design of the Study***

A correlational research design was used to obtain data on the relationship between students' perceptions of EFL teachers' interpersonal behaviors and their English language achievement. Cook (2008) stated that quantitative studies with correlational design are useful for finding relationships among variables and describing a phenomenon. According to Sekaran (2003), a quantitative survey design was used to gather numerical data on students' perceptions of teachers' interactional behavior in language classrooms. In this study, therefore, the quantitative approach enabled the researchers to see the issue under study from a quantitative perspective. It was suitable to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of EFL teachers' interpersonal behaviors and their English language achievement.

### ***Population and Sampling Technique***

The population of the study were first-year University learners found in Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. In this national regional state, there were ten government universities, in the 2020 academic year. Among the universities, the researchers selected four universities (including, Injibara University, Debre Tabor University, Bahir Dar University, and Gondar University) using a random sampling method that provides an equal chance of selection for all of the population. Based on the preliminary study conducted for this study, the students assigned to these universities were homogeneous because the Ethiopian Ministry of Education randomly assigned first-year students to all government universities found in the country. Among all batches of learners, first-year students were purposely selected since they were new to the university environment and community. In other terms, it is expected that these learners' insight into the student-teacher relationship and its' felt effect on English achievement gives various conceptions than senior students who have already rectified the situations.

While there were more than seventy English major first-year students in each university, there were a total of 354 English major first-year students in the aforementioned four Universities. Of all these students, when 44 students from each university were

randomly selected, a total of 177 students were selected from the four universities. While 103 of these students were males, the remaining 74 students were females. Therefore, the study was carried out with 177 English major first-year students on the correlation between students' perception of teachers' interpersonal behavior and their English language achievement.

## **Variables**

In this study, the independent variable was EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior as perceived by their students. Interpersonal behavior has proximity (degree of teachers' cooperation with their students), and influence (degree of teachers amount of control) as major dimensions with eight sub-scales as measured through a questionnaire on teacher interaction. The sub-scales were understanding, student freedom, leadership, helping/friendly, uncertain, dissatisfied, admonishing, and strict manners. Whereas the dependent variable was English as a foreign language achievement mean score of the students gained through English language tests.

## **Instruments**

### ***English Language Achievement Test***

To examine the students' English language achievement, a test with a total of 35 multiple-choice comprehension items incorporating listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary questions was employed. The test was piloted at Debre Markos University to check its reliability and validity. Accordingly, the test was validated by three English language instructors and twelve students, and the reliability was calculated using Cronbach alpha and found 0.83 which shows that the test was reliable.

## **The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was needed to collect data on English language instructors' interpersonal teaching behavior was gathered through using the standardized questionnaire on teacher interaction (QTI) (Francis et al., 2006). The questionnaire (Wubbels et al., 2006) consisted of fifty-six items. The items are divided into eight sub-dimensions which acquiesce to the eight sections of the model. The eight domains are understanding, student freedom, leadership, helping/friendly, uncertain, dissatisfied, admonishing, and strict. Each domain contained seven items with a five-point Likert scale type ranging from 'Never' to 'Always'.

The trustworthiness of the questionnaire was carried out, and the reliabilities ranged from 0.66 - 0.88: (0.86) understanding, (0.66) student responsibility/ freedom, (0.83) leadership, (0.75) uncertain, and (0.73) strict. The three scales, namely admonishing, helpful/friendly, and dissatisfied behaviors are omitted owing to their high correlations with their respective adjacent behavior.

### Data Analysis Methods

The data were analyzed through quantitative data analysis methods. Particularly, inferential statistics were used to scrutinize and construe the data that were acquired through questionnaires and English achievement tests. Descriptive statistics were employed to sketch EFL teachers' interpersonal teaching behavior. To explore correlations between EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior and students' English language achievement test, multiple regression was employed at a 0.05 significant level. Multiple regression was employed to ascertain the degree to which teachers' interpersonal teaching behaviors affected the students' English achievement.

### Results and Discussions

This study examined the association between learners' perception of English language teachers' interpersonal behaviors and students' English language achievement in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Particularly, it explored learners' perceptions of their EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors, examined the association between learners' perception of EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors and their English language achievement, and found the extent to which EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors foretell the learners' English language achievement.

#### *Learners' Perceptions of Their EFL Instructors' Interpersonal Behaviors*

With respect to the first research question, the results of Learners' perceptions of their EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Learners' Perceptions of Their EFL Instructors' Interpersonal Behaviors

| Instructors' interpersonal behaviors | M    | SD   |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| Strict                               | 2.23 | 1.92 |

|                 |      |      |
|-----------------|------|------|
| Understanding   | 3.98 | 0.42 |
| Leadership      | 3.96 | 1.01 |
| Provide Freedom | 3.02 | 0.74 |
| Uncertain       | 2.81 | 1.02 |
| Influence       | 0.41 | 0.43 |
| Proximity       | 1.31 | 0.71 |

As it is presented in Table 1, learners perceived that their EFL instructors' behaviors were more understanding ( $M=3.98$ ;  $SD=0.42$ ), show leadership ( $M=3.96$ ;  $SD=1.01$ ), strict ( $M=2.32$ ;  $SD=1.92$ ), and provide freedom or responsibility to the students ( $M=3.02$ ;  $SD=0.74$ ). However, the students perceived that their teachers were unlikely to show uncertain behavior ( $M=2.81$ ;  $SD=1.02$ ) because the EFL teachers exhibited this behavior seldom. Accordingly, teachers' understanding behavior, followed by leadership behavior was kenneed as an interpersonal behavior that happened mostly in EFL classrooms. Besides, English language students understood that being strict and providing students with freedom or responsibility were also their English language teachers' behaviors. Hence, the English language teachers displayed strict behavior on the one hand while they gave freedom of independent work or responsibility to their learners on the other hand. This result is consistent with some related studies (Derakhshan et al., 2022a; Derakhshan et al., 2022b; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Shakki, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2009) where understanding behavior of English language teachers was perceived most while uncertain was the least. On the contrary, this finding was not corroborated with the results of Ramos and Fisher (2013), who found that all eight interpersonal teaching behaviors were found with similar rates of happenings.

Concerning the major dimensions of teachers' interpersonal behavior, the mean results of the two dimensions betoken learners understood that their teachers were more cooperative than dominant. This finding was in line with previous findings including Khojastehrad and Sattarova (2015), and Wubbels et al. (2006) that found learners perceived as their teachers were more cooperative than dominant. Hence, the mean results of influence (Mean=0.41, & Standard Deviation=0.43) of the current study were found to be smaller than the mean in Singapore, Australia, and Iran (Wei et al., 2009). Proximity, on the other hand, the mean value (Mean=1.31, & Standard Deviation=0.71) of this study was found to be bigger than the values of studies conducted in the countries mentioned above. It, therefore, conveyed that

Ethiopian EFL teachers in the sample universities were less dominant but more cooperative in the communication process with their learners.

### *The Association between Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviors and Learners' English Language Achievement*

Regarding the second research question, the results on the correlation between learners' perception of EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors and their English language achievement (Table 2) showed that there were positive and significant correlations between the learners' English language performance and their EFL teachers' leadership and understanding behaviors.

**Table 2.** The Association between Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviors and Learners' English Language Achievement

| Teachers' interpersonal behaviors | r      | p      |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Strict                            | -0.012 | 0.53   |
| Leadership                        | 1.42   | 0.0002 |
| Understanding                     | 1.67   | 0.000  |
| Students Freedom                  | 0.023  | 0.42   |
| Uncertain                         | 0.54   | 0.21   |
| Influence                         | 0.114  | 0.024  |
| Proximity                         | 0.079  | 0.014  |

Table 2, depicts that learners' English language performance increased as their perceptions of their EFL teachers' leadership and understanding behaviors were increased accordingly. On the contrary, there were no significant correlations between students' English language achievement and their EFL teachers' strict, student freedom, and uncertain behaviors. This finding was in line with Maulana et al. (2012), Haber (2011), and Wubbels et al. (2006) where leadership and understanding behaviors were correlated significantly with students' English language achievement. Nevertheless, it was not consistent with Wei et al. (2009) where only uncertainty was negatively and significantly correlated with learners' English language accomplishment. Regarding the two dimensions, both proximity and influence were positively and significantly correlated with the learners' English performance. This result, on the other hand, tended to agree with previous studies (Macleod-Ball, 2011;

Mahle, 2011; Rickards & Fisher, 2000). Nonetheless, it was inconsistent with some other studies (Negash, 2006; Wei et al., 2009) where no significant correlations were found between the two dimensions and learners' cognitive accomplishment.

### ***The Prognosis of Instructors' Interpersonal Behaviors on Learners' English Language Achievement***

The results of the third research question are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Prognosis of Instructors' Interpersonal Behaviors on Learners' English Language Achievement

| Sources    | SS      | Df  | MS    | F     | Sig   |
|------------|---------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Regression | 18.143  | 7   | 4.021 | 6.201 | 0.000 |
| Residual   | 217.043 | 361 | 0.601 |       |       |
| Total      | 235.186 | 368 |       |       |       |

Multiple correlation = 0.302, Adjusted Correlation (R)<sup>2</sup> = 0.071

As can be seen in Table 3, the findings on the prognosis of EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors on learners' English language achievement unveiled that the five predictor variables in connection significantly and positively correlated with the learners' English language performance ( $R=0.302$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The behaviors, in combination, significantly predicted learners' English performance ( $R^2=0.071$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). It showed that EFL teachers' interpersonal behaviors altogether discussed 7.1% of the variances in the learners' English language performance results (see Table 3). The effect observed in the current study was almost terminated to the eight percent ( $F=12.101$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) of the variances in English performance of the learners at Middle East Technical University (Brok et al., 2004).

### ***The Contribution of Independent Variables to Learners' English Performance***

Finally, Table 4 portrays the contribution of EFL instructors' interpersonal behaviors to the learners' English language performance. The findings uncovered that the independent variable, *understanding*, followed by EFL teachers' *leadership* interpersonal behavior was found to be the most powerful and significant predictor of the learners' English language performance. In this regard, Maulana et al. (2011) stated that *understanding* and *leadership*

interpersonal behaviors were suggesting students' English language achievement significantly though they were not the only ones. On the contrary, Fraser (1998) found that only a *strict* scale contributed a significant amount of variance to students' English language achievement. Here, the results of the study strengthen that only *influence* was revealed examining students' foreign language achievement significantly. This finding was consistent with Francis et al. (2006). However, this was not intended to agree with Wei et al. (2009) in which *influence* was found in examining students' overall performance in all courses significantly even though the degree of variance was insignificant.

**Table 4.** The Contribution of Independent Variables to Learners' English Performance

| Prognosticator Variables | Weight ( $\beta$ ) | t      | p     |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
| Strict                   | 0.291              | -1.171 | 0.23  |
| Constant                 | -                  | -2.031 | 0.43  |
| Leadership               | 0.398              | 1.98   | 0.014 |
| Understanding            | 0.841              | 2.728  | 0.000 |
| Student Freedom          | -0.038             | -0.179 | 0.604 |
| Uncertain                | -0.034             | -0.154 | 0.521 |
| Influence                | 0.114              | 0.908  | 0.018 |
| Proximity                | 0.079              | 1.635  | 0.102 |

### Conclusions and Implications

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the learners perceived that their EFL teachers at Ethiopian government universities exhibited high *understanding* and *leadership* behaviors followed by *strict*, *student responsibility* or *freedom* and low *uncertain* behaviors. Accordingly, the EFL teachers were more cooperative and less dominant even though uncertain behavior was also pointed to some extent. Even if there were vast complications responsible for students' English language achievement, this study showed that EFL teachers' interpersonal behaviors significantly stated students' English language achievement. Even though the effect was not large, proper attention ought to be given to it as it has potential in examining learners' EFL performance which has been diminishing at all levels of academic issues. Of the five sub-dimensions of teachers' interpersonal behavior, EFL teachers' *understanding* and *leadership* behaviors were found to be significant prognosticators of the learners' English language performance. In addition, *influence* was

found to be a significant predictor of students' English language achievement while *proximity* was not exhibited as well.

In sum, students' perception of their EFL teachers' interpersonal behavior influenced their English language performance. As a result, this study supposed that EFL teachers ought to reexamine their connection with their students to improve teacher-student relations to create a suitable atmosphere for EFL classes and promote students' learning. Finally, based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that universities should provide continuous training for EFL teachers on theoretical and practical orientations of interpersonal behaviors and their association with students' learning achievement.

However, it is necessary to confess that small samples were used in the present study that showed preliminary conclusions concerning teacher-student interpersonal relationships in the Ethiopian context. In this regard, the analysis could only be studied at class level and the statistical power was limited to establish associations between variables. Furthermore, it remained insufficient whether the findings were generalized in Ethiopian higher education. It is, therefore, recommended that future studies on teachers' interpersonal behavior and learners' academic achievement with a greater number of participants and various data gathering and analysis methods arrive at a more comprehensive generalization.

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### **Competing Interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.



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