



Online Teachers' Strokes and L2 Grammar: Social Networks in Focus

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ABSTRACT- This study investigates the effect of the online English Teachers' Stroking Behaviors on EFL learners' L2 grammar learning through online learning of L2 grammar. For this purpose, sixty females intermediate EFL learners were selected and randomly divided to three telegram groups. Before starting the online course, a researcher-made grammar test was administered as the pretest. The determined grammar points were instructed by one teacher in the same way for all three groups during one month. In the first group, the teacher frequently included some pre-planned words and expressions implying positive conditional stroke in her feedback during teaching process. For the next group, she frequently used some per-planned words and expressions bearing negative conditional stroke and for the last group as the control group, the teacher provided the learners with the feedback implying no emotional themes. At the final session, another researcher-made grammar test was administered for three groups as the post test. The results revealed that teacher's positive verbal conditional stroke was significantly more effective than the negative conditional strokes; however, the negative ones were more effective than no stroke. Findings of interviews showed that the participants prefer receiving strokes from teacher, even the negative ones, in comparison with receiving no strokes.

Key Words: Stroke; positive verbal conditional stroke (PVC); negative verbal conditional strokes (NVC); no stroke (NS); online learning; social networks

I. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the quality of education process, everyone beware that the teacher's and learner's interaction is regarded as a basic part of that in the educational settings both in the form of face-to-face or distant form. Hall and Walsh (2002) believe that the teacher-learner interaction quality in the language learning contexts is considered as a pivotal factor in an effective and efficient teaching and learning process (Aldridge and Fraser, 2016; Kato, Tscholl and Kunnen, 2018). Emotional factors are integral parts of teacher-learner interaction; therefore, considering these factors in education domain can affect the quality of learning and teaching process (Watkins, 2019). Teacher-learner interaction can be examined through Transactional Analysis (TA) which was introduced originally by Eric Berne (1958). One of the main concepts within TA scope which is directly related to teacher-learner interactions is the concept of stroke. Stroke can be any action pertaining to confirmation of other's existence (Shirai, 2006). The key objective of education within the humanistic and psychological domain is changing a learner to an appropriate decision maker one in his life and to ameliorate some of his psychological dimensions such as self-determination, critical thinking, emotional abilities and autonomy (Pishghadam, Zabihi, and Shayesteh, 2015). Thus, a language teacher needs to be educated in some psychological aspects to have an expedient recognition of learner's psychological, mental, emotional, social and ethical needs to augment his general life's quality (Pishghadam, Zabihi, and Kermanshahi, 2012). Recently, rapid growth of technology has opened the doors to many new dimensions of pedagogy (Yedla, 2013) and this unprecedented development in education should not be ignored by language teachers. Using social networks for the educational purposes has attracted many teachers' and learners' attention because of their unique advantage of learning and teaching beyond the classroom environment. This kind of learning can motivate the learners to have their own pace in the learning process and in this case a teacher has the main role to persuade the learners for being independent and self-learners; therefore, involving affective factors in this kind of learning and teaching is inevitable which has not been addressed enough so far.

Essentially, it is time to pay an especial attention to teacher-learner interactions based on TA theory through the application of novel technologies in the education domain. Therefore, the researchers of this study decided to investigate the effect of the English Teachers' Stroking Behaviors on EFL learners' L2 grammar learning through online learning of L2 grammar.

Background of the Study

Transactional Analysis (TA) was introduced originally by Eric Berne (1958). TA is a theory within the psychology and psychotherapy domain and according to Stewart and Joines (1987), "Transactional analysis is a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change." (p. 3). To elucidate the concept of transactional analysis, it is essential to define transaction. The unit of social intercourse is called a transaction. If two or more people encounter each other... sooner or later one of them will speak, or give some other indication of acknowledging the presence of the others. This is called transactional stimulus. Another person will then say or do something which is in some way related to the stimulus, and that is called the transactional response (Berne, 1964, p. 29). In the educational contexts TA contributes to teachers and learners to establish efficacious interaction in order to have beneficial learning process (Stewart & Joines, 1987).

Stroke

A stroke is a recognition unit or "fundamental unit of social action" (Berne, 1964, p.15). In other words, it can be any action pertaining to confirmation of other's existence. We need strokes to keep physical and psychological soundness. The first meaning of stroke was proposed by Berne referred to the infants need to touch things and later acknowledged that adults also look for such kinds of physical stimulation. Although, adults seek for other types of strokes including smiling, complimenting, or even in some situations a frown, by which they can prove that their presence has been recognized (Stewart & Joines, 1987).

Strokes can be exchanged through three channels: positive or negative, verbal or non-verbal, conditional or unconditional. Verbal stroke is recognized as applying language and words in both forms of oral and written which ranges from saying hi to a long conversation. Non-verbal strokes refer to actions such as smiling and frowning. Positive strokes are the actions that result in pleasant feelings in the receiver of stroke; athwart, negative strokes result in unpleasant experiences. Conditional strokes betoken what a person does, while unconditional strokes refer to what a person is (Stewart & Joines, 1987). Berne (1964) believed that despite the unwelcome nature of negative strokes in comparison with lack of strokes, they are more pleasant since you can feel that you have been seen by others.

Distance Education

Distance education is defined as a kind of education that "takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology is used to bridge the gap (Willis, 1993, p. 4). Sometimes, the teacher and learner separation can be problematic in learning and teaching process because it imposes an obstacle to interaction.

For information exchange and communication, technology is increasingly improving and encouraging the pedagogical practices for the teachers and learners, changing the direction of learning process from the teachers to learners. Today, technology is applied as a resource of learning around the world and learning sources are not only limited to the available textbooks but have expanded to the multimedia and the internet that have been widely utilized in distance teaching and learning. In this kind of learning the learners can receive the needed information whenever and wherever they wish. In fact, the internet can be considered as the source of online learning (Suhirman, 2019).

Distance education has gained remarkable worldwide popularity in the learning and teaching domain. It has introduced a range of interesting new ways of transferring knowledge between teachers and learners in spite of the physical distance and sometimes time distance between them. Distance education is different from the traditional one in which the teacher and learner have face to face interaction in the same place. Many reviews have been done in the domain of distant learning but they have taken distant learning into account generally and they paid less attention to online learning more especially (Gibson, 1990; Moore and Thompson, 1997). Online learning happens when the learners use the internet and are faced an instructional sequence to do some learning activities, and to obtain the learning purposes (Ally, 2002; Ritchie and Hoffman, 1997; Sun,

2011); although, this type of learning has its own challenges as well (Wang, 2004; Coverdale-Jones, 2000). Researchers in online language learning and teaching field have carried out many studies about face to face classroom and online learning differences and the necessity of including new technologies in teaching and learning process (Tratnik, Urh and Jereb, 2019; Hampel and Stickler, 2005; Bennett and Marsh, 2002; Wilson and Stacey, 2004; Compton, 2009; Barker, 2002) Numbers of social media users around the world have been growing at a remarkable rate and it has been included in the curricula of different universities to give their students the edge in the job market after graduating. More and more educators are becoming interested in integrating social media and virtual worlds in their respective area of language teaching and learning, such as vocabulary teaching (Noor Al-Deen, 2016, Lawrence, 2018).

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to point out the aim of the study the following research questions were posed:

- 1) How does the English teacher's application of positive verbal conditional stroke and negative verbal conditional stroke effect the learners' online L2 grammar learning?
- 2) If there is a significant effect, which type is most effective in learners' online L2 grammar learning?
- 3) What is the EFL learners' attitudes towards the effect of the English teacher's application of positive verbal conditional stroke and negative verbal conditional strokes on their L2 grammar learning?

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

For this study, the researcher used three groups each consists of 20 female intermediate EFL learners. Total number of participants was sixty Iranian EFL learners from a language institute in Mashhad. Their age ranged from 22 to 48 and they were from different socio-economic backgrounds. Their educational levels were different from BA to MA degree in different majors such as: agriculture, architecture, management, physical education, law, tourism, librarianship, electronic and industry.

Instrumentations

First of all, the Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test for the intermediate (Lesly, Hasen & Zukowski, 2005) was applied to homogenize the subjects. This test is a multiple choice evaluation package including of 70 items in 3 parts: listening 20 items (15 minutes), reading 20 items (20 minutes), and language use 30 items (15 minutes). According to the guidelines, the learners whose scores were between 37 and 49 were considered as the intermediate level EFL learners.

To examine the pre-existing differences among the learners in the terms of L2 grammar knowledge (specifically adjective and adverb clauses knowledge) and to investigate this knowledge differences after implementing the treatment, two grammar tests including adjective and adverb clauses exercises were designed by the researchers one of which was used as the pretest and the other one was applied as the post test. The content of the researcher-made tests, consisting filling the blanks items, unscrambling items, and multiple choice items, were validated by two related experts; also they were piloted among 24 intermediate EFL learners and their Cronbach's alpha were calculated (pretest: 0.783 and posttest: 0.806).

Procedure

First of all, to ensure that the selected subjects were at approximately same level of English proficiency, the researchers used the 'Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test' (Lesly, Hasen & Zukowski, 2005). According to the results the expedient participants were picked for the study. Then, three groups in telegram were created and the participants were randomly assigned to these three groups. The members of each group were 20 female intermediate EFL learners. In that moment, the participants did not have any problems about the availability of telegram in Iran. Before starting the online course, one of the researcher-made grammar tests including adjective and adverb clauses exercises was administered as the pre-test for the members of

three groups to investigate whether there are any differences among the all three groups' learners' knowledge of adjective and adverb clauses before treatment fulfillment. These grammar points were instructed and practiced by one teacher in the same way for all three groups during one month, 2 times in a week. At the first session, the teacher pointed out to the differences between adjective and adverb clauses by sending an image for three groups and providing some explanations, examples and exercises in this regard (as you can see in figure 1). In the subsequent sessions, the teacher taught the learners how to make the adjective and adverb clauses and in each session the learners could ask their questions and they were assigned to do some related exercises for the very session and for the next session. In each session, the teacher reviewed the previous session content and checked the learners' answers to the related assigned exercises.

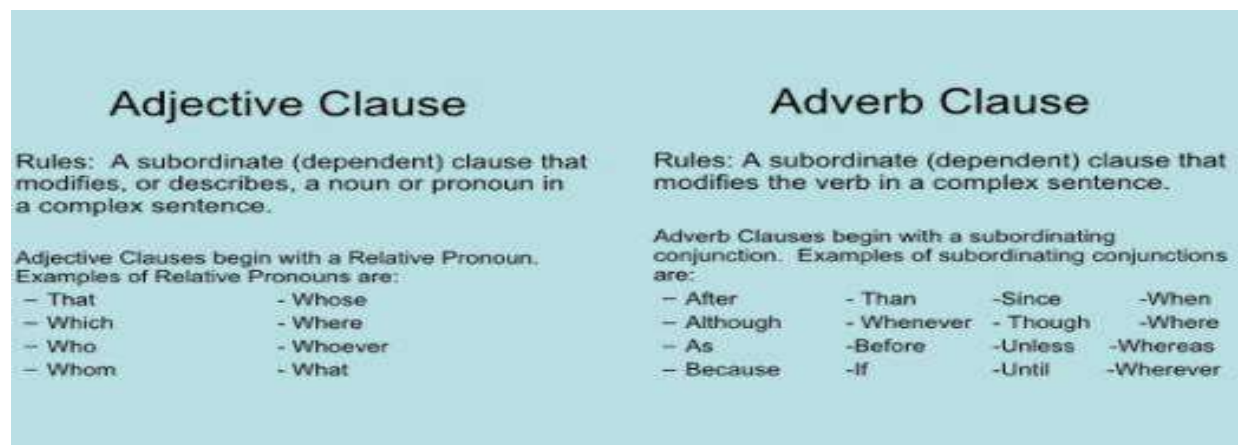


Figure 1: The differences between adjective and adverb clauses

In the first group, the teacher frequently included some pre-planned words and expressions implying positive conditional stroke in her feedbacks such as “you did well or excellent” and “I am satisfied with your assignments” in each session in the group or in each learner’s PV. For the next group, the teacher frequently used some pre-planned words and expressions bearing negative conditional stroke in her feedbacks such as “you did not well, you can do it again” and “I am not satisfied with your assignments, so do it again”. Finally, for the last group, the teacher provided the learners with the feedbacks implying no emotional themes such as “it is not correct, pay more attention” or “it is correct think about the other one”. At the final session, another researcher-made grammar test including adjective and adverb clauses exercises was administered for three groups to examine the effect of using two strokes on the EFL learners’ L2 grammar learning after treatment fulfillment.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The first phase of data analysis is the pilot study of the motivation questionnaire. Because three independent variables are included in the study, to address the first two research questions of the study, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used. It is used to determine whether there are any differences among three groups after treatment implementation.

V. RESULTS

To address the first two research questions of the study, data collected through the posttest and pre-test and some statistical procedures were applied to the data. For this purpose, SPSS, version 19, was used. Firstly, the descriptive statistics for pretest were applied which were displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the three groups at the pretest of grammar

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
PVC	20	11.9000	1.51831	.33950	11.1894	12.6106	9.00	15.00
NVC	20	10.9500	2.11449	.47281	9.9604	11.9396	8.00	15.00
NS	20	11.4000	1.53554	.34336	10.6813	12.1187	8.00	14.00
Total	60	11.4167	1.75916	.22711	10.9622	11.8711	8.00	15.00

To evaluate whether there are any significant differences in learners' L2 grammar knowledge of three groups before treatment implementation and whether they are suitable for the study, the mean scores of the three groups at the pre-test were compared by the use of a one-way ANOVA. The F-observed value and p-value were 1.483 and .235, respectively. This amount of F-value at 2 and 57 degrees of freedom was lower than the critical value of F and p-value was higher than the significance level of .05 (see Table 2).

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA on the three groups at the pretest of grammar

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.033	2	4.517	1.483	.235
Within Groups	173.550	57	3.045		
Total	182.583	59			

According to table 2, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the three groups at the pre-test ($F(2, 57) = 1.483, p > .05$); therefore, these groups are suitable ones for this study. The result of the Levene's test of homogeneity of variance illustrates that the three groups have homogenous variance; it means that, there was not any significant differences among the variances of the three groups (see Table 3).

Table 3: Test of Homogeneity of Variances at pretest

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.235	2	57	.116

Based on the table 3, the results of the one-way ANOVA were reliable ($F(2, 57) = 1.483, p > .05$) The descriptive statistics for the three groups at the post-test are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the three Groups at the Post-Test.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
PVC	20	18.3000	1.38031n	.30865	17.6540	18.9460	15.00	20.00
NVC	20	14.1500	2.41214	.53937	13.0211	15.2789	10.00	19.00
NS	20	12.7500	1.48235	.33146	12.0562	13.4438	10.00	15.00
Total	60	15.0667	2.97371	.38390	14.2985	15.8349	10.00	20.00

The mean of PVC stroke group at the post-test is higher than the other two.

To evaluate whether the treatments led to the differences, the mean scores of the three groups at the post-test were compared by the application of a one-way ANOVA. The F-observed value and p-value were 50.383 and .000 respectively. This amount of F-value at 2 and 41 degrees of freedom was higher than the critical value of F, and p-value was lower than the significance level of .05 ($F(2, 57) = 50.383, p < .05$) (see Table 5):

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA on the three groups at the Post-Test.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	333.233	2	166.617	50.383	.000
Within Groups	188.500	57	3.307		
Total	521.733	59			

According to the results of table 5, it can be concluded that there are significant differences among the mean scores of the three groups on post-test.

The effect size, calculated via eta squared, was found to be .639, (see table 6).

Table 6: degree of association between the dependent (post-test scores) and independent (three types of stroke) variables

	Eta	Eta Squared
posttest * group	.799	.639

This table indicates the degree of association between the dependent (post-test scores) and independent (three types of stroke) variables, which is a large size (Dornyei, 2007).

The Levene's test of homogeneity of variance reveals that the three groups possessed homogenous variance ($F(2, 57) = 50.383, p > .05$). (See table 7)

Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variances at posttest

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.473	2	57	.038

Thus, the results of the one-way ANOVA are reliable. It means that there were no significant differences among the variances of the three groups.

The result of one-way ANOVA shows that there are differences among the means of three groups, but their exact places were not determined. To indicate the precise place of differences, a post hoc comparison of the means was conducted. (See Table 8).

Table 8: Bonferroni test for the comparison of posttest means of the three groups

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PVC	NVC	4.15000*	.57507	.000	2.7315	5.5685
	NS	5.55000*	.57507	.000	4.1315	6.9685
NVC	PVC	-4.15000*	.57507	.000	-5.5685	-2.7315
	NS	1.40000	.57507	.044	-.0185	2.8185
NS	PVC	-5.55000*	.57507	.000	-6.9685	-4.1315
	NVC	-1.40000	.57507	.044	-2.8185	.0185

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Therefore, Bonferroni test was applied and the results displays that there were significant differences among all three groups of PVC, NVC and NS at the level of 0.05.

To find the effect of three types of stroke on the learner's L2 grammar learning more precisely, the difference of scores at pre-test and post-test was calculated (gain scores) and the related statistical analyses were conducted for them. The descriptive statistics for gain scores for the three groups are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Groups in Grammar at the Gain Scores.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
PVC	20	6.4000	2.03651	.45538	5.4469	7.3531	2.00	9.00
NVC	20	3.2000	1.39925	.31288	2.5451	3.8549	1.00	5.00
NS	20	1.3500	.87509	.19568	.9404	1.7596	.00	4.00
Total	60	3.6500	2.57646	.33262	2.9844	4.3156	.00	9.00

The mean of PVC group at the gain scores is higher than the other two.

To compare the mean scores differences at gain scores, a one-way ANOVA was applied. The F-observed value and p-value were 57.00 and .000, respectively. This amount of F-value at 2 and 57 degrees of freedom was higher than the critical value of F and p-value was lower than the significance level of .05 ($F(2, 57) = 57.00, p < .05$) (see Table 10).

Table 10: One-way ANOVA on the three groups at gain scores.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	261.100	2	130.550	57.000	.000
Within Groups	130.550	57	2.290		
Total	391.650	59			

According to table 10, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the gain scores for the three groups ($F(2, 57) = 57.00, p < .05$).

The effect size, calculated via eta squared, was found to be 0.667, (see table 11).

Table 11: degree of association between the dependent (gain scores) and independent (three types of stroke) variables

	Eta	Eta Squared
gainscore * group	.816	.667

This effect size determines the degree of association between the dependent (gain score) and independent (three types of stroke) variables, which is a large size (Dornyei, 2007).

The Levene's test of homogeneity of variance showed that the three groups had homogenous variance (See table 12).

Table 12: Test of Homogeneity of Variances at gain scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.049	2	57	.002

Therefore, the results of the one-way ANOVA are reliable. The F-value of 57.00 at 2 and 57 degrees of freedom was lower than the critical value. As a result, the underlying assumption of one-way ANOVA was fulfilled, namely, there was no significant difference among the variances of three groups ($F(2, 57) = 57.00, p > .05$).

To recognize the place of differences, Bonferroni test was applied (see Table 13).

Table 13: Bonferroni test for the comparison of gain scores means of the three groups

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PVC	NVC	3.20000*	.47858	.000	2.0195	4.3805
	NS	5.05000*	.47858	.000	3.8695	6.2305
NVC	PVC	-3.20000*	.47858	.000	-4.3805	-2.0195
	NS	1.85000*	.47858	.001	.6695	3.0305
NS	PVC	-5.05000*	.47858	.000	-6.2305	-3.8695
	NVC	-1.85000*	.47858	.001	-3.0305	-.6695

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicate that, at the level of 0.05, there were significant differences among all three groups of PVC, NVC and NS.

The means of group 1, group 2 and group 3 are displayed in the figure 2 below.

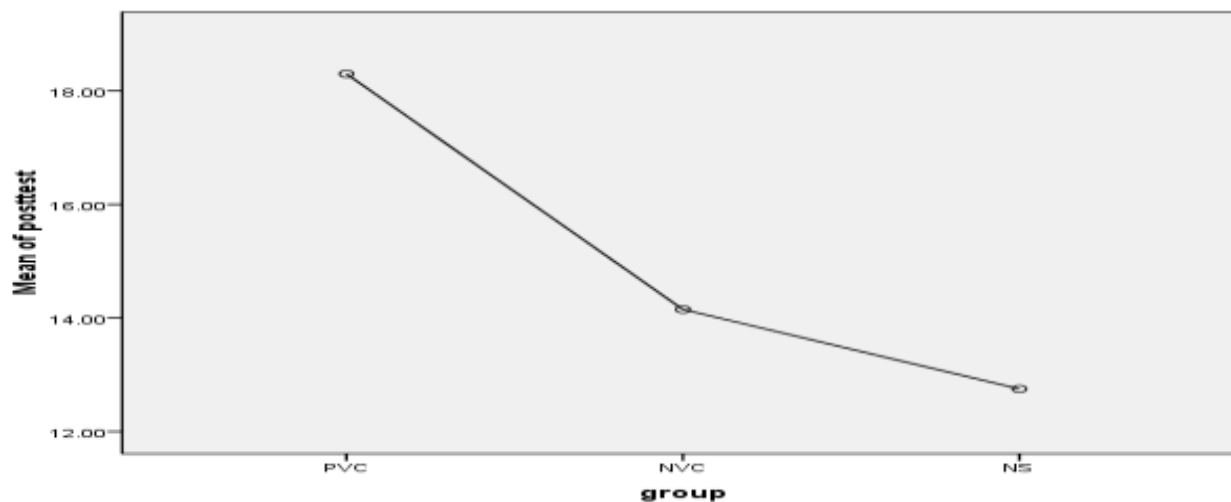


Figure 2: The means of group 1, group 2 and group 3

As the figure 2 indicates, the mean of PVC group is higher than the other two. This result can also be concluded from table 4, 8, 9, and 13. We can conclude that PVC strokes are significantly the most advantageous ones and the NS is the least advantageous or may be even disadvantageous one in developing learner's L2 grammar learning.

According to the interviews' results, the EFL learners believed that the PVC strokes can affect their learning positively. They did not like NVC strokes and NS but they prefer NVC ones in comparison with no strokes. Based on their ideas, receiving no strokes from the teacher can be meant being ignored by her.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Considering emotional factors of teacher-learner interaction in educational settings can affect the quality of learning and teaching process (Kato, Tscholl and Kunnen; 2018; Aldridge and Fraser, 2016). According to Hall and Walsh (2002), the teacher-learner interaction quality in the language learning contexts is regarded as a basic factor in efficacious teaching and learning process. Teacher-learner interaction can be evaluated through Transactional Analysis (TA) which was proposed by Eric Berne (1958). One of the main concepts in the domain of TA which has an important role in teacher-learner interactions is the concept of stroke. Stroke can be any action relating to the confirmation of other's existence (Shirai, 2006). According to Pishghadam, Zabihi, and Shayesteh (2015), education attempts to make a learner more autonomous within the humanistic

and psychological framework considering his psychological aspects. Pishghadam, Zabihi, and Kermanshahi (2012) believe that a language teacher should be familiar with the learners' psychological aspects to determine their needs for promoting the general life's quality. Recently, rapid development of technology has involved education domain, so the psychological factors of education have been affected as well. Therefore, in this study it was attempted to investigate the effect of the online English teachers' stroking behaviors on EFL learners' L2 grammar learning through online learning of L2 grammar.

The results of the study revealed that the online English teacher's application of positive verbal conditional stroke and negative verbal conditional strokes have the significance effects on the learners' online L2 grammar learning. Regarding the findings, online English teacher's application of positive verbal conditional strokes are significantly more effective than the negative conditional strokes; however, the negative ones were more effective than no stroke. The interviews' results revealed that the EFL learners prefer positive verbal conditional strokes among the three ones and they assume that this type of stroke can affect their learning process positively. They did not like both negative verbal conditional stroke and lack of stroke but they prefer the negative verbal conditional ones in comparison with no strokes because they think that receiving no strokes from the teacher means not being seen by her.

Regarding the domain of this study, some weak points should be paid attention. Some limitations to using strokes are involved in this study; for example, because of some distance learning restrictions, the researcher intends to investigate merely the effect of positive verbal conditional stroke, negative verbal conditional strokes and lack of stroke in this study. We should be careful in generalizing the results of this study because a convenience sampling was used for the study. Today, there are various kinds of online social networks among which the researcher of this study chooses telegram due to its popularity among Iranian people. Considering the psychological differences between male and female learners, the researchers intend to select the female participants. Small sample, age, personal variable, limited educational context, and family background can be other kinds of problems with which the researcher may face. Each of these variables can raise new questions for further researches in the same field in the future.

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