

# Probing Language Teachers' Stroking and Credibility in Relation to Their Success in Class

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*Given the significance of teacher success in the adequacy of teaching and learning, the present study aims to examine the role of two factors, namely teacher stroking (teacher attention) and teacher credibility in relation to teacher success. To do so, a total of 301 English as a foreign language (EFL) learners completed three survey instruments: the Student Stroke Scale, the Source Credibility Scale, and the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), first, the construct validity of the Source Credibility Scale was substantiated, and then the associations among all three scales were examined. The results of CFA and correlation analyses revealed that teacher effectiveness correlated significantly and positively with both the components of stroke and that of teacher credibility. We conclude with a discussion of the results and implications for teaching and learning.*

*Compte tenu de la signification de la réussite des enseignants dans l'efficacité de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage, la présente étude a comme objectif d'examiner le rôle que jouent deux facteurs, l'encadrement personnalisé par l'enseignant et la crédibilité des enseignants. Nos données proviennent de trois outils de sondage (échelle d'encadrement personnalisé; échelle de crédibilité de la source; questionnaire sur les caractéristiques des enseignants efficaces) auprès de 301 étudiants d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE). Une analyse factorielle confirmatoire a établi la validité conceptuelle et les liens entre les trois échelles ont ensuite été étudiés. Les résultats de l'analyse factorielle confirmatoire et des analyses de corrélation ont révélé une corrélation significative et positive entre l'efficacité des enseignants d'une part et l'encadrement personnalisé et la crédibilité d'autre part. Nous concluons par une discussion des résultats et la présentation de leur impact sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage.*

Teachers are regarded as the most vital component of any system of education; to wit, the adequacy of education depends on the effectiveness of the teachers in that educational system (Pishghadam, Baghaei, & Shahriari Ahmadi, 2011). According to Wenglinsky (2000), teachers' effectiveness is the most important factor in determining learners' success. In the same vein, Galluzzo (2005) considered teacher quality to be the strongest predictor of students' achievement. Due to such views on the significant role of teachers in students' achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996), several studies have focused on the characteristics of a successful teacher (e.g., Elizabeth, May, & Chee, 2008; Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) proposed a classification of the characteristics of effective teachers, which include being caring and having adequate knowledge of the subject matter (Demmon-Berger, 1986). These two factors are closely related to the construct of teacher credibility, defined by McCroskey (1998) as “the attitude of a receiver which references the degree to which a source is seen to be believable” (p. 80). Teachers who are perceived as more believable by their students tend to be more influential than those who are perceived as less believable (Finn et al., 2009). Given its significance, teacher credibility has been the focal point in a large number of research studies undertaken to explore the factors contributing to its development (e.g., Galloway, 1977; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009; Morris, Gorham, Cohen, & Huffman, 1996).

Among the other features of effective teachers as proposed by the AASA is their accessibility to students outside of class. Besides their accessibility, other characteristics of a successful teacher have been identified by Elizabeth et al. (2008) and Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) which include engaging all learners in class activities and paying attention to all students respectively. These elements of effective teaching are linked to the concept of stroke. Learners need to be recognized by the teacher and receive the teacher’s attention in order to “satisfy [their] emotional need” (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014, p. 1). Even though initiatives have been taken to revitalize this relatively under-researched concept, much more needs to be done in this area.

A review of the literature reveals that despite a large number of studies exploring the various factors that may be associated with teacher success, no systematic empirical study has focused on the roles of teachers’ stroking and credibility in their perceived success. Therefore, the current study intends to fill this gap by exploring English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers’ stroking and their credibility in order to shed more light on these factors and their contribution to the success of teachers in general, and EFL teachers in particular.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Teacher Stroking**

One of the factors contributing to students’ learning in an educational setting is a positive relationship between teachers and their students (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014). Such a relationship not only helps students build the necessary interpersonal skills, lessen their anxiety, and augment their motivation, but also causes them to feel engaged in the learning process (Da Luz, 2015; Khajavy, 2012; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Pierson, 2003).

Berne’s Transactional Analysis (TA), which refers to “a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change” (Stewart & Joines, 1987, p. 3), can provide useful insight into building positive teacher-student relationships. In educational arenas, TA can be effective in helping teachers and learners to communicate more clearly and productively (Stewart & Joines, 1987). One of the components of the TA approach is the concept of stroke (Berne, 1988). Stewart and Joines (1987, p. 72) defined stroke as “a unit of recognition,” meaning that strokes show us that our existence as an individual has been recognized by others. We are all strokable and need strokes; thus, in case of under-stroking or lack of stroking, we feel deprived, which explains Berne’s (1988) use of the term “recognition-hunger” for this concept. To satisfy this hunger, it has been postulated that “any kind of stroke is better than no stroke at all” (Stewart & Joines, 1987, p. 73). Accordingly, if insufficient positive

strokes are received to fulfill the hunger for stroking, negative strokes are then sought. In addition to positive and negative strokes, Stewart and Joines (1987) identified four other types: verbal versus non-verbal (e.g., nodding or shaking hands) and conditional (what one does) versus unconditional (what one is) strokes.

In a classroom setting, each individual needs to be stroked and paid attention to (Pishghadam & Ghahari, 2012). In fact, stroking is an important element of teacher care (Pishghadam, Naji Meidani, & Khajavy, 2015); nevertheless, a review of the literature reveals that scholars have paid limited attention to stroke in classroom settings. In one study, Pishghadam and Khajavi (2014) designed and validated a questionnaire of stroke for educational purposes and identified four factors underlying this concept which they labeled as verbal (e.g., naming), non-verbal (e.g., smiling), valuing (showing whether or not the teacher values his or her students), and classroom activities (involving the students in class activities and tasks). The authors further reported a positive relationship between stroke and motivation, which supports the significance of stroke rich environments in educational settings (Pishghadam & Khajavi, 2014).

### **Teacher Credibility**

The concept of credibility dates back to Aristotle's division of the means of persuasion into three categories, namely Ethos (the source's credibility), Pathos (the emotional or motivational appeals), and Logos (the logic used to support a claim), which he believed have the capacity to influence the receiver of a message (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1996). In the same vein, a number of researchers (e.g., Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Tormala, Briñol, & Petty, 2006) have shown that being perceived as credible plays a crucial role in the efficiency of dissuasion or persuasion of the audience.

To apply this to the realm of education, any classroom can be looked at as a persuasive context in which the source, the teacher, has the capacity to persuade the audience, the students (Gray, Anderman, & O'Connell, 2011). Accordingly, McCroskey (1998) defined teacher credibility as "the attitude of a receiver which references the degree to which a source is seen to be believable" (p. 80). The word *attitude* implies that credibility is a concept that can be interpreted differently by different students; thus, making it a matter of subjective perception (Cooper & Simonds, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Although a matter of attitude, credibility has been systematically investigated to establish a set of objective criteria used to assign to a teacher.

McCroskey, Holdridge, and Toomb (1974), for instance, developed a measure of teacher credibility and identified five underlying dimensions: competence, extroversion, character, composure, and sociability. In 1981, McCroskey and Young revised the construct of teacher credibility, maintaining only the two dimensions of competence and character. Finally, in 1997, McCroskey and Teven refined the measure of credibility and declared competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill as the three dimensions of teacher credibility.

A review of the literature reveals that in addition to the factors mentioned above, perceived teacher credibility can be accounted for by a host of many other factors. For instance, congruence between a teacher's verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Galloway, 1977), the way a teacher is dressed (Morris, Gorham, Cohen, & Huffman, 1996), the layout of a teacher's office (Teven & Comadena, 1996), and the use of affinity-seeking techniques (Bell & Daly, 1984). More recent studies have also shed light on the factors that can predict teacher credibility. For

example, the instructor's marginalized status such as being of a particular sex, race, or ethnicity (Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002), providing supplemental instructional technology such as course websites (Witt, 2004), teaching philosophy (Brann, Edwards, & Myers, 2005), misbehaviors (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006), and immediacy behavior such as self-disclosure (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009), all influence how teachers are perceived by their students in terms of credibility.

In addition to the research studies exploring teacher characteristics that may account for perceived credibility, a large number of researchers have focused on the effects of this construct on the learners. As an example, students who perceive their teacher as credible have been found to have higher levels of state motivation (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). Moreover, teacher credibility has been reported to be positively linked to students' contribution to class discussions, learning, and academic performance (Cooper & Simonds, 1999; Deluchi & Pelowski, 2000; Myers, 2004; Teven & McCrosky, 1997), level of student satisfaction (Teven & Herring, 2005), positive evaluation of the teacher and the course in general (Kearney, 1994; Teven & McCroskey, 1997), respecting instructors and recommending them to their friends (Martinez-Egger, & Powers, 2002; Nadler & Nadler, 2001), and communication with the instructors both in and out of the classroom (Myers, 2004).

## **Teacher Success**

Other than the significant concepts of teacher stroke and teacher credibility, the concept of teacher success is also of paramount significance due to the pivotal role teachers play in the learner educational process. In fact, certain teachers influence some students to such a great extent that they regard their teachers as role models (Pishghadam & Saboori, 2013). Wenglinsky (2000) regarded teacher effectiveness, which is quite similar to teacher success (Elizabeth et al., 2008), as the most important factor in determining learners' success. Based on this rationale, a large number of researchers and educators (e.g., Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009) have sought to explore the answer to the question, "What makes a teacher successful?"

The AASA categorized attributes of effective teachers into two classes: management and instructional techniques, and personal characteristics (Demmon-Berger, 1986). Some of the features of effective teachers include teachers being good managers, having high expectations of students and themselves, believing in their own efficacy, being caring, flexible and imaginative, having a strong grasp of the subject matter, being accessible to students outside of class, and adjusting their teaching to student needs (Demmon-Berger, 1986).

Tamblyn (2000) identified some features of successful teachers as creativity, skill, flexibility, warmth, and a sense of humor. Kyriakides, Campbell, and Christofidou (2002) asserted that effective teachers are characterized by having adequate knowledge of the subject matter, providing sufficient instruction, managing the classroom environment and providing good classroom climate, using time and instructional materials effectively, and providing the learners with practice opportunities.

In a similar attempt to identify characteristics of effective teachers, Hiebert, Morris, Berk, and Jansen (2007) conducted a study and found successful teachers are those who specify learning goals for students, evaluate if the goals are attained, hypothesize the effects of teaching on students' learning, and reflect to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Elizabeth et al. (2008) proposed a model of teacher success in Hong Kong. The findings revealed that effective teachers were creative, skillful, and fair in both assessment and grading. Furthermore, engaging

learners, enhancing critical thinking, and providing students with proper feedback were among other characteristics of effective teachers.

Teacher success has also been found to be associated with factors such as multiple intelligences (Pishghadam & Moafian, 2008), the application of Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques (Pishghadam, Shayesteh, & Shapoori, 2011), critical thinking (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010), and the ability and skill of the teacher in employing instructional materials, planning, questioning, and assessing and evaluating (Porter & Brophy, 1988). Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) developed and validated a teacher success questionnaire aimed at identifying the characteristics of successful English language teachers. They reported 12 factors leading to teacher success (e.g., interpersonal relationships and attention to all, inter alia).

Conversely, a number of other studies have examined factors that interfere with teacher success. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) and Korthagen (2004), for example, pointed out some elements of working condition and the environment, such as school facilities, heavy teaching loads, and unsupportive administrators as obstacles to teacher success.

Despite all the studies conducted on factors contributing to teacher success and teacher credibility, and to a lesser degree on stroke, to our best knowledge, no systematic research has focused on these three factors simultaneously. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the relationship between EFL teachers' stroke, credibility, and success and to determine any probable associations or predictive roles between these factors. Our study addresses the following questions:

1. Are there any significant relationships between teacher stroke and credibility subscales and teacher success?
2. Do teachers' stroking and credibility significantly affect their success?

## Method

### Participants

The participants in the present study were 301 Iranian EFL learners whose age ranged between 12 and 48 years ( $M = 18.3$ ,  $SD = 5.7$ ). The sample included 107 men and 183 women. Eleven of the participants did not specify their gender. All of the participants were studying English at various private language institutes in Mashhad and Kerman, two cities in Iran. With respect to their level of proficiency, there were 122 elementary, 109 intermediate, and 70 advanced English learners. Participants were chosen based on their willingness to take part in the study.

### Instruments

To garner the required information, three Persian questionnaires were applied: the Student Stroke Scale (SSS), the Source Credibility Scale (SCS), and the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ).

**Student Stroke Scale (SSS).** To measure the stroke that students receive in the classroom the Student Stroke Scale, designed and validated by Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014), was utilized. This scale consists of four underlying factors, namely verbal stroke (6 items: 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 17), non-verbal stroke (4 items: 1, 2, 3, 4), valuing (4 items: 9, 10, 11, 12), and classroom

activities (4 items: 14, 15, 16, 18). The scale is a 5-point Likert-type in which items range from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*); therefore, the participants' scores can range between 18 and 90. The reliability of the original scale was reported to be 0.88. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also calculated for the present study which ranged from .79 to .88 (see Appendix A).

**Source Credibility Scale (SCS).** In order to measure the participants' perceptions of their teachers' credibility, the Source Credibility Scale developed by Teven and McCroskey (1997) was employed. The scale consists of three subscales, namely competence (items 1, 2, 7, 11, 13, 16), goodwill (items 3, 5, 8, 9, 15, 18), and trustworthiness (items 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 17) which add up to 18, 7-point bipolar items ranging from 7 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Based on this scale, the score of teachers' credibility as perceived by their students may vary between 18 and 126. The reliability of the underlying subscales has been reported as 0.89, 0.93, and 0.83 respectively (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1996). Since the scale was in English, for this study it was translated into Persian and then it was validated. The reliability coefficient of the scale for the present study ranged from .81 to .91 (see Appendix B).

**Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ).** Developed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009), the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire was used to measure the students' assessment of their teacher's success. The CSTQ comprises 12 factors in the form of 47, 5-point Likert-type items ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*); thus, the participants may obtain a score between 47 and 235. The constructs underlying this questionnaire are labeled as teaching accountability (items 13, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 34), interpersonal relationships (items 7, 3, 8, 9, 4, 5, 33), attention to all (items 38, 40, 39, 41, 25), examination (items 19, 20, 36), commitment (items 1, 2, 47), learning boosters (items 27, 42, 43, 46, 10, 35), creating a sense of competence (items 15, 16, 17, 18), teaching boosters (items 6, 11, 12, 14), physical and emotional acceptance (items 28, 29), empathy (items 44, 45), class attendance (items 31, 32), and dynamism (items 24, 37). While the reported reliability of the CSTQ has been 0.94, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the present study was .89 which assures a good reliability estimate (see Appendix A).

## Procedure

To gather the data, the three questionnaire instruments, that is, the SSS, the SCS, and the CSTQ, were distributed among students. Based on the rationale that the students' first language was Persian, the questionnaires were administered in Persian to improve the response rate. The researchers explained the purpose of the study and assured the students that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. Participation was voluntary and students were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaire. The questionnaires took between 15-20 minutes to complete.

## Data Analysis

For the data analysis, in order to validate the SCS, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run using AMOS version 20. To investigate the associations between teacher effectiveness, stroke, teacher credibility, and their underlying components, SPSS version 20 was used. Finally, to determine the role of stroke and teacher credibility in teacher effectiveness, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized.

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In CFA, the observed model is compared to a hypothesized model to test if the sample data fit the proposed measurement model (see Figure 1).

The criteria for the probable fitness include various goodness of fit indices, in other words,  $\chi^2/df$  (chi-square divided by degree of freedom), GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index), IFI (Incremental Fit Index), and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index). An acceptable fit index is a requisite for validity (Levine, 2005). For the purpose of the present study,  $\chi^2/df$ , TLI, and RMSEA were used. According to Kaplan (2009), a model is of good fit if  $\chi^2/df < 3$ , TLI  $> .90$ , and RMSEA  $< .08$ ; thus, as Table 1 delineates, the indices for the present model are within the acceptable range.

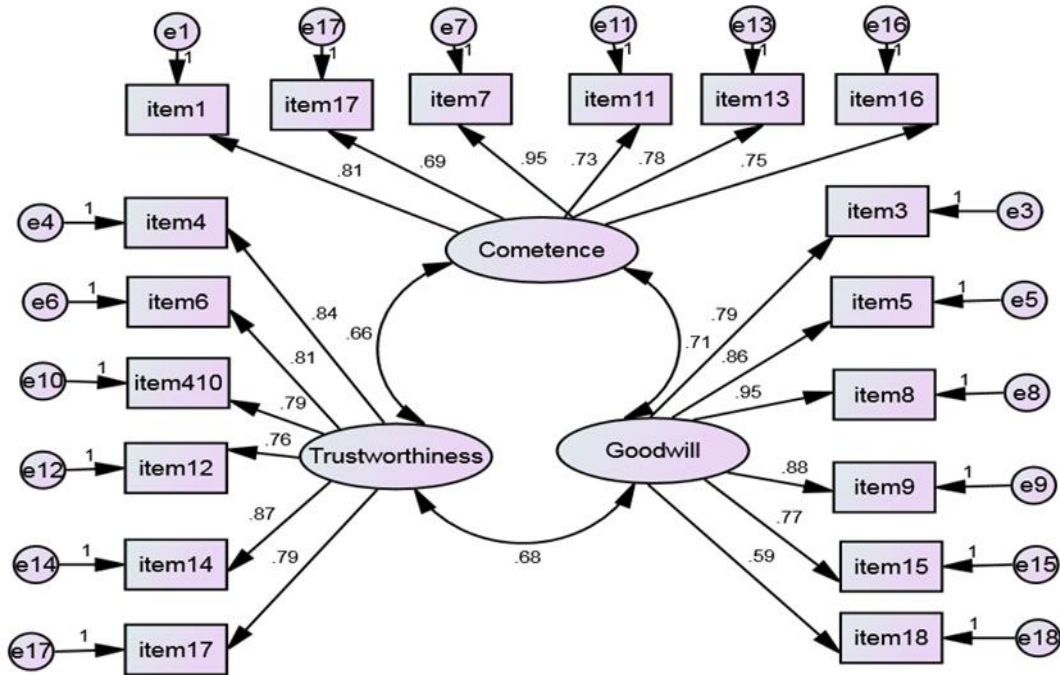


Figure 1. The Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 1

#### Goodness of Fit Indices

	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable Range		< 3		> .90		< .08
Teacher credibility	10.21	2.13	.91	.91	.92	.05

## Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2 portrays the descriptive statistics and the correlations between the constructs underlying the variables used in this study, namely stroke, teacher credibility, and teacher success.

As can be seen in Table 2, teacher effectiveness correlated significantly and positively with the verbal component of stroke and is slightly higher ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ) than the other components. The coefficient of correlation between teacher effectiveness and class activities was found to be  $r = .51 (p < .01)$ , teacher effectiveness and non-verbal stroke was  $r = .49 (p < .01)$ , and teacher effectiveness and valuing was  $r = .38 (p < .01)$ . Also, the analysis of the data revealed a significant positive correlation between teacher effectiveness and the sub-scales of teacher credibility. In this regard, the correlation coefficient of perceived competence and teacher effectiveness was slightly higher ( $r = .66, p < .01$ ) in comparison with the other sub-components, namely good will ( $r = .49, p < .01$ ) and trustworthiness ( $r = .52, p < .01$ ). Finally, a closer look at the coefficients presented in Table 2 reveals that the correlation between teacher effectiveness and credibility is higher than that of teacher effectiveness and stroking.

## Structural Model of Teacher Effectiveness

In order to have a clearer understanding of the roles of stroke and credibility in teacher effectiveness, SEM was utilized. Figure 2 presents a model of the relationships between English language teachers' stroking, credibility, and their effectiveness. Based on the model, teacher credibility and stroking, together with their sub-components, can predict teacher effectiveness.

As can be seen in Figure 2, almost 26 % of the variation in teacher effectiveness is accounted for by stroke ( $\beta = .51$ ), and 43% is explained by teacher credibility ( $\beta = .66$ ). So, perceived teacher credibility explains the higher variation in teacher effectiveness than teacher stroking.

Also, among the observed scores for the four sub-constructs of stroke, the highest variance is evident in verbal stroking ( $\beta = .89$ ). In other words, the subscales of stroke are responsible for the variance in teacher effectiveness:  $\beta = .82$  for class activities,  $\beta = .77$  for non-verbal stroke, and  $\beta = .72$  for valuing.

Table 2

### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Verbal	19.09(3.38)	1							
2. Non-verbal	12.79(2.28)	.61**	1						
3. Valuing	10.92(3.63)	.50**	.49**	1					
4. Class activities	15.54(3.71)	.62**	.71**	.68**	1				
5. Competence	33.29(6.73)	.24**	.21**	.19*	.23**	1			
6. Good will	32.46(5.69)	.33**	.31**	.29**	.27**	.55**	1		
7. Trustworthiness	34.26(6.23)	.27**	.18*	.21**	.22**	.66**	.57**	1	
8. Teacher Effectiveness	189.25(19.24)	.53**	.49**	.38**	.51**	.66**	.49**	.52**	1

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$



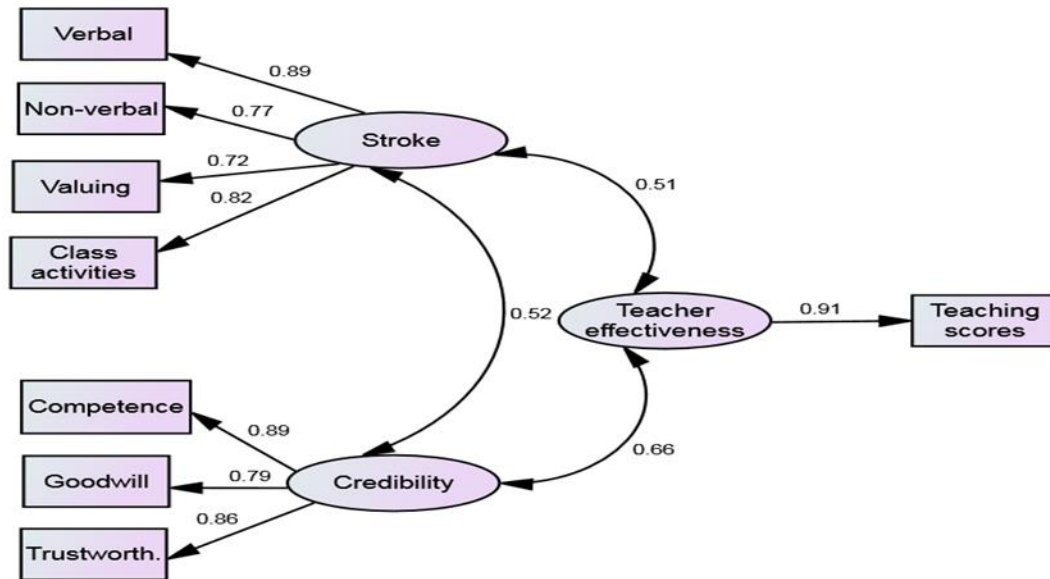


Figure 2. Proposed Model of Teacher Credibility and Teacher Stroking as Predictors of Teacher Effectiveness

Table 3

*Goodness of Fit Indices*

	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable Range		< 3		> .90		< .08
Model	11.22	2.09	.90	.92	.921	.06

With regard to the subscales for credibility, competence accounts for the variance in teacher effectiveness to a greater degree ( $\beta = .89$ ) than trustworthiness ( $\beta = .85$ ) or goodwill ( $\beta = .79$ ).

In order to find out whether the model was adequate with respect to the data set in this study, the goodness of fit indices presented in Table 3 can be used as the yardstick.

As shown in Table 3, for the present model, chi-square divided by degree of freedom is 2.09, Tucker-Lewis Index is .92, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation equals .06. The presented statistics meet the cut-off points as discussed by Kaplan (2009), i.e.  $\chi^2/df < 3$ ,  $TLI > .90$ , and  $RMSEA < .08$ , and ratify the fitness of the model with the data in this study.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the associations between EFL teachers' stroking, teacher credibility, and teacher success, and more specifically, to examine the roles of teacher stroking and teacher credibility in teacher effectiveness and to determine their

predictive power in the success of teachers as perceived by their students.

To achieve these aims, initially the SCS was validated by running CFA. Based on a review of the literature, the researchers identified a hypothesized model and scrutinized the factorial validity of the model with reference to the data collected from this sample. To substantiate the validity of the model, goodness-of-fit indices were utilized (Kline, 2011) to verify the plausibility of the model. All of the observed factors were consistent with factors of the SCS (Teven & McCroskey, 1997).

The results of correlational analyses point to a significantly positive correlation between stroke and teacher effectiveness, on the one hand, and teacher credibility and teacher effectiveness on the other hand. What this means is that strokees (those who receive strokes, i.e., students), who are more frequently addressed by the stokers (those who give strokes, i.e., teachers), are more inclined to believe that their teachers are successful in comparison to teachers whose rate of strokability is low. In addition, the results indicate that teachers who are perceived as more credible also tend to be regarded as more effective by their students than their counterparts with a less degree of credibility. Moreover, from among the four factors of stroke, verbal stroke and valuing showed the highest and the lowest correlations with teacher effectiveness respectively. In addition, the competence component of credibility correlated with teacher effectiveness more than goodwill or trustworthiness. On the whole, teacher effectiveness was found to be more correlated to teacher credibility than teacher stroking.

The relationship between stroke and teacher effectiveness may be explained by the need to appease each individual student's hunger for recognition. To learners, a good teacher who is a stroker meets that need. Such a teacher pays attention to learners, values their characters, respects their opinions, devotes time to help learners with their problems, and is willing to build rapport, all of which are the characteristics of a successful teacher (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009).

The relationship between credibility and teacher effectiveness is unsurprising as students are highly perceptive to noticing which teacher is likely to make a difference to their learning. When a teacher proves to be credible by reassuring and building confidence in the students, students' trust and respect also builds for the teacher. Students put more effort to learn; and hence, assess the teacher as effective. The results of this study support the findings of other researchers such as Teven and McCroskey (1997) who asserted that upon perceiving teachers as credible, their students evaluated them more positively and advised their friends to take courses with such teachers (Nadler & Nadler, 2001).

With regards to the second aim this study, we discovered the predictive role of stroke and teacher credibility in teacher effectiveness through SEM analysis. The results reveal that the degree to which teachers stroke their students impacts their level of success as assessed by the students. To put it differently, stokers who supply more strokes are expected to be more effective than those giving fewer ones. One probable line of explanation can be based on the rationale that a sign of effective teaching is learners' level of achievement (Good, 1979). Since providing stroke is associated with increased learner motivation (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014), it can be inferred that if the teacher pays attention to all students, involves them in class discussions, compliments their achievements in the presence of others, as stroke instances, the strokees become more motivated, put more effort into their learning, and as a result, their achievement level increases.

Moreover, teacher effectiveness was also positively associated with teachers' credibility. In other words, teachers' perceived credibility plays a significant role in their level of success as

evaluated by their students. This result can be explained through considering the classroom as a persuasive context in which the teacher has the capacity to persuade the students (Gray et al., 2011). Being perceived as credible plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of persuasion (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Tormala et al., 2006), which in the educational contexts refers to the effectiveness of teaching. To put it differently, students are likely to listen more attentively to a teacher who they believe is competent, dependable, caring, and understanding.

A similar finding was reported by Finn et al. (2009) who declared teacher credibility as one of the key factors leading to instructor effectiveness. Also, according to the American Association of School Administrators, being caring (goodwill) and having a strong command of the subject matter (competence), as components of credibility dimensions, lead to teacher effectiveness (Demmon-Berger, 1986). Teven and McCroskey (1997) further support these findings and assert that teacher credibility is positively linked to students' positive evaluation of the teacher and the course in general.

The present study, when examining the subscales of stroke—verbal stroke, class activities, non-verbal stroke, and valuing—revealed a variance in teacher effectiveness from the highest to the lowest degrees respectively. To put it in simple terms, stroking the students verbally plays a more significant role in teachers' success as perceived by their students, that is, verbal strokes are more likely to be noticed by the students than valuing. Students, especially younger students, are particularly perceptive to their teacher's verbal behaviors such as naming, complimenting, or even scolding, while valuing strokes such as using the students' scientific knowledge may not be as vital to them.

In addition, it was found that teachers' competence accounts for their effectiveness more than their trustworthiness or goodwill. One possible explanation may be that due to the centralized system of education in Iran, students' primary learning goal is to successfully pass the exams, specifically the high-stakes university entrance exam. As a result, they expect their teacher- in this case the English language teacher- to simply transmit knowledge to them; therefore, the teacher's personal and interpersonal characteristics are not that important to them. This finding is corroborated by Gadzella (1971), Kyriakides et al. (2002), and Celik (2011) who agree that command of the subject matter is one of the most prominent characteristics of a successful teacher.

The results of this study can be informative for language teachers. As put forward by Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014), paying attention to students and asking them to take part in the discussions and classroom activities, not only helps to augment the students' level of motivation, but also, as revealed by the findings of the present study, plays an important role in the teachers' effectiveness (Wenglinsky, 2000). Therefore, teachers are recommended to attempt to provide a stroke rich environment for their students and to be aware of the negative effects of under-stroking on their own success.

Furthermore, teachers should do their best to be perceived as credible by their students in order to be more effective and successful in their profession. A teacher should act in such a way as to be regarded as a subject matter expert who cares about and understands the students; hence, students can trust the teacher. Future research should examine the role that various factors (e.g., feedback type) may play in teachers' perceived credibility. The results of this study can also be of interest to teacher educators. Teacher training courses should address the concepts of stroke and credibility and their importance to the student, as well as the value of teachers' attention, to help the teachers increase their effectiveness.

This study was conducted in the context of private language institutes. So, future studies can

probe the variables in this study in other contexts, including public schools or universities, to explore any probable changes in the results. Furthermore, the data sources in this study were English language learners in two cities in Iran which cannot be representative of all EFL learners. Thus, any generalization of the findings should be made cautiously. Moreover, the data about the teachers was presented from the vantage point of their students. Further studies might utilize teachers' reports about themselves or teacher observation in order to triangulate the data. It is suggested that future research take into consideration teachers' individual differences such as gender, or the teachers' years of experience.

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**Appendix A: Sample Items of the Student Stroke Scale:**

Valuing: Teacher devotes enough time to me in the classroom.

Class activities: Teacher pays attention to my homework.

Verbal: Teacher knows my name.

Non-verbal: Teacher smiles at me in the classroom.



**Appendix B: Sample Items of the Source Credibility Scale:**

Competence: Inexpert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Expert

Goodwill: Cares about me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't care about me

Trustworthiness: Honest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dishonest

**Appendix C: Sample Items of Characteristics of Successful Teachers  
Questionnaire:**

Teacher is dynamic and energetic.

Teacher is self-confident.

Teacher pays attention to every one of the students.

Teacher respects the students.

Teacher returns exam results on time.