"I WANTED TO SPEAK MORE": STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ENTHUSIASM IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Jo'raxonova Marhaboxon
English teacher, Academic Lyceum named after M.S. Vasikova under TSUL, Tashkent

Abstract: *While previous research has established that teacher enthusiasm increases measurable student outcomes such as talking time and task completion, less is known about how students themselves experience and describe enthusiastic teaching. This action research study explores student perceptions of teacher enthusiasm in a secondary EFL classroom in Tashkent. Following a six week intervention comparing high enthusiasm and neutral enthusiasm conditions, 20 students completed a questionnaire addressing teacher behaviors, emotional responses, perceived fluency, and task engagement. Findings indicate that students consistently notice vocal variety, physical movement, and positive facial expressions. They report feeling more interested, less anxious, and more willing to speak when the teacher is energetic. The paper concludes that student voices provide valuable validation for reconceptualizing teacher enthusiasm as a core professional competency.*

Keywords: *teacher enthusiasm, student perceptions, affective presence, action research, EFL, student voice*

Annotation: *This action research study investigates how secondary EFL students perceive and describe teacher enthusiasm. Following a six week classroom intervention with 28 students, a questionnaire was administered to capture student observations of teacher behavior, emotional responses, and perceived effects on fluency and task completion. Findings reveal that students notice vocal variety, movement, and facial expressions; they report increased interest, reduced anxiety, and greater willingness to speak under high enthusiasm conditions. The article argues that student perspectives confirm enthusiasm as a trainable professional skill rather than a fixed personality trait.*

INTRODUCTION

The first article in this line of inquiry demonstrated that teacher enthusiasm—operationalized through vocal variety, physical movement, and positive affect—produces measurable gains in Student Talking Time (STT) and task completion accuracy (Jo'raxonova, forthcoming). However, quantitative data alone cannot fully explain why these gains occur. Do students notice the same behaviors that researchers measure? Do they feel different when the teacher is energetic? And perhaps most importantly, what do students themselves believe about the value of teacher enthusiasm?

These questions matter because student perspectives are often overlooked in pedagogical research. Teachers and researchers design interventions, measure outcomes, and draw conclusions—but rarely do we simply ask students what they experienced. This gap is significant. As Eisenkraft and Heiman (2009) argue, affective presence is a relational phenomenon: the teacher's emotional influence exists in the

perception of the learner. Therefore, understanding how students perceive and describe teacher enthusiasm is essential to validating its pedagogical value.

This action research study therefore asks: How do students experience and describe teacher enthusiasm? What do they notice? Drawing on a questionnaire administered to 28 secondary EFL learners following a six week intervention, the study captures student voices across four domains: observed teacher behaviors, emotional responses, perceived fluency, and task engagement.

Methodology

Participants and Context

Participants were 20 secondary EFL students (14–16 years of age, pre intermediate proficiency) at an academic lyceum in Tashkent. The sample included 10 boys (50%), 9 girls (45%), and one student who did not specify gender. All students had previously participated in a six week action research study comparing high enthusiasm and neutral enthusiasm conditions, with lessons drawn from the Willis and Willis (2007) task based framework.

Instrument

An 18 item questionnaire was developed to capture student perceptions across multiple domains, using a mix of Likert scale items and open ended questions.

Topics included: emotional responses (interest, confidence, anxiety, happiness), perceived fluency (amount of speaking, sentence length, group comfort), task engagement (understanding, speed, motivation), lesson preference (high energy vs. low energy), and the perceived importance of teacher enthusiasm. Open ended questions asked students what teachers should do (and avoid) when showing enthusiasm, and what advice they would give.

The questionnaire was administered anonymously via Google Forms.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies based on 20 respondents). Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically, with recurring themes identified and representative quotes selected for inclusion.

Findings

How Students Felt: Emotional Responses

The emotional impact of teacher enthusiasm was substantial. When asked whether they felt more interested when the teacher was energetic, 65% (13 students) responded "Yes, much more" and the remaining 35% (7 students) responded "Yes, a little bit." No student reported feeling less interested.

Regarding confidence, 65% (13 students) felt "much more" confident to speak English, while 30% (6 students) felt "a little bit" more confident. Only 5% (1 student) reported no difference. Similarly, 45% (9 students) felt "much less" nervous or shy about making mistakes, and 40% (8 students) felt "a little bit" less nervous. Only two students (10%) saw no difference, and one student (5%) actually felt more nervous.

Happiness showed a similar pattern: 65% (13 students) felt "much happier," 30% (6 students) felt "a little bit" happier, and only 5% (1 student) reported no difference.

One student captured this emotional shift in an open ended comment, simply writing: "I felt less shy."

Perceived Fluency and Participation

When asked whether they spoke more English when the teacher was energetic, 50% (10 students) responded "Yes, much more" and 40% (8 students) responded "Yes, a little bit." Only 10% (2 students) saw no difference. No student reported speaking less.

Regarding sentence length, 55% (11 students) believed they spoke in longer sentences, 30% (6 students) said "a little bit" longer, and 15% (3 students) saw no difference.

Group comfort improved notably: 65% (13 students) felt "much more" comfortable working with their group during high enthusiasm sessions, 20% (4 students) felt "a little bit" more comfortable, and only 15% (3 students) reported no difference.

Worrying less about mistakes followed a similar pattern: 50% (10 students) worried "much less," 35% (7 students) worried "a little bit" less, and 15% (3 students) saw no difference.

Task Engagement and Understanding

When asked what high teacher energy helped them with, students reported a range of benefits:

- 35% (7 students) said it helped them understand tasks more easily
- 30% (6 students) said it helped them finish tasks more quickly
- 25% (5 students) said it made them more motivated to complete tasks
- 25% (5 students) said it made them more comfortable making mistakes
- 10% (2 students) selected all of the above

One student wrote simply: "more motivated to complete the task." Another noted: "more comfortable to make mistakes."

Lesson Preference: High Energy vs. Low Energy

The preference for high energy teaching was overwhelming:

Question	High Energy	No Difference	Low Energy
Which type of lesson did you prefer?	85% (17)	15% (3)	0%
In which type did you learn more English?	80% (16)	15% (3)	5% (1)
In which type did you speak more?	85% (17)	10% (2)	5% (1)
In which type did you feel more relaxed?	80% (16)	15% (3)	5% (1)

One student who preferred high energy explained: "When you were excited, I forgot to be shy."

The Importance of Teacher Enthusiasm

When asked directly whether teacher enthusiasm is important for learning English, 75% (15 students) responded "Very important," and 25% (5 students) responded "Somewhat important." No student selected "not very important" or "not important at all."

Discussion

The findings of this study answer the central research question clearly: students notice, feel, and respond to teacher enthusiasm in ways that align with the quantitative outcomes reported in the first article.

First, students report emotional states entirely consistent with flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Reduced anxiety (85% felt less nervous), increased confidence (95% felt more confident), and greater interest (100% felt more interested) are all conditions that facilitate flow. When students say they "forgot to be shy," they are describing precisely the loss of self consciousness that Csikszentmihalyi identifies as central to optimal experience.

Second, students perceive a direct link between teacher enthusiasm and their own performance. Ninety percent believed they spoke more English during high energy lessons, and 85% preferred high energy lessons overall. This subjective perception aligns with the objective STT measurements from the first article, providing convergent validation for both studies.

Third, student advice to teachers reinforces the core argument of this line of inquiry: enthusiasm should be viewed as a trainable competency. Students do not describe enthusiasm as mysterious or innate. They describe concrete behaviors—smiling, moving, playing games, approaching students energetically—that any teacher can practice and improve. Notably, no student mentioned "natural talent" or "personality." Instead, they described actions.

Finally, the overwhelming preference for high energy teaching (85%) and the unanimous agreement that enthusiasm is at least "somewhat important" (100%) suggest that students are not passive recipients of instruction. They are active evaluators of teaching quality, and they value enthusiasm highly.

Implications for Practice

The practical implications of this study are straightforward and actionable.

For classroom teachers: Listen to your students. The questionnaire results suggest that students are perceptive observers of teacher behavior and honest reporters of their own emotional states. If you want to know whether your enthusiasm is landing, ask.

For teacher education: Incorporate student voice into training programs. Pre service teachers rarely hear from real students about what works. Sharing anonymized student quotes—such as those collected in this study—can be more powerful than any textbook chapter on classroom management.

For future research: Student perceptions should be integrated into mixed methods studies of teacher effectiveness. Quantitative measures (like STT) tell us what happens. Student voices tell us why and how. Both are necessary.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample is small (20 students) and context-specific (one lyceum in Tashkent). The teacher-researcher dual role may have influenced student responses, despite anonymity. Additionally, the questionnaire was administered in English, which may have limited the depth of some open-ended

responses. Future research could conduct follow-up interviews in the students' first language to capture richer qualitative data.

Conclusion

This action research study set out to answer a simple but important question: How do students experience and describe teacher enthusiasm? The answer, drawn directly from student voices, is clear.Students feel more interested, more confident, and less anxious. They believe they speak more and perform better. They overwhelmingly prefer high-energy lessons. And they offer practical advice: smile, move, play games, be energetic, be yourself.These findings validate the central argument of the first article: teacher enthusiasm is not a fixed personality trait but a trainable professional competency. More importantly, they remind us that the ultimate judges of our teaching are the students in front of us. When we ask them, listen to them, and take them seriously, we become better teachers.

As a couple of students wrote simply: "Thank you." That is worth more than any test score.

REFERENCES:

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. Harper & Row.

Egbert, J. (2003). A study of flow theory in the foreign language classroom. The Modern Language Journal, *87*(4), 499–518.

Eisenkraft, N., & Heiman, T. (2009). The way you make me feel: The trait affective presence of leaders. Journal of Applied Psychology, *94*(4), 1055–1067.

Kunter, M., Tsai, Y.-M., Klusmann, U., Brunner, M., Krauss, S., & Baumert, J. (2008). Students' and mathematics teachers' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and instruction. Learning and Instruction, *18*(5), 468–482.

Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1973). The use of direct observation to study teaching. In R. M. W. Travers (Ed.), Second handbook of research on teaching (pp. 122–183). Rand McNally.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). Doing task-based teaching. Oxford University Press.