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Determining Teacher's Role in Influencing Learners' Emotional Attitude towards Learning of English Language

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with investigating teaching practices in the English language classroom and their impact on learners' emotional aspect of attitude. To this end, a questionnaire was developed based on Dornyei's (2001) process-oriented model of motivational teacher practice and Dornyei's (2010) questionnaire, by combining group items' pool available on his personal website. The selected items from that questionnaire were made into questions for the learners to find out how learners perceive the impact of teaching practices over their emotional aspect of attitude while learning to speak in English language. The study took place at City University of Science and IT, Peshawar, and Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar (IMS). The participants were undergraduate students from Freshman

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English 1, 2, 3 and Functional English, both male and female. At the end of the study, the collected data was analyzed by using SPSS t test. The results showed that the participants expressed their weak satisfaction over their teachers' teaching practices on their emotional aspect of attitude towards speaking skill.

Keywords: Freshman learners, Speaking Skill, Emotional Attitude, Teacher's role

Introduction

"You cannot push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself." This is a famous quote of Robert Schuller. The same is true when it comes to language learning; nonetheless, for someone to climb up the ladder is easy if he or she is willing. However, in languages, willingness is not just an agreement, but it is rather the most complex phenomenon. In the context of Pakistan, English language learning has become an uphill task as almost all of the institutes are struggling in making language learning possible.

An adequate oral communicative competence in English language constitutes one of the most important element of educational systems of Pakistan. Nevertheless, a widespread worry exists that, despite given great importance to the fact of being fluent in English language, students fail to achieve satisfactory level of competence in the language even at the completion of compulsory education of English language.

Numerous studies have been conducted to know as to how to make the language classroom a better place for learning the language. It is, however, unfortunate that attention towards learners' attitude and motivation has

received little focus in Pakistan in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular.

There are many factors that shape students' attitude, i.e. parental encouragement, school environment, etc. However, teacher's role in the field of applied linguistics has been regarded as the most influential factor that can influence students' behaviour and can bring about greater changes in the learning capabilities of students and is responsible for shaping the mind of students towards language learning (Dornyei, 1994; Noels et.al, 1999). Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that English teacher confronts numerous issues with the learners in the language classroom that make the role of language teacher unique and challenging. Ur (1995) underlines a few of the issues teacher faces in language classroom related to the learners' emotional aspect of the attitude. They are:

- "Inhibition – fear of making mistakes, losing face, criticism, shyness
- Nothing to say – learners have problems with finding motives to speak, formulating opinions or relevant comments;
- Low or uneven participation – often caused by the tendency of some learners to dominate in the group;
- Mother-tongue use – particularly common in less disciplined or less motivated classes, learners find it easier or more natural to express themselves in their native language" (cited in Aleksandrak, 2011, p.39).

Being a language teacher in the pre 70s era was quite easy and straightforward. The teachers were more focused on structural lesson plan; however, in post 70s, teaching has become both rewarding and challenging profession (Fenstermacher and Sotis, 2004) as a teacher has to deal with numerous issues in the language classroom to facilitate language learning. Ames (1990, p.410) elaborates, "Effective schools and effective teachers are those who develop goals, beliefs, and attitudes in students that will sustain a long-term involvement and that will contribute to quality involvement in learning".

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the field of teaching and learning English language. The learners are often blamed for the negative attitude towards language learning. However, the reasons of their negative attitude are seldom considered. The study will be highly beneficial for the language teachers who normally interact with less interested or disinterested learners in the language classroom.

Main Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find as to how learners perceive the impact of classroom teaching practices on their emotional aspect of attitude towards language learning. The researcher took the sample from institutions of public and private sectors to ascertain the maximum representation of population.

Literature Review

According to Oxford and Shearin (1994) attitude is one of the six factors that has a great impact on motivation in language learning as it reflects the sentiments of a person towards the learning community and the target language.

Attitudes are commonly defined as acquired and relatively durable relationships the learner has to an object. According to Gardner, attitudes are a component of motivation, which "refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language" (1985, p.10). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) have proposed a strong relationship between attitude and motivation. They state that attitude plays an important role in supporting levels of motivation that affect language learning in return. On the

other hand, Brown (2000) believes, "that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and, in all likelihood, because of decreased input and interaction, to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency" (p.181).

The learners' attitude towards learning to communicate in English has badly been affected by Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as GTM has little to offer for the students who desire to improve their oral communication skill. According to Brown (1994), GTM focuses on transition, reading and grammatical rule ignoring the aspects of pronunciation and speaking ability of the learners.

The method is still in practice in majority of the institutions in Pakistan both in private and public sectors and the communicative language learning receive little focus. However, the learners' attitudinal inclination towards communicative practices is still alive. Recently Zeeshan (2016) surveyed the learners of government schools in Baluchistan in which he assessed the learners' attitude towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Grammar Translation Method. The learners showed less favourable attitude towards GT as compared to the attitude they showed towards CLT.

Attitude concept can be viewed by three aspects. These three aspects of attitude represent learners' behaviour, emotions and cognition. Emotional aspect of attitude deals with how learners' attitude is affected by different emotional factors that result in liking or disliking an object or the surroundings (Choy & Troudi, 2006).

Over the past few years, researchers have given much importance to emotion in the process of language learning and in the meaning construction. They believe that emotions and thoughts are dependent upon each other and cannot be separated. Caine and Caine's (1997) guiding principles state that emotions are essential for the patterning of brain.

The role of emotions not only applies to the types of experiences the students are provided with but to the classroom atmosphere we create as well. Creating a warm emotional climate to the learners in which they feel confidence, free of any anxiety, and charge with great motivation is as important as providing activities that have emotional connections. This has beautifully been explained by Fried in these words, "Only when teachers bring their passions about teaching and life into their daily work can they dispel the fog of passive compliance or active disinterest that surround so many students" (2001, p.1).

Jensen (2000) points out that moderate stress is required in many content areas to optimize learning. However, for subjects with high complexity and novelty, such as language and mathematics, students learn better with the lower stress environment. Stephen Krashen (1981) in his discussion on "affective filter," highlights the importance of emotions in the language learning process by recognizing the fact that children are known to resist learning when learning is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment.

As discussed earlier, teacher's role is highly regarded in moulding the learners' emotions. Clark and Trafford (1995) reports the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship, in which the teachers shared their students' views regarding teacher's role as being the most significant variable that has a great impact on their attitude towards language, while De Pietro (1994) has a reverse argument by claiming that pedagogy has no importance in the learners' attitude when their attitude is already negative as pedagogy is not enough to improve and correct learners' attitudinal problems. However, these views stand in contrast with each other and reject the theories presented by some of the valuable in depth research that have supported the view that there is extreme relation between learners' attitude and classroom teaching practices

(Dornyei,1998, Nikolov, 1998 Cited in Brendan Barter, 2006).

According to Garner, (1998) "Wise teachers allow each of their students to guide them to what the students find particularly enjoyable and worth learning. The result will be greater student interest, sense of competence, creativity, learning and preference for challenges." In creating motivating classroom environment, language classroom should present an interesting environment for building positive attitude of learners towards the target language, teacher and learning a foreign language, which is highly demanded for effective learning.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were selected from City University of Sciences and IT, Peshawar (CUSIT) and Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar (IMS). The former belongs to private sector while the latter is in public sector. The total number of participants participated in the study were 163 learners studying in different undergraduate courses, i.e. BBA, B.Ed, B.Com, BS computer Science and BSc Engineering.

Study Design

The design of the study was quantitative, descriptive and inferential in nature as it explores the belief of the learners that needs not only the description of the data but also require making inference to represent the whole population as well. The learners were given questionnaire to fill in with options they considered most close to their opinions and conclusion was made.

Instrument

The instrument of the study was the questionnaire adapted from Dornyei's (2010) questionnaire, combined group items pool, available on his personal website and partly from the experience of the researcher. The selected items of the questionnaire represent learners' emotional attitude towards learning language. 7 point-Likert scale was employed with 1 Strongly Disagree and 7 Strongly Agree.

Data analysis

The data was tabulated after collection and analyzed using statistical technique such as sample t test using SPSS to obtain not only the mean score but the significance of the mean as well. On the basis of analysis and interpretation of data, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

Results

Table1: One sample T- Test

Do you enjoy learning in class?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
8.264	162	.000	1.05521	.8031	1.3074

The First investigative question asked whether the learners enjoyed learning in the class.

Table 1 describes the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.05 and is found statistically

significant at $t = 8.264$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondent showed inclination towards the level that is above the level 4; however, their hesitation is evident from not touching the strong level of option. The score in the table indicates that the respondents are more inclined toward agreement regarding enjoying learning English in the class that reveals that the learners' attitude towards learning English language is positive in the class of the present semester, however, they restrained to a weak level of satisfaction.

Table 2: One Sample T-Test

Does your teacher give you confidence to speak in English?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
11.827	162	.000	1.34356	1.1192	1.5679

Question No.2 asked from the learners whether their teachers gave them confidence to speak in English language.

Table 2 clarifies the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.34 and is found statistically significant at $t = 11.827$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$). It is concluded that the respondents showed inclination towards the level that is higher than neutral position 4; however, their hesitation persisted by not marking the strong level of satisfaction. In the table, it is found that the respondents showed inclination toward agreement that their teachers gave confidence by encouraging them to speak in English.

Table 3: One-Sample T- Test

Does your teacher try to make English learning activities interesting?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
1.976	162	.050	.22699	.0001	.4539

Question No.3 asked from the learners whether their teachers tried to make English learning activities interesting.

Table 3 clearly depicts the difference between means score and neutral position which is 0.22 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = 1.976$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$), concluding that the respondents are not satisfied with their teachers' efforts in making the learning activities interesting. The above table shows that the respondents were inclined toward neutral level which indicated learner's dissatisfaction on the above question.

Table 4: One-Sample T- Test

Does your teacher appreciate you when you perform well in the class?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
16.022	162	.000	1.76687	1.5491	1.9846

Question No.4 asked from the learners whether their teachers appreciate them when they perform well in the class.

Table 4 reveals the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.77 and was found statistically significant at $t = 16.022$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondents showed inclination towards the level that was higher than neutral position 4; however, their hesitation persisted by not marking the level that touched the strong or the stronger level. The above table revealed that the respondents were inclined towards agreement with respect to their being appreciated when they performed well.

Table5: One-Sample T- Test

Does the appreciation of your teacher motivate you to show better performance?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
14.845	162	.000	1.68712	1.4627	1.9115

Question No.5 asked from the learners whether the appreciation of their teachers motivate them to show better performance.

Table 5 presents a clear picture by indicating the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.69 and is found statistically significant at $t = 14.845$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondents show inclination towards the level that is higher than neutral position 4; however, they have not marked the rank which is 6 or 7, the stronger level. In the above table, it is found that the respondents are inclined toward agreement that upon teacher's appreciation their motivation to perform better increases.

Table 6: One-Sample T- Test

Does your teacher get angry when you don't perform well?

Test Value = 4				
T	Df	Sig. (2-	Mean	95% Confidence

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference	Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
-	1.208	162	.229	-.16564	-.4364	.1051

Question No.6 asked from the learners whether their teachers got angry when they didn't perform well.

According to the above Table 6 that presents a clear picture by indicating the difference between means score and neutral position which is- 0.166 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = -1.208$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.23$), concluding that the respondents show inclination towards the level that is lower than neutral position 4.

Table 7: One-Sample T- Test

Does the angry mood of your teacher de-motivate you?

Test Value = 4						
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
				Lower	Upper	
6.461	162	.000	.77914	.5410	1.0173	

Question No. 7 asked from the learners whether the teacher's angry mood caused de-motivation in them.

According to the above Table 7, the difference between the mean score and neutral position is 0.779 and is found statistically significant at $t = 6.461$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), revealing that the respondents show inclination towards the level that is higher than neutral position 4 thus giving us the picture that the learners get de-motivated if their teacher gets angry at them on their poor performance in the class.

Table 8: One-Sample T- Test

Is your teacher careful in avoiding embarrassment while giving you feedback?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
4.437	162	.000	.60736	.3370	.8777

Question No. 8 asked from the learners whether the teacher remained careful in avoiding embarrassment while giving them feedback.

According to the above Table 8, the difference between mean score and neutral position is 0.61 and is found statistically significant at $t = -4.437$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), indicating the respondents are inclined towards the level that is just above the neutral position 4, which indicates that the learners are not much satisfied with the way teachers give them the feedback.

Table 9: One Sample T-Test

Do you feel free to express yourself in your class?

Test Value = 4					
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
1.337	162	.183	.13497	-.0644	.3343

Question No. 9 asked from the learners whether they feel free in the class to express themselves.

Table 9 tells us the difference between means score and neutral position which is 0.135 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = 1.337$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.18$), indicating that the learners feels hesitant to express themselves in the class. It further clarifies that atmosphere in the class is not much conducive for the learners to freely express their opinions.

Table10: One Sample T-Test

Does your teacher remain friendly with you in the class?

Test Value = 4						
t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
				Lower	Upper	
.192	162	.848	.01840	-.1710	.2078	

Question No.10 asked from the learners whether the teacher remained friendly in the class.

According to the above Table 10, the difference between mean score and neutral position is 0.02 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = -0.192$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.84$), indicating that the respondents are inclined towards the level that is below the satisfaction level thus suggesting that learners are not enjoying the friendly relation with their teachers.

Discussion

The emotional aspect of attitude carries a pivotal and very important role in motivating learners to learn language. Swain (2013) states that both Psychology and Applied Linguistics have increased the awareness of the effects on language learning in the recent year (Cited in Dornyei et al. 2014).

The study has taken up issues related to classroom teaching practices and their impact on the learners' emotional aspect of attitude in which the learners have shown their satisfaction over their teachers' teaching practices. The teachers somehow influenced their emotional aspect of speaking attitude towards language learning;

however, their hesitation is evident as majority of the learners have shown their weak satisfaction and restrained to touch the strong or the stronger level of agreement. There are statements in which the learners restricted to the neutral value and avoided to make any opinion which shows the learners' dissatisfaction.

According to the data, the activities the teachers conduct in the classes are less interesting to the learners that mean the learners perceive them boring and monotonous. When learners find the activities boring, they take little or no interest in the activities and will try to avoid their being active participants in these activities.

The perceptions further reveal that the teachers are less careful in avoiding learners' embarrassment when giving them the feedback although the learners have expressed their mild satisfaction and restricted to show their strong agreement. It implies that learners require their teachers to be more careful while giving them the feedback as even little embarrassment can make the learners anxious in the class and restrain them to express themselves freely in the target language. This negative behaviour from a teacher causes anxiety in learners that have a bad impact over learners' motivation towards language learning (see Chambers 1993, Dornyei and Ushioda, 2011).The data surfaces the fact regarding teachers' unfriendly behaviour towards their students that restrain them from sharing their problems with their teachers thus having a negative impact on the learners' emotional aspect of attitude. The teachers, however, have left a positive impact over the learners by appreciating them for their good performance, and they believe that appreciation have a positive impact on their learning.

The learners' emotional aspect of attitude can be sustained and strengthened when learners enjoy surety that learning goals are attainable. This emotional attachment with the end results fills learners with more determination and energy to pursue the objectives of the course. However, the data revelation in this respect is not very encouraging as the learners are not strongly satisfied with their teachers' efforts they are putting in to achieve the goals of the course.

Some of the factors have a negative impact on the learners' emotional aspect of attitude towards the learning process, which are responsible in restraining learners from making favourable attitude towards learning the target language. Over all, the learners have, however, expressed their satisfaction on majority of the statements relating teachers' efforts in making learners' emotional aspect of attitude favourable towards learning language, but they have remained reserved in showing their strong satisfaction on almost all of the questions.

Conclusion

Attitude is understood as the most important factor that plays a leading role in shaping learners' attitude in general, and emotional aspect of attitude in particular is highly significant for successful learning or acquisition of language as supported by (Choy & Troudi, 2006, Dornyei & Csizer, 1998). Analysis and discussion of the emotional aspect of attitude conclude that learners have expressed their agreement towards majority of the statements; however, they refrained from going beyond the level of mild satisfaction. This indicates that learners are not strongly satisfied with classroom teaching practices and the feedback given by their

teachers as the learners still face pressure to express themselves in the target language. If teachers could stress on more efforts to make language learning an interesting task, it will surely have a more positive impact on learners' attitude, particularly their emotional attitude. The learners seem in demand from their teachers to be more particular in their approaches in handling classroom teaching practices in order to provide them with more conducive learning environment that could help in enhancing learners' emotional attachment towards language learning experience.

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