

Impact of Teaching Practices on Learners’ Behavioural Pattern towards English Language Learning

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Abstract

This study explored and examined how learners’ perceive the impact of the teaching practices on their behavioural aspect of attitude during the teaching of the English language. To this end, a questionnaire was developed from the ‘Motivational Strategies Questionnaire’ (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) and based on Dörnyei & Otto (1998) process model of students’ motivation. Those items selected from the questionnaire, which were related to learners’ aspect of behavioural attitude. The study was carried out at the City University of Science and Information Technology(CUSIT), Peshawar and Institute of Management Sciences(IMS), Peshawar (IMS). The participants were undergraduate students from Freshman English 1, 2, 3 and Functional English including both males and females. Consequently, the data collected were tested by employing SPSS t-test. The results inferred, showed that the students conveyed their weak satisfaction and fulfillment in their teachers’ teaching practices for their behavioural feature of attitude towards speaking skill.

Keywords: Freshman learners, Speaking Skill, Behavioural Attitude, Teacher’s role, learners’ perception

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Introduction

There is a growing belief that learners' attitude is the essential component needed for successful language learning. A favourable attitude towards language, its culture, language teacher and language environment is a must for successful language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that the learners' ability to master a language is not only the matter of mental competence but there are other factors involved too such as learners' beliefs and attitude towards the target language (Cited in Hosseini, & Pourmandnia, 2013).

Sufficient verbal communicative competence in the English language is the constituent component of education in Pakistan. Nonetheless, a pervasive concern is that, regardless of given significance to the fact of being articulate in the English language, learners (in the existing milieu) are unable to gain an adequate degree of proficiency in the said language even at the culmination of compulsory core education.

Several factors influence learners' attitude, including filial-familial reassurance and school environment. Nevertheless, teacher's role in the pedagogy has been the notable component that controls learners' behaviour and thus brings about influential changes in the learning competence of students and is accountable for guiding the behaviour of students towards language learning (Dornyei 1994; Noels et al 1999). However, the fact cannot be overlooked that the English language teacher faces challenges from the learners' side in the language classroom that makes the role and responsibility of the language teacher arduous as well as unique. In this connection, Ames (1990, p.410) extrapolates that: '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'.

Literature Review

Oxford and Shearin (1994) believe that attitude is one of the seminal factors that influence motivation in language learning. It is "sentiments towards the learning community and the target language" (p.12-28).

Attitudes are usually termed as acquired and thus comparatively stable relationships the learner has towards an object. To Gardner, attitudes are an integral constituent of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), that "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) suggest an

adhesive relationship between motivation and attitude. They opine that it plays a pivotal role in enhancing levels of motivation that affect the process of language learning. By contrast, Brown upholds “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” (2000, 181).

The learners' attitude towards learning English has adversely been affected by the Grammar Translation Method that is still in vogue in the majority of the schools in Pakistan, especially in public sector institutions. Yet, the learners' attitudinal propensity towards communicative competence is still in practice. Lately, Zeeshan (2016) surveyed the learners of public sector schools in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, where he examined the learners' attitude towards Communicative Language Teaching and Grammar Translation Method. The learners were less interested in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as compared to their attitude (they expressed) towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

The concept of attitude can be looked at and scrutinised from three different yet closely connected perspectives. They represent learners' behavioural, emotional and cognitive patterns. All the aforesaid three factors structures and restructures learner's liking and disliking of an object or the environment they live in and shape their attitude towards learning a language (Choy & Troudi, 2006).

Clark and Trafford (1995) dilate upon the significance of the teacher-student relationship, in which the teachers conveyed their students' understanding apropos teacher's role as being a vitally important variable that impacts their attitude towards language learning, whereas De Pietro (1994) argues that pedagogy has nothing to do with learners' attitude because when and if they hold indifferent attitude, pedagogy is less important in fixing and improving learners' attitudinal issues. Notwithstanding, these remarks are in contrast with each other and decline the postulations highlighted by some of the in-depth research that upholds the view that there is an interwoven relationship between the learners' attitude and pedagogical practices (Dörnyei, 1998, Nikolov, 1998 Cited in Brendan Barter, 2006).

Garner (1998) remarks that: “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 setting up a motivating classroom environment, it should create an

interesting setting for establishing an optimistic attitude of learners towards the target language that is concomitant for effective learning. Hall (2009) stresses the same point by arguing that fluency in the English language is considered to be the key of success as it is the dominant language of technology, banking and sciences, so a positive attitude towards the English language is a predictor of success in learning English.

Behavioural Aspect of Attitude: The behavioural aspect of attitude deals with how one behaves or reacts to a particular situation. Kara (2009) believes that Positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive behaviours toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Such students are also observed to be more eager to solve problems, to acquire the information and skills useful for daily life and to engage themselves emotionally.

The close connection between attitude and behaviour assumes that there is constancy between the two and that one's behaviour is expected to be in line with the attitude one holds. The strength of attitude is a good predictor of behaviour, and the stronger is the attitude one holds the more it will affect one's behaviour.

In 1860, Lazarus & Steinthal describes the influence of Anglo-European in "Volkerpsychologie" focusing on the idea of a collective mind. It promotes the notion that development of personality depends upon cultural and community influences, especially through language, as language is not only a social product of the community but a mean through which a particular social thought in the individual can be encouraged (simplypsychology.org).

The current study was important in the context of English language learning and teaching. In this regard, the learners are criticised for their indifferent attitude towards language learning; nevertheless, the causes and reasons for such attitude are occasionally investigated. The study is helpful for the language teachers as well, who routinely correspond with learners who are least interested in the language class.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the paper was to figure out as to how the teaching practices in the language class impact learners' perception of attitude towards English language learning.

Methodology

Study Design

The study design followed a qualitative research pattern, invoking descriptive and inferential techniques. The learners were assessed by a questionnaire which they had to fill in with options next to their choice.

Participants

The participants of the study hail from the City University of Sciences and IT (CUSIT), Peshawar and Institute of Management Sciences (IMS), Peshawar. All of the 163 selected participants studying in different undergraduate courses, i.e., BBA, B.Ed, B.Com, BS computer Sciences and BSc Engineering.

Instrument

The instrument of the study was the questionnaire adapted from Motivational Strategies Questionnaire' (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) and based on Dörnyei & Otto (1998) process model of students' motivation. The items selected from the questionnaire related to the learners' behaviour towards learning the language. 7 point-Likert scale was employed with 1 Strongly Disagree and 7 Strongly Agree.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed among the learners and clarified the points when the learners had difficulty to fill in.

Data Analysis

The data collected were tabulated and scrutinised by employing a statistical sampling technique, that is, one-sample t-test to obtain the difference between the mean score and the significance. Based on analysis and elucidation of data, conclusions were inferred and recommendations were offered.

Findings

Table 1

Enthusiasm of Teacher for teaching English in the class as perceived by students

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
5.1600	4.9646	9.111	162	.000	1.02454

First investigative question asked whether the teacher showed enthusiasm while teaching in the class where 7-point Likert scale was used for responses. Mid value 4 is taken as the threshold for a neutral response that can be taken as the test value for null hypothesis while below 4-point show inclination towards disagreement and more than 4point show toward an agreement.

Table 1 shows the difference between means score and neutral position is 1.025 which is found statistically notable at $t=9.11$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondents expressed a leaning above than 4 points; however, their options remained on the weak level of satisfaction and did not opt to select the strong options.

Additionally, we carried out a frequency analysis of the various type of responses including respondents' disagreement, neutrality and agreement. Out of the total, 14.7 percent respondent showed disagreement, 19 percent remained neutral and 62.3 percent showed agreement. In total, one-third showed disagreement or remained neutral while around two-third showed their agreement. Overall, the learners' showed their weak satisfaction and restrained to go beyond the weak level of satisfaction.

Table 2

Students' Response about their learning to speak English in class

The second investigative question asked whether the learners learn how

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
4.5200	5.1593	9.494	162	.000	.96319

to speak in English in the class.

Table 2 underlines the difference between means score and neutral position which is 0.96 and is revealed as statistically important at $t = 9.494$ (p -value < 0.01), concluding that the respondents testified a propensity towards the level that was beyond 4 points; however, they have remained hesitant to mark score 6 or 7. In the table above, it is found that the respondents were in slight concordance with their learning to speak in English in the class.

The frequency analysis of the responses of the respondents showed that out of the total, 13.5 percent respondent showed disagreement, 17.8 percent remained neutral and 68.7 percent showed agreement by marking the level 5, 6 or 7. In total, approximately, one-third showed disagreement or remained neutral while around two-third showed their agreement. Around 30 percent of the learners hesitated to show their full confidence and just marked the level that is below 6. We can infer from their selection of marking the weaker degree of agreement 'to some extent' that learners have shown hesitation by not marking the highest level of satisfaction over the question whether they learn speaking English in the class and thus can be concluded that learners are partly engaged in activities that are meant to motivate them to learn to speak in the target language.

Table 3
Students' Response About Provision of Activities by Teacher to Improve Their Speaking Skill

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
4.4800	5.4690	8.641	162	.000	1.16564

The third investigative question asked from the learners whether their teachers gave them activities in the class to improve their speaking skill.

Table 3 highlights the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.17 and is found statistically significant at $t = 8.641$ (p -value < 0.01), concluding that the respondent showed inclination towards the level that was beyond the neutral position 4; however, their hesitation was reflected by not claiming the strong level 6 or 7. The table further reveals that the respondents were inclined towards the agreement, however, they restricted towards mild satisfaction.

The frequency analysis of the responses of the learners revealed that 19.6 percent out of total, expressed the negative view along with 11.5 percent remained neutral while 13.5 percent showed mild agreement. 55.2 percent have shown strong confidence for being provided with speaking activities by their teachers for the improvement of their speaking ability.

Table 4
Response of Students About Their Teacher giving them confidence to Speak in English

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
4.0800	5.4602	11.827	162	.000	1.34356

Question No.4 asked the learners whether their teachers gave them the confidence to speak in the English language.

Table 4 reveals the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.34 and is found statistically significant at $t = 11.827$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondents showed an inclination towards the level that is higher than neutral position 4; however, their hesitation persisted by not marking the level 6 or 7. Here in the table, it is found that the respondents have shown an inclination toward an agreement that their teachers give confidence by motivating them to speak in English.

The frequency analysis done on this question provided the results in which, 10.4 percent respondents showed their disagreement, 22.7 percent remained neutral while 77.4 percent agreed that their teacher gave them the confidence to speak in English. However, 27 out of it, marked the weaker degree of agreement indicating their hesitation to fully support their teachers on this question, and just 25.2 percent of the respondents came up with a strong opinion regarding the confidence given to them to speak in English by their teachers.

Table: 5
Students' Response about their teacher setting specific activities for learning English for communicative purposes

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
4.3800	5.5487	3.035	162	.003	1.19018

Question No.5 asked the learners whether their teachers set specific activities for learning English for communicative purposes or not.

Table 5 tells us the difference between means score and neutral position which is 1.19 and is found statistically significant at $t=3.035$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$), concluding that the respondents showed an inclination towards the level that was higher than neutral position 4; however, they have not marked the stronger level. In the above table, it is found that the respondents were inclined toward an agreement that their teachers involved them in communication in the target language through different communicative activities.

According to the frequency analysis, 17.2 percent out of the total respondents expressed their disagreement, 16.6 percent remained neutral and 62 percent showed their agreement, however, out of the agreed respondents who have gone with weak agreement make 25.8 percent. Just 11.7 percent chose the highest level. The results, if taken on a positive note, has reached the level of satisfaction due to better performance by some of the teachers whose students chose the highest ranking for their performance, however, it cannot be taken as highly satisfactory as the overall ranking has not reached the level beyond 5, which indicates that quite many learners have not gone for the highest ranking for their teachers' performance in this area, which is why their score failed to reach the level 6 or beyond.

Table 6
Students' Response about the role of activities for learning English for communicative purposes

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
3.6000	4.2389	.400	162	.690	.04294

Question No.6 asked the learners whether they find language learning activities helpful for communicative purposes.

Table 6 tells us the difference between means score and neutral position which is 0.04 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = 9.709$ (p -value < 0.69), concluding that the respondents showed an inclination towards the level that was almost a neutral position i.e., 4. In the above table, it is found that the respondents were inclined toward a neutral position which indicates that they found activities set by their teachers for communicative purposes less helpful for improving communication skill of English language.

The frequency analysis on the question revealed that out of the total, 32.5 percent respondents disagreed with the question, 25.8 percent remained neutral and 41.7 percent showed agreement. In total, almost more than half percent of the learners showed disagreement or remained neutral while less than half percent showed their agreement. In this way, it can be inferred that the responses of the learners did not show a satisfactory level. The scores indicated that the learners still need to have activities that could help them more to produce results.

Table 7

Students' Response about their peer interaction in English to improve your communication skill

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
3.2400	4.5044	.882	162	.379	.11656

Question No.7 asked the learners whether they interact with each other in English to improve their communication skill.

As per the above Table 4.36, the difference between a mean score and neutral position is -0.2 and is found statistically insignificant at $t = 0.882$ (p -value < 0.379), suggesting that the respondents remained hesitant to express their opinion; it indicated that they hardly engage themselves in communicating in English with each other. It is also evident that the teacher's role had not been impressive in this regard to influence learners' attitude and motivation towards speaking in English with each other.

The frequency analysis told us that 35 percent of the total responses disagreed to the question while the learners who remained neutral on this question make 21.5 percent. 33.6 percent have shown

their agreement regarding interaction with their classmates to improve their communication skill. 20.9 percent of the learners have shown their mild agreement which shows that the majority of the learners avoid speaking English with each other in the class or outside the class.

Table 8
Students' Response about their teacher asking for their opinion about English language teaching activities in the class

Mean		t.value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Female	Male				
3.5600	4.6814	2.441	162	.016	.33742

Question No.8 asked the learners whether their teachers ask for their opinion when making strategies for language teaching.

Table 4.44 reveals the difference between means score and neutral position which is 0.34 and is found statistically significant at $t=2.441$ (p -value < 0.01), showing respondents' hesitation to mark level higher than the value 4.

The results of the frequency analysis on this question explain that 31.3 percent of the total respondents have gone negative towards the questions while 20.9 percent remained neutral to the question posed on learners. However, 47.9 percent of the respondent agreed to the question; out of them, 18.4 percent of the respondents expressed their mild agreement, which indicates that majority of the learners were not consulted regarding the introduction of language teaching activities in the class.

Discussion

The behavioural feature of attitude plays a significant role in motivating learners to learn the language. Swain (2013) comments that psychology and pedagogy have amplified the understanding of the influence on language learning (Cited in Dornyei, et.al, 2014).

The study focuses on the subject of teaching practices in a classroom environment and shows how the learners' attitude impacts their learning. They express their satisfaction with how a teacher teaches while taking into account their attitudinal performance. The teacher, up to a great extent, inspires their behavioural facet of oral attitude towards language learning. However, a bigger part of them is still reluctant as

they show their weak satisfaction and contained to reach the strong or the stronger level of agreement. However, there are statements in which learners restrained to the neutral value and shunned to express any opinion which indicates the learners' discontent.

As per the data analysed, the teachers' teaching practices are not strongly perceived by the learners and it is, therefore, they are less involved in various communicative activities that teachers carry in the classes. Learners have gone negative on item No.6 that suggests that learners do not find communicative activities helpful for improving their oral communication. This is why item No. 7 clarifies that learners avoid communicating in the target language with each other in the language classroom. The learners selected weak level of satisfaction on almost all of the items indicating learners' behaviours are not strongly influenced by their teachers' teaching practices; it is, therefore, learners' behavioural attitude towards communicating in the target language remain unfavourable.

Conclusion

Attitude is understood as the most important factor that plays a leading role in shaping learners' attitude in general, and behavioural aspect of attitude, in particular, is highly significant for successful learning or acquiring language. After analysing and discussing the behavioural aspect of attitude, it can be understood that learners perceive a weak impact of their teachers' teaching practices over their behavioural aspect of attitude as the majority of the learners showed hesitation to touch the strong level of satisfaction. These findings further reveal that the learners' behavioural aspect of attitude still needs much focus from the teachers to be streamlined. The learners showing their weak agreement towards the majority of the statement and refraining to go beyond the level of mild satisfaction indicate that learners require their teachers to be more particular in their approaches in handling classroom teaching practices to leave a strong positive impact on their behavioural aspect of attitude towards language learning.

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