Students' Attitudes Towards Their Teachers' Practice

مواقف الطلبة من ممارسات أساتذتهم

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Abstract:
The rationale behind the present research is then to explore EFL students' attitudes towards their teachers' practice of tasks in the Algerian tertiary level context. It sets forth a discussion in the interdependency between how tasks are taught and students' learning attitudes. To carry out the study, a qualitative research method was adopted using a semi-structured devised focus-group interview. Thematic analysis technique was relied on to organize and interpret the obtained data. The research sample was composed of nine (9) third year EFL students at Biskra University, Algeria. The findings of the current research showed that students held negative and dissatisfactory attitudes towards their teachers' behaviors, including choice of topics, feedback, group work, and teachers' talk time. It is then recommended that teachers need to reconsider their practice and identify strategies for improving full range of skills.
Keywords: Students' attitudes, Teachers, practice, Teachers' behaviours.

ملخص البحث

الهدف من وراء هذه الدراسة هو معرفة مواقف طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه ممارسة

معلميهم في السياق الجامعي الجزائري. في هذا الصدد، نناقش الترابط بين ممارسات الأساتذة في

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التدريس والمواقف التعليمية لدى الطلبة. لإجراء الدراسة، تم اعتماد أسلوب البحث النوعي باستخدام مقابلة مجموعة التركيز. إضافة الى ذلك، تم الاعتماد على تقنية التحليل الموضوعاتي لتنظيم وتفسير البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها. حيث تتكون عينة البحث من تسعة (9) طلبة في السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة ، الجزائر. و قد أظهرت نتائج البحث الحالي أن الطلاب اتخذوا مواقف سلبية وغير مرضية تجاه سلوكيات أساتذتهم، بما في ذلك اختيار المواضيع، و التقييم، و العمل الجماعي و الوقت المخصص للأساتذة لإلقاء و تقديم الدروس. استخلصنا من الدراسة أن الأساتذة يحتاجون الى إعادة النظر في ممارساتهم وتطوير مجموعة من الاستراتيجيات لتحسين مهاراتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مواقف الطلبة، ممارسات الأساتذة، سلوكيات الأساتذة

1.Introduction

It is commonly known that a good teacher can change students' life positively around them. Teacher-student relationships is of supreme importance for the success of both teachers and students. As for classroom management, this kind of relationships is the most substantial factor in determining the success of failure of teachers' work. Teachers have to demonstrate a unique compassion, perseverance, diligence, sincerity, research orientation, honesty and flexibility as a person. Teachers also need to be solicitous in the way they react to students' comments. Generally, teachers react by using praise, acceptance, remediation, or criticism in responding to students. Derk as stated in (Mehdipour & Balaramulu, 2013)

Attitude are internal feelings or beliefs of people towards specific phenomena. One of the main aims of education is the enhancement of pleasant attitude in the individuals. According to Richardson (1996) attitudes are an expression of inner interactions that reflect whether a person is favourably or unfavourably predisposed to some phenomenon. It is also to be kept in view that education is required to develop several attitudes in the students; such as attitude towards self, attitudes towards

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learning, attitude towards teaching, and attitudes towards others or certain ideals (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). Gardner (1980) defined attitude as the sum total of a individuals' instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, perceived notions, fears, threats and convictions about any specified topic.

Learner's motivation is seen as a key factor which affects the success or failure of second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 1994). Gardner and Lambert (1972) supposed that the learners' motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes towards the surrounding environment like the classroom, teacher etc. in particular and by his orientation towards the learning task itself. According to Gardner (1985) motivation is seen as the extent to which the learners endeavour or strive to learn the language because of the inner desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. Şen (2013) claimed that the positive attitudes help for a better comprehension of the nature of learning for the learners, it also makes the learners more open to new knowledge, increases their expectations from learning process, and reduces their anxiety levels.

It is certain that teachers practice is an important component of becoming a teacher by granting experience in the actual teaching and learning environment (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). Teachers provide a guiding role in the process of teaching and learning and therefore are exceptionally influential (Mehdipour & Balaramulu, 2013). Some of the roles are a guide, a counsellor, disciplinarian, custodian, evaluator, curriculum developer, lifelong, learner, extension worker, researcher/Innovator, Organizer of co-curricular activities, administrator (Globe & Porter, 1977). Teachers of all categories and levels should be responsive to all role changes played by them in the context of education. They should be aware that their behaviours are not fixed, but are revolving around the influence of changes taking place in a society and the educational system itself (ibid).

During teaching practice, teachers are given the chance to try the art of teaching they have gained from previous experiences in actual terrain of the teaching profession (Kasanda, 1995).

Teachers at very early stages of the job realize the value of teaching practice, perceiving it as remarked by Menter (1989, p. 461), *"the crux of their preparation for the teaching profession"* because it is an interface between theory and practice. Therefore, teaching practice generates a combination of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the teachers as they commence their teaching practice (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2004)

Gibson and Chase (2002) emphasized the fact that characteristics and behaviours of teachers have a tremendous impact on shaping students' personalities, knowledge, values, and attitudes towards teachers and school. The literature reported that the influence of teachers' characteristics on forming students' attitudes towards learning have a greater effect on students' achievement rather than learning instructions or subjects themselves (Morrell & Lederman, 1998).

It is believed that students' satisfaction with learning environment is related to their sense of belonging, integration, academic achievements and teachers' characteristics and behaviour (Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009). Moreover, teachers who succeed to provide non-threatening setting and listen to their student, are more likely to be successful and are able to identify various aspirations and motivations among their students more than teachers whose practice is based on traditional pedagogical approaches and whose primary focus is on control and discipline (Woodson-Smith, Dorwart, & Linder, 2015). To conclude, teachers´ actions shape the learning environment, thus integrating an important part of the learning context, taking into account motivation, cognitive, and affective aspects of the learning process (Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010).

In order to adequately examine teachers' practice and the area of their influence, it is required to put students' views into consideration. Research studies integrating students' attitudes of teachers' qualities are of great importance (Mainhard, 2015). Teaching practice also includes peculiar interpersonal relationships in which both teachers and students influence each other in different ways; therefore, a wider approach to this problem is needed. The current study aims to examine the relation

between teachers' behaviours and practice and students' attitudes towards them. It is important to note that scarce studies explore teachers' characteristics based on mere standpoint of students (Misbah et al., 2015). This kind of approach might bring forward the problem and enrich theoretical approaches regarding teachers' quality and their impact on students' attitudes towards learning. Hence, the results of this research could be relevant for teaching practice and contribute to raising the quality of education.

2. Methodology

This study opted for the phenomenology approach based on qualitative method that aims to take a comprehensive and in-depth view of facts of what has been already observed. Phenomenological study attempts to acknowledge understanding, perceptions, and perspectives of people related to a particular experience through in-depth and unstructured interviews. Typically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, or situation. The interview(s) attempts to answer two broad questions (Creswell, 2013): (1) what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? (2) What context or situation has typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon? Through this process the researcher is supposed to construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a profound understanding of the phenomenon.

2.1. Instrumentation

To meet the study objectives, a semi-structured interview was devised and used. The interview consists of four sections of total number of 17 open-ended questions. The aim of the questions was to trigger students' attitudes and perceptions about their teachers' practice. The present study, therefore, identifies seven related aspects that were extracted from the results of the students' focus group interview, namely choice of topics, feedback, teachers' talk time, and group work.

2.2. Participant

The sample of this study includes nine participants, seven females and two males who were selected randomly from third year students' during the first semester of 2018-2019. The aim

behind adopting random sampling is to avoid the interference of some variables like gender and level besides collecting as relevant data as possible. Students had oral expression course twice a week (one hour and a half per session). Five male teachers and one female teacher took in charge teaching oral expression for third year students. We assume that participants are quite familiar with the oral expression course used by their teachers to handle the classroom practice. They are also supposed to be highly motivated and enthusiastic to practice speaking as it is a prerequisite skill for advanced learners at this level.

2.3.Procedures

After devising and piloting the interview, a session was devoted to have a one-on-one discussion session with participants out of their official study schedule (afternoon at 16:00) to converse friendly and stress-free setting. Initially, 12 students were invited for the interview but only 9 were present. The interview started with a warm up talk to set a tone of discussion, and provide a permissive atmosphere by introducing the interviewer and indicating the objectives of the study. Questions were clearly asked for better comprehension and allow interviewees for a brain-storming moment. A circle seating shape facing the interviewer was used to give a chance to all participants to be seen and talked to. The interview with students lasted 45 minutes. Answers were recorded through a smart phone voice recorder application. The answers were then transcribed to a written script for a better storing and retrieving. After that, data was coded through *Atlas software* which has the ability to processes and categorize data (words and expressions) into themes according to their frequency of occurrence in the transcript.

3.Results and Discussion

The results of the interviews shows that teachers' practice and behaviours are of an extreme importance because of their influence on students' in the learning process. As the respondents argued that they are *not interactive* and *disengaged* because their *interests are not fulfilled* in the course of oral expression. They state " *we are not into topics like natural disasters and books*

reviews of classic novels but topics of nowadays life like technology, sports, and fashion". Pedagogically speaking, meeting students interests and considering their preferences and learning styles are substantial requirements in the lesson plan (Nunan, 2004). The majority of the interviewed students claimed that they are not given enough chances to speak out their thoughts or provided with checklist or portfolio to highlight their preferences or contribute in decision-making. Boumova (2008) explained in his thesis that traditional approaches generates reluctant choice of topics whereas contemporary teaching methods are more effective in raising communication and creating a positive attitude to the course. Richardson (as stated in Boujaoude, 2012) has found that teachers' beliefs, awareness, and knowledge drives the decisions they make in their classroom and influence their instructional beliefs and classroom practices. Other barriers that might impede teachers to use various choices of tasks include lack of equipment, laboratory, and ICT tools (Wallace & Kang, 2004). As quoted by students: " *some tasks are difficult to perform because of space and furniture*". A study suggested by (Blackmore et al., 2013) suggested that there is an emerging interest in the specific aspects of design that may impact on teacher practice and student learning outcomes and motivation with regard to environmental factors and how specific environmental conditions impact upon students and teachers in classroom such as noise, temperature, air quality, ventilation, lighting, space, and furniture.

Feedback is a process in which learners make sense of information about their performance and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies. Respondents quote " *the feedback most of the time is general and superficial after each performance like: good, acceptable, not bad, the next one*". Hence, students felt unmotivated because they usually spend time to prepare assignment waiting for the moment when the teacher is supposed to encourage and motivate them. They quote " *If I knew earlier my teachers attitude towards my performance, I would not work that hard*". A major point in evaluation with regard to motivation is controlling how much feedback should be given to

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students. Curry (2017) think that too little correction may make students feel neglected, too much correction and they may feel criticised. In the same vein, Participants complained about *excessive error correction* during each performance in which they feel *anxious* and *embarrassed.* Decision making about what feedback to provide stems from the purpose of the task itself for instance if the task is for communicative purpose, remarks about accuracy should be less emphasized and vice versa (ibid). In addition to that, participants stated that *" teachers work with good students and praise them more than us ".* Hence, these frequent behaviours may make students uncooperative and begin to under-estimate themselves because, as Maslow (1970) claimed that learners in general do better when they feel they are valued by their teachers since it promotes their painstaking, self-actualization, and creativity. Nunan (2004) suggested that implementing various types of assessment like peer and self-assessment may encourage students' autonomy, raise their confidence, and generates a healthy environment free from anxiety and criticism.

Group work is also an important factor that displays teachers' behaviours while interacting with students. Rance-Roney (2010) describes group work as a classroom practice where students work in teams to construct knowledge and accomplish tasks through collaborative interaction. Most of students reported *" My teacher does not focus a lot on team tasks but rather individual ones".* Thus, certain tasks like debates, collective games, and role plays will not be a part of the classroom activities. According to Brown (2001) the purpose of group work is to enhance students' communicative skills on the one hand; and to minimize affective factors like shyness, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence on the other hand. Moreover, some students stated *" I don't like group work because I feel uncomfortable and neglected"* . They add *" my partners are bossy, impose their opinions on others, and I can't cope with them".* Here, teachers can show ways to deal with conflicts and help students manage themselves. Alfares (2017) suggest that to avoid all types of conflicts among students, teachers should work on group

cohesiveness, seating arrangement, group size, and to set a different role for every student each time the group work is taken place. Further, when it comes to group work evaluation, they reported *" I am not satisfied with the way of evaluation, my teacher praise all members of the group equally though not all of them are active"*. In this, sense teachers seem to be unfair with everyone and not playing their expected role in maintaining group cohesiveness. Kagan (as stated in Kondo, 2010) suggest that equal participation in a given task and equal evaluation are corner stones to facilitate the implementation of collaboration and team activities in the teaching and learning process.

Teacher talk is the language that teachers use in the classroom when they give questions or explain something to students, or when they want to check if students understand the material which is introduced in the classroom. Teacher talk time within the EFL classroom has been critically evaluated in the process of endeavouring to increase students' practice time Willis (as stated in Davies, 2011). In this study, participants claimed that *teachers tend to be authoritarian by taking all the stage during learning hours*. Studies suggested, at least indirectly, that the amount of teacher talk time might be inversely correlated to the degree of students' active learning opportunities, i.e. the greater the amount of teacher talk time, the less the students get to practice in classroom and therefore, the less the effectiveness of the lesson (Paul, 2003). Students perceive interruptions as demotivating during performances and should be moderate and less excessive. A quote by Richards and Lockhart (1996, p. 3) illustrates the impact of teacher talk time when a teacher after viewing a videotape of their own lesson saying *"I had no idea, I did so much talking and didn't let students practice"*. Hence, this signifies that the quantity of teacher talk is not consistent neither with quality nor efficiency of teaching. Davies (2011) proposed a number of techniques to optimise the balance between teacher talk and students talk.

- Management of error correction
- Management of responses and elicitation
- Students pair and group work

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- Instruction clarification
- Deep understanding of students interests and behaviours

4. Conclusion

This study revealed students' attitudes about teachers' practice in dealing with EFL students and its impact on their motivation. The results obtained from the focus group interview displayed that teachers have lack of awareness in the teaching practice. Therefore, aspects like teachers' talk time, variety of topics, group work, and adequate feedback should be reconsidered because they are cornerstones in the teaching profession. When dealing with students, it is important to make them feel comfortable, well treated, respected, and valued not just as students but also as mature members of society. The nature of the relationship between teacher and student should be characterized by flexibility, interaction, honesty, and credibility. Teachers and researchers are invited to take into consideration students' interests and perceptions as a method of self-evaluation. Objectively speaking, it is important to point out that the fluctuation of teachers' practice relies primarily on two major factors: students and environment. Hence, classroom task-practice cannot be always constant and gauged out of external factors. Moreover, teaching generally requires spacious classrooms with modern equipment and reasonable number of students to allow teachers to be fair, efficient, and to minimize as much affective factors as possible. This paper (its theoretical, methodological part, as well as the analysis of the research results) may serve as a basis for further research, as well as for comparison with other similar studies.

5.Recommendations

1. The implementation of flipped classroom to raise a positive and relaxing working environment, to promote higher quality work, and to facilitate collaboration for both teachers and students.
2. Successful teaching practice should be accompanied with the use of ICT tools inside the classroom to support innovation and teaching methods diversity

3. A pre-service training and in-service training are mandatory. Student-teachers should be put under the tutelage, supervision, and mentorship of a senior pro before and during the process of professional teaching.
4. The Algerian policies of university should incorporate inspecting (supervision) regulations to enhance the quality of teaching.

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