

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department



"THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD LANGUAGE LEARNING"

Presented by:

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To obtain the degree of:

Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas: especialidad en Francés e
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Advisor's Name:

MsD. Ana María Glower de Alvarado

San Salvador, El Salvador, Central America, April 2009

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SCHOOL OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
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GRADUATION SEMINAR

FINAL PAPER

"THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and teachers from all fields are attributed with diverse kinds of characteristics that must exist in all of those whose purpose is to warrant an effective learning in students. It is concerning to this, that ESL Teachers not only need to have some previous academic knowledge in pedagogy, but also they have to reflect on their personality when teaching for achieving a more effective learning outcome and being able to deal with different students' needs and nature.

The essence of this bibliographical research is to present the interest and concern about effects on students' attitudes toward language learning influenced by teacher-student relationship. Likewise, this research overlooks many cognitive theorists such as: Brophy J. Good and Pianta Robert C., who argue that "learning is a social event and their studies claim the importance for teachers to avoid neglecting to form emotionally warm, supportive relationships with and among their students."

It is crucial to recognize that every teacher has his or her own teaching style which provides, in most of the cases, an agreeable learning environment for students; understanding that a positive learning environment must be one in which school staff and students build interactions in which people feel accepted, respected and where learning is the main focus, by

overcoming challenges and changes at the moment of teaching students.

OBJECTIVES

General :

A) To point out teacher-student relationship relevance for enhancing an effective and enthusiastic interaction with languages.

B) To describe that teacher-student relationship spotlights another possibility to facilitate appropriate learning to Foreign Language students.

JUSTIFICATION

This bibliographical topic is chosen based on the relevance among all the aspects that are involved when learning a second language. Besides that, it is considered of real concern due to the involvement of students' success or failure at the moment of learning a second language. Furthermore, students' knowledge and learning techniques are not just the only factors that contribute to a fruitfully learning process, since attitudes are inner and abstract; they influence students' behavior toward learning a second language.

This research focuses on promoting awareness and consciousness on the staff of professors and the students from the Foreign Language Department, as well as on all ESL teachers who want to become effective ESL educators for their students' benefit and improvements in their academic outcomes as well.

**"THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS ON STUDENTS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE LEARNING"**

There are many things teachers can do to make their classroom a safe and positive place for students to learn. First and foremost, teachers need to be enthusiastic about themselves. They must come in with an energetic attitude. How the teachers feel and appear affects the classroom. Teachers are the facilitators, they set an example, and the teachers are the role model.

The ESL teachers have a great responsibility on rising students' awareness in learning the target language since it is up to them to facilitate students an effective learning and contribute to their academic growth. **However, students not only require the facilitation of this appropriate learning but also establish a true teacher-student relationship, influenced by the engagement of the understanding in the value of students' feelings and at the same time persuading students' attitude and interest toward language learning.**

Being an English teacher encompasses the guidance of students to execute a profitable learning involvement. It means that teachers must consolidate their role by eliciting students' consciousness of the target language learning responsibility they have.

One of the teachers' roles is being an advisor. It is in this position that teachers emphasize teaching about creating conditions in which, somehow, students learn from themselves. However, there exists an exchange of knowledge from teachers to students that is always maintained just for assessing them during their academic growth. Students need to know how and for what they are being advised especially when the teachers' aim is to raise students' awareness in learning the target language.

The importance of awareness-raising in language learning has caught the attention of some researchers, as it is the case of Nakatani Yasou, (2005) who Explains that "the awareness in learning processes is fundamental to all human fields and especially to acquiring complex skills like foreign languages".

According to Nakatani's words, it is understood that students need to create their own autonomy to become independent learners who will be aware of their own skill strengths and weaknesses. Thus, students' autonomy enhances teachers to facilitate their students an appropriate learning and make them involve into the process.

It deserves special consideration that some people "pick up" second language without attending to formal classes, as it is the case of children and immigrants who live in a target - language community with no formal language study. On the other hand, some others go to language classes and study for fulfilling the wish to learn. It is in this case that how the teachers facilitate students an accurate and appropriate learning become a crucial task for them.

Madrid Daniel In his book "the EFL teachers"(1996) stresses "the importance of teachers presence in the classroom as "indispensable" and highlights the importance over the resources used in the instructional processes such as: Books, hand outs, video sessions, visual aids and tape

recorders as the modifiers in the degree of the success or failure of a language lesson".

According to this author, Madrid Daniel; it is vital to include different resources when the teachers are planning their lessons; it is in this way that a variety of resources might be linked with the previous objectives for that specific lesson. By applying all of these, students are given the opportunity to develop their language skills easily when applying the language in order to communicate, which later will promote them an appropriate learning outcome in the target -language.

Moreover, in the opinion of the author Bilyeu, (1982) it is maintained that "many foreign language teachers find that some students are able to appropriately learn a foreign language easily, but other students learn it with great difficulty", by reading this it is undeniable that it is much more important the application of all kind of available resources to valance the accessibility of an effective learning in the classroom.

It is also interesting to reflect that ESL teachers are characterized for having pedagogical and personal aspects

that strength students' academic growth, since these aspects are perceived by students at the moment of being in a classroom, so that they are being directly affected by a variety of changes on their attitudes.

Among the pedagogical aspects, the author Politzer R.(1981) claims that "Effective teachers use an array of teaching strategies because there is no single, universal approach that suits all situations to improve learning achievement".

It is inferred from these words that teachers must use different strategies in different combinations with different students since students' learning outcomes will be fulfilled effectively for them .According to the researcher and author Feldman Robert, (2005)"Effective pedagogy practice promotes the well-being of students, teachers and the school community, but among all this it improves students and teachers' confidence by implementing quality of learning and teaching in the school".

It is tactfully presented how the pedagogical aspects group the three essential parts in the learning process, besides that, Rebecca Oxford, (1989) indicates that "the

teacher must design instructions that meet the needs of the individuals with different stylistic preferences in order to determine how and how well students learn a second language"

Besides the duty of ESL teachers to provide learning by pedagogical means to enhance cognitive development and intellectual achievement, it becomes apparent that nonintellectual factors also deserve educators' attention. By nonintellectual factors, it is understood in Madrid's own words that "ESL teachers' personal factors such as friendliness, kindness, open personality, vocation for teaching, patience, enthusiasm, dynamism, adaptability, humanistic interest and sense of humor are especially valued in education". By seeing these aspects, it is assumed that they can be understood from two perspectives, one by the teacher and the other by the students.

Aspects such as: Vocation for teaching, patience, resourceful, adaptability, enthusiasm and humanistic interest are elemental characteristics that are reflected along the teachers' performance at the moment of teaching. Some of these previous aspects already mentioned, allow the teachers to convey the learning-teaching process in a feasible way. Nevertheless, students' prior aspects are:

Friendliness, sense of humor, kindness, dynamism and open personality which transfer to students the idea of a more relaxing atmosphere when being taught. These aspects also capture students' interest by making teachers reach their students interaction with the language.

Even though, the pedagogical and personal aspects on a teacher work as a base for maintaining a teacher-student interaction, this interaction might not openly occur if the teacher has not promoted the conditions for developing a true and suitable relationship with his or her students. Therefore, if a relationship exists an impact might produce effects in both participants; teachers and students, and a series of elements would be present among the relationship development to characterize it.

Most important of all the previous aspects above mentioned, in Brophy and Goods' opinion (1974), it can be found that "The teacher- student relationship allows openly understanding since this is an important factor that strongly emerges students into a reasonable enhancement in their background knowledge". It is from this assertion that having a teacher - student relationship must be a priority for those teachers who are heavily engaged with teaching

principles and promote equitable opportunities to all students at the moment of being taught the target language.

According to the psychologist Pianta Robert, (1999) "positive student- teacher relationship is characterized by the following elements: open communication, as well as an emotional academic support that exist between students and teachers". These elements previously mentioned have a significant influence in students' attitudes, shaping and determining the effective interest in learning easily the target language.

Another author, in this case; Mortimore Peter (1999), claims that "Effective teaching is characterized by effective enthusiastic communication of subject matter and taking personal interest in students, being willing to help and support them and enhancing their confidence in self-esteem", Whenever an effective teaching happens in a classroom, students' learning process effectiveness will take place positively as a result of applying these convenient elements for reaching academic success.

It is remarkable for ESL teachers that when students are praised as people, their willingness increases in immeasurable manners. Besides that, by making them feel

heavily motivated, teachers conduct students to reinforce their prosperity self- learning

In addition some teachers must know that along the way of teaching a major part of their success is due to their ability to establish positive and meaningful relationship with their students. Teachers must therefore take the lead in developing such relationships to demonstrate actively to students that they genuinely care about them and to establish an agreeable and friendly teacher-student relationship without trying to become a personal friend of each student.

If teachers do not take time to get to know their students and establish a rapport with them as individuals, they will not be able to get these students to meet the challenges of learning. For example the author Sirinan S. Khalsa in his book "**Teaching discipline and self respect**" (2007), he set the following example: " *when I begin the year with a class of new students, I always concentrate during the first week primarily on rapport-building activities, I encourage the students to tell me a little about themselves, what they enjoy doing outside of school,*

their likes and dislikes, what pets they might have, what they hope to get out of the year and so forth.

I also share appropriate information about myself as a teacher, a husband and a father. This keeps the students the feeling that I genuinely interested in connected in them as people. I know that without rapport, they will not want to learn what I need to teach. Often bringing a small photo album can start this essential process with my students", as this author has explained, student-teacher relationship is the fundamental key; according to his point of view, to convey students' interest to learn and communicate their ideas in the target language. The fact of interchanging student-teacher information facilitates teachers to have a clearer frame of their students' academic background, feelings and values as members of a society as well as personal experiences which have molded them until the point of getting some particular qualities as individuals.

The engagement of the understanding in the value of students' feelings and attitudes into the teacher-student relationship is what is better known as one of the three domains from "Bloom's Taxonomy" (1973) called, the affective domain which includes the manner in which individuals deal

with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciations, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes.

By pointing out this domain, it can be inferred that it is necessary not to forget that the cognitive and psychomotor domains are also important in the learning process, but it is the affective domain which can prompt changes in students' attitudes due to the aspects involved in this domain.

The researcher and also professor from Oxford University, Jane Arnold, (1999) arguments that "the implementation of the affective domain has helped her to guide her students' language learning by incorporating: Reflection group and group discussion into language classroom", about Arnold's professional example, it is noticeable how the interest from students' opinions, feelings and life in general can auto complement these students' participation in classes and learning itself.

She also states on her book "affecting language learning" that the affecting domain and emotional factors influence language learning by proposing a holistic approach in which language learning experiences will be

much more effective when both: affect and cognition are considered.

After having read some knowledgeable authors in the teaching area, exposing their examples and personal experiences related to attitude and language leaning, our main concern is reinforced when we claim that a teacher-student relationship plays a pivotal role in changing students' attitudes toward language learning. Being this the priority of making students' attitude be favorable toward language learning as well as getting students involved in their own learning through the establishment of the teacher- student relationship.

This teacher- student relationship involves nonintellectual factors, which deserve educators' attention to create or consolidate on students the target language learning responsibility. All of these, to make students autonomous as well as teachers to facilitate their students an appropriate learning and make them engage into the process.

It is in this process that ESL teachers make use of pedagogy and their personality for maintaining a teacher-student interaction, but these ones are not enough to

promote the conditions for encouraging students to plunge into the target language interaction and become confident.

It is remarkable for ESL teachers to praise students as people and establish a true teacher-student relationship that it is characterized by the engagement of the understanding in the value of students' feelings and at the same time persuading students' attitude and interest toward language learning to fulfill the reinforcement of students' prosperity self-learning. Thus, it must be mentioned that the students' success may be more a factor of the skill and personality of the teacher and how this one establishes a fruitfully relationship with his or her students than of the methodology itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the gained understanding during this bibliographical research and our experience as students for six years, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In the process of teaching a foreign language it is not only important to develop and possess pedagogical and personal aspects as a teacher, but there is also a huge need in having a true teacher- student relationship; which is essential, since it has productive and emotional effects on students' attitudes toward language learning.
- ESL Teachers need to be academically prepared for teaching the target language in an appropriate way, using and balancing the different learning and teaching strategies. Nevertheless, they must establish a trustful and respectful rapport with students which leads students to learn more effectively.

METHODOLOGY

To carry out the present bibliographical research the following steps were followed:

First, the researched topic was selected from a variety of topics that were overlooked during the development of the modules. The second step was to search the literature based on the chosen topic. To do this, some techniques were used such as: skimming, scanning and mapping; also, cards to collect the information were written.

After reading carefully the gathered information, the third step was to develop the argument. This consisted on writing the thesis statement or claim; and also an outline was prepared to start organizing our ideas logically. Then, the fourth step to follow was to survey the literature. It consisted on assembling, synthesizing and analyzing the data from different books in order to draw conclusions, and provide the basis for addressing the research question.

The fifth step was to classify the literature in which the current understanding of the topic was interpreted and the thesis statement was completely reaffirmed.

Finally, the sixth step was to write the final report. In this step, there was a revision and edition of the information producing this bibliographical research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the purpose of helping the Foreign Language Department the new curriculum, the following recommendations are suggested for being taken into consideration:

- According to this bibliographical research, for teachers to be successful ESL educators, it is necessary to teach students in a comfortable environment in which students can feel that there exists a rapport with them.

- ESL Teachers not only need to be academically prepared but also conscious and interested in dealing with individuals as part of their own responsibility, to foster them to be attracted for learning the target language in an effective manner.

- Teachers and Students should not mislead the purpose of maintaining a student-teacher relationship, by trying to get a personal benefit or privilege.

- Students also have to contribute along with their teachers to grow the student-teacher relationship and cooperate by being willing to accept any necessary changes in the classroom environment for contributing in the improvement of their attitudes toward the language learning.

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