The Relationship between Teacher's Attitudes and Students' Motivation - Case of Undergraduate Students in North Cyprus Universities

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Abstract

This paper attempted to find out which behaviors of teachers affect the motivation of students. The study adopted a mixed-method approach to finding out the answers to the questions under study. A questionnaire was administered to the students studying in the department of English in the universities of North Cyprus. The questionnaire attempted to find out the motivating behaviors of teachers in English classrooms. Apart from this, seven students were interviewed to find out the most motivating interpersonal behaviors of teachers. The major findings of this study show that the teachers have a vital role to play inside and outside the classroom in motivating students and to enhance their learning. The positive attitude of teachers makes students participate actively in class hence lead to better academic performance. We can conclude that the teachers' attitudes affect students' urge and awareness to develop them academically and personally. The findings of this study can help the teachers to understand the needs of the students and help them feel motivated to obtain better learning outcomes. Course designers can also benefit from the findings of this study. They can design the courses/lesson plans or the activities according to the students' interest to ensure the required outcomes of the course since the findings of this study have been derived directly from the students.

Keywords: self-actualization, needs hierarchy, constructional communication, education psychology, nonverbal behaviors

Editor's Note

Reema Aslam RAO is a senior lecturer at Final International University, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). She had worked with many organizations in Pakistan and provided services to prepare customized lesson plans according to the needs of each group of learners. Her many interests include academic and scientific writing, in particular, effective grammatical and linguistic feedback, and lesson planning. Her most recent presentations have been on the topics of motivation, and corrective feedback.

Introduction of the Study

English language is the modern language and has become the main tool of human interaction in various areas. The use of English has gained popularity as Dalby (2002) commented that "no one can doubt that the use of English worldwide is growing year by year, as is the demand for English language teaching" (p. 10).

Although students' learning can be enhanced by their internal desire to achieve something, it cannot be denied that it does get affected by external sources such as rewards. With the help of increased students' autonomy, application of classroom

knowledge into real, competence, and self-viability can significantly increase student's interest in lessons (Ferlazzo, 2015 & Zhang, Solmon, & Gu, 2012).

It has been accepted by researches and learners that motivation can accelerate the rate of learning and it is the key factor for the success of second language learning. Motivation provides the initial impetus and later driving force to initiate and sustain the learning process. Remarkable abilities, appropriate curricula, and good teaching will not provide desired outcomes if the individuals are not motivated. Whereas, a motivated individual can make up for deficiencies in his learning style and aptitude (Dorneyi, 2009).

Gardner & Lambert (1972) gave importance to the fact that although second language learning largely depends on the individuals' aptitude however, motivation can override aptitude.

The word motivation has its root in the Latin language. The meaning of this word is 'to advance, progress, or to move'. From this statement, we can conclude that the study of motivation regards the study of action (Vural, 2007). The views on the definition of motivation largely vary, however, most of the researchers agree upon the fact that motivation involves human behavior and investigates in which order or criteria a person is behaving. It refers to the choice of a certain action, the perseverance of the person to perform that action, and the effort given to perform that action" (Dornyei, 2001b, p. 8).

According to Johnstone (1999), the term motivation is defined as an energizer that helps to accomplish a particular target. In the same way, as indicated by Ryan & Deci (2000), a motivated person is someone who has a desire to progress to achieve a goal. Hence it can be implied that without motivation a person would not have the desire to achieve his goal. When applied to the educational setting, a learner would not be able to accomplish his academic targets if he is not motivated. This can also affect the result in terms of overall academic performance. Cook (2000) proposed that the ability to learn a language is distinctive in different individuals. This implies that not only the levels and measures of motivation are unique but there are variations in the sorts of motivation too. Ellis (1994, p. 715) defined the term motivation as "the attempt which learners make for learning a second language because of "their need or desire to learn it".

Therefore, motivation is the result of why people choose to do a particular task. It also involves their consistency and hard work towards achieving the target.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it provides an opportunity for the students to speak about their concerns and choices. It allows them to talk about the teaching factors that motivate them in and outside the classroom. Generally, students do not find a chance to talk and share their concerns this study reflects on the concrete concerns and the factors that they find motivating in teaching and teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Gardner (2001a) claimed that an individual is motivated by observing the efforts that he puts forward to achieve his goals and his consistency with the efforts. A motivated individual does not take the tasks at hand as a burden but enjoys his endeavors to achieve his goal by employing different strategies to achieve the goal. It is a source of positive reinforcement for him. This implies that motivation is goal-directed behavior.

Gardner (2001a) agreed with Dörnyei's argument that three fundamental elements are required to learn L2 which includes effort, desire, and a positive effect. Gardner argued that these elements are necessary to differentiate between motivated and demotivated students.

Each element is necessary but not sufficient if taken in isolation. All three have to act together to exhibit the desired outcome. They all are adequate factors to assess motivation.

Each element is insufficient to reflect motivation on its own, and a motivated student exhibits many other qualities in addition to effort, desire, and affect but these three attributes adequately assess motivation (as cited in Vural, 2007).

Maslow's Needs Theory

The most popular and important theory on the subject of human motivation was proposed by a clinical psychologist Maslow in 1943. His theory was based on the personal judgment of people. He theorized that people are motivated by needs and they take certain actions to fulfill those needs in their lives (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be divided into two categories i.e. growth and deficiency needs and they follow a certain order. It proposes that an individual must satisfy lower basic needs before moving to higher basic needs. Once the individual will be reasonably satisfied only then he will be able to reach the highest level, which is self-actualization (Burleson & Thoron, 2014).

According to Kuar (2013), Maslow's needs hierarchy can be summarized by explaining the five needs which are included in this theory. Psychological needs form the basis of this hierarchy. This comes at the bottom of all other needs. This includes fundamental biological needs, which include food, water, air, house, and so on. The rationale here is that the basic psychological needs of the student should be met.

According to Maslow, "It is quite true that man lives by bread alone – when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?" (Maslow,1943: 370). Maslow's needs hierarchy suggests that once the need is satisfied, its emergence of new needs adds to the hierarchy and the process continues.

The second level in the hierarchy is safety needs. This implies that a student should feel secure in the classroom. He should know that he is as secure in the classroom as he feels in his own home. Students should be assured that they are being taught in a harmless environment.

A case of progress from physiological to security needs as motivators is the fundamental reason behind a drastic change in the demands of the labor community and the employees in the private and government sectors. In prior years, organizations used to emphasize on a greater salary for the satisfaction of psychological needs but now the security needs and safety arrangements are more accentuated in an attempt to motivate employee by providing and mentioning health care benefits, accident insurance plans and so on (Venugopalan, 2007)

Then next are the social needs. The third level of the pyramid is needs associated with love and belonging. These needs are met through satisfactory relationships—relationships with family members, friends, peers, classmates, teachers, and other people with whom people collaborate. Healthy relationships imply acknowledgment by others. The satisfaction of psychological and security needs make people seek for other individuals who can satisfy their social needs by loving them. When applied to the context of learning a language, students also love teachers who make them feel comfortable, respected, and loved. It is important to establish relationships where students are assured that they are accepted. (Martin & Joomis, 2007).

It refers to a sense of belongingness of students with the class and their classmates. Teachers should design such activities in their lessons, which include pair and group work so that students get a chance to collaborate and should not feel isolated.

The next level is self-esteem. It refers to the sense of taking care of each other's self- respect they should learn how to work together. Students come from different learning styles so a teacher should motivate them to respect each other's abilities and flaws

The need for self-esteem reflects the wish of an individual to be accepted by others and to stand out by being recognized as extraordinary. The wish for this type of recognition may arise from an achievement where one feels proud of himself. Unlike lower-order needs, these needs are rarely satisfied (Venugopalan, 2007).

The last level, which comes at the top of the pyramid in needs hierarchy, is self-actualization. This stage suggests that after meeting all four stages of needs hierarchy a learner will be able to give his full potential and can aspire to achieve a certain goal. It can be concluded from Maslow's theory that all aspects of learners' needs should be taken into account. The physical needs of students, ensuring that the students are comfortable in the learning environment and feel relaxed. (Maslow, 1987, p. 64). Another implication of Maslow's theory is that teacher to teacher and teacher to student interaction can make a foundation for students to feel motivated. Teachers can cultivate the ground that can be used as an opportunity for students to build motivating and learning relationships.

The Effect of Teachers' Behavior on Student Motivation

There is no one certain and set method of motivating students therefore, realistically the task of motivating students will never be an oversimplified process (Scdeideciker & Freeman, 1999 p. 13). Li (2006), stated that the classroom is not only an academic environment but it is also a real social world, and in this world teachers and students have an influence on each other. It is an important factor as this interaction might affect the learning of students as well (Seifert, 2004).

Wilson & Wilson (1992) sorted out the factors within the family and school environment that can have an impact on students' learning. He found out that teachers' support has a consequential effect on the motivation achievement of the students.

Moreover, Dornyei (2001) stated that motivation is a very important factor in learning a second language. If an individual is de-motivated he will not be able to learn the language effectively and the responsibility of motivation or de-motivation of a student lies copiously on the teacher.

Based on the literature discussed above, the emerging conclusion is that teachers play a vital role to create and increase the motivation of students. According to Winkie (2005), with the help of the motivational strategies used by the teachers, the learning and motivation of the students can be enhanced to help them learn a foreign language.

In the light of the above discussion this study tried to explore the answers to the following research questions:

What are the most motivating personal behaviors of teachers?

Which behaviors affect EFL student motivation the most in English Language class?

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study followed the mixed-method approach. Data was collected using a qualitative method i.e., interviews and quantitative method i.e., questionnaire.

Data Collection Instruments

Participants

The participants of this study were 80 Undergraduate students (34 male and 46 female) enrolled in the Undergraduate Program at the universities in North Cyprus. An additional 15 students were involved in the pilot study. However, later on, they were excluded from the study while collecting final data. The age of the participants of this study ranged from a minimum of 15 to a maximum of 30 years old.

This study involved two data collection tools. For the first research question about the interpersonal behaviors of teachers, seven students were interviewed. The following question was asked by the students during the interview: What do you think are the most motivating behaviors of teachers?

A questionnaire was designed comprising the items on teacher motivational behaviors to collect the data about the motivating behaviors of teachers in the classroom during teaching sessions. This 'Teacher Motivational Behavior Questionnaire' was designed after referring to Dornyei & Csizer (1998). Finally, out of 62 items, 13 items were selected to be added in the questionnaire and were written in the English language. The whole questionnaire comprised of the items related to teacher's lecturing style, personal features, rapport with students, error correction and evaluation techniques and lastly giving and evaluating homework. Students were given the right to keep themselves anonymous and they were given an option to opt-out of the study at any time by contacting the researcher through the contact details given in the questionnaire.

Section one of the questionnaire was aimed to collect demographic information of the age and gender of participants. Section two consisted of five Likert Scale items about the behaviors of teachers during the teaching sessions.

Data was collected after the midterm exams of the students allowing them adequate time to get familiarity with the instructor and also to gain an understanding of their verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

Validity and Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, two ELT experts were asked to identify repeated or irrelevant items in the questionnaire. They suggested corrections for the items they viewed as difficult for the students to understand. The questionnaire items were corrected as per their suggestions. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was piloted with 15 students. Those students did not take part in the actual data collection later on and were excluded from the study.

Consequently, after finding out the reliability scores of each item in the questionnaire, some items were omitted and some were simplified. This process resulted in 13 items to be added in the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the students rated the behaviors of teachers towards themselves during English language classes with a scale ranging from highly motivating to highly demotivating. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was designed after referring to Dornyei and Csizer (1998) 'Teacher Motivational Behaviors Questionnaire', the Cronbach Alpha reliability for the overall questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Table 1Reliability Analysis for 'Teacher Motivational Behaviors Questionnaire

Teacher's Lecturing Style (1-36) Teacher's Features (37-45)	.89 .83
Teacher's Rapport with Students (46-52)	.82
Teacher's Error Correction and Evaluation Techniques (53-57)	.72
Teacher's Giving and Evaluating Homework (5862)	.85

Cronbach Alpha for 62 İtems .94

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the students who are studying at the undergraduate level at universities in TRNC. Therefore, the results of the study can be generalized for the students studying at the undergraduate level in North Cyprus only.

Findings and Discussion

To collect information about the most motivating behaviors of teachers regarding their interpersonal behaviors, interviews were conducted. Seven undergraduate students who were studying at the universities of North Cyprus were interviewed. Written consent from all the students was taken to take part in interviews. The items listed below in the table show the motivating behaviors in ascending order from the most to the least.

 Table 2

 The Most Motivating Interpersonal Behaviors of Teachers

- 1. being friendly
- 2. being enthusiastic and energetic
- 3. Accessibility
- 4. greeting students
- 5. addressing them by name
- 6. putting a smile on his/her face
- 7. sense of humor

As can be seen from the table that the majority of the students feel motivated when the teacher talks to them in a friendly manner as one interviewee uttered that "when my teacher talks to me in a friendly manner I feel comfortable talking to her. I participate more in class and I do not feel stressed. However, when she talks to me in a strict voice I feel hesitant to ask anything". This finding is in line with the finding of the study conducted by (Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011) in which the participants stated being friendly as a motivating behavior of teachers for them.

Empirical researches (Murray, 1983a. 1983b, 1985; Perry & Magnusson, 1987,1989) has shown the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and motivation of students. In this study it has been proven as one of the participants uttered that: "Sometimes I feel lazy or bored to attend my English class but when my teacher enters the class with enthusiasm and energetic attitude I also start feeling energetic. It makes me feel happy and I feel my teacher is happy to teach me. "

According to the data in the table, the next motivating behavior is when the students can access the teacher. The opportunity for students to interact with teachers and ask for help is very appreciable as it can lead to openness and creates a comfortable environment for students. (Gecer, 2002). One participant stated that "If I find the homework difficult I usually do not want to do it but when I know that I can ask my teacher and she will respond to me if I will be stuck then I feel that I should study because my teacher will be there to help me".

Greeting the students after entering in the class was also seen as a motivation factor for the students. "Greeting students can have an immediate effect to create a positive environment. It's the first step to make a connection with your students and acknowledge their presence". To create a positive relationship with students, the positive behavior of a teacher is important. The act of greeting students can be considered as an act to foster that positive behavior (Yavuzer, 2000).

Another motivating factor for students is when their teacher calls them by their name. Syverud (1993:247) challenged educators to "ask yourself who is the one teacher in your entire life who made the biggest difference for you who taught you so well that you still think about him or her as your best teacher. I bet that for almost all of us, that best teacher was someone who knew you by the name".

When the teacher puts a smile on her face, students feel less stressed and they do not feel that teacher is authoritarian in class. A smile can work wonders as it can make students feel at ease. It conveys a message that they are in a safe and caring environment. Once they are sure about it then learning will easily take place (Ghiora, 2010).

If the teacher adds humor while teaching, students feel motivated. One participant stated, "I like when my teacher adds humor while explaining something or while talking to me. I feel fresh and ready for the next session. According to Pollack & Freda (1997), the student-teacher relationship may be improved when humor is infused into the classroom. Another advantage of adding humor in lessons is that it decreases stress and makes students feel happy (Moran, 1996).

The second research question aimed to find out the behaviors of teachers in learning situations with the maximum effect on student motivation. Table 2 shows the results of students' responses after they were analyzed on SPSS 20.

Table 3Teachers' Behaviors in Class During the Lesson

	N	M	SD
When the teacher shows her concern for my academic progress I feel	80	4 .7 6	0.48
When the teacher gives me lessons that I can relate with my personal experiences I feel	80	4.73	0.52
When the teacher uses audio-visual aids in lessons I feel	80	4.63	0.55
When the teacher gives positive written feedback on my assignments I feel	80	4.55	0.5
When the teacher monitors us continuously I feel	80	4.53	0.74
When the teacher asks questions during the lecture I feel	80	4.31	0.94
When the teacher takes feedback of the key points of the lecture I feel	80	4.03	1.08

	N	M	SD
When the teacher takes breaks through the lesson I feel	80	4.02	0.74
When teachers involve us in-class activities I feel	80	3.96	0.93
When the teacher repeats instructions I feel	80	3.63	1.23
When the teacher states the objectives of the lesson I feel	80	2.95	1.27
Giving regular home works makes me feel	80	2.51	1.5
When the teacher delivers lecture-based lessons I feel	80	2.4	1.73

Key: N= *No. of students* M= *Mean* SD= *Standard Deviation*

The table shows the mean values and standard deviations of the behaviors that students think are motivating for them. The most motivating behavior is when the teachers are concerned about the academic progress of their students (M=4.76). The next behavior that motivates the student the most is when they can relate the lessons with their real-life (m=4.73). They can make connections to the lessons with real-life situations. (Sample, 2015) also investigated the link between the use of authentic materials and student motivation. The findings of his study revealed that students' motivation increase when they were able to relate the class activities with real-life scenarios such as the use of restaurant menus, movies, and so on.

Students like when teachers use audio-visual aids in their lessons (M=4.63). From the table, it can be concluded that the students do not find it motivating if the teacher delivers lessons with lectures only (M=2040). However, they like when the teacher involves them in activities (M=3.96). This can be supported by the fact that they like the lessons in which their teachers use audio-visual aids. According to Dash & Dash (2007), visual aids are attractive to the sense of vision in which children see something. Furthermore, Singh (2005) defined visual aids as any device which can increase the practice of an individual either by sight or by sound.

Positive written feedback on the assignments of the students is another motivating factor for the students (M=4.55). As it is apparent that students feel good when teachers show concern for their academic progress therefore, giving them feedback would motivate them more to learn. It is also another behavior that shows that teachers are concerned. Continuous monitoring (M=4.53) during class is more motivating for the students than asking questions during the lessons (M=4.31). According to Frymier (1993), giving compliments on students' written work, writing positive comments, showing concern about their academic performance, and guiding them can take students to higher levels of academic performance with increased amounts of motivation. Students also do not find to be interested to give feedback for the key points of the lecture (M=4.03) neither do they want to participate in class activities (3.96).

Students find continuous class hours to be boring. Students like to take breaks during their class hours (M=4.02). Sometimes teachers repeat instructions to make sure that the students have understood the idea being taught to them. However, according to table 2, students do not like this teaching attitude of teachers. They also do not seem to be interested in knowing the objectives of the lesson (M=2.51). Students do not like to get home works. From the mean score, it was found to be the least motivating behavior of teachers in the classroom.

The findings of this study are in line with the findings of another study conducted by (Uluga, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011) which found out that the positive attitude of teachers

has a positive effect on students motivation, academic performance, and personality development. On the other hand, negative comments or any sort of verbal or non-verbal negative behavior exhibited by teachers can lead to negative academic results. The behavior of a teacher affects a student's life not only in the classroom but throughout his life. It must be remembered that students take teachers as mentors and role models therefore the views and perception of a teacher about life can also have an impact on the success of our students. Many factors can be judged as indicators for the lower academic performance of students. Motivation is lowered when a teacher fails to build a positive relationship with students. (Oluremi, 2013) found out that among many factors affecting the students' motivation and academic performance, teachers' professional behavior is the chief reason.

Recommendation

This study has found out that teachers play an integral part to motivate students and to enhance their learning. The positive attitude of teachers has a positive effect on students' academic performance. We can conclude that the teachers' attitudes affect students' urge and awareness to develop themselves academically and personally. Therefore, teachers should be reminded of their importance. They should create an environment in which students can feel relaxed and comfortable. The results of the study can be useful for teacher trainers as well. Teacher trainers can help the teachers to understand and address the needs of students inside and outside the classroom. Teachers should be trained not only to use textbooks and resources but they should also be trained to improve the interpersonal skills that can affect the students and help them achieve effective and desired to learn outcomes.

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