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Factors influencing language teaching and language learning

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to find the factors influencing language teaching and language learning. Therefore, this paper attempts to explain the factors which are important and effective in teaching and learning a new language. In addition, it focuses on some factors which affect the acquisition of English as a foreign language unsuccessful. The work is identify in the following variables like: Motivation, attitude, personality factors, socio-cultural factors, and instructional factors. Furthermore, the intention also to identify the different factors that negatively affect the teaching and learning environment, and find possible solutions to promote the teaching and learning. The points which make the learning unsuccessful are: Limited use of modern instructional methods, absence of training workshops, and insufficient amount of exposure to the target language. These points are additional factors of poor performance.

Keywords: Effective factors, language teaching and language learning, motivation, target language, and methods

Introduction

Apart from having good materials and using good and effective methods for a successful language instruction, there are some factors which influence in teaching and learning a language. Different researchers focus on different factors. Some of them focused on the factors affecting the students, some of them focused on the factors affecting the process of learning, and few focused on the factors influencing the instructors. It means the factors influencing language teaching and learning influence all people in one way or another. In addition, it is wrong to say that the factors affecting learning may be related only to the students, or it is related only to the teachers. This is does not look appropriate, because teaching and learning are not a separable phenomenon. All factors affect the language learning and teaching process. It means we should not pay attention just in one group of factors, instead we must take all the factors serious, and we should observe the interaction of these factors too. Furthermore, it should be clear that there are some factors which negatively influence the performance of teaching and learning, that we should take it serious. In conclusion, the outcome is to facilitate and improve the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language.

Research Questions

- What are the factors which influence in teaching and learning a language?
- What are the personality factors which have strong affect in language learning and language teaching?
- Which factors have negative influence in teaching and learning a language?

Literature Review

Teaching and learning are the two influential elements which are both related to human beings. According to Farhady & Delshad (2011) ^[6], both of them are intellectual creatures and they are the gifts with the most powerful instruments in the world, i.e. the brain and the mind. Both the students and instructors use their brain and mind for achieving their goals. Students learn the language through methods and material. On the other hand, both of these creatures are so complex, because when they face a problem, they do not respond in the same way. Therefore, for a successful language teaching factors affecting the teaching and learning is necessary. Abdelhak & Ladi (1995), believe that "The cognitive and effective dimensions may cause teachers to be less successful in teaching English as a second

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language. This is apparently the tree that hides the forest” (p. 3). It means in most EFL context the problem belongs to the lack of all the conditions that would contribute to successful language teaching and learning.

Factors Affecting the Learning/Teaching

The teaching and learning of English Language declined because of some reasons. To explore the factors which is shown to the falling standards of the language teaching and learning of English language in tertiary education. It is needed to examine the environment in which the English language is conducted. According to Brown (2005) [3], some surveys conducted, it shows that in addition to socio-psychological factors, there are other factors like motivation, attitude, language learning strategies and personality types, personality factors, and instructional factors which have positive impact on learners' English learning. In addition, there are other factors that are related to the use of instructional media.

Background Knowledge

Students' background knowledge is mentioned as an important cognitive that can make the learning easy. Regarding to the cognitive theory learning must be meaningful for learners. That is, the new information must be related to the old information.

Affective Factors

Affective variables are belong to the learners' behavior and attitudes. One learner may cite the case of an overachiever who can performs much better than expected because the important factors affect the rate of his or her language learning. But, in the case of underachievers, we can notice that their efficiency is adversely affected by some behavioral or attitudinal problems which are clamp by the context of teaching.

One of the important and affective factor is self-concept. Fortunately, the students who have positive self-concept may have the risk of initiating conversation without much concern for the errors during the conversation. Learners who have the high self-concept will not scare from the instructional environment. They will pay attention in the grammatical and communication errors completely natural for non-native speakers of English.

Self-concept also affect learners' approach to solve the important problems. For example, the students who are internals try to put the blame for their failure on themselves. But the students who are externals try to blame outside factors for their failure. Another example can be the case of an introvert, they may feel shy to use the target language in the classroom, whereas, in the case of extrovert, it can be different they will expected to prove to be outgoing and relaxed to initiate communication in the classroom.

Introversion and Extroversion

It is not clear that extroversion or introversion helps the process of second language learning. According to Farhady & Delshad (2011) [6], extroversion belongs to the strong wishes of a person who need to receive the self-esteem. Whereas, introversion belongs to a situation in which a person works hard to perform independently of what other people might think about him or her. Although introversion and extroversion have been identified in studies as an important factors in other areas of educational research.

There is a little attention in studies of language learning strategies which are very often dependent with success in language learning. “Whether or not extroverts or introverts are better language learners has been a subject of much debate. Some researchers tend to associate extroversion with better language-learning performance” (Dewaele & Furnham, 2012, p. 109) [5]. The persons who have introverts, they may have an inner strength to character that extroverts do not have.

Motivation

Before we examine the effect of motivation on language learning, it is very essential to know that motivation is the only factor which, combined with other variables, influence learner success. Gardner & Lambert (2016) [7] found that the absence of a positive attitude towards the target language and the target culture was responsible for the lack of success in most adult students.

According to researchers motivation can be shown to be the backbone of my classroom learning and teaching. When the learners motivate, the instructors can do his work in an easiest way. A motivated teacher can do a lot to improve the students. In teaching profession the effort is an important part. According to Hawley (2018) [9], lack of motivation cause the teachers to be less successful in their teaching. Cook (2018) [4], also endorses this concept by deducing that “high motivation is one factor that causes successful learning in reverse successful learning cause's high motivation” (118).

Motivation refers to the inner drive, attitude, and desire that guide to a particular action. Motivation can be one of the important factors of learning. Anyone who is unmotivated in learning will not learn, it does not matter from any method, materials, or strategies we use. In addition, it is very important to understand how motivation can be created, and maintained. As Adamson (1988) [2] stated that foreign language learners have two kinds of motivation: extrinsic or instrumental, and intrinsic or integrative. It is mentionable that motivation is not an independent and isolated factor to influence language learning. It can be influenced positively or negatively by other factors such as learning strategies, aptitude, self-evaluation and intelligence.

Intrinsic or integrative motivation depends on a person's internal values and the reward of feeling good to achieve a positive reaction. In addition it refers to a situation in which language learning acts as an instrument that would benefit the learner. For example, a person learns a language to get a job, to earn money or to publish papers. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to praise, awards, recognition and benefits.

Attitude

Attitude is a set of beliefs to act or evaluate behavior in a certain way. Language attitude is explained as a complex notion which can be defined as part of the existential competences, but also as a dynamic structure of learner attitudes. Attitude and motivation is related to each other, but they looks different in certain respects. As I mentioned before that motivation is a factor that encourage the students to learn a target language. Whereas, attitude is explained as the positive or negative feelings that students have towards the language, the language teacher, the language class, and the people who speak that language. Moreover, some scholars believe that motivation and attitude are the two

most important factors that shows to be successful in learning a language.

As Maley (2000) ^[12], added that attitude became more negative and motivation decreased the longer students studied the target language. So, there is possibility that students will get tired studying the language and have a more negative attitude towards learning a language (p. 56). Of course, teachers should find the reasons and make changes in teaching, and try to understand the source of misunderstanding. Furthermore, they should know students' purpose, background knowledge, interest, and learning style to keep their level of motivation and positive attitude in learning a language.

Language-Learning Strategies and Personality Types

Learning strategies are generally deliberate, planned, and consciously engaged behaviors, techniques, approaches, or activities undertaken by learners to ease the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information (Richards & Rodgers, 2001 p. 820) ^[13]. Among the researchers the definition of learning strategies are different, it looks that there are some agreement that strategies have such as learner-based process, approaches, actions and techniques, problem and goal-oriented, and particular tactics.

Different scholars of learning strategies provided the most comprehensive and detailed classification of learning strategies. According to Hudson (2000) ^[10], language learning strategies have two major categories, direct and indirect. Direct strategies are divided in to subgroups, like memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies divided in to metacognitive, effective and social strategies.

Personality Factors

There is an important awareness to examine human personality to find solution to the problems in foreign language classroom. That is why the study of the role of personality in second language learning resulted in a greater understanding of the language learning process, and using a better teaching methods. In fact the personality factors affect the development of feelings. The feelings are not just about ourselves but it relates the others with whom we interact. It means the learners must be aware of their environment and be conscious of situation, people, and objects. In learning a new language the learners must amendable not only with the people with whom they are communicating but also with the language too. Some of the personality factors which have strong influence to the language learning process are explained below.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense or personal value. Moreover, how much you appreciate yourself. Self-esteem affects not only what we think, but also how we feel. It has important affect for our happiness and enjoyment of life. It is also affect events in our life, for example, our relationships, our work and how we care for ourselves and our children. Self-esteem is made from learners' experiences with themselves, with others and with the environment that we live. Therefore, there can be different kinds of self-esteem. One kind of self-esteem is called general or global, it is belong to the evaluation of a person and the environment. The next kind of self-esteem is situational or specific, it is develop the evaluation of a

person in a particular context. Positive self-esteem help language students to participate in language learning activities and improve their ability.

Inhibition

Inhibition is a feeling that makes one self-conscious and unable to act in a relaxed and natural way. It is closely related to self-esteem. People build up a number of defenses to protect themselves while necessary. In childhood the growing degrees of awareness, to respond and value start to shape a good system of features, which people show and associate with themselves. The persons who have a higher degree of self-esteem, they are able to threat with their existence, and so their defenses are marginal. On the other hand, the persons who have weaker self-esteem build up huge walls of inhibition to protect their self-perceived weakness or lack of self-confidence. According to Farhady & Delshad (2011) ^[6], "It needs to be pointed out, however, that meaningful language acquisition requires some degree of identity conflict, simply because language learners will need to take on a new identity once they acquire competence in another language" (221).

Risk-taking

Risk-taking is one of the most important way of a good language learning. Learners accept what they don't know, and they focus on what they know. They don't wait for perfect pronunciation or form. As Harmer (2001) ^[8] stated that, successful language learning happens when the students have the willingness to take risks when they face a problem. In language learning risk-taking belong to specific activities that will help the students to develop their language abilities. According Brown (2005) ^[3], the students who have risk-taking they will improve their learning from the mistake they made. Risk-taking does not belong to a situation where a talkative student dominates the class with irrelevant verbal product. The teacher must observe the level of students' talk. In essence, high risk-takers who want to dominate the class may need to observe again by the teacher.

Socio-cultural Factors

Culture make a context of affective behavior for everybody. As Lamendella (1997) ^[11], explained that culture establishes a framework by which they can characterized the personal and social life of a person. According to some scholars people receive reality by the context of their own culture. That is why cultural awareness is an affective factor in language learning to avoid misunderstanding between members of different cultures.

It is important to know that students' achievement is affected by social factors. Students both inside and outside of the classroom are influenced by the social situation. For example, there is a rapport between teacher and students, and also the peers may have effect on each other. If the students think that they are at home, and see their classmates as friends, they can easily participate in the activity of the classroom. Instructors must try to develop a friendly atmosphere in which they feel a friendship, security and unity situation. I myself always attempt to have friendly situation in my classes, until the students can find the opportunity to use the language spontaneously, creatively, and productively.

Instructional Factors

The students are the focal point in teaching the second language skills, and the teachers also play a significant role too. Teachers are responsible to the language teaching context in making goals, conducting classes, setting standards, and examining the students' achievements. Instructors also have the responsibility for choosing and preparing the instructional materials.

"A teacher's self-concept, motivation, attitudes toward teaching, the learners and the instructional environment, and professional dedication play a significant role in his/her interaction with the learners" (Maley, 2000, p. 225) ^[12]. It means if a teacher does not have self-concept or motivation cannot teach the learners correctly. Or if a teacher is unsure about herself or himself cannot interact with the students. The result will be loss of management and disability in the classrooms. It is very essential to remember that instructors have an important role in the success of language teaching.

As Faehady & Delshad (2011), explained that language teachers have a more difficult job than teaching the other subjects. An important factor for second language teachers is their qualification, proficiency, and also their professional. Language instructors must have a good command of the language they teach with professional skills. The learners must have familiarity with both language cultures which is needed to make ready for orientation toward the target language and community.

In conclusion, if teachers want to be a successful teacher, they should focus in different factors like: students, materials, presentation of the materials, methods, the instructors' and learners' personality characteristics, techniques, and administrative facilities.

Adverse Conditions that Contribute to the Unsuccessful Foreign Language Learning

All researchers agree that the conditions surrounding the EFL teaching/learning process easily do not contribute to the successful foreign language acquisition. There are some unfavorable condition.

Limited Use of Modern Instructional Methods

Over the last decades so much has occurred in the language classroom that can be depicted as a digital revolution. Investigators indicate that English teachers are not familiar with different new methods. They are understandably more cautious in their language courses. Most of the teachers still use the traditional lecture method, while it is the time that technology is improved and it is ready to enable students in to a world of authentic language use (Abdelhak & Ladi, 1995) ^[1].

Absence of Training Workshops

The next reason is lack of training workshops for teachers. Workshops help teachers update their knowledge with the new teaching and learning methods, especially the newly teachers who are less experience of knowledge, and skills need to be trained on how to teach the students by using effective teaching methods and techniques.

Insufficient Amount of Exposure to the Target Language

The classrooms in which students learn the foreign language is a limited environment. As Hudson (2000) ^[10] stated that without the classrooms the students do not have the opportunity to use the target language and, in addition, there

is no chance for them to talk or interact with members of the target language. Learners do not speak, read, write, and listen to English outside the classroom. Moreover, they do not know about their culture. In learning a new language we must have the opportunity to communicate with others. Researches has shown that a number of students do not communicate the English language even in the classroom. They do not want to interact with their teacher or classmates because they do not want to embarrass themselves by making mistakes. As I experienced these kinds of students in my classes. They do not want to participate in lesson or even if they have problem they do not want to ask. These kinds of students afraid that they may make error or mistake. Studies shows that language learners do not just read in the classrooms, but they should read the magazines, and novels in the library of universities too.

Conclusion

To conclude, the main aim of the factors influencing language teaching and language learning is to identify the ways for teachers and students to facilitate teaching for them. It means teaching and learning belong to both the teachers and students. If any of them do not pay attention, teaching and learning does not take place. The factors which was mentioned in this article are the most important and effective factors which is helpful in teaching and learning a language. For example, motivation is an effective factor in language education which is influence for both teachers and students. If a student is unmotivated he or she cannot learn, while a motivated student can learn. In opposite, if a teacher is unmotivated teaching does not occur effectively, but a motivated teacher can teach very well. In addition, during this research I found attitude, personality factors, socio-cultural factors, and instructional factors are the important and effective factors which are necessary in teaching and learning a new language. Thus, this research comes up with a conclusion that beside effective factors there are some other factors which have negative effect on learners and teachers in teaching and learning behavior like: Limited use of modern instructional methods, absence of training workshops, and insufficient amount of exposure to the target language.

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