

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHERS' PERSONALITY

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Abstract

Teacher's personal trait is critical because it may ominously affect students' motivation in learning. However, some teachers remain unaware of its significance. It was evident in the students' statements stating that they often had to learn with moody teachers who, as a result, ruined their learning motivation. The present study aims to explore the students' perspectives on the EFL teacher's personalities that influence the students' motivation. To achieve the objective, the study utilized case study design in which the data were collected through semi-structured interview conducted to six senior high school students. The data were then analyzed by following Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework. The results showed that all respondents shared agreement on the teacher's personalities that they preferred. They felt happy and motivated when they learned with humble, friendly, kind, caring, patient, and humorous teachers. The results of this study may help the EFL teachers consider their personality as one of the vital aspects that could affect the students' learning motivation. EFL teachers should pay more attention to their attitudes towards the students. In addition, the results suggest that policy makers should formulate rules that encourage teachers to not only focus on their hard skills but also their soft skills such as good personalities.

Keywords— EFL Learning, Motivation, Perspectives, Personalities.

Introduction

It has been widely discussed that EFL teacher's good personalities or qualities are preferred by the students. Sehgal (1994) states that mentally healthy, stable, warm, and nurturing teacher is preferred by the students. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) claim that the students enjoy learning with an EFL teacher who has a good sense of humor since such a teacher enables them to feel at ease and relaxed in the classroom. Moreover, Chen (2012) states that the students are active and motivated when they learn with EFL teachers who are calm, not moody, and with a good temper. To end with, EFL teacher's personality is considered to be one of the most essential aspects in the language learning. It is in line with Trice and Harris (2001) who state that personal qualities of EFL teacher are important elements in language learning process.

Relevant to abovementioned philosophies, it is understandable that the personality of a teacher plays a pivotal role in motivating the students to learn better (Rockoff, 2004). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to show good personalities so that a safe learning atmosphere that encourages the development of their student's motivation can be created. This learning atmosphere may then enhance students' emotional state in undertaking the teaching learning process apart from other relevant supporting factors. Learning is supposed to be as convenient as possible in order to take full advantage of its process.

Teachers' good personalities are required if the teachers want to be effective in their teaching. Effective teachers should be, among others, optimistic, humorous, communicative and



appreciative to the students (Walker, 2008). Good teachers should be friendly, patient, nice, and polite (Khang, 2016). In addition, teachers are encouraged to be motivational, easy going, humorous, humble, respectful, and attentive in order to be a good teacher (Suparman, Hidayat, Ilyas, & Apriliani, 2019). Hence, personality is the main key to become an effective EFL teacher. In this case, positive personality is highly preferred by the students. They expect the teacher to be emotionally supporting to their learning process. Along the same line, they also suggest that classroom environment is comfortable as a result of the teachers' positive personalities. Especially in language learning in which personal interaction frequently occurs between teacher and the students.

However, most of the EFL teachers are still unaware of the importance of their personality. They focus more on teaching materials than paying attention to their personality in the classroom. In fact, some of the teachers underestimate the impact of their personality on the students' motivation and achievement (Dost & Hafshejani, 2017). As a result, many students lose their motivation because of the teacher's personality. The students often complain about the teacher's negative personality such as being moody in the classroom during teaching and learning process (Baloğlu, 2015).

The study concerning personal orientation (rapport) of the EFL teacher in depth and its impact on students' motivation in learning, to the researchers' best knowledge, is few. The gaps encouraged the researchers to conduct the study that explores the student's perspectives on the EFL teacher's personality that are influential on the students' learning motivation. This study is guided by the following research question "What teacher's personalities are influential on students' learning motivation?"

Research Method

The aim of this research is to explore the students' perspectives on the EFL teachers' personalities that are influential on the students' learning motivation. It is relevant to the characteristics of qualitative research approach that explores personal or individual perspectives in identifying their surrounding and occurrences (Dost & Hafshejani, 2017).

Participants

The participants of this study were six senior high school students. There were three categories of participants: low achievers, middle achiever, and high achiever. Each category consists of two students. They were intentionally and equally selected to ensure the perspective distributions from every students' cognitive level. In addition, high school participants are deemed mature enough to provide their perspectives to the phenomena being observe.

Instrument

The instrument of this study was interview. Creswell (2012) defines interview as an appropriate instrument to get deeper information in qualitative research. Semi-structured interview or open-ended questions was used to collect the data. The interview was carried out on the participants' spare time. The interview which asked seven principal questions lasted for the average of fifteen minutes for each participant. It was conducted on March, 14th 2020. When the participants answered the questions and explained their opinions, the researcher audiotaped the interview to ensure the answers when analyzing the data.

Results and Discussion

The present study investigated the students' perspectives on the teachers' personalities that influence students' motivation in learning. Thus, this section presents the findings related to the research objective and discuss those findings from the perspectives of the existing literatures and other empirical studies.

Obtaining the data from the interview, the study bears several findings. The results showed that all students shared agreement on the importance of the teacher's personalities in classroom. They even confirmed that teachers' personalities is more important than the teachers' knowledge. The plausible explanation for this finding is probably the importance of security and comfort on the process of the learning. When the students learned with nice teachers, they admitted that they felt happy to receive learning materials. A fun and calming learning

atmosphere can increase their willingness to learn and their understanding on the materials. It is supported by Connell and Wellborn (1990) who state that students who feel emotionally secure with classmates and teachers are more likely to be active participants in class and to exert more effort in their work thus maintaining or enhancing their academic achievement.

Moreover, the results indicated that there are some personalities of the EFL teachers that the students consider to be able to motivate them to learn. The students answered that *“teacher should be wise”*, *“kind, friendly, humble”*, *“caring, humorous, and patient”*, *“never angry”*, *“always appreciative the students”*. All of the students believed that those types of teacher’s personalities give positive impact to their motivation in learning and hence make the learning effective.

It is reasonable considering the fact that when the teachers have the criteria the students expect, the students become more comfortable in the learning. For instance, the students stated that they understood the materials well when the teachers were fun, and they felt confident when the teacher were respectful. The finding indicates that such personality makes the learning more effective. This finding supports Barnes and Lock (2010) who asserted that EFL teachers who appreciated students’ efforts, respected students, and called them by names were considered effective teachers.

The results of the study indicated that teachers’ personalities are influential towards the students’ language learning motivation. The findings can be explained by taking into account the nature of the motivation itself which, according to the literature, can be influenced by two factors; intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Hamalik, 2018). Language learning motivation can arise due to the intrinsic factors which are in the form of the desire to succeed and the drive for learning needs and hopes for ideals. Moreover, the motivation can also be triggered by the extrinsic factors such as appreciation, conducive learning environment, and interesting learning activities.

In case of the present study, the extrinsic factor comes from the teacher’s personality. Teachers who are not humorous and always serious make the students feel bored and fearful during the teaching and learning. Moreover, when the students learned with a moody teacher, they felt even less enthusiastic. This is in line with Chen (2012) who states that the students showed their distaste to the teacher who was too strict and serious.

The findings indicate that teacher's personality supports the success of the teaching and learning. By having good personalities, the teachers become a good example and role model which may arouse student’s learning motivation and encourage good achievement (Saudagar & Idrus, 2009). Similarly, Prabhu (1990) and Murray (2019) confirmed that the characteristics of EFL teachers with positive attitudes to their students would increase rapport between students and teachers, which might promote productive and successful learning.

This signifies that the personal aspect of the language teachers cannot be neglected. It is the basic capital for teachers, especially in daily behavior (Samani, 2006). It is a necessary part to a sensible and effective teaching (Trice & Harris, 2001). Therefore, according to the results, to be an effective EFL teacher, the teacher should display good personalities such as subtle emotion, good temper, calm demeanor, a good mood, and less annoyance.

Conclusion

The study investigated the students’ perspective on the teacher’s personalities that are influential toward their learning motivation. The results showed that English teachers who have a pleasant personality make them feel more enthusiastic in learning. The data indicated that students enjoyed learning with teachers who are humorous, kind, friendly, and caring. The most important thing is English teacher should have stable emotional condition; they should be patient and have a good mood, so as to make the students actively participate during teaching and learning process. A good English teacher's personality can have a good influence on students. One of them is on student motivation. Students claimed that their learning motivation increased when their teacher taught them in a fun way.

Considering the crucial role of the personal qualities of the teachers on the students’ learning and motivation, this study offers some suggestions. For both teachers and policy

makers, it is essential to start taking into account the essential role of the personal aspect on the teaching and learning. Successful teaching does not only encompass hard skills like good teaching methods, but also soft skills such as good personalities and attitude. For future research, the study suggests that similar investigation be done to different levels of students in order to gain comprehensive understanding on how students in different level of education view the role of teacher's personalities on their learning..

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