Teachers’ Teaching Strategies for Motivating Undergraduate Students to Learn English Language at Engineering University, Jamshoro

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English language teachers apply various strategies to keep motivating learners for learning English. Learners’ motivation for learning English changes from time to time and teachers’ teaching strategies have impact on their motivational level. This paper aims at investigating teachers’ teaching strategies that motivate learners to learn English effectively. Motivation is a psychological construct which refers to cause and origin of an action (Dörnyei, 2001). Thus, teachers’ teaching strategies may be cause and origin of learners’ learning. This current paper takes Dörnyei’s (1994) three levels model (language level, learner level, and learning situation level) which guides regarding motivational strategies of teaching and learning. This study used qualitative paradigm. Interviews were conducted from five English language teachers who shared their teaching experiences and strategies. The results of this study indicated that teachers tried to create friendly environment of learning and arranged pairs and groups for doing different tasks. Tasks were designed according to level and related to everyday life of students. Rules and regulations were pre-decided in order to maintain the decorum of class.

Keywords: Teaching strategies, Motivation for learning English, Undergraduate students

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English language to the undergraduate students of an engineering profession is quite challenging task, because they have already enough burden of their own professional subjects. Students belonging to rural and urban background from province Sindh get admission in Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro. MUET offers fourteen engineering and two non-engineering degree programs in which English language is one of the compulsory subjects (prospectus, 2011). Teachers have to deal with a range of multicultural and multilingual students under a single roof of classroom. For learning a second language, particularly English, requires learners’ interest and excitement (Brophy, 1998). However, motivational teaching strategies can enhance learners’ interest and excitement for learning a second language. It is a challenge for a teacher to develop interest and excitement for learning English language among students of various backgrounds.

This study researches teachers’ teaching strategies that enhance learners’ motivation for learning English language. Motivational teaching strategies refer to method and techniques that teachers use in the classroom in order to generate curiosity and maintain students’ motivational level for learning English language (Dörnyei, 2001). Effective teaching methods and techniques can divert students’ attention towards
learning and they can involve in learning integrally. Dornyei (2001) further, relates motivation with the human mind. He (2001) states that motivation is a psychological construct which refers to cause and origin of an action (Dörnyei, 2001). A number of researchers and teachers believe that motivation plays an important role in determining learners’ success or failure in learning the language (Dornyei, 2001). Motivation for learning English shows learners’ intensity and enthusiasm. A successful language teacher is one who motivates learners to learn language. This paper takes Dornyei’s (1994) three levels model and intends to explore its practical use within classroom context.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims at investigating motivational teaching strategies that the teachers of English as a second language (ESL) use in their classroom in order to enhance their learners’ motivation for learning English.

2.1 Research objectives

- To analyse teachers’ teaching methods and techniques that they apply in English language classrooms at engineering university.
- To identify appropriate teachers’ teaching strategies that they apply to enhance learners’ motivation for learning English.

2.2 Research Questions

- What are the teaching methods and techniques that English language teachers apply in classroom?
- What are the appropriate teaching strategies that enhance learners’ motivation for learning English?

3. Literature Review

Research on L2 motivation was initiated by Gardner (1985) and his associates in Canada. Their initial aim was to investigate learners’ attitude towards second language as well as community. After Gardner’s initial concept of SL motivation, a number of researchers (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Oxford and Shrine, 1994; Dornyei, 1994; Williams and Burden, 1997; Ushioda, 1996a) turned their attentions toward second language (SL) motivation and traced out the gap between SL motivation and educational psychology. Dornyei (1994) states that the Gardner’s socio-educational model (1985) includes only general educational aspects and his Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) do not present sufficient elements that indicate motivation in classroom situations. Therefore, after 1990s it would be right to say that research on L2 motivation shifted from social milieu to classroom context.

3.1 Dornyei’s model (1994)

Dornyei’s three levels model emphasises on educational aspects of motivation; it investigates motivation from classroom perspectives. Dornyei (2001) is of the view that his three levels (The language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level) is a comprehensive model of SL motivation in educational context. Dornyei (1994) suggests thirty motivational teaching strategies within his three levels. His strategies are based on his personal experiences and pervious findings which help teachers to enhance learners’ motivation for learning language. Thus, his motivational teaching strategies guide this study to investigate teachers’ method and techniques which they apply in MUET, Jamshoro. The next section discusses Dornyei’s three levels model and his motivational strategies.
3.1.1 The Language Level

This level covers general elements of second language (SL) motivation which are taken from earlier researches as done by Gardner (1985). This level refers to learners’ reasons for choosing a language i.e. either integrative reason or instrumental reason or both. Integrative motivation shows learners’ inner desire to learn about target language culture or community. On the other hand, instrumental motivation points out practical benefits for learning a language such as job interviews, academic exams, foreign scholarships etc.

Within this level Dornyei (1994) suggests following teaching strategies:

(1) The ESL teachers should add social and cultural aspects of second language (SL) within course contents in order to provide positive SL related experiences in class.

(2) They should provide cross-cultural awareness. They should not only focus on cultural differences but also similarities.

(3) They should enhance learners’ communication with native speakers.

(4) They should draw their students’ attention to instrumental aspects of motivation.

3.1.2 The learner level

This level refers to the characteristics of an individual and such characteristics help learners in their learning process. For example: need for achievement and Self-confidence.

Within this level Dornyei (1994) suggests following teaching strategies:

(5) They should boost up the self-confidence of students.

(6) They should enhance the students’ self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a human cognitive realization in which people realize that they can do certain tasks.

(7) They should highlight what students can achieve in learning second language rather than what they cannot. They should make students realize that mistakes are a part of learning.

(8) They should create a supportive and acceptable learning environment in order to reduce students’ anxiety in SL classroom.

(9) They should enhance positive attribution because there may be some students who could not do well in past.

(10) They should help students to set attainable sub-goals. Their sub-goals should be according to their own learning plans.

3.1.2 The learning situation level

This level refers to situation-specific motives within language learning classroom setting. Dornyei (1994) explains three different components of this level. These are:

- Course-specific motivation

This motivational component refers to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method, and the learning task.

Dornyei (1994) suggests eight teaching strategies:

(11) They should design the syllabus of the course according to the level of students and course should be related to everyday life of the students. They should involve students in designing the course
programs and also can do needs analysis.

(12) They should increase the attractiveness of the course content by making it authentic and including audio and video recordings.

(13) They should discuss with the students about selection of materials in the course.

(14) They should generate curiosity and sustain the attention of their students.

(15) They should increase the students’ interest and involvement in the task.

(16) They should not bring difficult tasks but match difficulty of the task with students’ abilities.

(17) They should train students to complete the task.

(18) They should give satisfaction to students. They should make a wall chart of what they have learned.

**Teacher-specific motivation**

This motivational aspect refers to the motivational impact of the teacher’s personality, behaviour and teaching style/practice (Dornyei, 2001a).

Dornyei (1994) gives six teaching strategies for this aspect:

(19) Following are three basic characteristics of a teacher that enhance students learning: first is empathy that refers to being sensitive to students’ needs, feelings, and perspective, second is congruence that points out the ability of teachers’ behaviour that should be real and authentic and the last of them is acceptance which refers to non-judgment, positive regards, and acknowledging all students as a complex human beings with both virtues and faults.

(20) They should not be authoritative but the facilitators.

(21) They should give autonomy to their students. They should not give extra burden or external pressure.

(22) They should increase students’ interest in SL learning.

(23) They should develop intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the tasks. For that, they should make students realize that the task is not an imposed demand to be accomplished but a learning opportunity to be valued.

(24) They should provide feedback to the students about their learning process.

- **Group-specific motivation**

This motivational aspect refers to the group dynamics of the learner group (Dornyei, 2001a). These are formed within four main components: goal-orientation, norm and reward system, group cohesion, and classroom goal structure (Dornyei, 1994).

Dornyei (1994) gives six teaching strategies for this aspect:

(25) They should help students to make the groups and the groups should be goal-oriented.

(26) They should set norms of classroom. They should involve students to make
rules and regulations and should apply from very first day of class.

(27) They should remind students to maintain decided norms.

(28) They should not directly or indirectly compare students with each other but focus on individual importance and progress. They should not evaluate student’s progress in public but in private.

(29) They should create classroom environment in a way that the students should know each other and share their personal feelings, desires, and fears.

(30) They should utilise co-operative learning techniques.

Dornyei’s (1994) comprehensive framework and his thirty motivational teaching strategies guide this study to investigate how MUET’s teachers teach students. This paper follows following research method.

5. Methodology

The study used qualitative research design in collecting and handling data. The qualitative research is an increasing demand of researchers of social sciences (Dornyei, 2007). Research in qualitative paradigm refers to the procedures of collecting data in open-ended questionnaire that analyze transcribed recordings in qualitative content analysis. This paper used interviews as tool to collect data.

5.1 Data Collection

The study conducted oral interview. Among a number of different kinds of interviews, this study used semi-structured interview because it gives freedom to participants to explain the phenomena in their own way. Five (ESL) teachers of MUET, Jamshoro participated in this study. They shared their teaching experience and strategies that they apply in the classroom.

5.2 Data Analysis

This study interpreted the interviews from five participants who shared their views about teaching strategies.

6. Findings

The findings of this study are based on the views of five interviewees who are the faculty members of English Language Development Center (ELDC) at MUET, Jamshoro. Interviews were recorded individually by cell phone and participants’ names were kept anonymous.

Following are the findings of major questions:

Q1. How far do you think that the culture of target language is effective for learners’ language learning?

To the answer of this question, this study found that two out of five ESL teachers do not think that the culture of target language is effective for second language learning. They were of the view that the most of students of MUET, Jamshoro belong to Sindhi culture and they give preference to their own culture. One of them said:

*Though, we speak, utter, or exchange ideas in English in the class but the context of language is where they live. So, we do not give them knowledge of English culture. We do not talk about Europe or Australia that would be imaginative because they are unaware of that context.*
While other three participants of them think that to some extent the knowledge of culture is also important. They were of the view that the culture cannot be separated from any language because the culture is integral part of any language. One of them who was in favour of the knowledge of culture said:

*I think that the knowledge of culture should be given to students because the more they know about the culture of target language the more knowledge of language they will gain.*

When they were further asked about how they give cultural knowledge of target language. They replied that they encouraged students to watch and listen English movies, English songs, and bring poems or couplets of famous poets in the class.

Q2. What types of teaching materials do you bring in the class to increase the interest of students?

To the reply of this question, all participants had almost same opinion that they tried to bring materials which were authentic and related to students’ everyday life. One of them said as:

*In very first class, I take interview from my students and try to understand their psyche, level, and interest for learning English and then I develop the material according to the psych, level, and interest of my students.*

Q3. What kind of strategies do you apply to boost up the self-confidence of students?

The finding of this question suggests that group-based learning is the most appropriate strategy that boosts up the self-confidence of students. All participants directly or indirectly refer to this strategy. They believe that activities, tasks, presentations, and group discussions can enhance students’ confidence. One of them said:

*For anxious learner, I make groups of students and keep one anxious student in one group. In a way, I think, the anxious students learn from other members of group more than their individual learning.*

Another participant said: *I do find many students from rural background who have not much confidence. Without making them realize or revealing their anxiety in the class or suggesting that they are not good students, I usually give them extra time and make them realize their mistakes are the part of learning in class.*

Q4. Which teaching methods do you apply to help students in learning?

To the answer of this question, generally all teachers went against authoritative method, lecturing method, traditional or grammar translation method. All five participants chose, co-operative teaching method, eclectic teaching method, and communicative method because their course contents do not allow traditional methods but the modern one. One of them said:

*Teaching a language can never be authoritative, and giving only lectures to learn a language can never work. What I do in my class I give autonomy to my students and through co-operative teaching method students take interest in learning English.*

Another participant said: *Though the students belong to engineering field and they have already a lot of burden on their shoulder of their own professional subjects but they take interest in
learning English because the way we teach is co-operative.

Another said: *I prefer communicative method because I enlarge comfortable zone where students can easily talk and produce the things that they want.*

Q5. How do you control disruptive noise in your classes that disturb students in learning?

Participant had various different techniques to control noise in their class. For that, they shared that they make rules and regulations for maintaining the classroom decorum with their students. One of them rejected the idea of discussing rules and regulations with students because students have various likings and disliking so the teachers should make rules and regulations by their own choice and make students follow them. However, other participants were of the view that teachers should take students in confidence because the rules and regulations can enhance their learning.

Conclusion

Teaching English requires trainings to apply the appropriate strategies that increase students’ motivation for learning English. This study analyzed Dornyei’s (1994) model which suggested thirty teaching strategies then this paper investigated practical use of Dornyei’s strategies among the ESL teachers of MUET, Jamshoro. In the semi-structured interview, this study found that teachers went against traditional teaching strategies and followed many of Dornyei’s (1994) thirty motivational teaching strategies. Teachers believe that students should know the culture of target language to some extant but main focus should be given to their own context in which they use language.

Teaching materials also increase students’ motivation if they are related to daily life of students. Group-based learning increases students’ confidence and decreases their anxiety. Meanwhile, co-operative teaching method encourages and authoritative method discourages students’ motivation for learning English. Pre-decided rules and regulations can provide more opportunities to the students in learning English.

REFERENCES


