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Thirty Five Characteristics of Motivating English Teachers: University EFL Learners' Perspectives

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Abstract

This research article would like to present EFL Learners' perspective on motivating English teachers. The research was conducted by applying qualitative paradigm. The research informants were seventeen university students in Batusangkar. The data were collected by applying unstructured interview technique. The data were analyzed qualitatively by using Miles and Huberman technique of analysis. The research results show that the EFL learners have various perspectives on motivating English teachers.

Key Words: Motivating English teacher, university EFL learners, perspective.

1. Introduction

There are four factors that can be dangerous to learners' motivation: physical condition, method of teaching, the teachers, and success. Among the four factors, the teachers factor is the most powerful one (Harmer: 1991) because the teachers play significant roles in increasing, or decreasing students' motivation (Al Kaboody, 2013); and in provoking effective and efficient learning on the part of the students (Markley, 2004). They influence their learners' academic achievement and outcomes (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijse & Robinsona, 2004; Lasley II, Siedentop & Yinger, 2006; Stronge et al., 2004; and Rockoff, 2004). Moreover, the teachers' personality is directly and indirectly related to learning and teaching in the affective domain as well as to that in cognitive and psychomotor domains (Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter, 2012).

In EFL context, research proves that teachers can directly influence students' motivation about learning English (Anjomshoa and Sadighi, 2015), and presence of motivation can increase learning behaviour (Anjomshoa and Shadighi, 2015). Thus, teachers need to know the type of motivation and its sources to meet the students' particular needs because it is one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning (Dörnyei, 2009), and the enhancement of English language skills (Nadeem, Mubasher (2013). The students' motivation correlates strongly with proficiency (Spolky, 1989; and Lee, 2010). In other words, motivation is a major factor in the successful study of language acquisition, and an important contributor to language achievement in terms of linguistic outcomes, including language components - vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation - and the four basic language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Gardner: 1985). Considering how influential the teachers to their students, they should make themselves motivating, or as a source of students' motivation. The students, on the other hand, should have good perception on the teachers. What are the characteristics of motivating teachers based on Indonesian EFL Learners' perspectives? This paper, therefore, presents the characteristics of motivating teachers based on the students' perspectives.

2. Method

This research applied a qualitative method (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 397). The informants of the research were English Teaching Department students at State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Batusangkar (West Sumatera, Indonesia). The informants of the research were seventeen EFL learners selected by applying purposive sampling technique. To collect the data for the research, an in-depth interview technique was applied. To analyse the data, the technique of data analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. The technique consisted of three stages. They were data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

3. Findings

Based on interview with 17 informants, it was found that motivating lecturers have certain characteristics. The characteristics are: (1) emotionally intelligent, (2) intellectually intelligent, (3) innovative, (4) be as they are, (5) not authoritarian, (6) friendly, (7) able to create conducive/comfortable atmosphere, (8) not discriminatory, (9) able to make the students do their best, (10) able to make difficult things become easier, (11) becomes a model in actions, behaviours, and achievements, (12) giving challenging assignments, (13) disciplined, (14) has good speaking ability, (15) caring, (16) understand students, (17) willing to share own experiences and those of successful people, (18) humorous, (19) giving feedback, (20) guiding their students, (21) being informative, (22) knowledgeable, (23) just to all students, (24) emphasizing religious values, (25) simple, (26) assigning grades as they are, (27) not rigid, (28) able to solve the students' problems, (29) willing to spend their time for students, (30) able to refresh the students' mood to learn, (31) able to provide opportunities for their students to get progress or success, (32) appreciative, (33) consistent, (34) punctual, and (35) not fussy.

Those teachers' characteristics will influence the EFL learners' learning motivation. In EFL contexts in which all of the conditions that contribute to successful foreign language learning are lacking, motivation encouraged by teachers becomes an important factor because motivation is "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner: 1985); "a process whereby certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action or until the planned outcome has been reached" (Dornyei, 1998); "a process for goal-directed activity that is instigated and sustained" (Pintrich&Schunk (2003) (p.5); "an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behaviour" (Woolfolk, 1998); or "an internal process that activates, guides and maintains behaviour over time" (Salvin, 2001). In EFL context, English is not used in daily communication. As a result, there will not be enough English input in the environment. Moreover, there probably aren't enough opportunities for interaction with English speakers. In such contexts, motivation plays vital roles since it (1) makes expected change in the learners; (2) encourages the learners; (3) makes learning and teaching effective; (4) creates teaching atmosphere in class room; (5) makes the learners active and creative; (6) creates interest for the learners' self-studies; (7) makes them identify themselves; (8) inspires them to become active and regular in their work and start their work; and (9) inspires them to prove their goal and objectives (Patel and Jain, 2008).

One of the mentioned characteristics which influences the learners' motivation is caring. The characteristics is just the same as what is pointed out by Gardner (1985) in his motivation theory stating that learners are motivated to learn and achieve when they perceive their teachers care about them (Gardner motivation

theory, 1985). They will be motivated by the teachers' democratic interaction styles, developing expectations for student behaviour in light of individual differences, modelling a "caring" attitude toward their own work, and providing constructive feedback. Another characteristic is "able to create conducive/ comfortable atmosphere". This is also motivational because the process of learning in the classroom is accompanied and accelerated by positive affect and relaxed atmosphere. Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter (2012).

Some of the above characteristics are also in line with what Rubio (2009) points out that effective teachers will combine professionalism with care, understanding, fairness, and kindness, who have to be passionate, enthusiastic, motivated about teaching and learning, and create warm classroom environments where students feel comfortable, and who have a sense of belonging, as the environment is conducive to learn. Besides, they should also be innovative, invite students to approach and interactions, and also values diversity. In other words, effective teachers are those who have the capacity to inspire students to reach their fullest potential on learning through their qualities and professional and personal skills, just the same as the finding of this research.

If the characteristics are compared with the "Big five" Personality Traits proposed by Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter (2012), there are also some similarities, namely: (1). Conscientiousness: dependable, hard-working, organized, self-disciplined, persistent, responsible; (2) Emotional stability: Calm, secure, happy, unworried; (3). Agreeableness: Co-operative, warm caring, good-natured, Courteous trusting; (4) Extraversion: Sociable, outgoing, talkative assertive, Gregarious; and (5) Openness to experience: Curious, intellectual, creative, cultured, artistic, sensitive, flexible imaginative.

If the characteristics as perceived by the informants compared with ten basic characteristics of passionate teachers as listed by Fried (2001), there are four similar characteristics between the two, namely: having cares, having sense of humour, tolerating absurd and meaningless things that students exhibit in their behaviours but at the same time critical and very attentive to manners that students must have (not rigid), endeavouring to establish and maintain a learning environment where students can learn from their mistakes. The characteristics found are also in line with this statement "A teacher is a complete person within; curious about her students feelings, passionate, sociable, loveable and super comprehensive" (UNESCO 1996).

4. Conclusion

The EFL learners have various perspectives on motivating English teachers. In EFL contexts, all of the conditions that contribute to successful foreign language learning and it were affected by learners characteristic. By thirty five characteristic which were found, most of them point to the Caring characteristic.

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