



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

TEACHER IS FACILITATOR OR PEDANTIC: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

ZAREEN CHAUDHRY

Department of English language and Literature
University of Management and Technology
Lahore, Pakistan



ZAREEN CHAUDHRY

ABSTRACT

One key factor delineating that ESL learners are not producing desired goals, is the gap in transfer of knowledge to these students by their teachers. In spite of the significant role of the teachers in this regard, to date, least number of studies are conducted focusing on this issue of Asian region's ESL learners specifically of Pakistan. The aim of this study is to trace those factors that are impediment for the students in learning language. Data was collected through fifteen female students' narratives and questionnaire filled by ten teachers of a private school situated in a metropolitan city of Pakistan. From the students' narratives factor endorsing as barrier for students in learning process were teachers' behaviour, teacher-lecturing style, teachers' preference to use L2 and teaching language in isolation. Analysis of the teachers' data brought forward teachers' ignorance towards students' emerging requirements and concerns. The study finds out teachers' ignorance of their central role as a facilitator in meaning making process of learning. This results in an inadequate learning by ESL learners.

Key words: ESL learners, Students impediments, pedantic teachers, facilitating teachers

©KY PUBLICATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a second language is very central to the education system of developing countries particularly Asian region. Almost in every country of Asia like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, India or Japan education policy makers are in continuous endeavor to impart good knowledge and develop proficient understanding of English in their students. After every couple of year, methods of teaching English are revised, new syllabuses are imported, and adapted, but even after passage of years, "the desired goals have not been achieved at the full extent." (Shinde&Karekatti 2010). We are still striving in full swing to achieve the desired

outcomes inform of well learnt English learners. The struggle is evident not only in my country but also in all those countries where English is considered as L2. According to Wikipedia, there are 75 countries in world where English is officially or unofficially claimed as L2. Despite all the efforts for years, we observe that our English learners are not producing that very effective result as it was supposed to be. Students spend 10-12 years in schools and still come out with the least understanding of the subject. They can attempt complete paper in English but when it comes to communication, they are hesitant or quiet. They might be good in reproducing a lot of rules or structures, but my question mark is on their

conceptual growth and acquisition of English language with good understanding. As Seeroi argues that English words have become part of Japanese vocabulary, even an old farmer can put together words to pass his point. Give youth a test of vocabulary and they will pass it. So why can't they speak (2012). The paper, therefore, intends to trace those gaps which are cause of blockade in the learning process of language learners.

With the passage of time, English teachers have equipped themselves to meet the contemporary demands of English learners. They try to be friendlier and try to diminish distance between them and their learners to enhance process of learning. Even then students seem to be afraid of speaking, removing their ignorance or share their feelings in the language class. As established by Westbrook (2011) there always remain a considerable gap between learner and teacher even in a class which is set with student centered approach. In language classes, learners prefer to be quiet or not to raise hands. The situation might seem normal or acceptable in a traditional classroom setup where students are supposed to be quiet and digest teacher's words like devotees, and where language books are taught like religious books. But in this whole process message is lost and least learning is done (Seeroi 2012). Teachers work and behave according to their own belief system about imparting knowledge. They believe that they are storehouse of knowledge and they cannot be a source of nuisance for their learners. Shinde and Karekatti (2010) supported the point by stressing that Teacher's belief system not only shape their attitudes, methods, policies but also play decisive role in learner's development. A teacher has to be very clear about his/her style and methods in transferring the language. It is seen that teachers who are imparting knowledge for years are not ready to revamp themselves with the emerging demands of learners. Though they assure that they are in pace with the contemporary needs of learners and know well to handle the issues but we are seeing no effective outcome from our language classrooms. ESL learners are hesitant, shy, nervous, unconfident and passive when step out of their classes and move around in real world.

In our prevailing education system, knowledge and meaning are passed without any conscious effort to ascertain that it has been understood and digested by learner (Bolitho). Learners are oscillating between teachers and books to attain and gain knowledge. In this whole situation, the learner remains empty minded. "Dropout, failure and underachievement of academically competent ESL learner suggests that we are failing to educate them at the level where meaning resides". (Roessingh 2005). This researcher has aptly challenged the capacity of language teachers in conveying knowledge to learners. How come a student who can perform well in vocabulary tests is unable to communicate his peers or people outside his class? This reminds me of a green grocer near my house (in Lahore) who has regular foreigner customers living nearby. The grocer manages to talk with them in English but out of this picture, he cannot use and he does not know English. My point is, are we producing the same lot of ESL learners well performing in academics but poor in real world.

Student obstacles in learning are often overlooked or most of the time not bothered by language teachers. Our language classrooms are most of the time clustered with intention to deliver skills and language system, and in this practice, we overlook the necessity of learner (Bolitho). Learners are supposed to understand things and build concept without questioning or demanding clarification. Those practices in the language classes are resulting in the form of misunderstanding or half understanding of the concept. Teachers work according to their understanding in class rather than from learners' perspective (Lynch 2015). Learners' need to communicate in a conducive environment to have "comprehensible input" as posits by Krashen (1980) It is seen that teachers behave as the only resource person in class, they don't try to bring themselves down to the level of a learner to understand student's problem. Sanjaya and Natsir suggested that a teacher can be a facilitator for learners (2014).

In many institutes, it has been noticed that a teacher need to reposition herself/himself according to need of students. Teacher's attitude and talk pose much fear in learners. Teachers use

much stick and less carrot. Seeroi (2012) found that a learner gauges it well that if he tries to make a joke, or interrupt or raise a question, he is definitely going to incur the anger of the teacher. Such fears, apprehension, deterrence and obstruction in mind of the learners have resulted in the form of zero output from language classrooms. Roessingh (2005) put weight behind the notion that a teacher needs to be an effective mediator. In an ongoing scenario, a thoughtful teacher who can tune himself with the minds of learners is hardly seen. Simply, if students are not showing good output it means teachers are not teaching well (Johnson 1999). Therefore, the present study aims to track those barriers which are causing troubled learning in our language classrooms. In this study, the constructivist theory of learning, Krashen's Second Language Acquisition theory and teaching models of Grammar Translation Method (GTM: supporting Pedantic attitude of teachers) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT: reflection of teacher as a facilitator in making meaning) will be taken into consideration to understand the gap between teacher, learner and the learning. As advocated by Higgins & Major (2014) that a learner's progress is the yardstick which measures teacher's quality. It is often observed that teachers simply focus on delivering lectures and being pedantic. Johnson (1999) described this as Pedantic attitudes channelize that lethal venom which destroys the learning desires.

The work of previous researchers put weight behind the assumption of this study that there are certain factors which are an impediment for learners to acquire meaning and understanding of English language.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i) What is the main stumbling block for students in learning English?
- ii) What factors in the class are working as an obstacle for learners in the process of developing understanding of English language?
- iii) How far does a teacher realize his/her impact as a facilitator or as pedantic in the process of learning on his/her learners?

III. Methodology

Data collection and procedure of data collection

Data for this study is based on narratives written by sample students and questionnaires filled by sample teachers.

Population

To conduct the study, the researcher has selected a private school of Lahore (Pakistan). It is an English medium school. It is a well-reputed school of the area and its students have been studying English Language as a main subject for many years.

Data collection and Subjects

In order to gather data, a group of 15 female students between the age group 11-13 has been selected. The sample group has been studying in the same school for the last seven years. A group of 10 English Teachers from the same school has also been selected to get a comprehensive view of the study. Both students and teachers' point of view is taken under consideration to probe the hypothesis from all possible angles. The teachers have teaching experience ranging from 5-20 years.

Instrument for Students' Data

The students were given one hour to write the narrative in response to the question:

- In their opinion, what is the main hindrance(s) they face in the class that do not let them develop understanding of English Language or that do not let them learn English?

Previous studies in order to analyze students' behaviour and problems have mostly used instruments of data collection like theoretical studies (Roessingh 2005, Nastir & Sanjaya 2014), questionnaires (Shinde & Karekatti, 2010), observations (Seeroi 2012). I believe to understand the assumptions of the present study, it is crucial to have access to personal experience and feelings of students. Therefore, I choose students' narrative as the instrument of data collection.

Instrument for Teachers' Data

A questionnaire was prepared which consisted of sixteen statements and four open-ended questions regarding their teaching style and methodology in language classes. The statements reflected principles of Grammar Translation Method (reflection of a Pedantic teacher) and

Communicative Language Teaching (reflection of teacher as mediator or facilitator).

Data analysis

The questionnaire given to teachers contained sixteen statements for which Five-point Likert scale was used and participants were asked to express their beliefs by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each statement using (1)SD=strongly disagree,(2)D=disagree,(3)DK=don't know,(4)A=agree, or(5)SA=strongly agree. Four open ended questions were also added to know detailed opinion of teachers on their teaching style and methodology in Language classrooms. As far as student data is concerned rather than conducting detailed interviews or surveys the researcher preferred narratives written by students to have exact picture of the issue. The students were asked to write a journal in response to question: In your opinion, What is the main obstacle/reason that could not let them learn English? The students were given liberty not to mention their names, so they feel free to express their issues. The students have shared themselves very openly as they were asked to write narrative anonymously. The narrative data was then analyzed using emerging themes or patterns in them. I assigned different colours to each theme and they were highlighted accordingly in every narrative.

IV. Findings and Discussion

Analysis of Students' data

Students' narratives illustrated various dimensions of language teachers that act as an impediment for students in learning in classrooms. The elements are

- i) Teachers' behaviour
- ii) Teacher – lecturing style
- iii) Teachers' preference to use targeted language only.
- iv) Teaching in Isolation.

(1) Teachers' Behaviour

The most cited factor causing barrier in learning to students is teacher's behaviour and the way teacher talks in class. According to Westbrook (2011) a teacher needs to understand learner's communicative Anxiety(CA) as learning a language involves emotion and Communicative Anxiety is very

much real in such situation. The concern is reflected in the narratives of S1 and S5.

Narrative 1

The rude language discourages the students. I am afraid of my teacher and like to be quiet without understanding things. [S1].

Narrative 2

In junior classes, I was scared to ask questions because my teacher was very strict. But now, my teacher is very nice and kind. I enjoy. [S5].

The narratives clearly establish that teacher has to be a friendly, accessible and a facilitator, concerned with meaning making rather than transferor of knowledge. A teacher should understand human feelings and be sensitive to emotions of his/her students. Teacher believes that being strict or inaccessible enable him/her in maintaining disciplined class essential for learning process. In fact this approach is damaging the process of learning. As argued by Westbrook (2011) that as a student, I have been seeing towards my teacher for support and praise.

(2) Teachers' Preference to use L2

In the light of narratives, it is found that many students consider strict use of English language for two way communication in class as an impediment for them in developing good understanding of English. The factor is very much visible in narrative S10,S7 and S9.

Narrative 3

When my teacher speaks English, She is too quick and I don't know what she is talking about. I do not remember.[S10]

Narrative 4

When we ask our teacher to explain things in Urdu, She rejects the request by saying, it is an English medium school.[S9]

Narrative 5

She speaks English all the time and when I ask question in Urdu, she fines me. How I can learn.[S7]

From S7,S9, and S10 narratives, it is inferred that if teacher does not develop rapport with the learner, they won't be able to learn. The off and on use of L1 establish a healthy relation between a teacher and

student. As suggested by Seeroi(2012), the use of L1, sometimes, in the class bolster amiable relation between teacher and learner. In L2 class, teachers need to understand that the use of first language make students feel comfortable. The whole time of L2 makes the process unreal and artificial. Students get distracted and learning process becomes inactive.

(3) **Teacher – Lecturing Style**

Some students mentioned teacher’s personal style of lecturing as an important factor in language class. They consider it inconvenient in developing understanding of the language.

Narrative 6

In my pervious class, I do not know what my teacher tells. She talks too much. But now I understand English because our new teacher knows how to teach. [S6]

The narrative of S6 pins out the fact that a teacher should know what is he/she doing and how it should be done. The teacher should know how to place himself/herself as a mediator between the learner and their requirements to develop language objectives (Roessingh 2005).If a learner develops a notion that his/ her instructor does not carry much knowledge or won’t be able to impart knowledge, the learner loses interest and resultantly stops learning. Few teachers tend to elaborate things unnecessarily without realizing that it is required or essential for learners or not.Seeroi(2012) remarked on this setting as a situation in which teacher keeps on explaining and explaining, all are quiet and disciplined but none is listening. What happens as a result than teacher makes everyone quiet too much that nothing can restart them. One way to facilitate active student learning is that teacher modify strategies and incorporate more communicative method of teaching in class.

(4) **Teaching Language in Isolation**

Narrative of S15 and S12 expressed their experience of being unable to develop meaning of things they learnt in language class.

Narrative 7

We daily learn words in class but I do not know how to use them when I write a story. My vocabulary tests are good, but I cannot use words at my own. [S15].

Narrative 8

English is very difficult, I often get headache when I try to learn it but I know many sentences [S12].

From the narrative of S12 and S15, it is evident that our learners are unable to comprehend language and its function in context .As emphasized by Seeroi(2012) that Japanese kids have learnt hundreds of words and handful of grammar, but no examples of how to use this knowledge in real-world. In language classes, words and structures are regularly taught but real-world practice is always missed out. Our students need reinforcement in a way that can develop their understanding of words in actual context inside and outside the language classes.

Analysis of Teachers’ Data

Following figures show the responses of the teachers to first 16 statements in the questionnaire.Strongly Disagree and Disagree has been treated as D, and Strongly Agree and Agree as A.

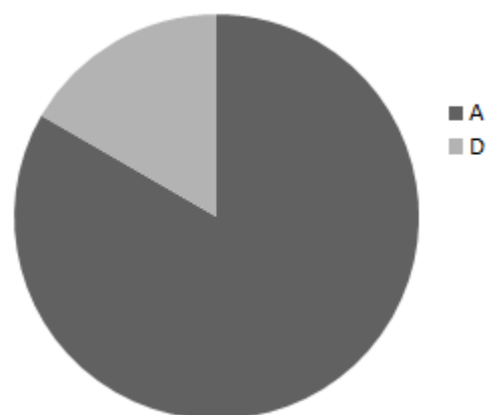


Fig 1: Teachers’ response to the statements supporting Pedantic (GTM) approach.

80% of the teachers’ showed positive response to the 8 statements reflecting pedantic approach. Only 20% teachers disagreed with principles of traditional grammar teaching methods in class. Surprisingly, when the same sample of ten teachers responded to the 8 statements based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching showed almost the same result. 86% teachers’ responded in affirmative towards statements based on CLT and 14% rejected their inclination to use this methodology in their classrooms.

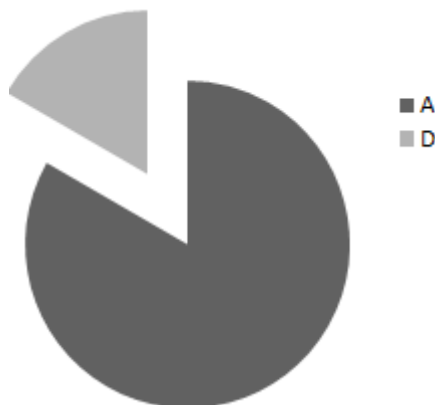


Fig 2: Teachers' response to statements based on communicative Learning Teaching

In the last part of questionnaire where four open ended questions regarding teachers teaching style and beliefs were asked. The teachers' responses were very surprising and drastically opposite to the notions depicted by sample students. All teachers claimed themselves as teacher who favour student-centered classroom. All teachers responded that they have always been facilitator to their students. In response to the last question, in which their opinion about what is the stumbling block for learners has been asked, was also very shocking. Again, the response was quite contrasting to the apprehension and reservations of the sample students. Nine out of ten teachers consider that

Lack of vocabulary, confidence and grammatical understanding is the main barrier for students in language classrooms.

Only one teacher believes that latest teaching methods and non-availability of teaching aids is the main barrier in learning English language.

Teachers' response to questionnaire confirmed the claim of Seeroi (2012) that there's a vast disparateness (on teacher's part) in knowing what to do and actually being able to do it. The teachers believed that they have been a good facilitator in language classes and it is their students' personal capacity that they have not been able to learn affectively. Whereas learners' response made it very clear and evident that they are rich for "comprehensible input" (Krashen 1980) but their instructors are unable to transmit knowledge

successfully. The way students have shared and pointed out their issues reflect that they are aware of their problems, and instructors need to comprehend it. Teachers' belief influence their consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods and teaching polices and finally learners' development (Shinde&Karekatti 2010). Their study puts weight behind the present study that teachers are reshaping language classes on the basis of their believes. Teachers have to realize that their adherence to strict beliefs and practices is causing great damage to learning process of ESL learners.

The analysis of data collected from students and teachers brought forward a serious gap between teachers and their understanding about the actual need of learners. Freire (1970) argued that the teachers need to realize that their students are not any bank or depository place in which learner's role is only extended as receiver, filler and depositor of knowledge delivered by a teacher. Learning is an active process and teacher has to be a real source of knowledge transferor. A teacher has to gauge that productive learning and outcome from language learners is only possible when they will try to see problems and obstacles from students' perspective.

V. CONCLUSION

This research has investigated factors that work as a stumbling block for English learners in their classroom. Not a lot of studies have been conducted on this aspect. Therefore, through this paper it is tried to find impediments of learners and devise ways that can remove those factors and facilitate learning process. It is suggested as also argued by O' Dwyer(2006) that now the exemplar is more a student – centered approach, in which teacher is facilitator in transfer of knowledge rather an authority . It is appeared that knowledge transfer should be meaningful and occur in a conducive environment. Teacher's pedantic attitude should intentionally be suppressed to enhance eagerness of learners. Mentors of language should be perfect, approachable, supportive, friendly and encouraging. A successful teacher pours knowledge in such a way that it leaves its prints on the brains of those who are there to learn (Johnson 1999). There are many reasons why a learner does not speak or participate,

this is teacher's duty to find out and resolve according to the level and requirement of the learners. The study has also found that language teachers are perplexed about their own teaching approach. They have been ignorant towards the actual learning demands of their learners. It is noticeably seen that teachers do not know the difference between teaching and being a facilitator or mediator in learning, and this is where distance between learners and teachers befall. A framework is suggested to develop relationship between teacher and their learner which will enable the teacher to play his/her role as a facilitator of meaning making between language and its learners rather than lecturer.

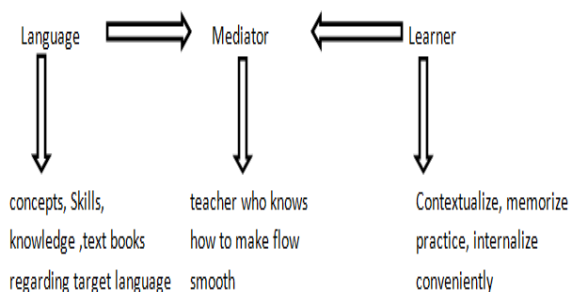


Fig3: A framework signifying the role of a teacher in language learning. (adapted and taken from Roessingh 2005)

It is clear that teachers need to position themselves at such a place where they can facilitate the flow of knowledge from target language to learner. Teachers have to make such adjustment that they can mediate communication between language's form and meaning, and learners understanding. Roessingh (2005) emphasized

Underlying concepts may find their way into existing mental framework/schema structure or semantic networks where the essence of what needs to be understood can be integrated, assimilated, and stored; later to be recognized, retrieved, and activated as background knowledge.

Perhaps through this approach, we can create such conducive environment for learners in which they feel comfortable to communicate and internalize language. If we want our generations to equip themselves with good knowledge of English language, we have to see things from students' side of the desk. Further studies can be conducted by

including teachers' observation in the light of their responses to the questionnaire. This might reinforce the claim made by this research and present a wider picture of the issue in a broader context.

REFERENCES

- Barry, J. Wadsworth 2003. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development: Foundations of Constructivism (Allyn & Bacon Classics Edition) (5th Edition)
- Bolitho, Rod. Teacher talk and learner talk. European centre for modern languages/Council of Europe
<http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/grouplead/results/lucru/4/rod.pdf> (accessed 15 June, 2015.)
- Freire, P. 1970. The Pedagogy of the oppressed. M.B. Ramos (trans.) New York: Seabury Press
- Higgins, Steve., & Major, Lee Eliot. 2014. What makes great teaching?
<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/what-makes-great-teaching-final-4.11.14.pdf> (accessed 18 May, 2015)
- Johnson, D. Claire. 1999. Avoiding pedantism : A path to thoughtful teaching. *Journal of Chiropractic Humanities*. Vol 9, pp.104-110
<http://archive.journalchirohumanities.com/Vol%209/JohnsonAvoid.pdf> (accessed 5 June, 2015.)
- Lynch, Larry (2015). Three mistakes teachers make that cause learners to fail
<http://www.eslbase.com/teaching/three-mistakes-cause-learners-fail> (accessed 2 June, 2015)
- Nastir, Muhammad, & Sanjaya, Dedi. 2014. Grammar translation method (GTM) versus Communicative language teaching (CLT); A Review of literature. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*. Vol. 2, n. 1
<http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/IJELS/article/view/231> (accessed 17 May, 2015)
- O'Dwyer, Shawn 2006. The English teacher as facilitator and authority. *Tesl-EJ*. Vol 9, n. 4. s
<http://www.tesl.ej.org/ej36/a2.pdf> (accessed 29 May, 2015)

- Ricardo Schütz 2014. Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition <http://sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>(accessed 2JUNE 2015)
- Roessingh,Hetty.2005.The intentional teacher:The mediator of meaning making *.Journal of EducationalThought*.Vol39,n.2(Autumn)pp. 111-134
- Seeroi,Ken 2012.Why are Japanese so bad at English. <http://japaneseruleof7.com/why-are-japanese-so-bad-at-english-5-reasons/>(accessed 12June,2015)
- Shinde,Mahesh B.,&Karekatti,Tripti. 2010.Primary teachers' beliefs about teacher talk in ESL classroom: a Perspective from India.The *International Journal of Research in Teacher Education*.Vol.1 (special issue 4)pp.55-65
- Westbrook,Frances. 2011.Lessons from the other side of the desk: Discovering Insights to help language learners.*English teachingforum*.V49,n.1,pp.2-7 <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ936089.pdf> (accessed 11 June ,2015.)