

Teachers' Attitude towards students in an ESL Classroom

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Table of content

1. Introduction	1
2. Pre observation stage:	
Literature Review	2
2.1 Assertive approach	3
2.2 Business academic approach	3
2.3 Behavior modification approach	4
2.4 Group managerial approach	5
2.5 Group guidance approach	7
2.6 Acceptance approach	8
2.7 Success approach	9
3. While observing stage.....	10
4. Post observation Stage: Recommendation	12
5. Conclusion	15
6. Works Cited	16

1. Introduction

It is very essential for an educational institute to provide students a suitable learning environment. A teacher plays a vital role in creating a suitable atmosphere for the students to learn. Students spend more or less one fourth of their time of a day at school where they have direct contact with their teachers. Teachers can play an important role in shaping students' attitudes (Corson, 2001; Macías, 2004; Nieto, 2002). Actually, good teaching is about caring and sharing; the capacity to accept, understand and appreciate students, making students feel good about themselves, having positive attitudes and setting achievement goals and getting all dedicated and cheerful in the classroom. Teachers can make a student motivated as well as demotivated through their attitudes towards the students. As in our country Bengali is our mother tongue and English is learnt as second language, students face problems in learning English as they do not have much exposure to the language. But, it is the teachers' duty to manage the students and to motivate them to learn that language. As there are students in a language classroom with mixed ability, there must be different students with different viewpoint, personality, learning ability. But, teaching is a complex task and teachers must act judiciously with the students; a teacher has to understand that every individual student is different and has to take care of this difference while dealing with them. That is why linguist Strevens asserts in 1979, "Differences in teaching for different circumstances or the teacher as chameleon", which shows that teachers must have a diversified personality to suit the need of his or her students. We know that teachers can be sometime constructive, again sometimes destructive for a student. If a teachers' approach or attitude is not proper towards the students the students' interest level of learning may decrease. Again, many students in our country have great fear about their schools,

whereas I think they should be eagerly going to schools, as school is the ideal place to make their foundation of their life. But, it is very frustrating that students in our country do not want to go to school and consider it as a place where they are dominated by the teachers. This happens when the teachers' attitude towards the students is not proper. Teachers who have not received any training on how to deal with the students do not know how to manage a class effectively. There is a wrong notion commonly believed that teachers' attitude does not affect teaching as long as his or her teaching is effective. The fact is that it is not possible to make teaching effective if the attitude is wrong. So, teachers' attitude is of paramount importance. That is why teachers' attitude towards students in an ESL class room is one fact that should be taken into account for effective teaching practice.

2. Literature Review

Effective teaching largely depends on a teacher's ability to manage a class. In order to manage a class, a teacher at times has to be rude with the students to keep the situation under control. Many linguists claimed their views about what should be the right attitude of teachers towards their students. There are mainly seven approaches or models (Assertive approach, Business academic approach, Behavior modification approach, Group managerial approach, Group guidance approach, Acceptance approach, Success approach) on the attitudes of the teachers in a classroom. All of these approaches are based on psychology, classroom experience, and common sense which form a scale from firm, direct and structured to flexible, indirect, and democratic attitude of teachers.

Assertive Approach is an approach that is based on Lee and Marlene Canter's model of discipline. This approach expects teachers to maintain discipline in the class. Teachers will do so by specifying rules of behavior and consequences for disobeying them. The teachers take charge of the classroom as soon as they enter the class room, set the rules, and interact with the students in a calm yet dominant way. According to this approach, teachers manage the classroom in a way that students are not allowed to ignore the presence of the teacher. According to Duke and Meckel, "students come to realize that the teacher expects them to behave in a certain way in class". Teacher holds students responsible for their actions and works. This approach assumes that firm classroom management helps the students a lot, because it allows them to develop their best behavior, skills and abilities and provide them an effective learning environment. But, this type of approach was criticized in the 1960 as "authoritarian" "militaristic" and "prejudicial" toward students.

Business Academic Approach - This approach was developed by Evertson and Emmer emphasizing on the organization (according to age, sex, abilities etc.) and the management of students as they engage in academic work. This approach is known as the Business Academic Approach. Well run classrooms are free from disruption caused by the students, where students behave in an orderly manner and are involved in learning. It is a "no - play, no - frills" approach. This approach is appropriate for both elementary and secondary level teachers that overlap with various instructional techniques. This approach includes three parts. The steps are-

Clear communication of work assignments and requirements - the teacher must explain clearly to students about their assignments, set the standard of their work, and how to go about their work etc. Explanation should be made in both oral and written forms. Before starting the works,

rules must be provided to the students (that makes them understand what is expected of them) and teachers must make sure that the students understand his / her instruction.

Another part is ***Monitoring of student work*** - monitoring student works helps the teacher to identify students who are having difficulty and to encourage them to keep working. The teacher must be sure that all students work properly and they know what to do in their assignment, otherwise, some students may not do their assignment, and some other may do their assignment incorrectly. This monitoring can be done in the group work, or individual work, monitoring can be also done to ensure successful completion of the students' works or assignments. Teachers can keep records of the students' works and monitor their improvements thereby.

The last part of this approach is ***Feedback to students*** -regular, immediate and specific feedback is important after academic monitoring. It is important for the teachers to pay attention to problems as well as good work of the students and provide feedback accordingly.

This approach involves a high degree of "time on task" and "academic engaged time" for students. This means when the students are on task, there is little problem regarding discipline. Teachers manage the students' works, engage them in work, monitor their works and give feedback by providing rewards for good work and take punitive measures for misconduct.

Behavior modification approach is rooted in the model work of James Watson and the more recent work of B. F. Skinner. It involves a variety of techniques and methods, ranging from simple rewards to elaborate reinforcement training. This approach spends less time on personal history of students or on searching for the reasons for a particular problem. There are some basic principles of this approach. These are-

A. behaviors are shaped not by the cause of the problems in the history of the individual, but by consequences

B. behavior is strengthened by immediate reinforcement. Positive reinforcements are praise or rewards, and a negative reinforcement is a process by which an activity is learned through the use of an unpleasant incentive.

C. Behavior is strengthened by systemic reinforcement (positive or negative). Behavior is weakened if not followed by reinforcement by the teachers. Students respond better to positive reinforcement than they do to punishment.

D. Students should be awarded accordingly. When a student is not awarded for appropriate or adaptive behavior, inappropriate behavior may arise.

E. Once the behavior is learned by the students, it is best maintained through intermittent reinforcement (that reinforcement of a behavior only occasionally).

F. Rules are established and imposed in the classroom. Students who follow rules are praised and rewarded in various ways. Those who break rules are either ignored or punished immediately.

Teacher must realize that teacher is one of the adults who serve as reinforcing agents in the students' life.

Group managerial approach is based on Jacob Kounin's research. This approach gives importance on teachers' immediate response to group student behavior. Teachers' response to an improper behavior of any student must be appropriate. If a student's improper attitude remains unnoticed, ignored or allowed to continue by the teachers for a long time, it might spread to the group and become more serious and chronic. This approach is also named as "ripple effect". A teacher can behave in a number of ways:

Desist techniques followed by the teachers to stop the rude attitude of the students. Kounin feels that teachers depend on two abilities. *With it ness* is the ability to react to the students in a timely fashion. It involves communicating to students by the teachers that the teacher might know what is happening, or that one “has eyes in the back of one’s head”. *Overlapping* behavior is the teachers’ ability to handle more than one matter at a time. The teacher can attend one or more student at the same time.

Movement management is the organization of the behavior that shifts from task to task within and between lessons. This approach talks about the term movement. *Movement* may be characterized as smooth or jerky. **Smoothness** is a constant and calm flow of activities. It involves uninterrupted and short work periods. **Jerkiness** is an unmanageable flow of activities. It may happen if the teacher tries to do too many things at once or does not make clear to students procedures for ending one task and shifting to a new one (the teacher may have to shout during switching from one text to another, disorder may arise as students have to ask questions about what to do, an unengaged student may create disruption).

Group focus is keeping the students focused in group activities. It can be achieved by **alerting** (activities that include creating suspense, presenting new materials, choosing reciters randomly, etc.) or by **accountability** (that includes holding up props, checking the products of nonreciters, checking the performance of reciters etc.)

This approach believes that student’s engagement in lessons and activities is the key to successful classroom management. Students are expected to work and behave accordingly. Successful teacher monitors student work in a systematic way, clearly defines acceptable and unacceptable behavior. According to this approach, the successful teacher has a clear sense of direction and sequence for tasks.

Group guidance approach was introduced by linguist Fritz Redl. This approach is based on manipulating the surface behavior of the students on a group basis. As teachers have few opportunities to work with students on an individual basis they must learn to work with groups of students. Discipline and class room control are managed through the group atmosphere. This can help them to deal or manage a large classroom. To maintain a good discipline in a large classroom the teacher must understand very well the group (its needs and its interests) and thus can control the behavior of the group. According to Redl, disciplinary problem may occur by one major cause – *boredom*, which leads to withdrawal, frustration, and irritability, or aggressive rejection of the entire group on the part of the students. Another key factor is the organization of the groups (organizational composition must be appropriate in relation to students' needs, abilities, age etc.). Again, in some cases teacher's behavior is the source of the problems by imposing inappropriate rules, screaming or making threats, displaying outbursts of emotion, assigning works to the students that lack of challenges. In this case teachers often mistakenly blame the groups rather than taking care of their own behavior. According to the educators, the most difficult task of developing a positive working relationship with the students on an individual or group basis involves responding with understanding to the needs and feelings of the students, making an attempt to understand students' individual problems, showing trust and respect to them, listening and monitoring them, diagnosing what has to be done to influence the students' behavior in a group, assigning meaningful work, and encouraging task-behavior. If the teachers do not analyze group management problems correctly, the problems will persist and increase.

Acceptance approach maintains that every person wants to be accepted. Like everyone, even students try hard to be accepted by their teachers. This approach is also based on the democratic model of teaching. Here, the teacher acts as a leader by establishing rules and consequences but at the same time allows students to participate in decision making and to make choices. Rudolph Dreikurs first noticed the need for acceptance by the students. Acceptance by peers and teachers is the prerequisite for appropriate behavior and achievement in school. If the students are not successful in receiving recognition, they will turn to mistaken goals. There are four mistaken goals. They are-

Attention getting-When students do not get the appropriate appreciation that they desire, they often turn to attention getting misbehavior. They want other students or teachers to pay attention to them by acting as “class clown” by asking special favor or by seeking help continuously.

Power seeking- some students try for the recognition by challenging adults to achieve what they think power is. Arguing, contradicting, teasing, bad temper and disgraceful behavior are the weapons that the students use to show power.

Revenge seeking- some students who fail to gain recognition by power may seek revenge. Students who seek revenge do not care about punishment.

Withdrawal- If students feel helpless and rejected by their elders or teachers they may withdraw themselves from the social situation. If they are not noticed at the proper time, eventually they become isolated and refuse to co operate or participate.

To identify the mistaken goals the teachers must deal with the students with an explanation in a friendly, non threatening way. The teacher needs to be sure that the students are aware of and understand the consequences of inappropriate behavior. This approach expects that eventually

students learn to control their actions and to make better decisions, and thus they reach a point where their behavior is controlled by a sense of self- discipline.

Success approach is like the *acceptance approach*. This approach works best in junior high schools. This approach deals with general psychological and social conditions. It deals with general psychological and social conditions. William Glasser calls it *reality therapy*. It tells that although teachers should not excuse bad behavior on the part of the students, they need to change whatever negative classroom conditions exist and improve conditions. For some students school may be the only place where they get attention and care whereas some students challenge to create a positive relationship with their teachers. That is why teachers should show care, be positive and be persistent. They should emphasize on helping the students. Glasser makes the point that teachers must be supportive and meet with students who are beginning to show difficulties and they must get students involved in making rules, making commitment to the rules, and enforce them. Schools must be a warm, friendly place for the students. Students will not be productive if they are not psychologically satisfied (making the students to feel that someone listens to them, thinks about them, cares for them, and feels that they are important). The schools must change their rules and regulations of teachers' attitudes by making it more satisfying to students and more reliable with the students' interests so that they can gain a sense of power, accomplishment and importance in the classroom. This approach involves a certain amount of warmth, genuineness and concern for the students (social, psychological and cognitive needs). For this reason many progressive educators try to adapt many of its ideas and in support of applying this approach in class rooms.

3. While observing stage

When a teacher enters a class, she/ he expect everything to be orderly and disciplined. Whenever the situation becomes out of their control they raise their voice to get their attention, hit the board with a duster or yell, and scream to maintain silence. I observed that it works, and then the teachers get into their lesson. But, teachers need to realize that managing the class will require creative strategies. I was an intern of an English Medium school. I closely observed the teachers, and their attitudes towards students. I believe that it is essential for a school to provide the students the best learning environment (friendly, co-operative, active and effective). But, in my observation I have noticed that the environment of the school was very unfriendly. Whenever I entered the school I was told lots of rules for maintaining discipline among students. Actually, the teachers were not supposed to be the facilitator of the students rather the teachers were instructed to be the dictator of the class. To maintain discipline in the class I observed that the teachers yelled, screamed, hit the table with the books and hit the blackboard with dusters etc. Though the teachers assigned the students in the class, but did not instruct the students clearly about the procedure of their works, as a result the students interrupted the class and the teachers started to scream at him or her. Even, during the class assignment, the teachers should monitor the students' works, and should take essential step accordingly. But, in my observation I noticed that the teachers used to check the copies of students or started chatting with other teachers rather monitoring the students. As a result I observed that the students worked reluctantly and casually, as a result students failed to finish in time. The teacher shouted at the students for not submitting the assignment in time. But, I think, the teacher should monitor properly and guide them towards the completion of the students' works. This school was clearly following Assertive Approach that is based on Lee and Marlene Canter's model of discipline. Here, teachers try to ensure the

responsible behavior of their students. The teachers take the charge of the classroom as soon as they enter the class room, set the rules, and interact with the students in a dominant way. The students can not forget about the teachers' authority anyway. Here, the teacher expects the students to behave in a certain way in class. Students are bound to give a good explanation for their actions and works to their teachers. But, as this type of approach was criticized in the 1960 as "authoritarian" "militaristic" and "prejudicial" toward students, I think the authority of the school should change the way they behave with their students and should take some good aspects from all of the eight classroom management approaches (eclectic approach).

One day the principal of this school asked me to conduct a class. I made the students understand the topic (Fill in the blanks with Hard and Soft things) by asking them whether they know the meaning of hard and soft. The students told me the meaning in Bangla. I asked them whether the table was hard or soft. The students replied correctly. Then, I asked about cheeks, whether it is soft or hard. They told me, "soft". I appreciated them, told them to open their exercise book and look at the pictures of the items in the book. Then, I made them understand about some vocabulary items which were difficult for them to understand (badge, mitten etc.) and gradually took them into their lesson. When they understood their lesson I told them to open the exercise book and to fill in the blanks with the correct words in their exercise book. While they were writing I started to monitor the class and helped the students wherever they needed. As they worked I moved around the room, checking their works and offering suggestions. Again, when the students were telling their understanding of my instruction, I encouraged them to carry on their works. I think this will increase their confidence. I was dealing with the students very supportively. To encourage them I put hand on students' shoulder while explaining to create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. I saw that one student was not writing, just playing with

his pencil box and making sounds. I went to assist him and encouraged him to write. I waited till he was ready to write. When he started to write I went to others to monitor. But, the teacher who was observing my teaching told me not to waste time to make the students understand individually, it was time consuming. What I should have done was to scold him and made him write. But, the course on practice teaching, which I took at my University, I was taught to monitor in a positive, supportive and non- threatening manner so that students feel very comfortable in the class. I also told them how to behave properly in a class room.

4. Post observation stage

To me, Students learn more effectively when they are actively engaged in their learning. I believe that effective classroom management is one of the most overlooked aspects of ESL teaching. Maybe the teachers come up with a great syllabus to be implemented and effective materials to teach, but it is questionable how much lessons are given to the teachers to manage the class properly or in which way they are managing a class. That is why I think it is the time to go over the situation for the benefit of the teachers' judgment and most importantly for the students; teachers need to plan to manage a classroom. First, a teacher needs to get into the classroom keeping his professional demeanor to establish his or her authority in the class room. One thing to be noted is that having authority is not similar to being authoritative. This will impress everyone and give the respect that a teacher deserves. There is a saying, "To get respect, you must first give it." So, the teacher must show respect towards the students' works and thoughts to get respect from the students. I think *Effort, flexibility, and availability* are the factors

that can help the teachers to make the students to feel more comfortable in the classroom. One challenge that is faced by the teachers is recognizing and interacting with all students in class. The teacher should try to learn students' names and start class on time, show up after hours to encourage the students. During class hour a teacher can invite the students to take a part in discussion. I think, a teacher can judge how his or her performance is by watching the class. Smiles and eager responses mean he or she is doing well. If there is a room full of frown or blank eyes, or students looking at the clock, then there must be something wrong. It is important that the students can communicate freely with teachers and with each other without being disruption.

Firmness and fairness- Though teacher should be flexible towards the students and keep a relaxed classroom atmosphere, they should not allow or tolerate something that is unacceptable. Fairness includes recognizing good behavior of the students and their effort to be disciplined in the class. Teachers can praise the students for their good behavior; avoid sarcasm or shouting.

Knowledge of the teacher of the content- Students will judge the teachers by their ability to answer to their questions. The teachers should welcome all questions asked by the students. Students will feel encouraged. If there is a request for clarification from the students, the teachers may often invite the other students to try to give the answer first. If no one answers it, then the teacher can smile and remain silent and look around the class encouraging other students to give the answer. Somebody will answer to the question and if the students failed then the teacher can answer it. If there is an off-topic questions raised from the students the teacher can handle it with a brief answer.

Keeping the students focused and keeping them wanting to learn- The most important thing that a teacher must have is the ability to explain the content clearly to the students. A teacher can

keep a class focused by involving the students in their lesson. The teacher can ask questions to the students from their lessons or something interesting that relates to their lessons. They can move around the class, permitting when any student offers to answer questions. I think the teacher should encourage students who show reluctance in answering or shy in class room. Again, bringing two or more students to the front of the class to do something can keep the rest of the class focused. Again, sometime some teachers may face problems with highly capable students who often want to dominate other students. In this case I think the teacher may invite the student to be his or her assistant for the day and offer him or her to answer all the other students' questions before the teacher answers.

Again, some other areas that should be taken into account by the teachers are- establishing classroom rules, intervention strategies, keeping students on task, helping struggling students, refining the homework process, supporting at-risk students, lesson plans that work, teaching the disrespectful student, minimizing classroom disruptions, adopting self-checking strategies for students, implementing active learning strategies, look after teachers' own language, positive rewards, and time management.

5. Conclusion

“Effective classroom management is the foundation of any good lesson.”- E. B. White. It is essential for a school to provide the students the best learning environment (friendly, co-operative, active and effective). And an effective classroom is where learning takes place in a pleasant environment; the teacher is enthusiastic and active and encourages student to participate. The teacher is needed to be firm but not dogmatic. Good teaching is about caring and sharing; the ability to understand, accept and appreciate students, making students feel good about themselves, having supportive attitudes are all the qualities a teacher should have. Students learn more effectively and sincerely when they are energetically engaged in their learning. The teacher should manage the class by many techniques. Classroom management techniques and activities should be focused on the whole class rather than on individual students in order to maintain an ongoing effective and consistent classroom. When management techniques are used consistently, they help the teacher gain control and teach effectively. Through a teacher’s positive, supportive and non- threatening manner students can feel comfortable in the class and learn successfully.

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