



ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ESL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This paper aims to examine the impact of the learning environment on ESL (English as a second language) students' language acquisition. It is important to outline the role of the language atmosphere in the ESL classroom that should contribute to the development of students' language skills. The authors suggest that if ESL teachers know how to create an appropriate and stimulating learning environment, the learning and teaching process will be more effective and productive. Thus, it should enhance and influence students' attention, motivation, and academic achievements of ESL students.

Key words: ESL, positive learning environment, interaction, self-esteem, language acquisition, communication, language environment, external factors, learning capabilities.

Introduction

As English has become a global language of business and scientific communication throughout the civilized world, it demands from ESL teachers to pay more attention to the methods and techniques they use in their English lessons to support and promote students' engagement and motivation to learn English. One of the main targets for an ESL teacher is to create a positive learning environment, which should stimulate students to gain new knowledge, communicate and develop their language skills. Nunan, D. [1] noticed that students of a second and foreign language are considered successful if they can communicate effectively in the target language [1]. The language environment includes everything that ESL students can accept from their senses during the process of language acquisition. However, we should realize that these are not just sounds they hear while listening to other students or audio files, pictures they see on the walls in the classroom, or films that they watch to improve their listening skills. In addition, it is the ability of an ESL teacher to create a positive atmosphere in the lesson, where students feel physically and emotionally safe, respected, supported, and motivated to learn



English, and where there is a positive relationship between the teacher and students and among students in the class. The learning environment is a complex of external factors, that will contribute significantly to enabling second language learning. It goes in line with Fraser's [2] words about the learning environment that encompasses social, psychological, and pedagogical contexts where learning occurs and which affects student achievement and attitudes [2].

Creating a positive learning atmosphere is essential on the part of a teacher to make the language classroom conducive for learners, where they could work cooperatively. Such viability influences the learning capabilities of learners in which they feel comfortable as actively synergetic members of the class. That, too, encourages the emotional well-being of learners which are required for both the learning and emotional development of learners [3]. The one and enable language learning a successful experience. Students will take their cues from the teacher when it comes to interacting with ESL students. Teachers must be genuine and non-judgmental when dealing with students. ESL students may quickly withdraw if they are treated differently, and learning outcomes will suffer. An inclusive learning environment is one in which students learn acceptance of differences in culture, religion, economic status and language so that all students feel respected and supported. Whether ESL students have a separate specialized class for English or are mainstreamed with a fluent English classroom, the goals of inclusiveness and achieving English fluency are the same. A positive classroom climate for the best forms of learning to occur is marked by teachers trying to establish effective positive interactions in the environment of the class [4]. As described by [Shmuck and Schmuck](#) [5], in a positive classroom climate students expect each other to try their best intellectually and to support each other in doing class activities. The kind of effective social interactions is in the form of students sharing much influence with each other as well as with the teacher, and there are high levels of interest in group work as a whole and among classmates [4]. In such a positive climate, open communication is supported mainly in the form of dialogs and the existing norms support the academic work being done [5]. However, it is noteworthy that teacher's expertise cannot on its own, within a positive classroom climate, warrant effective social interactions. As maintained by [6], these constructive social interactions will not emerge within a positive classroom climate unless the goals, expectations, and values are clearly stated. When teachers' ambiguities are lowered by recognizing every student's talent, abilities, and expectations, teachers are better capable of managing socially effective interactions in class [7]. The benefit of the social interactions promoted in a positive classroom climate is that both the students and the teacher achieve a better understanding



of each other and themselves. This enhanced understanding of each other's values fosters a better establishment of the expectation culture and provides better chances for both teachers and students to move toward better academic achievements [8]. Also, the social interactions developed in a positive class climate help to increase learners' self-esteem and improve their chances for success [9]. This was how the pioneers in investigating positive classroom climate and its effects on class procedures perceived the topic. Summarizing all these points, here are four important factors that contribute to a positive classroom environment and ESL students' attitudes toward the lesson:

- Teacher – student relationships. Most students consider their teacher as a role model. For this reason, to motivate students to learn English, it needs to be enthusiastic, cheerful and sincere [11]. Showing students that caring for them, and teacher is there to help them master the English language, rather than constantly criticizing or correcting them. Students want teachers who are friendly, caring, and trustworthy [12]. Always being well prepared for the lesson and showing willingness to answer students' questions will boost students' participation for the lesson.

- Encouraging a favorable psychological environment in the classroom. It is important to establish a kind of "classroom community", in which students feel free to communicate using the foreign language. An important thing to bear in mind is that you should create a classroom atmosphere in which language errors are considered a natural part of the process of learning a foreign language [13]. If errors are ridiculed, some students may suffer from communication apprehension, that is, they will be unwilling to communicate using the target language.

- Creating an attractive physical classroom environment. Very often teachers overlook the significance of an attractive and motivating physical environment. However, teachers can make a significant contribution to the physical environment in which teaching and learning takes place. To Hannah [15]: "Wise teachers allow each of their students to guide them to face challenges." For motivation, a language classroom should create an exciting environment to build a positive attitude of learners towards the target language, teacher and learning a foreign language. life application, scope, and significance. By so doing, they become proactive in achieving their set goals of learning. Meyers and Jones [14] comment thus: "Active learning involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject" (p. 6).

- Enhancing the educational resources with authentic texts and activities. Students often develop negative attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language due to the lack of stimulating, authentic teaching material and tasks. Authentic material is



meaningful to students, challenges their cognitive abilities, and engages them personally. It also increases interest and intrinsic motivation. If you feel that your English coursebook contains few authentic texts, then you need to provide your students with authentic texts and activities. Authentic material and tasks should be selected based on the following guidelines: it should be related to the students' interests, knowledge and everyday experiences; it should foster learner autonomy by providing activities and tasks that require students to use English for authentic communicative purposes.

Conclusion

Certainly, creating a positive classroom environment plays an important role in maintaining student motivation, especially in the context of ESL education. Motivation is essential for promoting language learning and developing communicative competence and maintaining it can be difficult for teachers. However, the link between a positive environment and sustained motivation is evident when teachers strive to create an environment where students discover the intrinsic rewards and excitement of language activities. In a classroom where diversity is accepted, open communication is encouraged, and support is easy, ESL students feel motivated and engaged. The positive reinforcement not only supports students' interest, but also helps them develop their communication skills. Teachers enhance the overall learning experience for ESL students by creating active opportunities for collaboration, celebrating cultural differences, and using interactive teaching methods. Characterized by an understanding of individual needs and the development of a growth mindset, this positive classroom environment is a catalyst for language acquisition and all-round student development. As a result, ESL students not only improve their language skills, but also develop a sense of belonging and confidence, which lays the foundation for a lifelong love of learning and intercultural competence.

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