

Students' Perceptions towards the Efficacy of Their Learning Environment and Educational Courses in Qualifying them as EFL Learners for their Future Careers

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Abstract

The present paper examined EFL students' attitudes towards Class environment they have passed through their studying at the college and also examined their own opinions concerning the courses they have studied, what courses they thought they could improve their thinking, characteristics and how this would reflect on their own career after graduation, Also, the study investigated students' opinion towards the studied courses, what courses need to be changed or modified or added. Numbers of students at level 8 were chosen randomly. A questionnaire was used to discover students' attitudes towards class room environment and courses they have studied in the four years. That topic was chosen in a try to discover more about the relationship between students' college studying and their career after college. If what they have experienced in the college qualified them to their career life after graduation on not, and so the study could suggest improvements in the department plan or environment that can help future students to better qualification for life after graduation. Therefore, the study hypothesis was, EFL students have positive attitudes towards class room environment and courses studied as they qualify them to their career. The study showed students' different opinions towards the classroom environment; most of them assured that classroom environment qualified them for their career. Students' attitudes towards the courses varied, they had positive attitudes towards specific courses and negative attitudes towards specific courses. Suggestions and recommendation were presented.

Key words: Efficacy - classroom environment

1-Introduction

Classroom environment (CE) is an important factor in the learning process. It can attract students to better learning, as it motivates them to the learning process. When students feel that the CE give them chances to better functioning of their own characteristic to improve, cope with their desires for learning, they feel more commitment to the process of

learning. Moreover, there will be a big gap between students who study courses they feel interested in them or at least invest their own characteristics and connect them with their career after graduation and students who study courses away from their interests and have no relationship with their career after graduation.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The present study tried to discover more about students' attitudes towards classroom environment, courses they have studied at the university and their career after graduation.

This can be stated clearly in the following questions:

- 1- What are EFL students' attitudes towards classroom environment?
- 2- What are EFL students' attitudes toward studied courses?
- 3- What is the relation between classroom environment, studied courses and students' career after graduation?

1.2 Hypotheses of the study

The questions of the study can be stated in the form of the following hypotheses:

- 1- EFL students have positive attitudes towards classroom environment.
- 2- EFL students have positive attitudes towards studied courses.
- 3- There is a reciprocal relationship between classroom environment, studied courses and EFL students' career.

1.3 Study Objectives

The present study aimed to:

- 1- discover the importance of the classroom environment in developing learners' characteristics and qualifying them to life after graduation.
- 2- know more about courses student study and how these courses improve students' skills and cope with their interests and their next career. In this way, recommendations can be presented for a better learning environment and a good study plan.

1.4 Population of the study

The population of the study is EFL students at Al-Baha University.

1.5 Participants of the study

A sample of 80 students at Level 8 (they are about to graduate) will be chosen randomly from Al-Baha university- Foreign language department at Boher – Alaqiq.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is important to:

1- Students as:

- It discovers the appropriate circumstances that improve students learning skills and qualify them for their career.
- 2-Through students' opinions towards courses they study, improvement study plan can be suggested.

2- Teachers:

-They can make use of the information that will be collected in that study to adapt different methods for a better classroom environment that can develop all the sides of the learners during the learning process.

3- Course Planners

Students' attitudes towards courses they study in the college need to be put into consideration when plans are designed as learners are an essential part of the learning process that should never be neglected.

2-Literature Review

Classroom Environment (CE) and studied courses are two major elements in the learning process. CE has a pivotal role in the learning process and students' abilities to communicate (Fatimas, Ismail, Pathon & Memon, 2020). In learning English as a foreign language, classroom is a primary source where learners find opportunities to make communication in the English language and enhance their L2 willing to communicate. CE includes different domains such as teacher, learners, facilities, interaction between teacher and learners, roles of the teacher and the learners in the learning process, or as Merritt (2019) explained that environmental variables include many domains, individual or personal domain, school or institutional domain, schooling or societal domain or physical such as tables...., materials (curricular or instructional), interpersonal (teacher and students interact), instrumental, psychosocial. All these domains affect the product of the learning process and that is the learner. All these domains help to form the character of the learners, his/ her characteristics and as a result on his/ her career.

Positive Classroom Environment contributes to effective learning. It is a supportive learner-centered classroom environment that prepares students to succeed. It facilitates students' academic achievement and attends to their socialization needs. It builds a "classroom community" in which students' cognitive, affective, and physical needs are met. • It nurtures a broad array of learning styles and experiences while emphasizing individualized student-learning. It promotes collaborative-learning opportunities (Bryant, 1999; Fielding, 2006; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeisser, & Long, 2001) in (Merritt, 2019). On the contrary, negative classroom-learning environment are not only problematic but they can also cause students not to succeed. Courses also that students study has an important role in qualifying the learners for their career after graduation. and shaping their cognitive and creative abilities for a better career.

The impacts of the CE on learners have been investigated by many researchers and concluded the effects of CE on developing different traits of learners. Ndid and Efflong (2020) stated that the environment within which teaching and learning occurs can influence the effectiveness of teaching, attitude and performance students. Also, studies of Fatimas, et.al (2020) and Jian-E-peng (2019) showed the effectiveness of

classroom environment and classroom environment includes many factors such as teacher support, teachers' classroom management and teaching style. Merritt (2019) approved the importance of CE and the role of the teacher in creating a better CE that facilitate learning and how a positive CE provides advantageous conditions that may cause students to succeed. CE had a stronger relationship with a critical thinking disposition than skills. (cheng & Wan, 2017). Li, Huang, & Li (2020) study also improved the effects of classroom environment and trait emotional intelligence on foreign language enjoyment and anxiety.

Courses represents an essential part of the input that students are subject to in the CE and have a great role in forming the character of the students and qualifying them to their path or career after graduation. Muthama & Kinyanjui (2013), investigated the relationship between university course and an individual's career path. It seeks to find out job satisfaction as a result of these two variables. That is whether one is satisfied in their present area of employment, or simply the career path they are on and also if this particular area of employment is related to the university course pursued It was found that the graduate trainees and graduates in regular employment expressed satisfaction in their current areas of work or career paths. It was also found that the university course and one's career path had a strong correlation but these two factors were not adequate predictors of job satisfaction for the graduate trainees and the graduates in regular employment.

3-Methodology

3.1 Tools of the study

A questionnaire was used to investigate students' attitudes towards the classroom environment and studied courses. The items of the questionnaire concerning the CE were taken from a ready online one in the study of Ebrahimi (2015) with some changes to adapt the present study. It was divided into two parts. They are:

A: class room environment

It included five items. They are:

- 1- **Personal Relevance:** It refers to the extent to which college activities and knowledge are relevant to students' everyday out of college experience.
- 2- **Uncertainty:** Extent to which opportunities are provided for students to experience knowledge is evolving and culturally and socially determined
- 3- **Critical voice:** Extent to which students feel that it is legitimate and beneficial to question the teachers' pedagogical plans and methods
- 4- **Shared control:** Extent to which students share with the teacher control for the design and management of learning activities, assessment criteria, and social norms of the classroom

- 5- **Student negotiation:** Extent to which students have opportunities to explain and justify their ideas, and to test the viability of their own and other students' ideas, experience.

B: Studied courses

It included subjective and essay questions, that ask Students about the courses they studied and their study plan, which courses they thought important or not important for their career, their suggestions for a better study plan whether by adding or removing courses.

3.2 Procedure

An online questionnaire was sent to the participant of the study. An online session was held in which the instructions of the questionnaire were explained to students and necessary translation for specific items were given to the participant in their native language to be sure that they understood what they were asked for before they give their answers. Also, they have been told that their answers are classified so they should give their opinions freely, as their answers would so important to improve the classroom room environment and study plan.

3.3 Data Analysis & Results

Students' responses on the questionnaire showed that:

First: concerning part 1 (classroom environment):

Item 1: Personal Relevance:

Students' responses varied towards school activities and knowledge and how they are relevant to their everyday out of school experience. 77.2% agreed that classroom environment helped them to cooperate. About 64. % agreed also that The English they have learned during the four-year was a part of their out of classroom life and they have learned different interesting things about the outside-world from their experience in the environment classroom.

However, students' attitude towards their learning and if it started with problems related to the outside world were equal. Half of them agreed while the others refused.

Item 2: Uncertainty:

Most of the students (78%) agreed that the classroom environment teaches them that English teaching is influenced by people's values and opinions. They have opportunities in the classroom environment to acknowledge their cultures and different methods for learning English.

Item 3: Critical Voice:

Concerning students' rights to question the teacher about his pedagogical plans and methods in the classroom, 59.8% agreed that they can ask the instructor about the purpose behind learning the courses, while 40.1% disagreed.

75.2% of students agreed that they can speak up for their rights. 52.6% disagreed that they don't have the chance to complain about teaching activities.

Item 4: Shared control:

Concerning the issue of students' chances to share the teacher control for the design and management of learning activities, assessment criteria, and social norms of the classroom, students' responses reflect their confusions. May be this of misunderstanding specifically because they didn't share this experience before with the teacher.

Item 5: student negotiation

Students' responses showed that they had the chance to explain and justified their ideas to their teachers, exchange their ideas and experiences with them.

Second: Studied courses

That part included a part related the study plan, importance of courses they studied relating to their career, and students' suggestions for plan improvement.

1- The study plan

Most students agreed that they know their plan and they gave their opinions concerning the courses they learned.

2- Importance of courses

Students' attitudes towards importance of courses and its usefulness to their career, are divided half and half. The first half thought they are important for their career as English teacher, translator or interpreters. While the second half thought they are not so helpful for their career.

Also, students' attitudes specifically towards linguistic courses were negative. They didn't enjoy them. in contrast to skill and literature courses. 94.9% of them enjoyed skill courses, 54.1% enjoyed literature courses, while linguistic courses came last, 50% enjoyed them.

According to students' responses, Translation, grammar, vocabulary, writing, and listening and speaking courses are so important for them. Then after these courses come some literature courses such as short story and drama.

In their responses for the courses that are less important come drama, general courses such as skills of writing and research methods

3- Plan improvement

Students have many suggestions concerning the courses.

1 -Some self-developmental courses

2-I think some courses such as interpretation should be considered as practical courses and not be that serious in evaluating students when they decide to be majored in that course than it should be more serious.

3-Use body language more when presenting and explaining because body language is important in establishing information and not forgetting it.

4-They suggested more listening comprehension – Film analysis and criticism

5 -Provide more facilities like more equipment, internet, electronic devices

6-more interpretation courses

7-Our goal is to learn the English skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, not

to focus on literature and linguistics.

4-Discussion of Results

Analyzing students' responses to the first part of the questionnaire showed that they have a good attitude towards classroom environment and how it is helpful for their experiences outside colleges is good. So, the first hypothesis of the study: "EFL students have positive attitudes towards classroom environment. "is accepted with some suggestions for more space in the classroom environment for participation and more negotiation in activities practiced in classroom.

Concerning the second hypothesis: "EFL students have positive attitudes towards studied courses.", students' attitudes courses they studied at college are positive. Therefore, the second hypothesis is accepted. Moreover, they gave many suggestions concerning the courses they study by adding or removing some courses. It was clear from students' responses that they have a good positive attitude towards skill courses more than literature and linguistic courses. They thought that skill courses develop the main skills of language which are reading, vocabulary, writing and speaking and that what they are going to practice outside classroom and what benefit them more in their career.

For the third hypothesis about the relation between classroom environment, studied courses and EFL students' career. They agreed that there is a reciprocal relation between what they studied in the college and their career after graduation as EFL teachers or translators or interpreters.

Also, for more improvements in the study plan, they had some suggestions concerning the courses for more effective graduates.

5-Recommendations

The present study has some recommendations:

- Study plan need to be reconsidered from students' perspectives concerning the courses. Skill courses need to be increased in the plan. Literature courses should be less.
- Also, it will be more valuable and enrich, if the FL department has two sections, a linguistic section and a literature one. In this way, students have the choice to choose the section that compatible with their interests and the career they want.
- More academic counselling session should be presented for students concerning the plan and the classroom environment. During these sessions, students need to give a chance to speak up about classroom, courses and activities, their teachers. Through these sessions, a lot information can be discovered about the learning process and so improvement plans can be prepared and presented to stakeholders for competent graduates that can serve the community.

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