

Verbal Behaviors of Teachers and Student Anxiety in Language Classes

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to examine the features of teacher-student interaction and to identify dominant social factors that caused anxiety in language classes. The participants of the study were both teachers and students drawn from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University. The study was qualitative and it used interviews, focus group discussions and diaries. The results of the study showed that freshman students were anxious due to teachers' verbal behaviors. The data revealed that there were various social factors that let students experience anxiety of which disrespecting students by teachers was one of the most important elements. Some instructors were inconsiderate in their treatment of students. They insulted students which made students feel socially inept. In view of the above, students should be guarded against unprofessional behavior of teachers which has gripped the minds of the students.

Keywords: Anxiety, verbal behaviors, teacher-student interaction, language classes

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

Anxiety is an intricate psychological concept that cannot be easily defined. However, psychologists in the area defined it as a general term referring to the feeling of nervousness, fear, apprehension and worrying. Psychologists (Dworetzky, 1988; Comer, 2007; Myers, 2007) viewed anxiety as a disorder and they classified it as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic disorder, social anxiety and separation anxiety. In the realm of language learning too scholars such as Horwitz et al. (1991) defined anxiety as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, worries and nervousness associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) apart from perceiving FLA as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning (Horwitz et al., 1991).

Research in the areas of linguistics and psychology began to recognize that cognition research explains only a part of how the mind works, only that part related to reasoning and thinking; it had neglected emotions (Young, 1999). To fill this gap, research has flourished in the area of affective factors and it was only three decades ago that research began in the area; however, this new dimension of research, launched in the area of affective factors, has been attuned to scientific enquiry (Young, 1999). Since the introduction of Krashen's Monitor

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Model (Krashen, 1981) and his Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1987), affective factors have been the subject of study under the realm of second language learning. However, compared to the cognitive domain, the affective domain has received much less attention, but any language teacher and learner can testify that language learning often involves strong positive and negative emotions (Stern, 1983). These (the inner world of the learner such as feelings and emotions) are aspects of the learning process that are often unjustly neglected, and yet they are vitally important if we are to understand human learning in its totality (Williams & Burden, 1997). The need to consider affective factors in the classroom is well implied in the findings of Abate (1996), who claimed that there is an association between anxiety and English language performance. Anxiety is one of the affective factors that have the potential to bring effect on language learning. Nowadays, scholars (MacIntyre, 1999; Horwitz, 2001; Zhang, 2001; Argaman & Abu-Rubia, 2002; Ariza, 2002; Dewaele, 2002; Cubukcu, 2007) in the area of affective factors frequently noted that anxiety has a subtle effect in foreign language learning. For example, Ariza (2002) stated that learning cannot occur until students want to learn; if learners are emotionally unwilling, language acquisition will be impeded. Cubukcu (2007) pointed out that anxiety makes learners unreceptive to language input.

Anxiety could also be classified as trait, state and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to a stable predisposition to become nervous in a wide range of situations and there is always a probability of being anxious in any situation (Young, 1991). State anxiety, on the other hand, refers to the moment-to-moment experience of anxiety; it is the transient emotional state of feeling nervous that can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity (MacIntyre, 1999). MacIntyre further noted in the case of language learning, we can see that a person with a high level of language anxiety will experience state anxiety frequently and in terms of occurrence, state anxiety is the first phase of situation-specific anxiety. The third type of anxiety, situation-specific anxiety, which is conceptualized by many language anxiety researchers (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004) as a situation-specific personality trait influences the language learning process. This specific anxiety, which has been responsible for students' uncomfortable experiences in language classes, was proposed by Horwitz et al. (1991) to be called Foreign Language Anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1991), this anxiety stems from the inherent authenticity associated with immature second/foreign language communicative ability.

In light of the above theoretical perspective, language anxiety is a form of situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999) existing in foreign language classes. Comparison among state, trait and situation-based anxieties revealed that it is situation-specific anxiety that influences the language learning process (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989 cited in Feigenbaum, 2007). Anxiety in language classes becomes a situation-specific personality trait. Language courses or classes are different from others; they are full of interactions, tasks and activities in which some students experience psychological blocks like anxiety (Bekalu, 2011). The uniqueness of foreign language anxiety in comparison with other academic anxieties lies in the interactive nature of language classrooms and the continual requests made to learners to communicate

(Ortega-Cebreros, 2003). In a broader sense, this indicates that the learning environment in language classes is a factor that induces anxiety.

The perceptions of students about the features of the learning environment entail anxiety. The prevailing view today is that emotions or anxiety for the present study are caused by appraisals of a self-relevant object or event (Smith & Mackie, 2007). An appraisal is an interpretation of an event including both the causes of the event and how the events affect the self (Smith & Mackie, 2007). Again, Smith and Mackie (2007) stated that appraisals take place at two levels. The first level of appraisal refers to the gross evaluation of the event and this leads to the second level of appraisal which includes the possibility of coping and attributions of agency (either self- or other-initiated).

In view of the above points, it is imperative that language teachers develop an awareness of the phenomenon of language anxiety, the causes of language anxiety in the language classroom and practical ways to reduce the levels of anxiety. Without considering the effect of affect, it might seem unreasonable to talk about the performance of students since the achievement of students could be hindered by affective variables apart from cognitive elements (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991; Campbell, 1999) since human learning is both cognitive and affective. In relation to this, Gebeyehu (2005) also noted that the association between anxiety and English language performance can only be regarded as definite and significant.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Citing studies such as Bailey and Ellis (1980) and Rathbone (1987), Ellis (1994) underlined the complexity and dynamic nature of learners' affective states and the influence these have on their ability to concentrate on learning. Of the various forms of affective factor, anxiety caused by teacher verbal behavior is the subject of this study. In his study, Bekalu (2011) found that it was only the relationship of teacher-interaction with language anxiety that was found to be significant. Students in Australia and U.S value professors who engage in behaviors that keep interaction lively; whereas for Japanese and Taiwanese students, relaxed movement and out-of-class communication emerged as the best discriminators of best versus worst professors and it is also interesting that the best two discriminators for Swedish students were verbal rather than nonverbal in nature (Georgakopoulos & Guerrero, 2010). In a similar manner, it was found that teachers' verbal immediacy behaviors were positively correlated at a statistically significant level with students' willingness to speak in English classes (Hsu & Roso, 2006).

Although there are many other factors contributing to students' participation in language classes or students' choice of teachers, teachers' verbal behaviors is found to be an important element in the classroom situation and it determines the participation of students and regulates the students' affective factors. Anxiety has been widely accepted as one of the key factors that influence success in foreign language learning. Researchers asserted that anxiety

has a relationship with academic achievement (Young, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Abate, 1996; Campbell, 1999; Gebeyehu, 2005). In a study conducted at Addis Ababa University, Bekalu (2011) further listed down a number of factors making students anxious, of which the following are the most important: fear of being evaluated, unrealistic assumptions about the university and instructors, low self-esteem and personality of instructors were mentioned as agents of psychological influences that trigger anxiety in the classroom.

However, none of these researchers explained the verbal behaviors of teachers and the psychological conditions of the learners. Hence, this study fills this research gap since understanding these factors could enhance the process of foreign language learning and performance. This is because considering the affective domain of students is found to be important and understanding these problems of the students is less of an option and more of a necessity.

Thus, the focus of this study is on the features of teacher-student interaction in general and teachers' verbal behavior in particular. In light of the above discussion, this study tried to look into the verbal accounts of teachers in the classroom and the psychological reactions of students. It is the premise of the present researcher that verbal behaviors of teachers could affect the emotion of students. In this regard, this study set out to answer the following research questions:

- What are the verbal behaviors of teachers in English language classes?
- Are students becoming anxious due to the verbal behaviors of teachers in language classes?

METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study was first year students in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. From the courses students took, language courses were identified since it was assumed that language courses would trigger anxiety in students. The total number of first year students enrolled in the Department was forty and sixteen key respondents who appeared to be willing and co-operative were chosen to take part in the study. I conducted the study in the first semester of the year after three months of classroom instruction in 2015. It was believed that students who were exposed to three months of English language teaching at the university could offer extended accounts of their language learning experiences. From all the courses students took, only those language courses that required students to speak with a reasonable degree of fluency and accuracy were identified since it was assumed that speaking English in front of the class triggers anxiety in students.

The subjects of the study and data gathering instruments

To extract the necessary data from the participants of the study, the participants and the researcher got closely involved. To this end, I made frequent contacts so as to secure the collaboration of the participants of the study. Thus, in selecting samples for focus group

discussion, diary and interview, purposive sampling techniques were used. Key participants who were willing and co-operative were chosen. To substantiate the findings obtained from student participants, I held interviews with teachers.

Out of the forty first year students enrolled in the Department, sixteen student participants and two teachers were chosen. Ten student participants, categorized into two equal groups, participated in focus group discussions; four students took part in recording their daily experiences using a diary and two student participants were interviewed. Again two teacher subjects who were willing and cooperative were also interviewed.

The focus group discussion with selected students was held to gather the general opinion, attitude, knowledge about teacher-student interaction in language learning. With regard to the diary, four respondents participated in reflecting their recurring issues upon the diary entries. Each learner was offered a notebook to record his/her thoughts and feelings on a daily basis for a month. They were also told that the issues recorded would be part of a study. An information guideline which helped the participants record the diary and adapted from Carroll's (1994) work cited in Krishnan and Hoon, (2002) was attached to the notebook. In the diaries, they were asked to write down the things that led them to feel anxious in the English classroom with regard to teachers' verbal behaviors. Finally, all the diaries were collected and only those thoughts and feelings associated with the aim of the research were selected and incorporated in the study. As it was stated above, students and teachers took part in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The FGDs and interviews were audio recorded using digital audio-recorder and transcribed. Before the discussion, I had informed members that I would tape record the session. I informed participants about the purpose of the recording so that I could refer back to the discussion when I wrote my report. Both the FGDs and the interviews were conducted in Amharic because the sample students had good command of Amharic, a language of wider communication in Ethiopia.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was transcribed and the verbatim accounts were thematically analyzed. In order to uncover the meanings of the data, I followed the Dornyei's (2007) classification of data analysis. These analytical processes have been the following: transcribing the data, coding, categorizing, producing derived data (tentative interpretation) and interpreting the data. Influenced by Creswell's (2007) argument, I used short eye-catching quotations throughout the analysis.

With regard to ethical issues, all the participants were willing in taking part in the study. Another important issue in qualitative research has been protecting participants and maintaining the security of their views. I assured participants that everything discussed would be confidential. I told them that I would hide their names in the analysis by assigning pseudonyms. In triangulation, I used corroborating evidence from different sources; that is, most findings obtained through interviews were corroborated with the results obtained from

diary or FGD. Furthermore, various findings or theories were used to provide corroborating evidence. In order to maintain the reliability of the data, I used inter-coder agreements. In doing so, I achieved a higher percentage, i.e. 80%, of agreement between the coding of the transcripts by the coders. Thus, the reliability was 0.8.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the qualitative data collection tools were classified according to the themes emerging from the responses and they were presented as follows.

Verbal Behaviors of Teachers in the Classroom

A large proportion of students' complaints were targeted at the verbal behaviors of teachers. The following excerpts exemplify the issue. Alem (pseudonym) wrote the following in her diary with regard to the behavior of her reading teacher:

If a student cannot answer a question, he [the reading teacher] says "go away". He also discourages students; he says that "a rural farmer is better than you." Is this expected from our instructor? (Diary 1).

Abayneh in the FGD forwarded the following insights:

But teachers give little value to their students. In this respect, there is a teacher who said [the following]: this year's ILS [Institute of Language Studies] students are International Lazy Students (FGD, 1).

In line with this, an instructor confirmed the response of the students and he, Gebru, shared the above sentiments and offered the following:

I would imagine, at least, some instructors would distance themselves from students and they are rough in their treatment (Teacher Int. 1).

Some instructors did not respect their students. With regard to Alem's notes, students were unfavorable compared with farmers who are equated with illiterate people. Abayneh's point further indicated that all students of the faculty were considered lazy. The underlying contention was that students did not deserve to be learners at the University, due to their poor academic competence. But, academically speaking, caring teachers who maintained openness and shared a deep concern with students could make a difference in their students who performed poorly. Students have a natural potential for learning if the classroom environment is conducive.

It is unprofessional to insult students; it is also unkind to be hostile and insult an entire faculty in front of a class. This type of treatment makes students perceive the classroom as a

threatening environment and they become unwilling to participate. In view of this, Brendgen et al. (2007) stated that experiences of verbal abuses by the teacher may weaken not only individuals' general sense of worth but also their specific self-concept in regard to scholastic and behavioral competence. Maltreated students have low self-esteem, difficulty in maintaining social relationships with their teachers and they develop mistrust with other teachers, too.

It could be expected that teachers might insult their students because students do not live up to their expectations. But whatever reasons the teacher might have, such verbal abuses let students down. Such treatment can turn the poor academic background of the students from bad to worse. In such cases where students have a poor academic background, the teacher should help students to develop language competence needed rather than worsening the matter. In addition to the academic challenge students face, teachers' behavior may become an additional burden to students.

Citing the practical experiences she encountered in the teaching-learning process, **Genet** described her reading teacher in the interview session as follows:

Well, I can mention my reading teacher as an example. It looks as if he doesn't know the very word treatment. I don't think he accepts the mere fact that a student goes to school to learn. He always wants us to give him the exact answer for his questions... He also mocks my response that also makes me anxious. My interest in learning is also in a state of decline (Int.2).

Still more, a number of consistent themes emerged. For example, Selam recorded the following points in her diary:

He [a Communicative English Skills teacher] has a 0% respect for his students. The first thing that you can see from his face is disrespect. This is not only my problem; it is the problem of every student who takes his course. The words that he uses to speak to his students, the words that he says in front of his students, the way he punishes his students, you cannot imagine. You cannot imagine, you do not even expect it from an educated person (Diary, 4).

According to the data above, students did not get respect from some teachers. Particularly, Alem and Abayneh's cases revealed that students were not valued. Similarly, Genet's response noted that she was mocked by the teacher in the classroom. It is ridiculous and unprofessional to mock students. Students want to be respected; otherwise, they feel detached from the learning process and lose interest in activities given in the classroom. Patrick and Ryan (2007) suggested that respectful environments have been associated with cognitive engagement; this is because, the psychological comfort ensuing from reverence sets individuals free from concern about being ridiculed. That is, when students are given due regard and when they are psychologically ready, they could be mentally keen to process

language tasks given in the classroom. As a teacher, there has been nothing more comforting than devoting one's time to respecting and helping students and securing their interest in the subject. However, this was not the case in the present study area.

The point raised by Surafel in the FGD coincided with the issue stated by Alem in her diary. Surafel who was in the FGD stated the following:

You observe a teacher shouting at a student and you feel that you might be insulted. He [the reading teacher] ridicules you and hurts you. I know students who cried due to this and wanted to change class (FGD, 1).

According to the excerpt above, the student wanted to change the class due to the discouraging comments given by an instructor. To this end, the student searched for other instructors who gave that course. Unfortunately, she was not successful. Consider the following excerpts taken from Alem's diary:

I am interested in learning in another class (group). But when I searched for another group, I found [Mr. X]; he is not better than my instructor (Diary, 1).

At this juncture, it is reasonable to say that there were some instructors who became too hostile and rough to the extent of making students cry. Students switched from class to class in search of instructors who lived up to their standards. A student who became afraid of one or two instructors could become fearful that the other instructors would repeat the same behavior. The students seemed conditioned to experiencing fear in each language class and they became unable to take part in a class discussion. In a similar study, LeeDo and Schallert (2004) reported that due to an accumulation of smaller aggravations, students cultivate their own private protests to what was going on in the class; and they stopped paying attention or participating in the class discussion not because they were simply being lazy but they were trying to protect themselves from strong negative emotions created in their milieu. A psychological instability like this would downgrade the very idea of classroom participation. This, in turn, implies that an absence of participation or reluctance to participate retards the development of skills.

It is true that such teacher-student interaction lowered the participation of students. Turula (2007) noted that with an authoritarian and uncompromising teacher, students have experienced isolation and a loss of control which could create separation in the classroom while intensifying language anxiety. Similarly, Chang et al. (2004) stated that adolescents who perceived their teachers to be authoritarian in teaching were more likely susceptible to the influence of their teacher's judgment of students in determining their peer relations and preference. Being authoritarian in the classroom does not only affect the teacher-student interaction, it also affects the interpersonal relationships of the students. This perceived teacher-student interaction further affects the academic performance of the students.

As it was seen from the data, some teachers treated students roughly. They even went to the extent of insulting students. In such a classroom environment, they were likely to experience anxiety with a different degree of intensity and this affected the process of language learning. Young (1999) noted that the greater the degree of social distance, the less successful the learner would be in learning the foreign language.

As per the data above, students were not esteemed and teachers did not make any effort that built positive feelings in the students. This is especially true in a multi-cultural context like Addis Ababa University which has students coming from different social and family backgrounds. Teachers are supposed to show professionalism and commitment to the students. Students are in need of scholarly help and teachers are supposed to show them the right path and create a supportive environment. Desirable interaction grows when rich relationships are built on mutual respect. The key to a rewarding relationship is to start with respect.

Furthermore, a bizarre incidence reveals the situation even more clearly. Sharing her terrible experience, Selam, in her diary, wrote about her teacher as follows:

The teacher asked the students to present an issue and he gave us a day to be ready on the topic. One of the students was trying to present in front of the class. The girl who was presenting was anxious and she shook and the teacher responded in such a way: “Are you incapable of presenting such things, had it been sex, you could have had it in every corner of the road. Don’t you think that I do not know you?” There is no word to express his improper words. The teacher is not creating anxiety but he himself is anxiety. He is the most undisciplined, ill-mannered teacher (Diary, 4).

One could not give a better example, than this excerpt, to demonstrate a teacher’s fallibility. This teacher’s behavior was far below the standard. In such an instance where a student becomes anxious, the teacher is supposed to take pity on a student and give help in her time of need. But to worsen the matter, he added an undesirable comment to her fear. That was a shameful act. Such thoughtless words caused pain and increased students’ irritation. Such spoken words from the teacher had a profound influence on the student’s thought and again the student’s thought determined the student’s act in the classroom.

The magnitude of the effects of such an incident depends on how the students perceive the event. Such events could never be erased from the mind of the student. In other words, this student thought about this traumatic event that led her to isolation from teachers and classroom participation. Even the other students who faced this incident could not be interested in participating in such classes; they might become passive and lose interest in the course. Even the slightest discouragement from a teacher could have a profound effect on students’ social and psychological well-being let alone a disparaging insult. Such a student has good reasons to be frightened. Images of such events might come back as flashbacks and negatively affect her future interaction.

Unfortunately, the intrusive nature of emotions makes students pay special attention to significant events like this. Such treatment would lead to a worsening of the student's performance by diminishing classroom participation.

The behaviors of some English teachers have become impenetrable barriers for students. These excerpts conveyed a powerful message to anyone who has respect for students. There might be students who were cynical about the teacher or about the teaching-learning process but such disparaging words annoy anyone who attends the class. Teachers are supposed to play a catalytic role in strengthening the teaching-learning process. Teachers are expected to be self-controlled since the comments, suggestions and feedback they give to their students' work have been a driving force for students' success.

The discussion could be widened still more and similar themes recurred in the following episode. Selam further recorded the points below:

A friend of mine who is a Turkish lady told our teacher that she did not understand the thing that he had said. The teacher's face changed and he said, "When did you start learning English?" She replied, "In April." He said, "This is not the place where English letters A, B, C, D are learnt; go and learn English at some language schools; you do not deserve to be here." I saw my friend's face in a broken state of mind and I told her to cool down. When she went out of the class, she just said, "Couldn't I speak English a little bit? Did I do badly?" She wanted to drop the course and take it next year because she did not want to see this teacher again and I tried to help her, informing that she should be strong and face challenges. A lot of students are afraid to attend his class like my friend (Diary, 4).

Here it is not hard to imagine the psychological disaster the student faced. The incident brought multiple psychological problems: anxiety, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction and the like. For example, the Turkish lady's lack of confidence was clearly exemplified when she asked her classmate "*Could not I speak English a little bit? Did I do badly?*" From her request, it is possible to say that this student was not even sure of what mistake she had committed.

According to the data, prolonged and excessive feelings of anxiety could be observed in the vulnerable student cited above. In this regard, Young (1999) noted that learners' frustrations and anxieties can stem from instructor/student interactions. Such upsetting experiences make students feel dazed. Students maltreated in such a way have multiple reasons for having less secure relationships and they worry that other teachers would react similarly. Students often draw generalizations based on one particular incidence.

It might appear that student's academic performance is low. Despite this, instructors should not lower themselves and insult their students. With no doubt, such maltreatment could leave

both the teacher and the Department with disgrace. Such treatment might lead one to conclude that teachers are not aware of the affective demands of the students. In this regard, Davis (1983) noted that most teachers are not well-informed about the dynamics of affective learning as there is little affective learning content in the curriculum. Teachers have to be more sensitive to conditions that promote feelings of success. The most frequent observation made by the participants in Price's (1991) study was that they would feel more comfortable if instructors were more likely to be a friend helping them to learn and less like an authority figure making them perform. This shows that the basic tenets of humanness such as being reasonable, empathic and fair should not be out of the teachers' horizon

Still, the students sampled were unhappy with some English teachers. In addition to the poor treatment, teachers threatened students. The following excerpts also disclosed this point. Hidja said: *they [teachers] say, "I will show you during exam time"* (FGD, 2). And Abayneh noted, *"it is good if teachers become friendly and stop giving warnings"* (FGD, 1).

During the interview, a teacher, Tilaye forwarded the following points:

If the students feel that the teacher is unapproachable, they stop coming and talking to him/her. We make a sort of error as far as marks are concerned, this may be a sort of problem we have (Teacher Int. 2).

Gebre, a teacher, also stated the following:

Rather than making students be afraid of grades which would be posted at the end of the semester, we do not need to make them be afraid of giving the D, F. In that case, they would not be free to learn (Teacher Int. 1).

These quotes showed that complaints about teacher-student interactions were getting louder and louder. The data, particularly, the responses of Hidija, Abayneh and the teacher, Gebre, showed that teachers gave warnings. This might be done while students failed to do what was expected of them. However, teachers were expected to cater to the needs of individual learners rather than giving warnings. Exams should not be used as an absolute means of measurement; they could simply tell teachers a few things about what has been understood in the classroom. Teachers should never consider examinations as weapons to threaten their students with. Instead tests could be used as motivational tools.

Discouragement, disrespect, insults and warnings could make student's emotions run high and students suffer from psychological instability. Moreover, all of these factors threatened the students' capacity to learn a new language. Threatening students with an "F" grade is professionally unsound. Giving an "F" grade and being proud of it is also unfair. Rather, the teacher has to change the poor background of the students. Without contributing our share to the improvement of students, giving low grades could be unreasonable. According to the data, students were being threatened with grades. This might make suspicions creep into one's mind about the rationality of a student's grade.

Due to fear of undesirable grades, students also developed a power distance. This power distance created a greater gap between students and teachers. The following excerpts showed this point. Alem recorded the summarized points below in her diaries:

We are afraid to ask them in their office because most of them are Doctors, MA [holders] and so on. As a freshman student and as we came from rural [areas] of Ethiopia, we are not aware of how and when we ask for help unless the teacher encourages us but most of our instructors cannot do this (Diary, 1).

Based on her responses, it was understood that the gap between teachers and students was wide. In this regard, Abayneh during the FGD noted:

There is a gap between students and teachers. For example, when you ask questions, they discourage you (they don't give you appropriate answers); they undermine you (FGD, 1).

In this regard, Gebru, a teacher, highlighted the following:

The other thing is they [students] would think that the teacher is not to help them but to evaluate them (Teacher Int.1).

The data seem to suggest that fear might stem from the power distance existing between student and teacher. Education is a cultural practice; the social hierarchy prevailing in the society (power domination existing at home) might be reflected in the interaction teachers have with students. Noticeable in the data is that there is a visible distance between teachers and students due to fear of power; that is, the power (being a teacher) creates fear.

Instructors should prevent negative emotions from becoming associated with the English class; rather they should promote a pleasant experience. In this regard, behavioral school of psychology stated that thinking about school may elicit either negatively-toned or positively-toned condition reaction. Davis (1983) asserted that punitive teachers and classrooms are associated with feelings of fear, anger, hostility, resentment, failure and depression. These emotional reactions might be elicited as conditioned reflexes to school-related stimuli.

This finding established an empirical link with the findings of Aydin (1999) cited in Horwitz (2001). In her findings, she noted that Turkish learners of English identified their teacher's manner as an important source of anxiety. In a similar study, Worde's (2003) participants explained that the teacher was trying to make them feel stupid and this indicated a lack of respect on the part of the teacher and an astonishing number of negative comments were made regarding the teachers such as: 'very intimidating', 'apathetic', and 'condescending' and a 'nasty person'. In the Ethiopian context, too, Walegn (1997) underlined that unhealthy relations should not be tolerated and he recommended that good relationships or understandings between teachers and students and among students themselves should also be

created to minimize students' stress. The majority of the participants in Seime's (1999) study did refrain from asking questions because of the instructors' behavior. Considering this situation, Abate (1996), on his part, recommended that there was a need for teachers to be sympathetic and avoid being over-critical of learners' performance, thereby encouraging a more relaxed classroom atmosphere and closer teacher-student rapport. According to Price's (1991) participants, the most common complaint about instructors was that many of them had used classroom time for performance rather than for learning. For students, the major purpose of joining the university is to learn and not to be evaluated; evaluation is secondary. The help and friendship the teacher shows towards students, how much the teacher talks openly with students, how he/she trusts them and is interested in their ideas have impacts on the emotional reaction of students.

In addition, the maltreatment of students by teachers has restricted the level of interaction in the classroom and this in turn has affected the degree of language learning, since language skills are developed through interactions. It has been often suggested that successful language learning probably depends as much on the type of interaction that takes place in the classroom (Garton, 2002). Furthermore, anxious students might be unwilling or unable to request the necessary clarification of content or to acquire the skills needed for learning the course concepts (Mejias et al., 1991). This implies that teacher-student interaction has a tremendous effect on the achievement of students. In this regard, Gebru, a teacher, during the interview, stated that teachers are aware of the effects of such undesirable interaction.

Every instructor teaching at this level knows that if he is unfriendly to his students, if he is hyper-corrector, not compassionate, students would keep quiet and the teacher is disturbing the course (Teacher Int.1).

However, this bad relationship could have enormous negative impacts on understanding the course.

Desirable Interaction

In spite of all these, there were teachers who handled the students' cases with caution. Truly speaking, there were instructors who were sensitive to student's feelings. In this regard, Genet, during the interview stated:

Of course there are teachers who treat us properly. For instance, my "Mr. Z" is that type of teacher, may be, it is because I have got a positive attitude towards the course itself (Int. 2)

The following segment of the discussion also illustrates the point at hand:

Researcher: *Do you think that most of the University instructors are autocratic (very hostile)?*

Senait- *I don't know many of them I know about six or seven of them.*

Researcher: *Among them?*

Senait: *Two of them are like that (Int. 1.).*

Hailemichael during the FGD further stated that:

The classroom atmosphere depends on the teachers. There are courses we attend in a relaxed situation and there are courses that we attend [being] stressed (FGD, 2).

Alem, on her part, recorded the following in his diary:

I am very interested in some other teachers; for example (Mr. X), he does not discourage us rather he advises us from his experience and he is punctual (Diary, 1).

Mekonnen in his diary noted the following:

The teacher, (Mr. X), helped us to do his best. I get relief and satisfaction. Nowadays, when I join his class, I am feeling better (Diary, 3).

Bemnet wrote the following in his diary: "*I have a good impression of (Mr. X). He is helpful*" (Diary, 2). Contrary to what has been said, there were some teachers who showed a clear sense of concern. There were instructors who lived up to the expectations of their students. The efforts that these instructors made to help their students were not left unheeded. These teachers were able to catch the attention of their students due to the fact that they provided students with constructive criticisms. The students have respect for these instructors who are hard-working and offer tremendous regard for students. These instructors deserve much respect. These types of instructors are able to leave a lasting impression in the minds of their students.

The quality of the relationships existing between teachers and students can affect the process of learning. When a teacher is an understanding person, the learners feel secure, and they could be open and non-defensive in learning. Within such a relationship, anxiety may disappear and effective learning can take place (Finch, 2001). In connection to this, Zhang (2001) noted that teachers' active and friendly exchanges with students in their free time at the beginning of the academic program might be an asset in helping these students to reduce their unnecessary anxiety.

CONCLUSION

Verbal behaviors of teachers in the classroom were found to be one cause of anxiety. When students did not respond correctly, they were subject to undesirable comments and these comments led students to self-doubt, confusion and fear.

According to the data, the relationships formed between teachers and students became tense. Students rarely talked with teachers openly. Due to bad treatment of some teachers, some students were humiliated. Some instructors became inconsiderate in their treatment of students. They went to the extent of insulting students, which in effect let students feel socially inept. In some instances, students were degraded and their human dignity was also attacked. Such harsh scolding and criticism in front of their peers could potentially have negative impacts on students' performance. The social proximity of teachers had an impact on the extent and nature of students' anxiety. By being open and friendly to them, a teacher could reduce the degree of anxiety but some teachers insulted students. Most students felt they were disrespected. Although giving respect for fellow human beings is the ABC of formal education, teachers did not show deference to students.

The intense fear of being scrutinized by others could enable students to predict negative events. This frustration engendered by some teachers could limit students from practicing required skills. Humiliating remarks forced students to see the relationships they had with teachers through dark glasses. In such a learning environment, students often choose not to communicate; students become unresponsive; they avoid interactions; they do not answer even if they know the answer to a question. They become resigned observers of the teaching-learning process. For them, sitting passively is more rewarding than making an attempt. They respectfully listen to teachers and tend to abstain from all participation. Students could not participate voluntarily in class discussions. This happens because students are at risk for insults. In other words, some teachers exert negative influences upon language learning. In light of this, creating a non-threatening environment is very important. This is because the skills that students have been equipped with require a conducive environment to develop.

Undoubtedly, mistreating students is not a common thread shared by all teachers. There are some teachers who have healthy relationships with students. The efforts of these teachers should not be left unnoticed.

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