The Effect of Teachers’ Emotions on Chinese Junior English Learners

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Introduction:
The study intends to investigate the effect of teachers’ emotions on Chinese Junior English learners. It is very common to see that in many primary schools, Chinese English teachers tend to play games with children, teach songs and the like, leading the Chinese young English beginners to the door to English world with great enthusiasm. But after children enter the Junior School, they are neglected for being lazy, being indifferent to high level English learning. The teachers in Junior School feel more dull in English classroom, in which the English seems more tedious to English learners than in Primary School. Theoretically, the teachers’ emotions have effect on the English learners in the process of acquiring knowledge, but some empirical studies did not reveal significant difference between the experimental group and the controlled group.

This study reports a similar experiment on Chinese Junior English learners. The subject were 70 Junior Students in a private school. They were divided into two homogenous groups (one controlled group and one experimental group.) At the
beginning of the semester when the experiment began, a pretest showed that the English proficiency of the two groups are similar. But the two groups were taught by two English teachers, both of them came from similar teaching experience, using the same teaching resources except that having different emotions in English teaching. A questionnaire was also conducted to show some extraneous variables and the results showed that the two groups were identical in this respect. The experiment began from the second week of the semester and lasted about 8 months. During the study, the experimental group followed the teacher with rich emotions to learn Junior English. Besides learning the language itself, the students were encouraged to have personal talk with the teacher, including discussing the problems appearing in the study, communicating with some affairs in the family or in the class, etc. It formed the routines of the English teacher. We could call this "extra emotion investment". Meanwhile the controlled group with another teacher, who was lack of emotions or we can say, a teacher seemed serious and traditional, and treated the students not as a whole person. He followed the same schedule of the other teacher, finishing the teaching task only but without any leisure time given to his students. At the end of the semester, a posttest was conducted, test items showed that the two groups were significant different in the outcome of English acquiring.

**Key words:** emotions; learner-center; cognitive competence; humanism.

**Abstract:** With the advent of "humanism" in the 60s of the 20th century, the conventional, authoritative teacher-centered instruction has given way to the learner-centered mode of instruction. Educators started paying attention to the impact
that learners’ affective factors (e.g., their feelings, emotions, tension, anxiety, frustration, needs, interests, motivation, and confidence, etc.) may bring in the process of learning. Then we have witnessed the birth and maturing of some innovative ELT approaches, methods, and techniques during the 70s to the 80s, such as The Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response (TPR), Suggestopedia, The Natural Approach, Communicative Approach, cooperative learning, interactive learning, whole language learning, task-based learning. In the 90s, Dr. Howard Gardner, a distinguished American cognitive psychologist, suggested from his research findings (1983, 1993 and 1995) that human cognitive competence actually is pluralistic, rather than unitary, in design. His multiple intelligences (MI) theory touched off a wave of educational innovation not only in the United States but throughout the world. Educators recognize the diversity of the learners in their learning styles, learning potentials, etc. and appreciate the development of learning strategies on the part of the learners. Jane Arnold, a well-known educator, mentioned in his book “Affect in Language Learning” that emotions can play great important role in English learning behaviors and outcomings.

1.1 Background of humanism theory:

In the 1950s, a different dimension was added, when research began to examine teaching rather than the teacher. The focus was on what the teacher does rather than what the teacher is. Systematic analysis of teacher-student alternation in the classroom, as well as other aspects of teacher and learner behavior, led to the development of systems for the coding and analysis of teaching in real time. The
focus was on how effective teachers achieved their traditional goals and the kinds of processes they employed. Systematic observation of teacher indicated that.

“When teachers visited by observers trained to record their behavior accurately and objectively, appropriate analysis of the records reveals stable differences between the behaviors of teachers who are more effective in helping pupils grow in basic skills, as well as in some affective areas.”

Effectiveness was generally measured in these studied by higher than predicted gains on measures of achievement in math and reading. The emphasis had thus shifted to the behaviors of effective teacher and the relationship between teacher behavior and pupil learning.

Humanism emphasizes on the development of the whole person rather than focusing solely upon the development and employment of cognitive skills. It focuses on the inner feeling of the learner and place the individual’s thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human development. These are aspects of the learning process that are often unjustly neglected, yet they are vitally important if we are to understand human learning in its totality.

The most well-known proponent of the psychic viewpoint was Simund Freud whose theories about human emotional development have had a powerful influence on the development of Clinical psychology and psychiatry across the world, but less apparent influence on educational psychology. A notable exception, however, has been the work of Erick Erickson, who made an outstanding attempt to draw together Freud’s views on human psychosexual development into a theory based on stages of
development throughout a human’s life with important implications for personal, social and emotional development.

The basis for Erikson’s ideas, which he sets out brilliantly in his classic text “Childhood and Society” (1963), is that human psychological development depends on the way in which individuals pass through predetermined maturational stages and upon the challenges that are set by society at particular times in their lives. Erikson calls this the fundamental epigenetic principle. He suggests that every individual proceeds through eight stages from both to old age, each of which poses a particular kind of challenge or crisis. If this challenge is handled well with the help of other significant people in their lives, then individuals can move relatively smoothly onto the next stage and will be in a stronger position to meet future challenges. However, if challenges are inadequately dealt with, for whatever reason, they will continue to reappear throughout a person’s life, making it more and more difficult to deal with subsequently stages and challenges appropriately.

Freudian theory epitomized the early school years as a “latency” period during which not very much was happening in psychic development. Erickson, however, describes this stage of industry as one in which the child will establish a sense of industry as basic educational skills and learning competence are developed, or a sense of inferiority of learning experiences are beset with failure. Competitive situations in which children are constantly being compared with each other are more likely to generate feelings of inferiority than are situations where the emphasis is upon individualized or co-operative learning. It is, therefore, important that those who teach a language to younger learners are aware of
the need to foster a spirit of co-operation rather than competition, and of the
development of this sense of industry.

1. **2Different types of English teachers:**

Adrian Underhill( ) made a definition about what the lecturer is and what the
facilitator is. “By lecturer he means a teacher in any educational situation who has a
knowledge of the topic taught but no skill or interest on the techniques and
methodology of teaching it. The main qualification of the lecturer is knowledge of the
topic, but the procedures and techniques the lecture employs to assist learning due not
deeply questioned, studied or even valued, not do they form part of the qualification
to be a lecturer. By facilitator, he means a teacher in any educational setting who
understands the topic, is skilled in the use of current teaching methods and techniques,
and who actively studies and pays attention to the psychological learning atmosphere
and inner process of learning on a moment by moment basis, with the aim of enabling
learners to take as much responsibilities for their learning as they can. This test is
what differentiates the facilitator from the teacher. The qualification of the facilitator
is having knowledge and practical expertise in all these areas.” As a lecturer, he may
have an inspiring and imaginative style, but he doesn’t pay much attention to his
students’ personal involvement. He doesn’t make a connection between the lack of
flexibility in his teaching. Techniques and some of the difficulties that arise in his
students’ learning. He doesn’t have systematic way of checking, learning, getting
feedback and diagnosing learning difficulties, nor a conceptual framework that
encourages me to develop such strategies. However he doesn’t see this as a problems,
nor perhaps do many students, because in his environment no one expects anything different. The successful students in his class are those themselves, or from elsewhere, what they do and how learning takes place do not get from the teacher. But as a facilitator, to teach is an art. He has both knowledge of the subject and a skillful use of the subject matter. He can hold the relationships in and between the people, he can feel the degree of security felt by the individuals, he knows the sensitivity of the trainer to undercurrents, the quality of listening and acceptance, the possibility of non-judgemental interaction and the way the needs for self-esteem and met and so on.

The lecturer concerned a lot about how to pass the language itself rather than the emotions of individuals in classroom. However the facilitator focused on the each English learners in terms of emotions, feedback, communications and tried his best to meet the needs of learners. In his class, eye contact, body languages and facial expressions usually affect a lot on the learners. After class, the desire to chat, investigate among the students is quite often handled. Here I don’t mean to attack any teacher and exaggerate only the facilitator. In fact it is true that the effect of learning English with different teachers is significantly different. Of course the change in teaching style from lectured to facilitator can come about within the development of a single person’s teaching career move slowly over several generation or not at all. In this experiment, two classes followed two kinds of English teachers.

At the end of the semester, the two classes finished the teaching resource at the same process and was given the posttest about the English level.

1. **Junior school students in China**
The Junior school students in China are mostly between the age of 13—15, Erikson defined this age as adolescents. They are seen as a period within which the search for “identity”, provides the key challenge. If this strong sense of personal identity is not established, then the outcome maybe role confusion, aimlessness and anti-social behavior. Adolescents with a strong sense of self identity have been described as less susceptible to peer pressure, having a high level of self-acceptance, optimistic, and form in the belief that they are in control of their destinies. An important function for teachers in Junior schools is to foster this sense of personal identity by encouraging learners to make decision for themselves and helping them to express their individuality in constructive ways. After adolescents say good bye to the age of “I can do it” (the ages in primary school), they entered Junior school in a new eyesight. With the heavier burden of English learning growing, the students are easier to lose confidence and gradually there would be a big gap between the teachers and the students. Most teachers tend to neglect the true desire of the Junior students and only foster the result of English learning, paying more attention to the top students in class rather than the whole students. Actually, each individual needs to be concerned about.

2. Research Methodology:

2.1 Subjects:

The subjects under study were 70 students in a private school. They were in Junior 1. All of them began to learn English at Grade 3 in the same primary school. We divided them into 2 classes, which included the equal proportion of boys to girls, with the same English level and English background. The only difference in and between
them was that each class was controlled by different English teachers respectively. One teacher with great enthusiasm for English teaching and the other was lack of emotions on English teaching. According to Professor Gui Shichun saying: “As a science it has its own laws and principles of the mechanism under which it operates. As an art, it requires ingenunity and creativity. A foreign language teacher needs both: mechanism makes him a real teacher, whereas creativity makes him a better teacher. The artistic approach can only be attempted on the basis of the scientific approach, not as a replacement of the scientific approach.”

2.2 Resources:
Better to involve the students participating in the English classroom, we used the Guangzhou experimental teaching material for Junior English learners. The sort of this materials has a certain topic for each unit, which is designed on task-based theory. Each teaching book for different semester is included 3 parts, such as Book1 consisting of 1A for reading, 1B for written exercises and 1c for listening. Two English teacher used the same teaching resources.

2.3 Procedures:
During the whole semester, the two English class learned with its own English teacher. Before the research, the experimental group and controlled group did a pretest to make sure that the English level and other affect of English learning were quite similar. The two English teachers were quite different in the teaching. We considered the one with the controlled group as a lecturer, another with the experimental group as a facilitator. In order to find out whether there were significant
differences between the experimental group and the control group, we analyzed the data of the questionnaires and their average scores for two exams (entrance exam and end-of-term exam), using SPSS (statistic package for social science).

2.4 Results of the t-test:

Before the experiment, all the students took the same exam including listening, reading, writing and an oral test. After all marks were typed and checked, we used SPSS to calculate the result. Table 1 and Table 2 showed that in students’ average total scores of entrance exam, $p = .007$, which means that there is no significant difference in term of students’ entrance exam, indicating that students from the experimental and control groups were at the same level of English proficiency. But after a term’s study with different approaches, changes have taken place. In the students’ end-of-term exam, $p = .005$, which suggests that there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the controlled groups.

Table 1: Results of the t-test

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<th>Entrance exam</th>
<th>End-of-the term exam</th>
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<td>Sig. (2tailed)</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.005</td>
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Table 2: Students’ average scores in two exams
### Results of the questionnaire:

I carried on an investigation and questionnaire was conducted between these two classes:

To obtain information on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the course and attitudes towards the English learning, we asked students to complete a Student Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix A) at the end of the program. Students were assured of confidentiality of their comments and were not required to write their names on the questionnaires. The questionnaire included 8 items which elicited information on the course conducted by different teachers. In writing the questionnaire, care was taken to use objective wording. Questionnaires had been piloted with students from the previous year. The result of the questionnaire demonstrated that there is a sharp contrast between the two different groups. Most students (85%) in the experimental group show great interest in the English learning, they like to speak English in or out of class with each other or with their English teachers, in the conversation they show self-esteem, and have more confidence about their achievements. Only 50% students in the controlled group are interested in English learning and hoped to have more interaction with English teachers.

### Summary:
One term’s experiment has shown that the teachers’ emotions have great effect on Junior English learners. As a humanist Roger (1969) suggested that identifying a number of key elements of the humanistic approach to education, human beings should have a natural potential for learning. Significance learning will only take place when the subject matter is perceived to be of personal relevance to the learner and when it involves active participation by the learner, i.e., experimental learning. Learning which is self-initiated and which involves feelings as well as cognition is most likely to be pervasive. “Independence, creativity and self-reliance are most likely to flourish in learning situations, where external criticism is kept to minimum and where self-evaluation is encouraged.”

Adopting a humanistic approach to teaching also brings back into focus on questions of what makes any learning experience truly educational. From this perspective, learning experiences are seen to be of limited educational value unless they have an impact upon the human condition. This offers a counter balance to the kind of criticism which is sometimes levied against formal educational system, i.e., that they treat people as objects and act towards them as if they were interchangeable units, thereby leading to alienation and a decreasing sense of self-worth. It is based on psychology than on linguistics, it considers affective aspects of learning and language as important. It concerns with treating learner as a whole-person with whole-person involvement in the learning process. It sees the importance of a learning government which minimizes anxiety and enhances personal security.

“Extra emotions investment” from the English teacher is an efficient way to
improve English teaching.

Appendix

Questionnaire for two groups

The survey aims to improve the English teaching. Please complete the questionnaire with attention. We shall keep your response confidentially. Many thanks for your help.

1. You ______ the English class
   A. very much like   B. like   C. neither like nor dislike   D. dislike

2. How many average hours do you spend on English learning?
   A. 4   B. 3   C. 2   D.1

3. You _____ the interview with English teacher.
   A. very much like   B. like   C. neither like nor dislike   D. dislike

4. To what degree do you think you have improved in English listening?
   A. Greatly   B. 50%   C. Somewhat   D. No improvement

5. To what degree do you think you have improved in English writing?
   A. Greatly   B. 50%   C. Somewhat   D. No improvement

6. To what degree do you think you have improved in English reading?
   A. Greatly   B. 50%   C. Somewhat   D. No improvement

7. To what degree do you think you have improved in English speaking?
   A. Greatly   B. 50%   C. Somewhat   D. No improvement

8. Please make comment on your English learning in this semester.
   _____________________________________________________________.

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References


