

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Some studies indicate that there are considerably different views between learners and their teachers. These differences have been noted in relation to their preferences, needs, and their language and language learning (Kern, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Nunan, 1988a, 1988b). Block (1994, p. 473) finds that "teachers and learners operate according to quite different systems for describing and attributing purpose to tasks." Kumaravadivelu (1991) believes that both learners' and their teachers' perspectives in language learning are likely different.

“Block claims that learners do have an awareness of what goes on in classes and that teachers should therefore make an attempt to align their task orientation to that of learners” (cited in Zohreh & Valizadeh). Also, Breen’s study (as cited in Block, 1996) indicates that learners can identify specific techniques adopted by the teacher that they prefer and believe that they help them understand the new language. Regarding two Australian studies, traditional learning activities are preferable (Nunan, 1989).

The study involving EFL learners in Hong Kong by Spratt’s study (as cited in Zohreh & Valizadeh) shows an important example of the different view between learners' preferences and teachers' perception of those predispositions. It is found that "teachers are able to gauge their learners' preferences with accuracy for 54% of activities" which is a considerable degree of discrepancy. In Barkhuizen’s study, ESL teachers in South Africa frequently become surprised when they find out their learners' thoughts, feelings and indications” (cited in Zohreh & Valizadeh).

Rao (2002) found from multi-method qualitative research procedures that Chinese learners perceive difficulties with Communicative Language Teaching due to the differences between the underlying educational theories of China and those of Western countries. In order to update English teaching methods, Rao therefore suggests that, EFL countries like China need not westernize but modernize English teaching.

According to the State Education Development Commission (SEDC), teachers are required to teach English communicatively in classrooms. As such, teachers have to train their learners in four language aspects which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In order to achieve this task, teachers are provided some guidelines as follows:

- “ 1. Teaching should start with listening and speaking.
2. Drills on language form should not be excessive.
3. English should be used in class.
4. Translation should be limited.
5. Audio-visual aids should be used or applied.
6. The teacher’s role should be as a facilitator and helper to guide learners to develop effective learning habits.
7. The teacher should be aware of learners’ individual differences in the learning process.
8. Learners should be appropriately encouraged.”

Anan Thaneepakorn (2003) states that “English teaching has not been effectively developed in Thailand for decades.” Further, he suggested that teaching English by using task-based activities should be applied in the classroom in order to engage learners in actively and effectively learning English.

Candlin’s study (as cited in Anan Thaneepakorn, 2003) defines a pedagogic task as “one of a set of differentiated, sequential, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu.”

According to Cray and Currie (1996), teachers should not act on behalf of their learners but with their learners. They should pay attention to their learners' ways of learning and preferences. If the teachers are not aware of those preferences, they will not be able to consider them in their teaching and classroom activities.

For this reason, teachers' perceptions of learners are likely important. However, according to Freud's study (as cited in Biehler & Snowman, 1986), there are interesting mechanisms involved. First is a "halo effect" which is a tendency to be impressed by prior information or impression. For example, if a learner is good looking and has a good background, the positive halo seems induced. Whatever that learner does, says, or responds would be impressed by teachers.

Secondly, there is cognitive dissonance, the tendency to ignore evidence that is inconsistent. Once a halo has been established, there is the tendency to pick out things which fit and ignore those that do not. Based on this, though a teachers' favorite learner does something dumb, the teacher is likely to forget and excuse it. Vice versa, if a non favorite learner or a learner thought of as dull says something correct, the teachers are likely to attribute it to luck or help from someone else.

Thirdly, it is projection. According to Freud, it is likely that teachers are prone to interpret behavior of learners based on their own personality, thoughts and feelings. In addition, like others, it is difficult for teachers to admit that they have done something wrong. Therefore, unconsciously, they tend to try to protect their ego and blame learners instead of blaming themselves.

Lastly, a factor is unconscious likes and dislikes which persist as memories and influence teachers' behavior even though they cannot be understood. All of us, including teachers and learners, have certain likes and dislikes in regard to physical and personality traits. It is found that many of our preferences or aversions are based on memories of which we are unaware. Therefore it is possible for everyone to be subjective in reacting to others.