AL-SHAJARAH

Al-Shajarah is a refereed international journal that publishes original scholarly articles in the area of Islamic thought, Islamic civilization, and Islamic science. The journal is especially interested in studies that elaborate scientific and epistemological problems encountered by Muslims in the present age, scholarly works that provide fresh and insightful Islamic responses to the intellectual and cultural challenges of the modern world. *Al-Shajarah* will also consider articles written on various religions, schools of thought and ideology and subjects that can contribute towards the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of science. Critical studies of translations of major works of major writers of the past and present and original works on the subjects of Islamic architecture and art are welcomed. Book reviews and notes are also published.

The journal is published twice a year, June-July and November-December. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, *Al-Shajarah*, F4 Building, IIUM Journal Publication, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), No. 24, Persiaran Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Taman Duta, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All enquiries on publications may also be e-mailed to alshajarah@iium.edu.my. For subscriptions, please address all queries to the postal or email address above.

Contributions: Submissions must be at least 5,500 words long. All submissions must be in English or Malay and be original work which has not been published anywhere else in any form (abridged or otherwise). In matters of style, *Al-Shajarah* uses the *University of Chicago Manual of Style* and follows the transliteration system shown on the inside back cover of the journal. The Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to return accepted manuscripts to the author for stylistic changes. Manuscripts must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief in Microsoft Word. The font must be Times New Roman and its size 12. IIUM retains copyright to all published materials, but contributors may republish their articles elsewhere with due acknowledgement to *Al-Shajarah*.

EXPLORING REPEATING STUDENTS' FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ESL WRITING

Ismail Sheikh Ahmad
Rosnani Kassim
Ainol Madziah Zubairi

Abstract

In ESL writing classes or courses, we often observe students struggling to learn the writing skills. Some students even fail the same writing course repeatedly. Failing and repeating the same writing course will certainly affect the repeaters in several aspects. Hence, this study sought to explore the feelings and attitudes of these students who were repeaters in learning writing in a pre-sessional English course at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Based on semi-structured interviews with the repeaters and their writing instructors, it was revealed that the repeaters had some negative feelings and attitudes, namely feeling uncertain with one's own ability, lacking motivation, suffering from anxiety and having poor relationship with their teachers. This paper further discussed these negative feelings and attitudes in light of scholarly thoughts of past and contemporary Muslim scholars to shed some light on aspects that are essential in ensuring successful language learning for repeating student, particularly in relation to their feelings and attitudes towards learning English writing skills. This study has major significance especially in enabling writing instructors to understand the repeaters better and to help them develop positive attitudes towards learning writing in English. The pedagogical implications and recommendations are also discussed.

Keywords:

Introduction

For a second language learner, writing in English is indeed a difficult and challenging task. This is in fact true for both native and

non-native speakers of English who are learning writing. As such, it is common to find many writing courses which offer extensive and specialized instruction in many colleges and universities in America, Australia and New Zealand, for instance. Meanwhile, within the context of second language teaching and learning, the teaching of writing has taken a central position primarily due to the need of students to be able to write well and effectively in their academic tasks, such as examinations, reports and assignments. In other words, the ability to write well is central to a student's academic success.

Perhaps, the most obvious factor that distinguishes many second language writers from native speaker writers is their ability to express themselves in English. While native speakers have abundant vocabulary and an intuitive ability to handle the English grammar, second language writers, especially those at the beginning of the learning process have to struggle with learning to write and learning English at the same time. As a result, there will always be unsuccessful learners who perform badly in writing. What is more alarming is when they continue to fail despite repeated instructions. It is undeniable that repeating the same course a few times will affect repeaters to a certain extent. Thus, it is crucial that the effects of failing and repeating an ESL writing course on repeating students be explored through examining their feelings and attitudes towards learning writing.

Language Education from the Islamic Perspective

"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim".[1] This hadith illustrates that it is incumbent on every Muslim individual to seek knowledge. Islam regards all knowledge as good and hence it is up to the person who possesses the knowledge to use it towards good or otherwise. In Islam, there are two types of knowledge: revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge.[2] The classification is based on the source of knowledge. Revealed knowledge comes from two main sources which are the holy Quran and the *Sunnah*. Acquired knowledge, on the other hand, which includes all branches of sciences is acquired through human experience and interaction with nature and can be obtained through the investigation of events and phenomena that exist around us.

Looking back in history up till now, the world has witnessed the achievements of many Muslim scholars who had made immense impact in various fields of knowledge including the field of education. To highlight the importance of learning foreign or second language skills from the Islamic perspective, it is deemed most appropriate that we look at the position of language education among the other sciences from the view of four prominent Muslim scholars: Al-Farabi, Ibnu Khaldun, Al-Shirazi and Ibnu Sina; whose thoughts and ideas with regard to education are highly valued.

To begin with, Al-Farabi who was well known for his classification and enumeration of sciences had acknowledged the role of language education by including it in his classification by naming it the Science of Language (*'ilm al-lisan*) alongside other sciences such as Logic (*'ilm al-mantiq*), Mathematical sciences (*'ulum al-ta'alim*), Natural sciences (*al-'ilm al-tabi'i*), Metaphysics (*al-'ilm al-ilahi*), Political science (*al-'ilm al-madani*), Jurisprudence (*'ilm al-fiqh*) and Dialectical Theology (*'ilm al-kalam).*

Al-Farabi further divided the Science of Language into seven sub-divisions. They are:

(1)   Simple expressions (*alfaz mufradah*) - lexicons

---

1 *Al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith 218.

2 Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge In Islam: A Study In Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic of thought and Civilization (ISTAC) International Islamic University of Malaysia, 2006), 121.

(2)   Composite expressions (*alfaz murakkabah*) - phrases

(3)   The rules (*qawanin*) governing simple expressions – morphology, phonetics and spelling.

(4)   The rules governing composite expressions - grammar

(5)   Correct writing

(6)   The rules governing correct reading (*qiraah*) - pronunciation

(7)   The rules of poetry (*shi'r*).[3]

It is important to note that Al-Farabi's classification was according to a hierarchy and the Science of Language is the first branch of knowledge to appear in the hierarchy. Al-Farabi expounded that Linguistic science is a pre-requisite for anyone who wishes to master the other sciences and that explains why language emerged at the top of the hierarchy.[4] This indicates how important language education is whereby it serves as the foundation for one who wants to pursue the other branches of sciences. In addition, the sub-divisions clearly outlines the specific language skills that should be learned by a learner such as vocabulary, sentence construction, spelling, grammar and writing conventions and genres that are needed in the production of an effective written or spoken rhetoric.

Meanwhile, another renowned Muslim scholar, Ibnu Khaldun, divided the sciences into two main categories and further subdivided them into specific areas. The classification is illustrated below.

A.   Philosophical or Intellectual sciences:
1.   Logic
2.   Natural sciences or Physics: Medicine; agriculture
3.   Sciences of beings beyond Nature, or Metaphysics: Magic and talisman; Alchemy.
4.   Sciences dealing with quantity: Geometry; Arithmetic; Music; Astronomy.

B.   Transmitted sciences:
1.   Quran, its interpretation and recitation.
2.   Hadith, the sayings of the Prophets and their chain of transmission.

---

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

3. Jurisprudence
4. Theology
5. Sufism
6. Linguistic sciences, such as Grammar, Lexicography and Literature.[5]

Ibnu khaldun's classification of sciences is known as one of the best classifications of knowledge ever done and we can see that it also includes language as a branch of knowledge.[6] Similar to Al-Farabi, this classification also follows a hierarchy but they differ in terms of the position of language in the hierarchy. In Al-Farabi's classification, language is primary; on the contrary, for Ibnu Khaldun, language is recognised as an auxiliary and instrumental science. Likewise, another well-known Muslim scholar, Qutb al-Din Al-Shirazi also included language in his classification of science by enumerating it under transmitted science.[7] The views of these two scholars clearly reflects that even though language education has been viewed as having varying level of importance, language indeed has a significant role for a learner as a vehicle to attain knowledge or the other sciences.

Another prolific Muslim scholar, Ibnu Sina, who had made great contributions in the field of philosophy and medicine also had his own view on knowledge acquisition. He viewed the aim of education as "the overall growth of the individual: physical, mental and moral; followed by preparation of this individual to live in society through a chosen trade according to his aptitude".[8] Subsequently, there are three important stages of learning for an individual which are for infants under the age of 6, the first stage or

---

5 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilisation in Islam, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2003), 63.

6 Hadi Sharifi, "Ibnu Khaldun's Thoughts in the Context of the Sociology of Education," *Muslim Education Quarterly 2*, 3 (1985): 3-26.

7 Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science,* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic of Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) International Islamic University of Malaysia, 2006), 123.

8 Abd al-Rahman al-Naqib, "Avicienna (370? – 428 AH – 980? – 1037 AD)," Prospects: *The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, XXIII 1, 2 (1993): 53-69.

the primary stage of learning (age 6 to 14) and the specialized education stage (age 14 onwards). As reflected in the aim of education, for infants under the age of 6, the focus is on developing the child's sensory, motor, moral and emotional faculties. At this stage, learning should be centered on fun and exercise based activities. The learning of language (learning to read and write) is included in the primary stage together with learning and memorizing the Quran. It was further suggested the teaching of language should begin with learning the alphabet, followed by composing words as well as their pronunciation and stringing sentences.

Clearly, language education has always been a major concern in Islamic education and Muslim scholars have long ago recognised it as a branch of knowledge. In addition, Islam also urges its people to learn other languages because it is a way for us to appreciate Allah's creation. In the Al-Quran, Allah (ﷻ) says, "*And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colors; most surely there are signs in this for the learned.*" (30:22) Furthermore, the diversity also teaches us to be tolerant with each other and to live among ourselves peacefully and harmoniously. Hence, it is important for us to learn not just our mother tongue but also other languages to better understand the cultures of others and the knowledge that originates from those cultures.

From the Islamic worldview, the primary goal of education is to lead and enable man to recognize and acknowledge his creator. Learning or knowledge seeking should lead man to understand why he was created in the first place – to serve Allah.[9] Based on this view, regardless of whatever discipline we are talking about, the objective of education according to the Islamic perspective should not only enable students to function in the worldly realm but also in serving Allah. According to Al-Zarnuji, learning should result in the change of one's behaviour and learners should have the right attitude and conduct in pursuit of knowledge. He outlined several traits of a learner which include determination, perseverance, diligence,

---

9 Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept Of Education In Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) International Islamic University Malaysia, 1991), 1-33.

patience and respect towards one's teachers and peers. Al-Ghazali stressed that fostering a good relationship between a teacher and a learner is key in ensuring the success of a learner in knowledge seeking.[10]

For university students in an international university where the medium of instruction is English, learning the English language skills is compulsory. In order for the students to succeed, it is crucial for them to have the correct attitude towards learning English. Therefore, this paper discusses the attitudes of repeating students in learning English writing skills in light of Islamic worldview as put forth by the Muslim scholars. The discussion we hope would shed some light on the aspects that are essential in ensuring successful language learning process for repeating students particularly with regard to their feelings and attitudes towards learning English writing skills. Through semi-structured interview with five repeating students and interviews with their writing instructors, these feelings and attitudes can be identified as the feelings of uncertainty with one's own ability (lack of confidence), demotivation, anxiety, and poor rapport with the writing teacher.

Uncertainty with One's Own Ability

With regard to the repeaters' attitudes towards learning ESL writing after failing the writing course repeatedly, apparently, they displayed negative attitudes. For example, two of the students did not see anything positive at all out of their failure. It is common that in any type of assessment, failure is often associated with negative consequences and a recent study conducted by Houchen proved just that.[11] Houchen's study explored the feelings of students who failed their secondary reading exit exam in a secondary school in Florida, USA. It was a high stake exam since it was compulsory for the students to pass the exam in order for them to be eligible for a

---

10 Wahyu Wicaksono, "Konsep Pembelajaran Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali dan Imam Al-Zarnuji (Sebuah Telaah Komparatif)" (undergraduate thesis, IAIN Walisongo, 2012), 33-54.

11 Diedre Houchen, "Stakes is High: Culturally Relevant Practitioner Inquiry with African American Students Struggling to Pass Secondary Reading Exit Exams," Urban Education. 2012, accessed August 12, 2016, http://uex.sagepub.com.

standard high school diploma. The data collected through student focus group discussion, teacher observations and the researcher's own teacher journal revealed one key finding. The students saw their failure in the test as their personal failure and it affected their self-confidence greatly. Similarly, for the repeaters in this study, they viewed and valued themselves based on the one particular writing test that they took and they took the failure as a personal deficiency and their being unsuccessful truly dented their confidence and hope.

Another study which tried to understand the predicament faced by unsuccessful students was conducted by Budny and Tartt.[12] The study was aimed to elicit the emotional problems faced by a group of freshmen engineering students who failed in some of their courses at the University of Pittsburgh. According to the researchers, the students said they felt diffident and embarrassed with the people who were close and important to them such as their family, friends and lecturers.

Clearly, dealing with low confidence is a challenge for the repeaters. To help boost their confidence, it has been emphasized that the learning objectives should be made clear to the students.[13] This will help students to set an attainable learning goal. He further added that teaching students other skills such as vocabulary, grammar, organization and mechanics will help students to strengthen their writing skill. The choice of writing topics for the students to write also plays an important role in elevating their confidence because students certainly will feel comfortable and self-assured writing about topics and issues they are familiar with. Writing instructors must encourage students to speak their mind by asking them to write about real issues and problems happening around them so that they can relate to the issues easily. In the same vein, this view highlights the significance of critical thinking.[14] Learners must be trained to think critically and discuss the issues and provide solutions by

---

12 Dan Budny and Jeremy Tartt, "Do Engineering Students Fail Because They Don't Know How To Fail?", accessed August 12, 2016, www.computer.org/ csdl/proceedings/ fie/2009/4715/00/05350555.pdf.

13 Haja Mohideen Mohamed Ali, "Second Language Teaching and Learning from an Islamic Perspective," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 16, 2 (1999): pp. 47-54.

14 Rosnani Hashim, "Islamization of the Curriculum," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 16, 2 (1999): 27-43.

presenting a clear, coherent and logical written argument.

In Islam, self-confidence is viewed as a key element in shaping a person's personality and self-worth.[15] In addition, Akrim Ridha stressed that one can only rise to his full potential if he has a strong self-confidence (*al tsiqah bi al nafsi*). He further outlined 6 characteristics which are fundamental in improving one's self-confidence:

1. Having faith in oneself to try his best
2. Diligent
3. *Ihlal* (turning one's weakness into a strength)
4. Persistent
5. Courageous
6. Iman.[16]

Practising patience and doing good are extremely encouraged by Islam. Allah the exalted says *"O my servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account."* (39:10) In addition, if a person seeks something (for instance knowledge) and diligently pursues it, he will eventually obtain what he desires and he must have the courage to pursue knowledge to the highest level for him to really taste success. Industriousness together with high aspirations promise continuous triumphs for a person who never gives up in the quest for knowledge.[17] We can see that it is important for the repeaters to develop all these traits so that they can develop their self confidence. A strong self-confidence will become a strong foundation for the repeaters to form more positive attitudes towards learning writing.

Lacking motivation

---

15 HAMKA, Peribadi (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1982), 67.

16 Sidiq Rahmat, "Konsep Percaya Diri dalam Al-Quran Menurut Hamka dalam Tafsir Al_Azhar dan Relevansinya dengan Tujuan Pendidikan Islam" (undergraduate thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2015), 19.

17 Imam Al-Zarnuji, Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning (Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum), trans. G. E. Von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel (Chicago: The Starlatch Press, 2000), 19-21.

Motivation to learn seemed to be impacted by having to repeat the course. For the students in this study, failing did not just dampen their motivation to learn, but also the drive to move on. At one point, a student said that after he had failed for the second time, he had almost given up. As a result, he became lazy and went to class unprepared, bringing with him only a piece of paper and a pen. In addition, after having to study in the same level for four semesters, the students started to feel that they did not have the drive to move on. Lacking the motivation to learn seemed to also affect their self-efficacy. They mentioned that they felt like they could not do anything and were not good at anything and therefore, they had to repeat. Peer pressure added to their low motivation. While many of their peers had passed and moved on to do their kulliyyah courses, they had to stay at the same repeatedly.

Giving up is a common theme that emerged from the interview. From the repeaters' perspective, the easy way out was to quit. One student mentioned that she had learned English every day for two years but she was still unsuccessful. She further explained that it made her so bored and demotivated that at times she just did not want to see any books on English anymore. Another reason given for the low motivation and feeling tired of their writing classes was due to the same teaching methods and materials used in the classes they attended. Despite the lack of motivation in learning writing, the same students seemed to have a positive attitude toward learning academic courses in English. They expressed their wish to learn other subjects besides English such as Economics, Sciences and other kulliyyah courses in their respective majors.

In Islam, perseverance in study and repetition are utmost important in the search for knowledge and quest for learning.[18] This study shows that students who went through the same learning experiences lack the drive to move on, and therefore lack the drive to persevere. While perseverance is demanded of Muslims who seek knowledge,[19] this study suggested that perseverance thinned and motivation dampened in learning writing because of having to go through the writing course repeatedly. Hence, the teaching and

---

18 Ibid, 20.
19 Ibid, 21.

learning experiences for repeating students need to be revisited and innovated in such a way that the students' motivation will not be affected and the drive to persevere is maintained so that their success can be assured.

Anxiety

Another disturbing problem is exam anxiety. The interviews with the writing instructors revealed the students' predicament. The writing instructors claimed that the students developed a "phobia" towards writing which became a hindrance for them to give and perform their best in class as well as during exams. Meanwhile, for the students, the anxiety led to an array of damaging consequences such as depression, extreme fear that obliterates one's self confidence and sleepless nights.

This finding generally supports the findings of a study conducted among some postgraduate students in a public university in Malaysia.[20] It was reported that exam anxiety was closely linked to writing apprehension. The students in this study stated that they were often nervous and worried when they had to write in class or in exams because they were overly concerned about their bad grammar. It was also found that anxiety caused students to avoid writing in class and to write very little outside class.

Certainly, affective factor is not uncommon among students and this is consistent with the affective filter theory postulated by Krashen. In this theory, the role of the affective domain in second language learning is likened to a filter; with motivation, confidence and anxiety as some of the variables. Should a learner have a high level of anxiety but a low level of motivation and confidence, these conditions will raise the affective filter up and when that happens, it will hinder the process of language acquisition since they inhibit comprehensible input. On the contrary, should one possess a high level of motivation and confidence while the anxiety level remains low, their language acquisition will be easier and more successful. In light of this theory, we note that for the repeaters, failing the course

---

20 Ibrahim Huwari and Noor Hashima Abd Aziz, "Writing Apprehension in English among Jordanian Postgraduate Students at University Utara Malaysia," *Academic Research International* 1, 2 (2011): 190-198.

repeatedly had indeed greatly contributed to their poor motivation and lack of confidence as well as increased anxiety.

Coping with exam anxiety would certainly be linked to the way the repeaters perceived examination in life. There should be a balance in how they view the reality of examinations for the purpose of life for Muslims which is seeking the pleasure of Allah. Examinations should be taken positively as a worldly task involving the right mind set such as being firm and with good intention of studying the language skills. This is line with our Prophet Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying "*Verily, God loves if any of you does a job, he does it with perfection.*"[21] Excellence in examination connotes excellence in studying the language. It is the pursuit of the pleasure of Allah SWT in studying the language and it is more rewarding than studying for the sake of passing the examination.

In lieu of the anxiety faced by the repeaters, the readiness in facing examinations would certainly relate to their level of anxiety. The extent of the repeaters' anxiety has to do with the state of their language readiness and attitude towards learning the language. In a sense, the repeaters have to take the task of learning the language firmly as if that they are travelling in a path of success.

There is a hadith narrated by Anas b. Malik in relation to the state of readiness. According to the hadith, a man came riding his camel and he asked, "*Oh Messenger of God, shall I leave my camel untied and trust in God*'". He (Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, "*Both tie your camel and trust in God.*"[22] Therefore, it is apparent that repeaters must put their total trust in Allah. Having faith and trust in Allah is important but it also requires total dedication and preparation in facing the examinations. Without these, repeaters would experience great anxiety and stress in facing the examinations. A peace of mind or tranquillity of the soul would certainly be associated with the purpose of life on earth and the

---

21 Amar Khaled, "Until They Change Themselves", Al-Kalima VIII, no. 2 (April 2006):1-5, accessed August 27, 2016, www.alkalima.com/?page=Archives&vol8&issue=2&id=101.

22 Imam Hafiz Abu Eisa Mohammad Ibn Eisa *At-Tirmidhi, Jami at-Tirmidhi* Vol. 4, trans. Abu Khaliyl (Riyadh: Maktaba Darussalam, 2007).

behaviours or conduct of the *insan* in life's matters.

Attitude Towards Teacher (Relationship with Teacher)

In this study, it was found that the teachers' way of communicating, especially in giving feedback and teaching method, was also an issue among the repeaters. The way the writing instructors gave feedback on the repeaters' essays and the failure of the instructors to establish a good rapport with the students seemed to be a pressing problem faced by the repeaters. As a consequence, the repeaters reported that they often felt lost and sometimes felt like not going to class because they felt like they were not learning anything. Indeed, the way writing instructors respond to the students' work has been an on-going problem for the students. It seems that the source of this problem is that the teachers adopt a certain way for marking students' work like underlining or scribbling in the margin but the details are not explained to the students.[23] As a result "the responses are often misunderstood, misinterpreted, and unhelpful to students in their efforts to rethink the problems being addressed."[24]

Another issue raised was the conflict between the teachers' and the repeaters' preferences in the teaching and learning processes. It can be deduced from the students' responses that this could originate from the teachers' lack of understanding towards the students and poor rapport between them. The statement such as "…I afraid the teacher will angry (laughs).. {If I asked}" [Cahaya/DU800] made by one of the students confirmed this presumption. Furthermore, research has proven that there is a link between teachers' dispositions and students' performance. In one study, it was found that teachers who established good rapport with their students through verbal and nonverbal communication, managed to successfully engage their students with their lessons in the classroom through suitable teaching method. In addition, those who were dedicated to help their students learn, would produce students who scored high in standardized tests.[25] Hence, this suggests that students who have problems with

---

23 Vivian Zamel, "Responding to Student Writing," *TESOL Quarterly* 19, 1 (1985): 24-27.

24 Ibid, 83

25 Susan Thompson, Mary Frances Randsell and Ceila Keiko Rousseau, "Effective

their teachers would find it difficult to perform well in their class and excel in their exams.

Apart from the issue with their teachers, it was also found that that the repeaters had challenges that stemmed from within them. Affective issues such as their own personal attitudes which include their reluctance to communicate with their instructors, and shyness were among the problems attributed by the students themselves. It is important to note that even though the repeaters were not satisfied with the way their teacher had taught in class and marked their essays, they chose not to raise their concerns to the teacher mainly due to their shyness. Some just gave excuses such as they did not know their teacher's office, they did not know their teacher's consultations hours or there were just too many students who wanted to consult the teacher. Thus, it can be concluded that establishing a good relationship with teachers seems to be a common problem among students who perform poorly in their studies. The finding from a study conducted among poor writers (students who failed their writing tests at university) best supports this presupposition. It was reported that most of the poor writers did not have a good relationship with their teachers and that could be the main cause for their dislikes towards learning writing.[26]

Obviously, the way the repeaters react towards their teachers is partly caused by the teaching approaches practised by the writing instructors. Hence, to overcome this, it is suggested that in learning language skills, students must be exposed to the process of learning such as problem solving, completing tasks and not just the products.[27] Problem solving and task-based learning have long been

---

Teachers in Urban School Settings: Linking Teacher Disposition and Student Performance on Standardized Tests," *Journal of Authentic Learning* 2, 1, 2005. Accessed August 12, 2016 https://suny-dspace.longsight.com/bitstream/handle/1951/6596/thompson.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

26 Joseph, M. Moxley, "Uninvolved = Poor writers," *College Teaching* 35, 1, 1987, accessed August 12, 2016, http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1167&context=eng_facpub.

27 Rosnani Hashim, "Islamization of the curriculum," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 16, 2 (1999): 27-43.

introduced as teaching and learning methods in Islam. Problem solving and task based learning provides contexts and purposes to language functions, as such, students will not just learn, but they will also understand and can function using the language. However, many writing instructions are conducted through rote learning method and drilling approach to ensure that students can memorize the correct forms. Even though these methods have their strengths, they tend to be too rigid and the students might not be able to function and use the language in natural and varied contexts. The traditional Islamic methodology also endorses memorization technique (especially to memorize the Al-Quran) but there are more to Islamic teaching methodology that memorization. In the Al-Quran, Allah called upon man to think and be critical in their thinking. Once learners are able to think critically, they can write effectively.

To add, the repeaters' reluctance to consult their teachers or their lack of effort to seek help from their writing instructors is not the correct way of dealing with their problems. The repeaters should not hesitate to meet their teachers to ask for clarifications about their written tasks. In Islam, asking questions in seeking knowledge is encouraged. By way of example, once, Ibnu 'Abbas was asked, "*In what way did you pursue knowledge*?" To which he replied, "*With the aid of a tongue fond of asking and heart full of good sense*."[28] Therefore, the repeaters should not give reasons such as their teachers are busy or they do not want to disturb their teachers to justify why they did not make efforts to consult their teachers. The repeaters need to talk to their teachers to avoid misunderstanding and confusion because as related in Sunan Abu Dawud, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "*The cure for confusion is but to ask*."[29] To further support the compulsion of asking questions in seeking knowledge, Allah says, "*So ask the people of knowledge if you know not*." (16:43)

---

28 Imam Al-Zarnuji, *Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning* (Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum), trans. G. E. Von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel (Chicago: The Starlatch Press, 2000), 30.

29 Ayaz Siddiqui, "Ten Adab of Seekers of Knowledge," accessed August 12, 2016, http://seekershub.org/blog/2010/02/ten-adab-of-seekers-of-knowledge-notes-by-ayaz-siddiqui/, 2.

Conclusion

As we have seen, being repeaters has ignited negative feelings and attitudes among the repeating students. It is sad that some had come to the verge of giving up because they did not see the possibility of passing the course. Some felt upset and demotivated because they thought that they were not just letting themselves down but they were also crushing the hopes of their families. The emotional repercussions seem to be very evident in the interviews.

Hence, we believe it is vital for writing teachers who are teaching repeating students to build a close rapport with the repeaters and provide detailed as well as comprehensive feedback to the repeaters with regard to their weaknesses in writing. These insights provide support to the existing body of literature with regard to the importance of feedback in helping learners to develop their writing in English. Indeed, feedback is key to improving learner's writing since it enhances writing in a couple of ways. First, it increases accuracy and second, it enhances the process of acquiring a second language in the long run.[30] Furthermore, the effectiveness of feedback in a second language writing is determined by the trust and good relationship between the writing instructors and the students. Hence, establishing good rapport between teachers and students is crucial.[31]

Another concern is the repeaters' affective issues, namely lack of confidence, their poor motivation level and anxiety. Apparently, having to repeat a course while their peers are already in kulliyyah somehow dampens their motivation. Moreover, having tried several times without achieving the desired results somehow caused these repeaters to lose interest and confidence which become a stumbling block for them in learning writing. To add, the repeaters often felt apprehensive in class especially when they thought about the writing topics, the writing tasks and the writing test. The anxiety was so

---

30 Gillian Wigglesworth and Neomy Storch, "What Role for Collaboration in Writing and Writing Feedback," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 21 (2012): 364 – 374.

31 Given Lee and Diane L. Schallert, "Meeting in the Margins: Effects of the Teacher-Student Relationship on Revision Processes of EFL College Students Taking a Composition Course," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 17 (2008): 165 – 182.

overwhelming for them that it often affects their learning and performance.

Therefore, it is extremely important for writing instructors to be sensitive towards their repeating students' emotional state and not just focus on teaching the lesson of the day. Being repeaters is awfully hard for the students, so, definitely they are more emotionally vulnerable than the students who are not repeaters. Teachers should be prepared to spend class time on activities that can boost the morale and motivation of the repeaters. A special unit which is dedicated to assist the repeaters needs to be established so that it could provide extra coaching for the repeaters as well as offer talks and programs which focus on the repeaters' affective needs.

It is believed that the matter of the repeaters' motivation level requires serious attention because once their motivation level is too low, they will probably give up totally on learning writing. The fact that they keep on failing demotivates them greatly. As such, if the writing instructors want to help them, the best thing that they should do is to pay extra attention to the repeaters and this will definitely improve their morale.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

	Ar	Pr	OT	UR		Ar	Pr	OT	UR		Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	ز	z	z	z	z	گ	–	g	g	g
ب	b	b	b	b	ڑ	–	–	–	ṛ	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	–	p	p	p	ژ	–	zh	j	zh	م	m	m	m	m
ت	t	t	t	t	س	s	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ٹ	–	–	–	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	sh	ه	h	h	h¹	h¹
ث	th	th	th	th	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ş	ṣ	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	j	ض	ḍ	ż	ż	ż	ى	y	y	y	y
چ	–	ch	çh	ch	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah			-a²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al³			
خ	kh	kh	kh	kh	ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ					
د	d	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğ	gh					
ڈ	–	–	–	d	ف	f	f	f	f					
ذ	dh	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	k	q					
ر	r	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	k					

¹ – when not final
² – at in construct state
³ – (article) al - or 1-

VOWELS

		Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	Ā	–
	و ی	ū	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī	ī
Doubled	يّ	iyy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)	iyy (final form ī)
	وّ	uww (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	uv	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	au	ev
	ى	ai or ay	ay	ey
Short	◌َ	a	a	a or e
	◌ُ	u	u	u or ü o or ö
	◌ِ	i	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. جھ jh   گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

AL-SHAJARAH
Special Issue
Contents

9 771394 687009