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The Role of The Teacher in Shaping Students' Attitudes in The Language Learning Process: A Critical Analysis

Abstract

This study is conducted with the aim of analyzing the role that the teacher has in shaping students' attitudes in the language learning process in English classes. It provides a brief summary of the way English language teachers' behaviour and attitude affect high school students' motivation and engagement in learning. Furthermore, it brings significant evidence on the way high school students and teachers perceive the impact of teacher behavior on learning English.

This study is conducted through a mixed research method. The instrument used to carry out the research is a questionnaire addressed to high school students regarding how the behavior and attitude of their teachers affect the language learning process and an interview with English Language teachers regarding the influence of their behavior has on students during the educational process. As a sample size it is used students and teachers from "Havzi Nela" high school in Kukës. The participants in this study are 107 students from the tenth and eleventh grades and three English language teachers. The results show that teachers have a fundamental role in teaching and their behavior affects students' learning. From the data, it was concluded that the students are satisfied with the behavior of the teacher in the classroom and admitted the fact that teachers have a great impact in shaping their attitude toward the language learning process.

Keywords: *teacher, student, relationship, behavior, attitude, motivation, language learning*

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that teachers have a fundamental role not just in students but in the society as whole. Recent years this role has won a greater importance and there have been notable transformations in the way teachers interact with students. Over the past decade, this development has brought about considerable changes in the ways teachers and students perceive the classroom dynamics, adapting to various situations encountered during the learning process. Even though it is acknowledged that attitudes and behavior are intrinsic to individual characters, teachers have a great role in shaping students' attitudes, especially when it comes to a foreign language learning process.

Teachers' attitudes have a great influence, whether positive or negative, on the language learning process. Both positive and negative attitudes among English language teachers significantly impact the success or failure of language teaching and learning.

Teachers hold the power to positively or negatively impact students' lives through their communication and reflected attitudes. Their influence can shape students' self-perception, their attitude towards themselves and the general public, as well as their communication, research, and creative abilities (Ataunal, 2003). Positive influence directs students towards paths of personal growth and perception of the learning process, while negative influence can hinder their development. Effective teachers who successfully connect with their students and exhibit positive behaviors such as active listening, understanding their thoughts, showing interest in their lives, and demonstrating appreciation, enhance student motivation and success. By fostering a close relationship, teachers provide students with valuable knowledge, experiences, and behavior on a given subject, serving as role models through their attitudes and behavior. Positive attitudes contribute to achievement and success, while negative attitudes can result in failure and associated challenges. For instance, if a teacher engages in negative or derogatory remarks towards a student due to academic shortcomings, the detrimental effects are inevitable (Gecer, 2002).

Taken into consideration what we mentioned above, the following research questions arise:

- 1. How do English language teachers' behaviour and attitude affect high school students' motivation and engagement in learning?*
- 2. How do high school students and teachers perceive the impact of teacher behavior on learning English?*

Thus, this study aims to analyze students' perceptions of teachers' attitudes and behavior within the classroom and provide empirical data that sheds light on the importance of teachers' attitudes in English language classes. Based on the research questions, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Teachers play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and motivation in the language learning process.

II. Literature Review

Behaviorist Theory

Behaviorist theory, pioneered by John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner, focuses on external behavior and its impact on learning. Watson emphasized that early attachment and relationships shape an individual's personality and behavior. Positive and affectionate relationships with parents, peers, and teachers foster positive personal development. Conversely, distant relationships can lead to negative attitudes and behaviors. Skinner extended this theory to language acquisition, stating that behavior is innate but can also be learned through experiences. Students learn through both positive and negative reinforcement, with praise or reprimand affecting their future behavior. Teachers play a role in modifying behavior by adapting their approach to different situations, thereby influencing students' engagement in the learning process.

Definitions of Attitude

Researchers in Psychology and Education have provided various definitions of attitudes. Montano and Kapsprzyk (2008) define attitudes as people's beliefs about their ability to perform certain behaviors, influencing their attitude towards those behaviors. Al-Mamun, Rahman, and Hossaim (2012) describe attitude as a psychological construct determining behavior, reflecting the individual's unique reaction to similar situations. Mensah et al. (2013) suggest that attitudes encompass an individual's thoughts, actions, and behaviors, which are influenced by personal experiences and situations. Attitudes towards a language can also influence learners' feelings towards its speakers. Karahan (2008) states that positive language attitudes contribute to a favorable orientation towards learning English, impacting students' achievements in the language. According to Massri, Rola (2020) teachers' attitudes towards students and language is shaped through various factors and their attitude is clearly reflected on their students. The environment in which teachers were raised and the generation they belong are considered among the core factors.

Attitudes towards language and students vary based on individual experiences and societal influences.

The research of Blazar D, Kraft MA. (2017) is focused predominantly on how teachers affect students' achievement on tests despite evidence that a broad range of attitudes and behaviors are equally important to their long-term success. They found that upper-elementary teachers have large effects on self-reported measures of students' self-efficacy in math, and happiness and behavior in class. According to them, students' attitudes and behaviors are greatly influenced by teaching practices, teachers' emotional support and classroom organization. Their study concludes that teachers who are effective at improving test scores often are not equally effective at improving students' attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, they recommend that teachers need to find strategies for improving the wide range of skills.

Tang Y and Hu J (2022) research found that teachers' discouraging attitudes and discouraging teaching approaches are important factors of student demotivation with English as a medium of instruction. The results also confirm that student disappointment is an important underlying mechanism in the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables.

III. Methodology

Research design

To achieve the goals that are set in this thesis data was collected using interviews with the teachers and students' surveys followed by a critical analysis of the case.

Participants

The participants of this study include 107 students from tenth and eleventh grade and 6 English Language teachers at "Havzi Nela" high school in Kukes. The participants were asked to answer a questionnaire which had to be completed in a paper. The survey was given to 55 students from eleventh grade and 52 students from tenth grade. The purpose of this selection of classes is to understand the impact that the students have when they are in touch with high school and a year after how they are adopted by the teachers and how much the teacher has helped them in their adoptions. The sample of the students includes both genders male and female, to have an equitable distribution of gender among the participants. There were 48 females and 59 males.

Survey Instruments

The survey was collected by a small group of teachers and high school students. This survey was given to three English teachers and 107 high school students. The purpose was to gather students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the role that teachers' attitude and behaviour has in defining students' learning process. There are close and open questions.

Since the surveys collect some quantitative data and qualitative data, the answers will be drawn in the graphic to make the right calculations and give the answer in percentages. The surveys are a valid instrument because they are both based on open-ended questions which allow the respondents to provide answers in their own words and provide qualitative data important to the study. They tell the researcher what the participant thinks about the topic. A minimum amount of quantitative data was collected through the response choices which were assigned a number as follows: A- very satisfied, B- somewhat satisfied, C-not at all satisfied, or A- always, B- sometimes, C- Never. However, the foundation of the surveys is to collect qualitative data collection as quantitative data were not enough to make the work a mixed method.

IV. Results

Survey data

Section 1. Data from students on teacher`s behaviour and attitude

First, students were asked how satisfied they are with their English teacher.

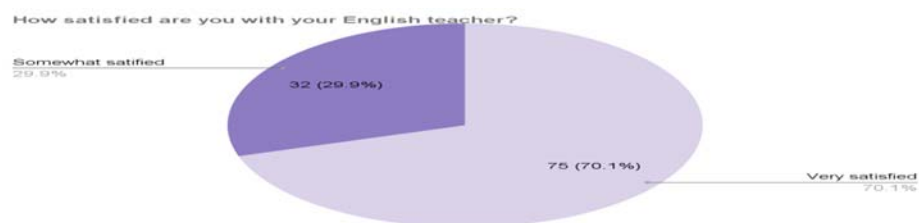


Chart.1 Data on the students` satisfaction with their teacher`s behaviour

As shown on the chart, (70.1%) of the students were very satisfied with their teacher which is a good start for the relationship between teacher-student. (29.9%) of the students were not completely satisfied which is normal for the relationship between them because the teacher is the head of the classroom and students may experience fear or insecurity towards the teacher. Surprisingly (0%) of the students were not satisfied with the teacher which shows the positive feedback and energy of the teacher.

To find out how satisfied are students with the attitude of the English teacher, the following question was asked:

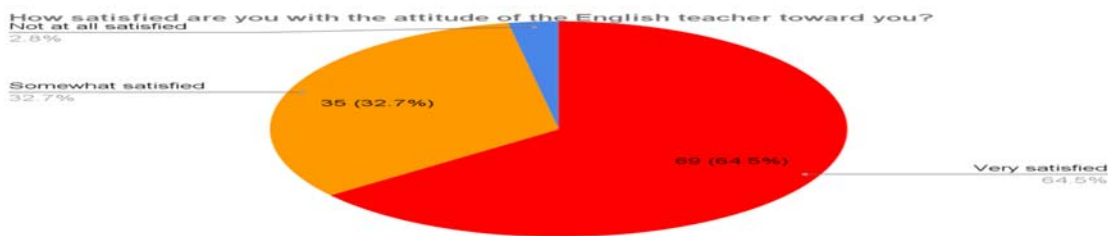


Chart.2. Data on the students' satisfaction with their teacher's attitude

Regarding the question how satisfied are the students with the teachers' attitude, students were in a high percentage very satisfied with the teachers' attitude toward them, (64.5%) declared to be very satisfied, while (32.7%) of them were somewhat satisfied. T.

Regarding this question that how satisfied are students with the language used by the English teacher the answer follows:

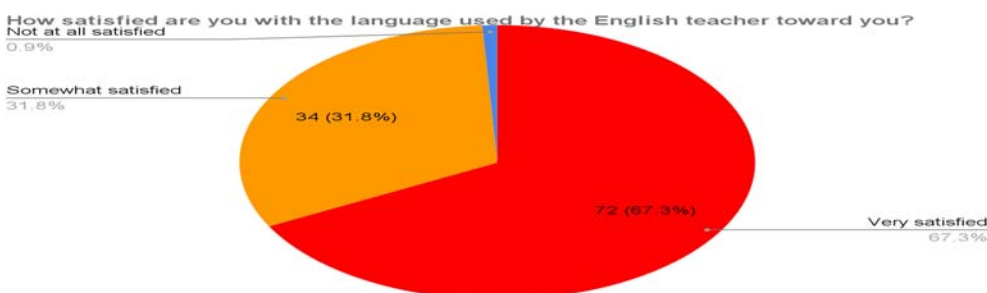


Chart 3. Data on students' satisfaction with the language that the teacher uses in the classroom

When students were asked how pleased are with the language that the teacher uses in the classroom, (67.3%) of them answered that are *very* satisfied with the right words that the teacher uses to communicate with them, (31.8%) said that they are *somewhat* satisfied and only one declared that he is not at all satisfied with the language that the teacher uses to communicate and learn them. In the following question, students were asked how satisfied are with the teacher's behaviour during the lesson and the answers were:

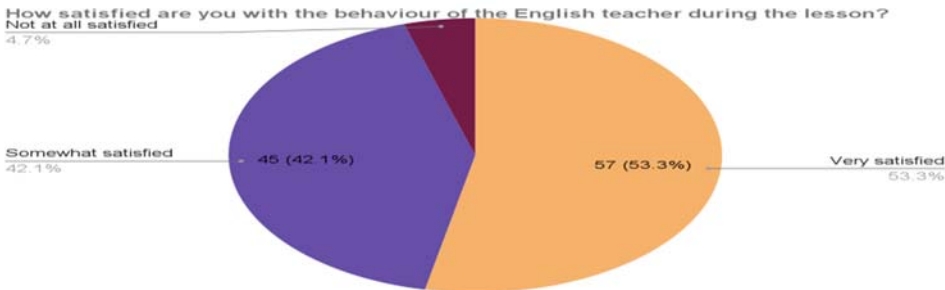


Chart 4. Data on students' satisfaction with the teacher's behaviour during the lesson

As shown in the chart, it is quite surprising that the students were more satisfied with the teacher's attitude rather than teacher's behavior. After all, (53.3%) of the students voted for the first choice which is very satisfactory and (42.1%) of them voted for the second, which means that the behaviour changes regarding the behavior that the students have in the classroom and the teacher behave in different ways to a different level of students. Only (4.7%) of the students were not at all satisfied with the teacher's behavior which is an insignificant amount related to the number of students who did the survey.

Section II

This section is focused more on the role of the teacher's attitude during the lesson which may be positive or negative depending on the teacher and the situation. The students were asked how much the attitude of the teacher affects their learning when the teacher is authoritative or creates a friendly atmosphere with them. In Section II, 86% of students believe that their teacher's behavior significantly affects their learning attitude, further supporting the idea that teacher influence is critical in shaping students' engagement and motivation. Additionally, 88.8% of students agree that a teacher's friendly or authoritative attitude affects the learning environment positively. The first question shows the effects of the teacher's behaviour on students' attitudes during the lesson and the answers are:

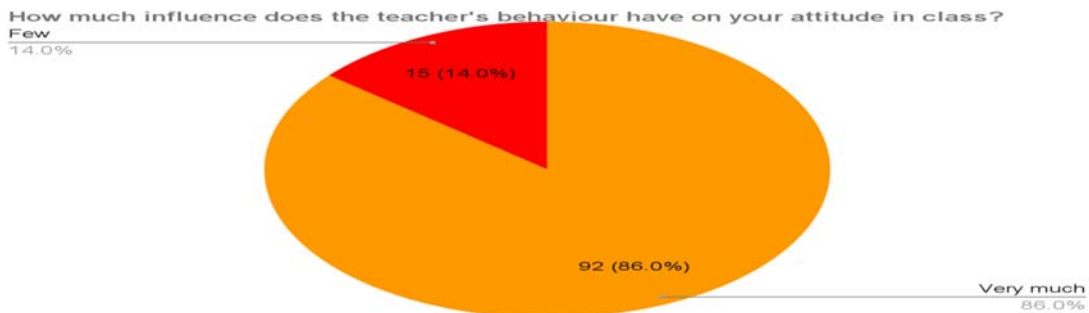


Chart 5. Data on students' perception on the effects of the teacher's behavior on students' attitudes during the lesson

As the chart shows (86%) of the students answered that teachers' behaviour affects them a lot in their attitude during the lesson and only (14%) said that they have a few effects from teachers' behaviour that may define their attitude toward her/him during the lesson. Zero votes were that has no effect at all.

The second question was derived from the first question that shows how much effect has in this case the teachers' attitude on students in the classroom whether the teacher is friendly or not, and whether the teacher is authoritative or not.

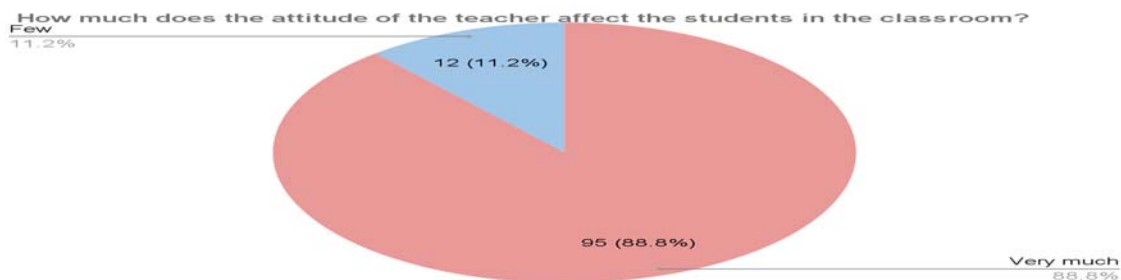


Chart 6. Data on students' perception of the impact of their teacher's attitude on their learning experience in the classroom

The chart shows clearly that most of the students (88.8%) answered that teachers' attitude has a high effect on the classroom and only (11.2%) of the students answered that the teacher's attitude has few effects on their learning process. These numbers and results are not absolute but prove that teachers have a significant influence on their attitude toward the learning process.

The following question show if the teacher has a negative attitude toward students during the lesson.

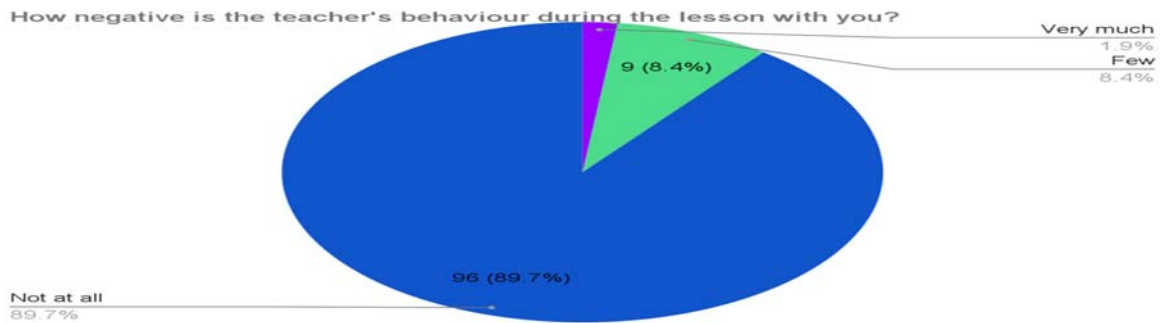


Chart 7. Data on students' perception regarding the presence of negative attitudes displayed by their teacher during lessons

As the graphic shows the students do not have complaints regarding negative attitudes and behaviour toward the teacher as (89.7%) of them have not experienced negative attitudes and behaviour toward the teacher. A few said that may have felt negative behaviour and only (1.9%) experienced a negative attitude towards the teacher.

And the opposite, in this graphic, shows how much positive attitude shows the teacher during the lesson.

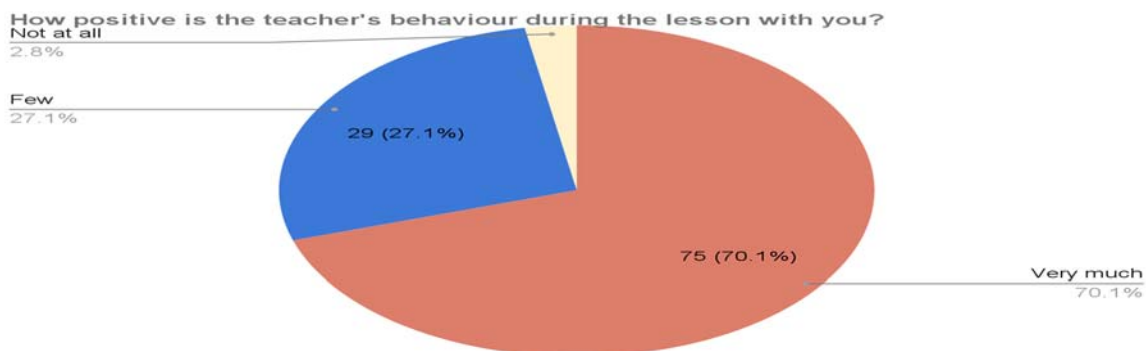


Chart 8. Data on students' perception on the extent to which the teacher demonstrates a positive attitude during lessons, based on students' perceptions.

The results showed that students are very satisfied with their English teacher and the positive attitude that has during the lesson is reflected in the figure where (70.1%) of the students are very satisfied only (27.1%) have some complaints and only (2.8%) don't think that the teacher has a positive attitude toward them.

Section III

The third section includes three questions that are related to the language that teacher uses in the classroom and how they affect the students, the language that students use toward each other, and how that affects their learning process.

The first question talks if the teacher bullying the students during the lesson and the results are:

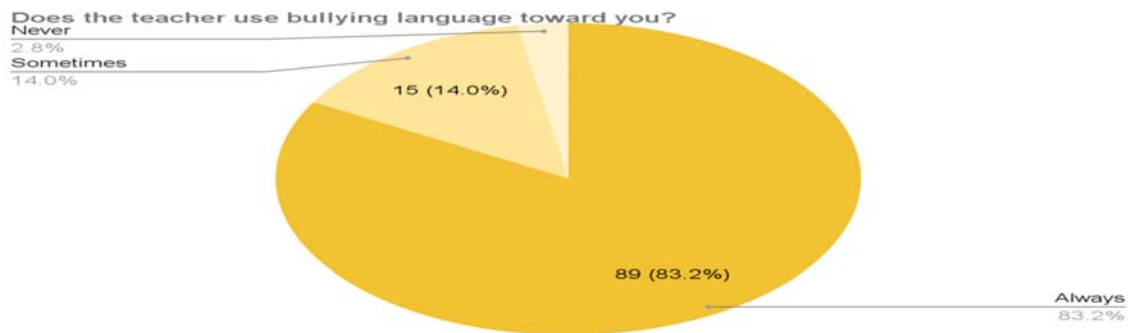


Chart 9. Data on whether students have experienced bullying behavior from their teacher during lessons and summarizes the corresponding results.

According to the students' answers (83.2%) of them have never experienced teacher a bullied situation, and (14%) of the students said they felt sometimes the teacher used bullying language and only (2.8%) of them said that they always hear the teacher bullying language.

The second question is about a critical issue such as racism and if the teacher uses racist expressions the results are as follows:

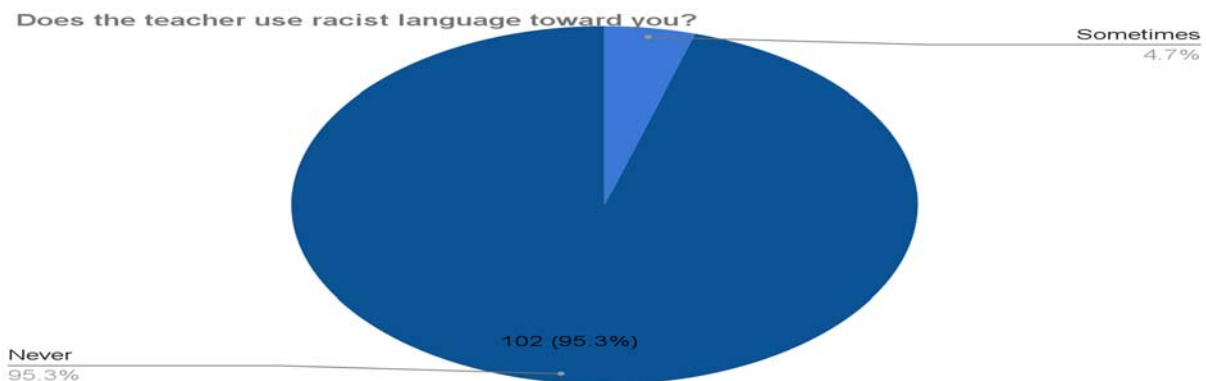


Chart 10. Data on whether the teacher uses racist language in the classroom

Regarding racist language used in the classroom by the teacher, (95.3%) of the students said never happened to hear such expressions toward them, only (4.7%) said that have happened sometimes and zero students said it always.

4.2 Interview Data

In this section, students and teachers were asked to give their opinion on whether their attitude affects their learning process, how much, and why. The same question was asked both of them . the answer of the students are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Students' answers regarding whether their teacher's attitude impacts their learning process, to what extent, and the reasons behind this

Students' answers whether their teacher's attitude impacts their learning process, to what extent, and the reasons behind this

1. *The attitude of the teacher in the classroom is very important to me because when the teacher is positive in the classroom the lesson becomes more enjoyable.*
 1. *There is not any effect on me, because the teacher does not use bullying expressions, screaming, or using psychological violence. So, I am very satisfied with my English teacher.*
 2. *The attitude of the teacher is very important to us during the lesson because when there is a lot of harmony in the classroom, we are more motivated to learn.*
 3. *If the English teacher uses a negative attitude and behavior, it affects us negatively and the opposite if she uses a positive attitude and behavior, it affects us positively in the lesson.*
 4. *If the teacher does not use positive language, then it affects my behavior toward the teacher. When she is friendly and uses positive language, it motivates me to learn more and I feel guilty if I don't.*
 5. *The teacher has a positive attitude toward us and helps us in our learning.*
 6. *The attitude and behaviour of the teacher are positive because she helps us whenever we need help.*
 7. *The teachers' attitude is positive and it affects us to reach our goals.*
 8. *The teacher's attitude affects positively me because she is very kind and nice toward me.*
 9. *The teachers' attitude is very important because it affects our learning process and our future in general.*
 10. *The teacher is very friendly toward us and helps us in our learning and has positive behavior.*
 11. *It affects us because if the teacher makes us feel good in the classroom even the lesson will go well.*
 12. *The attitude of the teacher affects me because I want to build a positive relationship and communication with my teacher so that the lesson becomes more enjoyable and functional.*
 13. *The attitude and the behavior of the teacher affect a lot at my learning because if she behaves well, I learn more during the lesson.*
 14. *The teacher has a positive attitude because she is a respectful and communicative person.*
 15. *It affects our learning process a lot because the better the teacher, the more we learn.*
 16. *Our English teacher is the best because her attitude motivates us to learn more*
 17. *Not only the English teacher but all teachers have an impact on the formation of students because most of the students create idols of their teacher and follow their steps for the future.*
 18. *If the teacher uses negative behavior toward us, our wish and willingness to learn the subject is not high, and*
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the opposite is when the teacher motivates us, we love more learning the subject.

19. *The attitude may be positive if the teacher behaves well and is not strict toward us when she allows us to speak freely about what we think and doesn't judge when we make mistakes but help us to improve them.*
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These are some of the students' answers to their survey, what is emphasized is the fact that most of the students mentioned that the role of the teacher's attitude is very significant to the learning process because if the teacher supports them, they are more likely to learn more and be motivated during the lesson. The same question was addressed to three different English teachers in the school and they approved mostly with the same answers that their attitude and behavior have a valuable impact on students' learning process but they emphasized that their attitude is related to the student's behavior in the classroom and their learning. They accepted that they behave differently from different students so that they be able to make the difference in which student is better and which student needs improvement.

The results presented above support our hypothesis that teachers play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and motivation in the language learning process. The findings show that teachers significantly influence the attitudes and motivation of their pupils in the language acquisition process is supported. The data supports the notion that teacher behavior and attitudes have a considerable impact on student engagement and their overall learning experience.

V. Conclusions

Referring to the the theories and the findings of this study, several points can be concluded. First, students were highly satisfied with their teachers, (70 %) of them declared that are very satisfied with their English teacher which highlights a strong, positive teacher-student relationship.

Second, concerning the idea of teacher's attitude and their influence on the learning process, a lot of students (64.5%) are rather happy with their teachers' attitudes, so supporting the fact that a good and encouraging attitude from the teacher improves students' involvement and learning opportunities. This satisfaction extends to the way teachers communicate, with (67.3%) of students appreciating the language used in the classroom.

Third, it was reported a minimal negative behavior. The majority of students (89.7%) reported that they had not experienced negative attitudes or behaviors from their teachers, which reinforces the role of positive reinforcement in learning. This finding also shows that in the classrooms there was not any negative behavior such as bullying or racism, which fosters a safe and welcoming environment for students. On the other hand, teachers the fact that they have a great influence on their students. Interviews with teachers showed that they acknowledge the significant impact their behavior and attitude have on student learning. Teachers emphasized the dynamic relationship between teacher behavior and student involvement by noting that they modify their approach based on the needs and behavior of individual students in order to maintain a pleasant learning environment. Last point to be mention is that positive teacher-student relationships boost motivation: Teachers who show a kind, encouraging manner are perceived by both students and teachers as having the effect of increasing students' motivation to interact with the material and to take an active role in the learning process.

These findings indicate that improving students' motivation and effectiveness in learning English requires creating a welcoming, positive, and encouraging environment in the classroom. The data also emphasizes how crucial it is for teachers to use a flexible, customized strategy when dealing with the different requirements and behaviours of their students.

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