HOW CAN ENGLISH TEACHERS AS ROLE MODELS INFLUENCE THE WAY ITALIAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ATTRIBUTE THEIR SUCCESS IN EFL LEARNING?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to research to what extent teachers of English as role models could exert influence on the process through which Italian undergraduate students tend to attribute their success in learning English as a foreign language. The trigger for this investigation comes from articles of TESOL that we read when we were studying for the MA in Applied Linguistics in the UK. This study was conducted at the University of Malta and the data gathering process consists of a quantitative approach through a questionnaire structured for twenty Italian undergraduate EFL students in order to investigate the learners' beliefs and reasons that could cause their success or failure in their learning experience with particular attention on the position of the teacher as role model. The literature review analyses theoretical issues regarding the intrapersonal and interpersonal theories of motivation in a foreign language classroom along with a psychological analysis of the students' perceptions of effective EFL teachers. Findings suggest that there seem to be significant differences in students' learning paths depending on their gender which indicates that it may have a leading role on how students perceive failure, success and above all the involvement of their teachers in the classroom.

Keywords: EFL, gender, motivation, role models, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to discover to what extent teachers of English as a foreign language, if considered as a role model, may exert influence on the way students attribute their success in EFL learning. According to our teaching experiences, it seems that not only could teachers in the classroom play a crucial role in motivating learners but they may be significant as a role model and affect the students' learning experiences. Moreover, based on our EFL study experiences, it appears that some of our English language teachers we had in the past at the high school and at university turned out to be a source of inspiration and models regarding the way we perceive English language learning. For this reason we decided to explore whether the "teacher role model" manages to have an effect on others and to what degree. Besides, the stimulus for this study comes also from articles of SLA that we read when we were doing research for the MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics that we did in the UK.

Likewise, our experiences as foreign language students helped us to notice that learners seem to have different perceptions concerning all the elements that come along during their learning path although they might be using the same course materials and

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