Unburdening the Pedagogy of the Oppressed: A Case Study of ELT Classrooms at University Level in South Punjab

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Abstract
Recently, the concept of Critical thinking got much significance in the teaching and learning process. Thinking creatively and critically in the English language beckons our representation in different domains of development as well. The present study is aimed to investigate the on-going teaching-learning process of English Language Teaching at University Level in South Punjab from the perspective of critical thinking. The theoretical insights have been taken from Freire's Banking concept of education in his seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2018). The findings of the study reveal that our ELT classrooms are lacking the creativity and critical thinking at large. Further in our classrooms, the Banking Model of teaching is being practiced where a student remains passive and the teacher is considered as the ultimate source of knowledge. It points out that our teaching and learning process is moving on some faulty lines which need revisions and amendments. It is suggested that the Problem Posing Model of teaching and learning may be adopted in our ELT Classrooms so that our graduates at the university level may think critically and independently.

Keywords: ELT Classrooms, South Punjab, Critical Thinking

Introduction
In all educational methods of teaching a second language, the teaching and learning process has a central significance (Myles, 2014). Educationists have been arguing that by correcting the faults in the teaching-learning process, significant improvements can be brought out in society as well. Ideally, an English Teaching classroom is estimated to enable the students to communicate effectively and efficiently in the targeted language- English. The concept of communicative competence was incorporated into English language teaching classrooms since 1970 (Savignon, 2018). Regarding the Pakistani context, the importance of education in the English language was felt even in pre-partition times. The slogan "No English- No Future" signifies the importance of English language teaching in Pakistan (Mahboob, 2002). In the Pakistani educational system, the syllabus of English has constantly been revised from the contents of the syllabus to the modes of assessment to bring significant improvements in the learning outcomes of the students in targeted language- English. But unfortunately, our graduates are unable to read, write, listen, and speak in the targeted language- English according to the purposed and desired SLOs. Assessment agencies have been pointing out this phenomenon that our students are not performing effectively according to the proposed goals. Rashid &Awan (2019) while concluding their study argued that a significant ratio of students leaves university or college due to the fear and anxiety of the English language. Bughio (2013) emphasized that there is dire need to bring improvements in the public universities of Pakistan. He argues that English language teaching in Pakistani universities is more on quasi methods and ignores the students' engagement in the active learning process. He demonstrated that teachers in Pakistani public universities should amend their roles according to recent interactive teaching-learning models. He concludes with the finding that by interactive learning process we can develop the ability of critical thinking among university students.

Warsi (2004) considers that educators in Pakistan are very much concerned and dissatisfied about the situations under which the English language is being taught in Pakistan. Despite studying English from Primary to Higher Secondary School level which counts twelve years, the students are

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unable to understand and communicate in the English language with ease and confidence. He recounts that there are the following problems which are prominently affecting the English language teaching in Pakistan; (a) Little understanding of curricular objectives (b) Untrained Teachers (c) Defective methods of teaching (d) Inappropriate selection of books (e) Insufficient facilities of educational material (f) Faulty system of assessment. In the light of problems pointed by Warsi, we establish that the conditions of English language teaching in Pakistan are not conducive and up to the mark. Coleman (2010) concluded his study that English language teaching is frequently unsuccessful, that it does not help children in their educational careers and that it may be counterproductive. Raja (2005) opines that a 52 % literacy rate of Pakistan points out that our educational system is still facing serious challenges. These problems may include personal problems, a crippled economy, and individual disabilities. But among these problems, the central problem is the weakness of the teaching-learning process and without improving the teaching-learning process; literacy rate in the country cannot be improved. A poor education system in the country is one of the reasons that the whole nation is undergoing political, economic, ethnic, religious, and cultural crises. As English is an international language, our deficiencies in the English language beckon our input at the international level as well. Blundell (1999) suggests teachers training is counted as an essential element for success and efficiency in education. Shamim (2008) considers implementation lags far behind the major policy change in 1989 for "democratizing" English. But little attention has been paid towards the process of English Language Teaching in Pakistan. Educationists count that our graduates at the university level are unable to speak English because they have not been provided a good environment. Tariq et al (2013) is of the view that learning is only efficient when the environment is suitable and helpful. In rural areas, the situational factors are not helpful for the students learning. All the factors to some extent are against the proposed situation of learning for the students. Due to rural, agricultural, un-educated background and poverty parents do not give any importance to the education of their wards. Most of the parents do not show any interest in ESL learning of their children. Rural and uneducated environment has a bad impact on learners. If the learners are living in an area of society where people of the area are well educated, students learning efficiency may be increased (Shamim, 2008). Parents' education, interest, family background and home atmosphere are crucial for ESL learning. If these factors play a positive role, learning may be enhanced. In the Pakistani context, the parents do not realize the importance of the English language that is a key to success in the present era. In our understanding, the issue is not with the environment of learning only but with the process of teaching-learning process as well. Our teaching-learning process is based on unnatural modes of learning i.e. banking concept of Education.

Generative Understanding of Knowledge

Freire (2018) considered that only such people can be called literate who could read and write critically. Gaining knowledge is neither meant to enable one to read a textbook but to think critically. While arguing the current dilemma of literacy he opines that our pedagogy has adopted more a banking model of education. So, it would compel the people to domesticate the oppressive version of student and teacher relations. In such a model of teaching-learning teacher is more like an absolute truth and unchallenged entity. While on the other hand, the student is considered as a slave who has never thought of his slavery and protects the rights of his oppressor in this banking concept of teaching.

Forrester (2008) proposed that the experience and knowledge based on experiences i.e. lived reality make the participants more active. It also arouses the interest of the participants into that reality. He suggested that the teaching-learning process would be more interesting and productive if it is based on lived reality. A lot of words can be generated by using the social context of the child for making the teaching-learning process more effective and interesting. The major principle in the generative method of knowledge is to enable the students more creative and to write words from the world of their own. It never means that this method endues the subjective reality as compared to the syllabus which is designed on the general ability of the students. In general, Education is taken as a challenge for individuals to cope with their understanding of the social situations prevailing around them (Perveen, 2015). A teacher in the class is supposed to develop ability among his students to abridge the gap between the students' understanding and challenges faced by the students while comprehending this reality. This challenge becomes more serious in the case of English language teaching and learning process. In such a situation the student is neither aware of the social nor cultural

world of the targeted language. This case is similar to every language which is taught as a second language. The unique domain of knowledge of the lived experience of reality becomes restricted in the case of second language learning especially English. Ultimately the students are bounded to memorize the things without knowing the reality (Khan, 2011). Even they remain unable to understand what they are learning. Richards (2013) suggests that in the case of English language teaching mechanical memorization of the language is practiced. He extends that one quality among the many that characterize the effectiveness of the teachers is the ability to bring a creative disposition to teaching. In the case of teaching a second language, creativity is also linked to different levels of proficiency in the targeted language in addition to four skills of the language. Many of the language tasks favored by contemporary language teaching methods are believed to release creativity in learners – particularly those involving student-centered, interaction-based, and open-ended elements. Iakovos (2011) considers that by drawing on teacher narratives and conversations with teachers, the notion of creativity in language teaching is explored from three different perspectives:

- The qualities creative teachers possess.
- How teachers apply creativity in their teaching.
- How creativity can be supported in the school.

It illustrates how creative teachers conceptualize their approaches to teaching. Means adopting different approaches to teaching may assist students in reducing their discontent towards English learning.

Freire (2018) believes the natural process of learning moves from known to unknown, general to abstract and easy to difficult. Dialogue as a teaching technique functions as a bridge between new forms of knowledge and existing realities in the teaching-learning process. Through dialogue, a teacher can guess the knowledge of his students. Actually through dialogue teacher can sort out the knowledge and experience of the child. While at the same time it engages the student in the active learning process. Here dialogue never means an active conversation between student and teacher. Rather an active interchange of knowledge and experience between the student and the teacher. In such a dialogic situation teacher is supposed to transform the student as an active and energetic participant of the social world. Keeping in view the context of Pakistan where the rate of literacy is already very less as compared to its neighbouring countries i.e. China and India, the situation of critical thinking and innovations in educational domains is very insignificant. In other words, we can say our educational system is majorly producing nothing new. In Pakistan, a significant number of teachers and students do not perceive their very basic human vocation to be 'more fully human' and to be critical of the existential realities. It is an undeniable fact that if teachers and students actively participate in the teaching-learning process by understanding the importance of critical thinking in education, literacy rates can improve in the country in terms of quality and quantity as well. Yet, the lack of 'critical literacy,' in Pakistan's educational system is promoting and perpetuating dehumanizing social behavior.

Research Design
The present study falls in the area of ELT and it is an investigation of the ongoing teaching-learning process at the university level. To collect data, the researchers have devised the questionnaire and administered among the students studying at the undergraduate and postgraduate level at university through online in the form of Google forms to measure the current situation of our English classrooms in the light of suggested model *Banking concept of education*. Freire (2018) pointed two parallel teaching-learning process models i.e. *Banking concept of Education* and *Problem Posing Education*. According to him, the banking concept of education restricts the teachers to the status of the oppressor of the reality and students as subject to such oppression. He pointed out that in the banking concept of education; students are treated as puppets and subject to the shattered reality projected by the teachers. He propounds that the teacher distorts the version of reality to students as he [teacher] never engages them to the experiences of the lived world and never provides access to converse and question the status of reality. The student is bound to have his share of "truth" which is entrusted by his teachers. While on the other hand, the problem-posing method of teaching is more interesting for the students. It enables the students to think more creatively, critically, and independently.

Sample and Population
Two hundred students of the University of the undergraduate and postgraduate level were selected as research participants by random sampling technique. The following universities were selected keeping in view the convenience of data collection

- Department of English, BZU, Bahadur Sub Campus Layyah
- Department of English, Baha Uddin Zakariya University Multan
- Department of English, Islamia University Bahawalpur
- Department of English, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan
- Department of English, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan

Friend a friend technique was used for the distribution of the questionnaire. The targeted population was the students studying English Language at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the university. The questionnaire was distributed to 250 students out of which 200 hundred students responded.

Tools of Data Collection
The data for the present study was collected through a questionnaire. Questions were designed carefully to know how students of undergraduate and postgraduate levels feel about the English teaching-learning process at the university level. A total of 13 questions were designed and each is highlighting a substantive issue in teaching and learning the English language at the university level in south Punjab.

Data Analysis
In this section, the responses of the students have been analyzed. Each question's response is discussed in detail and is presented in percentages through pie charts.

Do you think that students and teachers are equally important in our English language teaching classrooms for bringing change and transformation in society?
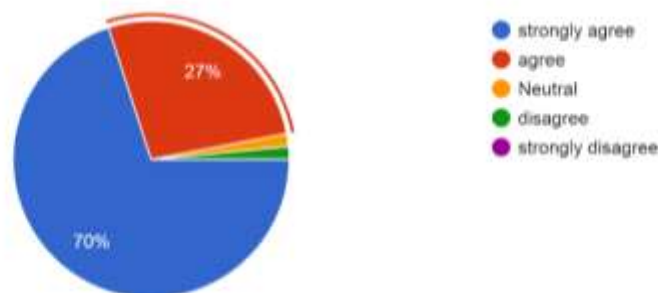
200 responses

Fig.1

From the collected data, 27% population strongly agreed that students and teachers as an agents of change and can bring transformation in the society. 70% population agreed while 1.5% population remains neutral and disagreed respectively. By the responses of two hundred students, we can establish that any change in society is possible through student and teacher interaction. Teacher transfers the social reality and students disburse that reality in society.

Do you consider the real purpose of English language teaching is to develop independent individuals who could think critically and creatively "
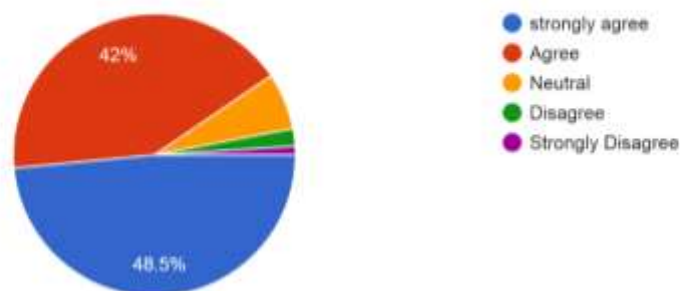
200 responses

Fig.2

In response to the real purpose of education is to develop individuals who could think critically and independently 48.5% population strongly agreed and 42% agreed. While 6.5% remain neutral and 2% population disagreed. It shows a strong tendency of the students that they are much interested to be critical and independent thinkers and they consider it as the real purpose of education.

Do you consider the real purpose of English language teaching is to develop independent individuals who could think critically and creatively "

200 responses

- strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
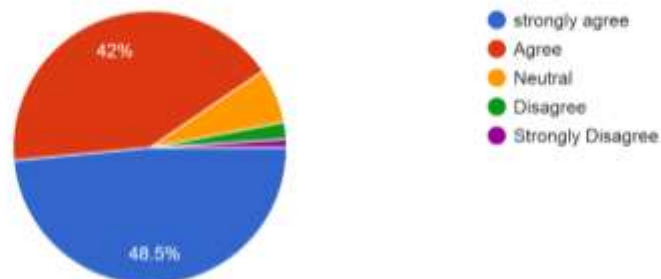- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

42%

48.5%

Fig.3

In response to the situation of our classroom about developing the creative skills among the students 27.5% population strongly agreed and 50% agreed that our English language teaching classrooms are not generating creative and critical thinking.15% population remain neutral while 7.5% disagreed. This shows that the situation of our English language teaching classrooms is alarmingly are unproductive.

Do you think that our English language teaching classrooms are lacking the development of creative skills at the university level?

200 responses

- strongly agree
- agree
- Neutral
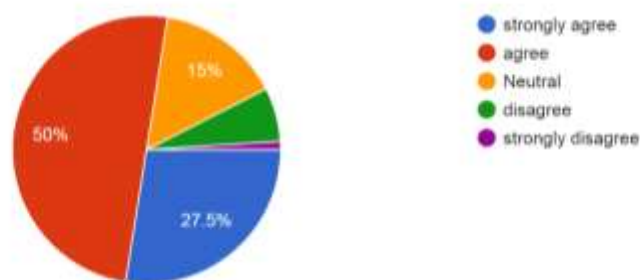- disagree
- strongly disagree

15%

50%

27.5%

Fig no 4

In response to the above statement about lacking creative skills in English language teaching classrooms, 27.5% population strongly agreed while50% agreed and 15 % responded in neutral and 7.5 disagreed. This is significantly alarming. It also points out that our universities have failed to develop creative skills among students. It further indicates that our teaching in English language teaching classrooms is an unproductive one.

Do you consider that our English language teaching classrooms are more focused on storing things rather than creating new things by the students?

200 responses

- strongly agree
- agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
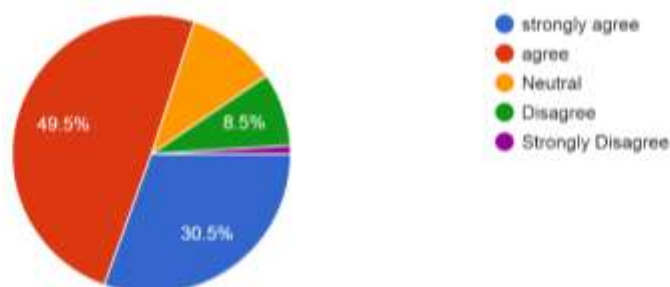
49.5%

8.5%

30.5%

Fig no 5

In response to the situation of our English language teaching classrooms, we see that our classrooms were more focused on storing things rather than creating new things. 30.5% population strongly agreed and 49.5% agreed that our English language teaching classrooms majorly focus on memorizing the material. It projects that the students are not taken as active participants in the classrooms. It further indicates the efficiency of the teachers that they are ignoring the theories of language teaching in English language classrooms.

Do you consider that in our English language teaching classrooms, our students record and memorize the things without knowing the real significance of these things?
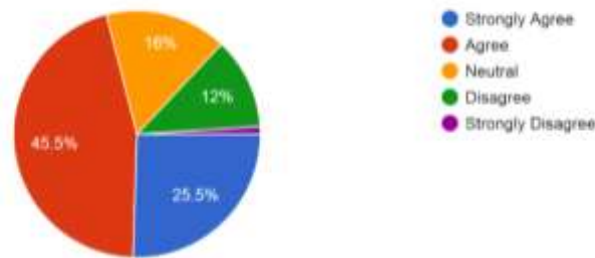
200 responses

Fig no 6

25.5% of respondents strongly agreed 45.5% agreed that in our English language teaching classrooms, students record and memorize the things without knowing the real significance of the things, 16% remained neutral while 12%. It points out the pathetic situations of the students in our English language teaching classrooms that even they are unable to know what they are memorizing. It also points out the demotivation level of the students in English language teaching classrooms.

Do you consider that in our English language teaching classrooms, the teacher as the narrator leads the students to memorize their narrated things mechanically?
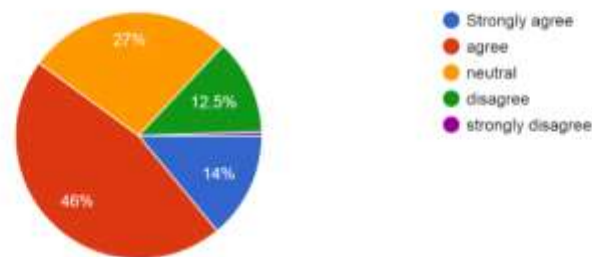
200 responses

Fig No. 7

While in response to the question that in our English language teaching classrooms, the teacher as the narrator leads the students to memorize their narrated things mechanically, 14% population strongly agreed and 46% of participants agreed. 27% of participants remain neutral and 12.5% disagreed. According to language teaching theories, the role of the teacher as an active actor who leads the situation is reversed in Pakistani English language teaching classrooms. Despite sparking the creative skills of the students the teachers lead the students to memorization. It points out that our teachers are ignoring the proper methods and techniques in language teaching in classrooms.

Do you consider that our English language teaching classrooms at the university level are designed in such a pattern in which teacher talks and the students listen- meekly?
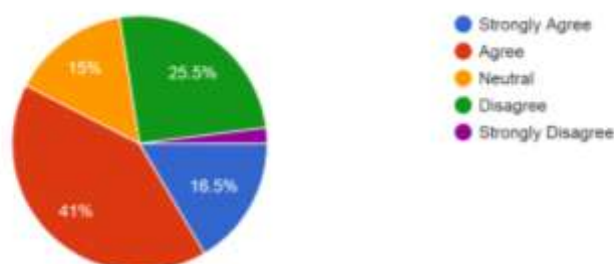
200 responses

Fig No. 8

228

In response to the question that our English language teaching classrooms at the university level are designed in such a pattern in which teacher talks and the student listens meekly 16.5% strongly agreed 41% agreed, 15% remain neutral While 25.5 % disagreed. It points out that in our English langue teaching classrooms the role of the student as an active learner is being ignored. Students are taken as passive listeners and mere imitators of the instructions provided by the teachers. It signifies that the role of students in the teaching-learning process is missing.

Do you consider that in our English language teaching classrooms students are treated as marginalized learners i.e the learners who know nothing of the English language?
200 responses

- strongly agree
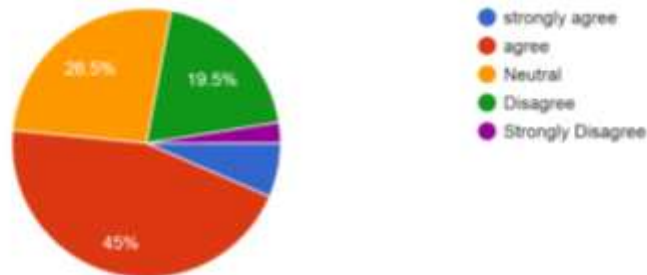- agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Fig No. 9

In response to the marginalized status of students 45% and 7% responded 26.5 % remain neutral while 20% of respondents remain disagreed. This statistics shows that in our English language teaching classrooms, the students are not an active participant in the teaching-learning process. They (students) are treated as a marginalized and unwanted participants.

Do you consider that our English language teaching classrooms are more focused on testing the memory of the students and have the significance of the real experience of the students?
200 responses

- strongly agree
- agree
- Neutral
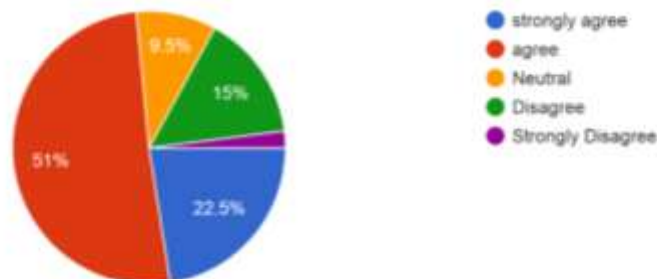- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Fig No. 10

In response to the questions, our English language teaching classrooms are more focused on testing the memory of the students and no significance for the real experiences of the student 22.5% strongly agreed while 51% agreed while 9.5% remained neutral and 16 % agreed. It points out that the real experiences of the students are not taken in count in our English language teaching classrooms. The memorization is appreciated in our classrooms.

Do you Consider that problem-posing education and particle education create interest and innovation among the students and enables them t...akes the students more creative and confident?
200 responses

- strongly agree
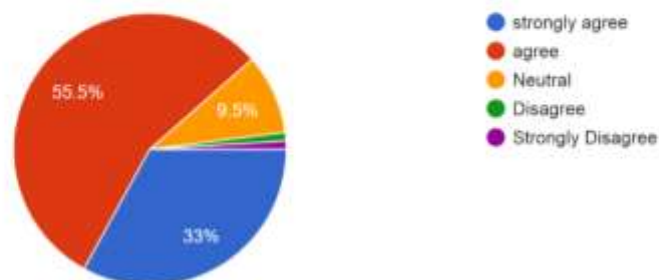- agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Fig No. 11

In favor of problem-posing education, 33% of participants strongly agreed while 55.5% agreed while 9.5% remained neutral and 2% disagreed. It points out the significance of problem-posing education among the students.

Do you consider that in our English language teaching classrooms teachers are on one hand and students are on another hand in acts of cognition? (therefor learning is not effective)
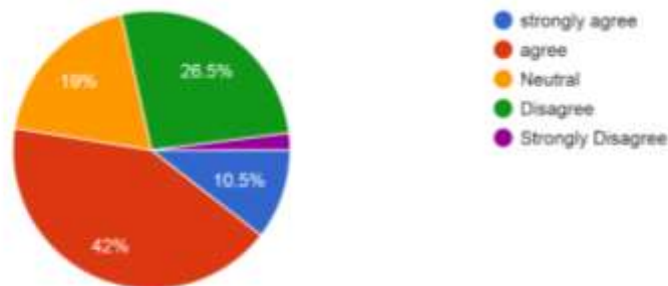
200 responses

- strongly agree
- agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Fig No. 12

In response, 10.5% of respondents strongly agreed while 42 % agreed 19% remain neutral and 26.5% disagreed. The spirit of the teaching-learning process is an interactive one. While in our English language teaching students and teachers are not interactive rather remain at poles in the teaching-learning process.

You would like to choose which one model of teaching for yourself in English language teaching classrooms? 1 banking education treats students as…education makes the students as critical thinkers

200 responses

- Banking model
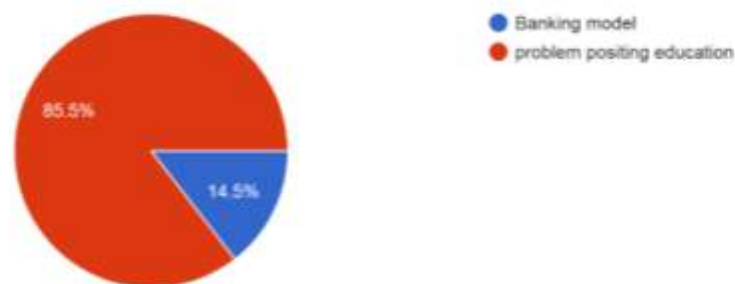- problem positing education

Fig No. 13

In response to the model of teaching 85.5 % of respondents prefer to choose problem-posing education for themselves as a mode of teaching and learning. It points out the interest level of students towards the problem-posing model of teaching. It validates that students are strongly inclined to the problem-posing model of teaching as it increases their interest and enhances their creative abilities.

Discussions

In the light of the collected data, we see that in our universities the teaching-learning process is working on the banking concept of education. Students are treated as marginalized creatures while teachers are considered as the absolute source of knowledge and the role of students as active learners are being ignored. Our ELT classrooms are more focused on encouraging students to memorize the material without knowing the real significance of the things. Contents of the syllabus are devoid of real and lived experiences ultimately the students remain ambushed in our ELT classrooms. Students are much in favor of problem-posing the educational system. Our English language teaching classrooms are more aligned to unnatural referential rather than the lived experience of the students. Hence, our English language teaching classrooms are missing the interest of the students.

The cognitive theories of learning are being ignored in our English language teaching classrooms consequently our teaching and learning are defective and non-effective. In English language teaching classrooms, less attention is paid to the development of the creative skills of the students due to which we are unable to develop confidence in our students. New methods of English language teaching are not adopted in our English language teaching classrooms due to which the teaching-learning process is both boring and laborious for the students and the teachers. In our

English language teaching classrooms, the role of the teacher as being the one who shapes new forms of knowledge in the classrooms is missing.

The involvement of actual contents in our classrooms is missing consequently students fail to a bridge the gap between syllabus and the social realities. The system of constructive criticism through the mechanism of feedback is missing in our English language teaching classrooms therefore improvement in the teaching-learning process is not possible. The examination system is inflexible due to which students are bound to memorize the things instead of focusing on their creative abilities.

Conclusion

In the light of above-analyzed data and relying upon the proposed model of problem-posing education by Freire (2018) we can establish the conclusion that there is the dire need for designing course content which should be more interesting and arose the critical ability of the students. The traditional syllabuses should be upgraded and modulated. Such revisions and amendments in the teaching-learning process are the need of the hour. Students need education and training in ELT classrooms that must help them to face real-life communication challenges amicably and is problem-solving. This is what the ELT Classroom is meant for. While in reality, our English language teaching classrooms promote the banking concept of education which is less effective. To improve the quality of teaching-learning in ELT classrooms, the following measures are suggested in the conclusion that pre-service Teachers training should be conducted by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to train the teachers so that they may incorporate the knowledge of real-world in their English language classrooms. The syllabus and its implementation should be designed in such patterns that our students may develop critical thinking. At the university level, students should be engaged more actively in the teaching-learning process rather than objects. Teachers should develop the creative and confident learners, rather producing memorizing machines. In the context of English language teaching classrooms in south Punjab, there is an urgent need for such improvements in the teaching-learning process. Further, it is suggested that in our English language teaching classroom activities should be planned which may engage the maximum students' participation.

For effective teaching-learning, the feedback of the students is of much significance but it is missing in our university classrooms. The teacher is considered the ultimate source of knowledge and authority which demotes the active participation of the learners. Universities should devise a proper system of feedback in the classrooms that must be non-threatening and collegial. In the light of feedback, the teachers should make positive changes in the teaching-learning process.

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