The nightmare of teachingophobia for neophyte teachers

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Abstract

Teaching beside modern schools brings fear and anxiety to the teachers. The common definition of fear according to Oxford Dictionary is the bad feeling that you have when you are in danger or when a particular thing frightens you. During the life, one can experience a great variety of phobias as fear of strangers, fear of darkness and fear of very particular objects. For a teacher there exists another fear known as fear of teaching. This kind of fear has many reasons as doing lesson plans, or an assignment to an undesired level and beginning teaching without preparation, which are traumatic in their own situation. Fears are not always rational; some of them are xenophobic in nature. This is true that the neophyte teachers worry that they may not be adequately prepared to meet the needs of students but experienced teachers may also seize up in fear. Indeed teachingophobia does not appear from poor teaching or disability but it has other reasons. In this way, this article tries to focus on different fears and phobias in teaching and suggests possible resolutions in order to make teaching a creditable job.

Keywords: Teachingophobia; Neophyte Teachers; Fear; Experience

1. Introduction

There are many things that people encounter and experience during the life in various situations and for various reasons. One of these things that can be defined as a concept deals with the notion of fear. Fear is a phenomenon, which everybody has encountered it in life. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary has defined fear as "the bad feeling that you have when you are in danger, when something bad might happen, or when a particular thing frightens you" (463). In this way, we can reach to this point that this abstract phenomenon is an emotional feeling, which unconsciously breaks out when one is in the situation of
danger. Concentrating on the situation, which is responsible for the feeling of fear many scientists and psychologists of mind argue that in different stages of life, human beings experience fundamental fears which are basic in different places and cultures.

They have identified fear as and developmental entity, which wears a different color coat in developing, stages of life. This begins early in life with fears of strangers, followed by fear of separation. Fears of very particular objects are prevalent during the school age years. This includes things like fears of animals, thunderstorms, and darkness. Next, in adolescence, fears of various types of social experiences take on prominence as fear of meeting new people, particularly of the opposite gender. Finally, in early adulthood, fear focuses on more abstract constructs, such as fear of living alone, failing test or being rejected.

Deeply thinking one who follows this issue may reach to this conclusion that fear exists through all life and in certain types of situations that tend to inspire fear in children, the power of fear acts more readily than they do in adults. There is a very strong relationship between age and the types of fears that people report in many different cultures. Because each step forward in life we forget what those youthful terrors feel like. However there is always this question that how fears can develop or disappear as we get older. Teachers have a significant role in the development of a society. They are key elements in the educational system. In the educational system, both teachers and learners endanger fear in their approaches toward teaching and learning. Fear can be conceptualized differently as experienced by both.

2. Fear and English language teaching

Many scholars prove it that learning and teaching can be sometimes anxious when they are dealing with a second language. Mutually some language learners and some language teachers become anxious when they cannot be themselves. They are commonly worried about looking unable to present and control the class, and of course because each action has different requirements for acting appropriately, which they should be aware of them. For example in case of an anxious child, his parents should help him to face his fears in a way that does not overwhelm him. So in the first day of school, the parent who can help the child overcome their fear of this so that the child ultimately can “make it” to school that day is really helping that child.

Fear as a pause, panic or a barrier that keeps us from moving on, can also let try to motivate ourselves. In this way, fear can be paralyzing and motivating. The reason for considering fear as being motivating is that we want to protect our inner selves. "When [one’s self] lose power, [he] experiences anxiety, fear and shame" (Turner and Stets 2006). Surveys have shown that many teachers feel moderately to strongly anxious about language teaching, and a number of students have found that teachers with higher levels of anxiety tend to do more poorly in their classes. However, there are counter opinions about motivating effects of fear. M. Nussbaum has a negative point of view on 'self' destructive role of fear. He believes that "fears are felt as tearing the self apart; because they have to do with me and my own, my plans and goals, what is important in my own conception of what it is for me to live well"(33).
Melinda Messineo in her lecture "Letting go: Overcoming Fear, Ego, and other Barriers to Effective Teaching and Learning" that was presented in North Central Sociological Association 2010 regards concerns and worries of the neophyte teachers as code of concerns which are prevalent among all teachers. These codes can be perceived in various situations and by different teachers in different cultures. Margaret Macintyre Latta in her article "the role and place of fear in what it means to teach and to learn (2005) introduces fear as an agency in both teaching and learning which is "a necessary part of our being that needs to be given space to reveal its nature and role in our lives" (184). She purposefully develops fear as a necessary moving force to be played with intentionally, in order to be overcome. As an important problem in language learning and teaching, fear and anxiety can have negative impact on "success and career goals" (Horwitz 10). Understanding the existence of fear, teachers can support themselves to overcome it.

Not only second language learners can be vulnerable to a particular type of anxiety called culture shock, but also second language teachers are faced with this issue. "Culture shock refers to anxiety reactions resulting from difficulties people have when they have to function within the norms and requirements of a new culture" (Horwitz 10).

Ben Willson et.al in their article, "Beginning Teacher Fears"(1997) identified fears that a neophyte teacher may encounter during his or her experiences. Based on our experiences and observations one can come to this conclusion that most of the time fears of teaching the same as teaching methods and behaviors are universal. They are general and inherent in each society and culture and various teachers with different background can overcome them in a similar way. Wilson’s elaboration of fears is as follow:

- Assignment apprehension
- Assignment fears
- Fear of meeting parents
- The fear of time utilization
- Racial fears
- Fear of not living up to personally imposed Expectations
- Fear of evaluation
- Fear of acceptance
- Personal inadequate preparation
- Classroom management and discipline
- Violence
- Violent student retaliation
- Students not learning or receptive to learning
- Paperwork
- Testing
- Technological innovations
- Fear of assessing and evaluating students
Fear is one of the psychoanalytic principles, which has the main role in developing personality. Most of fears stated by Willson are prevalent in the life and career of the teachers. For examples all teachers had the nightmare where they walk into a classroom and suddenly discover that they’re supposed to teach a class that they have not prepared for; or many teachers fear the student who says nothing, doesn’t make the grade; or sometimes some teachers fear that the students will be bored and disgusted by the class; or that the students will turn out to know more than the teacher.

Jeremy Harmer in his book How to Teach English (2007) asserts, one of the frequent nightmares for teachers of adolescents is losing the control of the class. Sometimes teacher cannot manage the class because the students do not like the subject or because issues in their life outside the classroom are affecting their behavior and outlook on life. In this way, this behavioral problem can causes a problem for the teacher.

3. Reducing the fear of teaching

Overcoming the fear of teaching can be done. There are some principles that teachers should follow in order to overcome the existing fear. Teaching can be intimidating, stressful or even frightening for new or uncomfortable teachers. Overcoming fear of teaching is not about simply being tough. It is about preparation, confidence and effective communication skills. Instead of getting fear over every lesson plan, teacher can learn and apply the skills he needs to give his students the best education possible.

There are moments of fear that come up right before one teaches or during a lesson. They may not be apparent to anyone else but they can rattle those who are faced with it. Some teachers pointed out that "when those small fears grab your thoughts, you can go for several minutes without actually listening to anyone else. You won’t even remember what you said."

Teachers should read, as much as they find about the course and prepare the lesson plans ahead of time in order to be fluent and overcome the stress of teaching. Given the high attrition rate of beginning English teachers, it is imperative to better prepare English pre-service teachers, so that they can be successful during the early years of their teaching.

To views of themselves as a future teacher, in particular their hopes and fears for English teaching and the experiences that help to shape their possible selves. It is better for teachers to wear a dress that can help them overcome fear. Wearing teacher clothes is like donning a suit of armour, giving you confidence.

**Try to see things from the child’s point of view** and never use fear, as a shortcut for education. We should never become frustrated when a student does not understand something. Our positive and patient response to questions builds an immediate and lasting trust that transcends fear.

An analysis of fear in teacher evaluation should take into account teacher controllability of teaching and its evaluation and principals’ preference for evaluation inflexibility. In environments compromised by fear, for example, administrators might limit information in teacher evaluation. Reform directions such as
union participation and altering the adversarial tone of evaluation may improve evaluation by more fully developing the skills desired in teaching.

4. Conclusion

Fear as a necessary confrontation for all teachers has a dual characteristic. It not only make teachers frustrated but also help them to enliven themselves and metamorphosis them. The awareness of the dynamic and transformational potentiality of fear in teachers progress; because if teachers understand fear they can overcome it easily. Many of our fears as teachers are unfounded, but on the other hand, they remind us that we are indeed concerned about being effective in the classroom and making it a worthwhile investment of time for our students.

References


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