International Academic Institute for Science and Technology

International Academic Journal of Humanities Vol. 4, No. 2, 2017, pp. 114-122.
ISSN 2454-2245

International Academic Journal of Humanities

www.iaiest.com

An Investigation of EFL Novice and Experienced Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies and Teaching Styles[1]

Mostafa Zamanian[a], Soheila Soleimani Pouya[b]

[a] *Assistant Professor of English Language, Shiraz University, Iran*

[b] *Master of English Language Teaching, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht,* Iran

Abstract

Learning English as an international language plays a pivotal role in current educational system of Iran. Classroom management strategies and teaching styles in English classes are of the most challenging aspects of teaching for novice and sometimes experienced teachers. The current study was designed to investigate classroom management strategies that Iranian teachers use and the dominant teaching style applied in the classroom. To study the research questions, 60 teachers in 10 language centers were surveyed. Teachers were at different levels of experience ranging from 3 years of teaching to 19 years of teaching and consisted of both male and female instructors. They were teaching English at different levels. To gather data, Lowman's (1995) Two-Dimensional Teaching Style Scale and the Behavior and Martin and Sass's (2010) Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) were carried out during two sessions in several private language institutes in Shiraz. The results of the frequency analysis and Spearman correlations indicated that the dominant teaching style of the novice EFL teachers was the intellectual excitement while for experienced teachers the dominant style was the interpersonal rapport. In addition, the results of the correlation analyses showed that there was not an overall relationship between the teaching style of the teachers and their classroom management strategies for neither the novice nor the experienced teachers. However, there was a significant correlation between the intellectual excitement type of teaching style and instructional type of the classroom management strategies. This was true for both the novice and the experienced EFL teachers.

Keywords: Teaching style, classroom management strategies

[1] MA thesis Submitted to the English language department in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Arts in Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)

Introduction

Teaching is a process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners so as to achieve specific outcomes. In order for the method used for teaching to be effective teachers need to be conversant with numerous teaching strategies that take recognition of the magnitude of complexity of the concepts to be covered. As an educator, the researcher has always been fascinated by the relationship between teaching methods and students' academic performance; especially when it comes to applications in the context of 21st century education. It seems that there is something in teaching that opens the gate of learning. It is true that successful learning depends on various factors that are not all teacher-related, but the methods that a teacher uses continue to play an important role in student learning and in their academic achievement. The challenges that educators face in the 21st century are so diverse that using better teaching methods is more crucial now than ever before.

Learning English as an international language plays a pivotal role in current educational system of Iran, international marketing, and diplomacy. It is worthy of note that despite other Asian counties like Japan in which English is used as medium of internationalization, the significance of learning English is restricted to educational setting in Iran (Farhady, 2010). As such, language learning is extensively recommended in educational settings and English is an indispensable course offered at all levels of education from Junior High to university.

The aim of this study was investigating Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and their relationship with the teaching styles teachers employ in English classes. this study tries to investigated positive significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management strategies and find out what the dominant teaching style.

Theoretical basis of research

Teaching style

Teaching style refers to "a predilection toward teaching behavior and the congruence between educators' teaching behavior and teaching beliefs" (Heimlich & Norland 1994, p.34). In fact, teaching styles are reflections of an amalgamation of teachers' theoretical assumptions and actual teaching practice. Jarvis (2004) provides a more vivid account of teaching style and believes that a style "is the totality of one's philosophy, beliefs, values, and behaviors, and it incorporates the full implementation of this philosophy; it consists of substantiation and support of beliefs about values and attitudes toward elements of the student learning and teacher learning exchange". The categorizations of teaching style have been recurrently stated in literature using different terminologies (Akbari & Karimi Allvar, 2010). For example, Flanders (1970) grouped teaching styles into Direct style (didactic) and Indirect style (student-centered). Similarly, Bennett (1976) identified informal (student-centered) and formal (teacher-centered) teaching styles. Moreover, Campbell (1995) proposed another categorization of teaching styles, which includes Didactic, Socratic and Facilitative teaching styles. Didactic teachers are dominant authorities in educational settings.

Socratic teaching style is again a teacher-directed approach and students' questions determine the direction of teaching process. Facilitative teachers create a pleasant environment and students are responsible for their own learning.

Studies on teaching methods are not something new in educational research. A large number of studies have been done on this area. Pascarella and Trenzini (2005) have written a compendium of research studies conducted in this area over the past three decades. Even before that, Feldman and Newcomb (1973) mentioned decades of similar research studies in the area of teaching methods. These show both increased interest and knowledge in the area of teaching strategies and learning theories. Svinicki (2000) suggests that these studies on teaching methods conducted in the past decades are so overwhelming that it would be impossible to go over them all in detail. For many decades, the search for better teaching methods to provide the best learning has been the goal of education. However, teaching method is not one-size-fits- all proposition. Flexibility is crucial in adapting teaching methods in the class. Since all teachers are different, the strategies they use, and the way they use them will depend on the context and situation of their class (McCornac & Phan Thuy, 2005), as well as their own personality and biases.

The effect of teaching methods on students' learning should be the interest of every teacher and student. In the field of education, there have been various studies done in an attempt to measure teaching methods.

Robinson and colleagues (1990) conducted a case study on several teaching methods in schools to explore the reasons for their use, and perceptions of effectiveness. The result of their study suggested that various methods do influence teaching effectiveness.

According to Keene (2008), each student learns best using strategies and objectives that reflect his experiences, abilities, aptitudes and interest. Similarly, there is no standard teaching method. The various teaching methods overlap in definition and application; none being mutually exclusive although researchers often delineate several teaching strategies. Demonstration technique is one of the many teaching learning style under the investigative or activity based. It is a method, which is capable of improving learning through its diversity effect activity. It has the prerequisite characteristics for individualized instruction and therefore has high potential for making teaching-learning process challenging and rewarding. There is radical departure from the direct teaching model in which the teacher engages student to learn.

Classroom management

Classroom management is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching for new and sometimes experienced teachers. New teachers fear students will not respect them, and for experienced teachers establishing management is a primary goal in the first few weeks of the year (Good & Brophy, 2008). Researchers describe classroom management as a complex issue in which many external and internal factors are interwoven. For example, Martin, Yin, and Baldwin (1998) believed that classroom management is a broad umbrella term, which describes the teacher's efforts to oversee classroom activities, such as learning, social interaction, and student behavior.

Classroom management problem is one of the central causes of burnout and job dissatisfaction for most of teachers. According to Landau (2009), the status of classroom management has been looked down because classroom management is not included in most of teacher preparation courses. Advice to teachers about classroom management was based on untested theory of "what works best for me" and little was supported by solid evidence (Good & Brophy, 2008). Most teachers have their own approach of classroom management acquired through their teaching experience or their own school years as learners. Teachers should find the approach that best fits into their context, learners, and style of teaching. A framework offered by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) has been one of the most frequently used frameworks in classroom management studies. Evertson and Weinstein organized classroom management strategies into six distinct approaches, namely: external control of behavior, internal control, classroom ecology, discourse, curriculum, and interpersonal relationships.

Research Methodology

The population, sample and sampling

The Population of this survey study included the teachers of private language centers in Shiraz to select the samples, convenient sampling was used and random cluster sampling method to choose the participants of the study. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010) cluster sampling is a kind of probability sampling in which the chosen unit is a group of individuals who are naturally together. That is a number of individuals who share similar characteristics with regard to the variables in the study and formulate a cluster.

In this study, the selected unit is English private language centers in which language skills are taught in Shiraz. Different language institutes comprised 60 EFL teachers. Through one-stage cluster sampling, teachers in 10 language centers were surveyed. The participants of this study were different in terms of level of education, teaching experiences and field of study. All of the EFL teachers had the experience of teaching all four-language skill: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Research tools

The instrument is a dependable measure developed by Joseph Lowman (1995); the scale is used to assess teachers' teaching styles by investigating their perceptions and preferences with respect to the concepts of Intellectual Excitement (IE) and Interpersonal Rapport (IR). The instrument employs a 5-point Likert

continuum beginning with 1 representing that 0% to 10% of the time the item applies to the respondents and ending with 5 showing that 95% to 100% of the time the item is true about them. It includes 22 items, eleven of which measure teacher's intellectual excitement and the rest measure teacher's interpersonal rapport.

The BIMS consists of 24 questions with 12 questions pertaining to the behavior management perceptions of teachers and 12 questions pertaining to the instructional management perceptions of teachers. The Behavior and Instructional Management Scale has been shown to be a valid and reliable instrument to measure behavior management and instructional management (Martin & Sass, 2010). Through a series of studies by Martin and Sass (2010), it was determined that the BIMS has an internal consistency of.774 for the behavior management factor and.770 for the instructional management factor. It was also determined through the factor analysis that the correlation factor is at.85, which reveals that the items in the questionnaire are valid and reliable in measuring the behavior management and the instructional management variables considered in this study. Summative scores ranged from 12 to 70 for behavior management and 12 to 70 for instructional management. Higher scores indicated a strong degree of teacher preference while lower scores indicated a lesser degree of reference (Martin & Sass, 2010).

The Analysis of Data

We have used Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as comparison of means, frequency analysis and correlation.

Research Findings

The first research question of this study intended to find the dominant teaching style used by the Iranian EFL teachers. For this purpose, frequency analysis was conducted to find which teaching style could be attributed to which teachers; novice and experienced. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 1: Frequency analysis for the intellectual teaching style (novice &experienced teachers)

NOVICE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Try to	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Often	18	52.9	52.9	61.8
	Always	13	38.2	38.2	100.0
EXPERIENCED					
Valid	Never	5	19.2	19.2	19.2
	Seldom	14	53.8	53.8	73.1
	Try to	7	26.9	26.9	100.0

Table 2: Frequency analysis for the interpersonal teaching style (novice &experienced teachers)

NOVICE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	try to	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Often	17	50.0	50.0	67.6
	Always	11	32.4	32.4	100.0
EXPERINCED					
Valid	often	17	65.4	65.4	65.4
	always	9	34.6	34.6	100.0

The second research question of this study intended to find the relationship between the specific teaching styles of the Iranian EFL teachers and their classroom management strategies. For this purpose, Spearman correlation was used to examine the correlation between the two variables. The results are reported for the two types of the teaching styles and classroom management strategies.

The results of correlation, as shown in Table 4.6, indicate that there was no significant correlation between the intellectual excitement teaching style and behavioral management strategies perceived by the novice teachers (r =.19, p >.05). The correlation between the intellectual excitement teaching style and instructional classroom management strategies was, however, significant (r =.65, p <.05).

Table 4.6 shows that the correlations between the interpersonal rapport teaching style and behavioral classroom management strategies (r =.26, p >.05) and instructional strategies for classroom management (r =.15, p >.05) were not significant either. Overall, the findings showed that there was no correlation between the teachers' teaching styles and their classroom management strategies except for one type of the teaching style and classroom management strategies.

Table3: Results of correlation between the teaching styles and classroom management strategies (novice teachers)

		behavioral	instructional
intellectual	Correlation Coefficient	.194	.652
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.272	.012*
	N	34	34
interpersonal	Correlation Coefficient	.266	.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.128	.378
	N	34	34

*: Significant at.05 level

The same statistical analyses were run to find the correlation between the teaching style of experienced EFL teachers and their perceptions of classroom management strategies. The results, which are shown in Table 4.7, showed that the correlation between the intellectual excitement teaching style and behavioral management strategies perceived by the novice teachers was not significant (r =.32, p >.05). In contrast, the correlation between the intellectual excitement teaching style and instructional classroom management strategies was highly significant (r =.72, p <.001).

Table 4.7 also indicates that the correlations between the interpersonal rapport teaching style and behavioral classroom management strategies (r =.15, p >.05) and instructional strategies for classroom management (r =.42, p >.05) were not significant.

Table4: Results of correlation between the teaching styles and classroom management strategies (experienced teachers)

		Behavioral	instructional
intellectual	Correlation Coefficient	.322	.728
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.000*
	N	26	26
interpersonal	Correlation Coefficient	.157	.421
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.321	.075
	N	26	26

*: Significant at.001 level

The results of the frequency analysis and Spearman correlations indicated that the dominant teaching style of the novice EFL teachers was the intellectual excitement while for experienced teachers; the dominant style was the interpersonal rapport. In addition, the results of the correlation analyses showed that there was not an overall relationship between the teaching style of the teachers and their classroom management strategies for neither the novice nor the experienced teachers. However, there was a significant correlation between the intellectual excitement type of teaching style and the instructional type of the classroom management strategies. This was true for both the novice and the experienced EFL teachers. Results of this study regarding the dominant teaching style of EFL teachers lend support to the findings of Faruji (2012), who found that EFL teachers use formal authority style. Faruji also used Grasha's TSI (1990) to collect

data from 23 EFL teachers in private language centers. The similarity between findings of this study and Faruji's could be due to the data collection inventories and setting, as both studies were carried out in private language centers. Nonetheless, it needs to be pointed out that only 23 teachers participated in Faruji's study via non-random sampling and the findings might not be generalizable to other contexts. The idea of possible connection between EFL teachers' classroom management approaches and teaching styles has been vouched earlier, though in a different context. Previously, Rahimi and Assodollahi (2012) examined the relationship between EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and teaching styles in Iranian high schools and came up with similar results. They used an earlier version of the questionnaire on classroom management approaches (Martin, Yin & Baldwin, 1998) and Teaching Activities Preference (TAP) Questionnaire (Cooper, 2001) to glean their data. Among other things, the study indicated significant associations between EFL teachers' behavior and instructional management approaches and teaching preferences in Iranian high schools.

Conclusion

Results revealed significant differences between novice teachers and their more experienced counterparts on both the Instructional Management and the People Management subscales but in opposite directions. Experienced teachers – those with six or more years 'experience – scored more controlling on the Instructional Management sub-scale but less controlling on the People Management sub-scale. These results indicate experienced teachers may have more realistic expectations regarding how to effectively manage their classrooms. That inexperienced teachers scored significantly less interventionist on the Instructional Management dimension suggests that they may naively believe that students and teachers are always working toward the same goals. The fact that they scored more interventionist on the People Management dimension reflects that they may overly rely on teacher control and survival skills to manage children.

Indeed, perhaps because they are less skilled regarding the Instructional Management dimension, they may be more likely to be in a controlling, reactive mode when it comes to the and People Management dimension. That is, they seem to be lax on Instructional Management issues because they may not have developed the art of creating smoothness or maintaining momentum (Kounin, 1970) in their lessons. Seasoned teachers, however, seem to present a mirror image of the beginning teacher. Because experienced teachers take more control in establishing suitable classroom routines, monitoring seatwork, etc. they are able to take a less controlling stance regarding People Management.

Practical suggestions

Findings of this study have important implications for practicing teachers, teachers in training and teacher trainers. Practicing teachers need to examine their own classroom management approaches and teaching styles to see whether these practices are conducive to successful language learning. Teacher trainers also need to make sure that training in effective classroom management is built into the programs intended for prospective teachers. Equipped with the knowledge of classroom management approaches and teaching styles, teachers are expected to be in a better position to examine their practices and, thus, to make informed decisions about these important, but often neglected, areas of their teaching. This familiarity, hopefully, will result in enhancement of teacher reflectivity in EFL contexts, and assist teachers in monitoring themselves and dynamics of classroom, setting practicable rules, and adopting the most appropriate teaching style and classroom management approach.

Additionally, this knowledge allows teachers to have a deeper understanding of the components of students' learning processes (Nielson, 2007).

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