Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University

Faculty of Humanities

On the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Classroom Management Orientations and Teaching Style

By: Fatemeh Asadollahi

Under supervision of Dr. Mehrak Rahimi
&
Co-supervision of Dr. Maryam Meshkat

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Studies Office in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

January, 2012

In The Name of Allah

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my cousin whose constant encouragement and support made it possible for me to successfully complete my study.

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Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and their teaching styles. Additionally, the difference between male and female teachers' teaching styles and classroom management orientations and their relationship with experience and age were explored. Three hundred EFL teachers filled in Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control inventory and Teaching Activities Preference questionnaire. The result showed that Iranian EFL teachers adopt an interventionist approach toward classroom management with regard to all three orientations of the classroom management (instructional management, people management, and behavior management). In addition, it was found that Iranian male and female EFL teachers do not much differ with regard to their classroom management orientations, and regardless of their age and teaching experience they are interventionist and controlling in their classes. Moreover, the findings of the present study indicated that Iranian EFL teachers use a variety range of teaching activities including thinking (M=4.29), sensing (M=4.44), judging (M=4.40), intuitive (M=4.18), feeling (M=4.15), extroverting (M=4.12), and introverting (M=3.75) type activities. However, the findings suggested that they prefer thinking, sensing, and judging type activities to others. It was also found that female teachers were different from male teachers with regard to extroverting ($t=3.70$, $p<.05$), sensing ($t=4.15$, $p<.05$), and feeling ($t=2.81$, $p<.05$) types of activities. The results also showed that age and experience were inversely related to sensing style of teaching and they were positively related to thinking style of teaching. Finally, the results of the study indicated that a positive and significant relationship exists between classroom management orientations and all activities teachers use (except judging and perceiving type), implying that those teachers who are more controlling and interventionist use more activities than those teachers who are more interactionalist in English classes.

Key words: Classroom management, teacher experience, teaching Style,Iranian EFL teachers

Table of Contents

Title **Page**

Dedication..... I

Acknowledgements..... II

Abstract..... III

Appendices…… IX

Table of contents..... IV

List of tables..... X

List of figures..... XI

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction.…….2

1.2. Statement of the Problem….…….……..…....4

1.3. Significance of Study...……...…6

1.4. Research Questions…….…….....9

1.5. Research Hypotheses…….…….....10

1.6. Definition of Key Terms……..……..…10

1.7. Limitations and Delimitations…….…….…….....11

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITRATURE

2.1. Classroom management.…….……...…….…..…..…..13

2.2. What is classroom management?.....13

2.3. Components of classroom management (C_3)…….…….....…...16

2.4. Factors affecting classroom management……..……..…..…..17
2.5. Wolfgang's model of classroom management strategies…….……...…19
2.6. Adaption of Wolfgang's model to EFL classes…….....….....20
2.6.1. Learner-centered vs. teacher-centered language learning……..……..22
2.7. Factors affecting EFL classroom management…….…….23
2.7.1. Methodology……..…….....23
2.7.1.1. Teacher-centered language teaching…….……..…..…23
2.7.1.2. Communicative methods…….....24
2.7.1.2.1. Cooperative language teaching…….….24
2.7.1.2.2. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)……..…..…25
2.8. Teachers' role……..……..……26
2.8.1. Teachers' individual characteristics ……..……28
2.8.2. Learners' role …….……...29
2.8.2.1. Students Cultural differences ……..…….....30
2.9. Brown's model of EFL classroom management……...…....30
2.9.1. Physical environment of the EFL classroom …….……...31
2.9.2. Teachers' roles and styles …….....31
2.9.3. Classroom energy …….....32
2.10. Harmer's model of EFL classroom management …….…….....32
2.10.1. Classroom management variables ……...……..…..…....32
2.10.2. Dealing with difficult situations ……..….…....33
2.10.2.1. Classroom discipline strategies ……..…..…....34
2.11. Teaching styles ..……....34
2.11.1. What is teaching styles? 35
2.12. Factors affecting EFL teacher's teaching styles ..…….....…36
2.12.1. Context ……..…..…….....36

2.12.2. Curriculum ……..……..……..……..……...38

2.12.2.1. Teaching material ……..……..38

2.12.2.2. Teaching methodology……..……..…..39

2.12.2.2.1. Iranian EFL teachers' methods ……..…43

2.12.3. Teachers ……..……..….43

2.12.3.1. Beliefs ……..…….....43

2.12.3.2. Competency (knowledge) ……..…….....44

2.12.3.3. Personality ……...45

2.12.3.4. EFL teachers' dispositions……..……..……48

2.12.3.5. Individual characteristics…….....49

2.12.4. Learners……..……...…..51

2.12.4.1. Students' learning styles ……..……...…51

2.12.4.2. Students' engagement ……..…....…….……...53

2.12.4.3. Students' assessment ……..……..……...…...55

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction ……..……..……..……..…58

3.2. Participants ..……..……..…....58

3.3. Instruments…..……..……..……..…….58

3.3.1. Personal information questionnaire…..……...……..…..….59

3.3.2. The Attitude and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory……..……..59

3.3.3. Teaching Activities Preference (TAP) questionnaire……..….60

3.4. Procedure……..……..….61

3.5. Design of the Study……..……..……....62

3.6. Data Analysis……..……..……62

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction……...…..65

4.2. Research Question Number 1…….…….……...….66

4.1.1. Discussion…….….…….....67

4.3. Research Question Number 2…….....68

4.3.1.Discussion ……..….....…70

4.4. Research Question Number 3…….….….…...…72

4.4.1. Discussion…….….....…73

4.5. Research Question Number 4……...…….….....…74

4.5.1. Discussion…….……...…....75

4.6. Research Question Number 5……...…….....76

4.6.1.Discussion…….……78

4.7. Research Question Number 6……...…….....79

4.7.1. Discussion……..…..….....80

4.8. Research Question Number 7……..……...…...81

4.8.1.Discussion……..……..…….....82

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, Implications, and Suggestions

5.1. Introduction……...…85

5.2. Restatement of the problem ……..…85

5.3. Conclusion …….……..…….86

5.4. Limitations of the study ……...……..……...…….…..….87

5.5. Pedagogical implications of the study …….…….…...88

5.6. Suggestions for further research …….…….……90

References…….……...….92

Appendices

Appendix (1) Personal Information Questionnaire ……..……118

Appendix (2) Classroom Management Questionnaire...…….…….….119

Appendix (3) Teaching Activities Preferences (TAP)……..…….120

Appendix (4) Activities that Iranian EFL teachers use most

in their classes…….121

Appendix (5) Table for determining sample size from a given population

Krejcie & Morgan (1970) …….....122

List of Tables

Title **Page**

Table 2.1 Learning and teaching activity preferences according to teachers' personality dimensions (Myers & Briggs, 1988) …….…….45

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for ABCC's subparts …….……...66

Table 4.2 The result of Chi square test …….……..67

Table 4.3 Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices ……69

Table 4.4 Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances ……69

Table 4.5 Multivariate Tests …….…..70

Table 4.6 MANOVA …….….70

Table 4.7 Correlation matrix …….….72

Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics for teaching styles …….……...74

Table 4.9 Independent Samples Tests …….……...77

Table 4.10 Correlation Matrix …….…..…80

Table 4.11 Correlation Matrix …….……...82

List of Figures

Title **Page**

Figure 2.1. Classroom management (CM) as a cyclical process…….……..15

Figure 2.2. Factors affecting CM……...…….…..…….18

Figure 2.3. Wolfgang's model (2005)……..……...…...…20

Figure 2.4. Harmer's (2007) model of Classroom Management variables……..…….…....33

Figure 4.1. The mean scores of Iranian EFL teachers for 8 teaching styles……..…….…....74

Chapter One

Introduction

1. Introduction

Despite educators' concerns with the nature of classroom learning environments, few studies have investigated either teachers' knowledge or practices of classroom management in positive learning environments. Lack of empirical evidence has left educators without clear direction and understanding of what knowledge and practices teachers utilize in creating and managing socially complex learning environments. It is as the blueprints for a house, but not the tools with which to construct it (Martin, 2004). With so little to guide, the educational system in Iran is hampered in its efforts to provide prospective teachers with appropriate tools to implement their visions for establishing positive learning communities. Furthermore, there is limited understanding of how teachers' practices are developed along with experience, particularly in the area of classroom management.

In particular, there is lack of nuanced understandings of how EFL teachers successfully establish and manage classroom environments that support both engaged learning and positive social interactions among learners while one of the most important factors regarding teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is how EFL teachers manage their classes (Brown, 2007). Although teachers may employ different styles in different teaching contexts in teaching English, they face the same issue to increase their teaching effectiveness and students' outcome with respect to classroom management.

Brown (2001) believes that the main step in the succession of practicalities for the language classroom is to grapple classroom management, "which encompasses an abundance of factors ranging from how you physically arrange the classroom, to teaching style, to classroom energy" (p. 293). Understanding the variables of classroom management would help one to sharpen his/her skills as a language teacher (Brown, 2001).

Over the past decades, knowledge about how children learn English and understanding what constitutes effective EFL teaching and language classroom management have increased

considerably. An EFL teacher can dramatically influence the amount and quality of language learning for students (Brown, 2007) considering many different factors related to his personality, teaching methodology, and motivation (Korthagen, 2004).

Moreover, students come to a language classroom with different degrees of aptitude and different goals for language learning (Fan, 2010). In order to help them achieve these goals and reach their potential, one of the most essential requirements to be addressed is how to create a safe language learning environment which helps students understand what they are taught (Harmer, 2007). This is so much related to how teachers can manage the instruction and students' behavior (Martin, 2004). The way language teachers perceive classroom management depends on how they see their job as a language teacher. In an EFL classroom, a teacher has control over many factors such as classroom's physical environment, students' mood and behavior, and the amount of communication between teacher and students which in turn will affect not only students' motivation for English language learning but also their environment and behavior (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

As time goes on, learning English, especially by young learners, is getting more and more popular in Iran. This is because of two main reasons; first, the goal of education in Iran according to Prospective Document 1404 is enabling the next generations to fully participate in the emerging global community (Prospective Document 1404, p. 2). As English language is the language of science and technology, and the dominant language for international communication, reaching this goal requires a useful knowledge of English (Birjandi, P. and Soheili, A., 1982).

Second, motivational studies with regard to EFL courses in Iran show that Iranian pupils are highly motivated to learn English (Akbari et al., 2005). Consequently, an increasing amount of awareness of different variables that affects language teaching profession in schools or private institutes has received more attention in recent years (Akbari et al., 2005).

Systematic studies have been started to scrutinize the factors that are sources of the problem (Ketabi, S. and Talebinezhad, M., 2009) and demotivation (Meshkat & Hassani, 2010) among learners in the national EFL curriculum.

Contrary to a significant amount of research on classroom management, the number of studies investigating classroom management in foreign language teaching setting is too limited. Hence, foreign language teaching situation in terms of characteristics of EFL teachers, their classroom management orientations and their teaching styles remains challengeable and needs more practical study and investigation.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management orientations in their English classes. Moreover, this study aims at exploring teaching styles that EFL teachers in Iran employ in their teaching. Additionally, the study attempts to know whether there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and their teaching styles.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Looking at literature reveals that educators have moved toward broader and more comprehensive positions on issues of classroom management (Jones, 1996; MC Caslin & Good, 1992). As Jones advocates, "classroom management is not only a means to effective instruction; it also becomes a vehicle for providing students with increased skills in interpersonal communication, conflict management and self-control" (p. 504). In line with this, effective classroom management has been recognized significantly contributing to student learning and development (Ormrod, 2003; Vitto, 2006). Teachers in all fields have always been reporting that classroom management is one of their most enduring and widespread challenges in their classroom (Manning & Bucher, 2003; Smith, 2000; Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003).

During its journey throughout the history, classroom management has undergone a shift of concept from a traditional one, “achieving class control and order” (Doyle, 1986) to “establishing a climate for learning” (Everstone & Emmer, 1982). Considering this shift, it is believed that classroom management is “the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur” (NSSE, 2005).

Consequently, the critical element of teachers’ role shifts from control to management that entails the management of time, space, material, students and every other element of the teaching/learning context (Duke, 1982). The change is coincidental with paradigm shift in applied linguistics that has turned a controlling teacher of the 70s into a facilitating teacher of 90s (Brown, 2007) whose main role in the classroom is to create a positive climate for learning. In a traditional EFL classroom, the teacher employs strict disciplines to have control over the whole class in order to convey his/her instructions and also to have students copy down what s/he teaches to them (Fan, 2010). Undoubtedly, these changes in concepts and demands that have happened in EFL teaching area influence EFL teachers’ teaching styles and their classroom management orientations.

An effective EFL teaching and learning classroom consists of some crucial elements that contribute to establishing a positive classroom climate. Therefore, identification and explanation of these elements will cast light on EFL classroom management which is the main and primary concern of teachers in pre-service and many in-service courses in any educational system. These challenges establish the need for the current investigation of factors related to classroom management in English classes in Iran.

Furthermore, what is noteworthy is that the issue of classroom management in English classes has been discussed only from the theoretical standpoint. Although some language educationists have determined the principles of how to manage a language classroom successfully (Brown, 2005; Chastain, 1989; Nunan, 2006), the relationship between language

teachers' classroom management orientations and their teaching styles and other classroom variables is still open to research. As classroom management in general and EFL classroom management in particular is one of the major concerns of pre-service and in-service teacher education, especially in Iran (Esmaeeli, 2003), it is logical to investigate the way EFL teachers manage their classes and how their management has a defining role in the way they teach English in their classes.

Ayers (2001), believes that an essential first step toward becoming a good teacher is good classroom management. Unfortunately, this subject is not included in any teacher training courses in our country (Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, 2011) and there is no specific practical course devoted to this subject in EFL teacher education programs in Iran. However, one can find some topics related to this subject in different resources, the only opportunity for EFL student-teachers is to study those parts included in books entitled as theories of language teaching, methodology or teaching language skills, or how to teach English. Consequently, a critical challenge language teacher-educators face is how to help EFL teachers or student-teachers expand their view of teaching in general and classroom management in particular.

1.3. Significance of the study

A number of researchers have investigated teachers' classroom management orientations from different perspectives (Crow, 1991; Needles, 1991; Winitzky, Kauchak, & Kelly, 1994). Investigations in this field have a lot to help teachers in any aspect of classroom management to find new ways to become more effective teachers and ultimately create an effective learning climate (Cole, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lemke, 1997; Marshal, 1992; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995; Wertsch, 1985, 1998). It is generally believed that "success [in learning a language] depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic

analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom" (Stevick, 1980).

One of the biggest challenges EFL teachers face is classroom management (Linse & Nunan, 2005). On the one hand, a language teacher tries to be a kind and loving caregiver for students and does not want to be a task master and further lets the genuine communication happen in the classroom (William & Burden, 1999). On the other hand, in order for the instruction to take place, the teacher should maintain order in his/her classroom. It is not, therefore, easy for an EFL teacher to create the balance between these two, i.e. a caring environment and a controlled one. The issue of classroom management becomes especially difficult for novice language teachers, and it is in most cases the problem for most experienced teachers as well (Linse & Nunan, 2005). As "teaching ESL or EFL to young learners is an evolving field, and many efforts are being made around the world to improve the process to both teachers and students" (Murray, 2002), it is necessary to look for some classroom management strategies that will facilitate an environment that is conducive to learning a foreign language.

English language learners are a special group-considering their age level- and as an EFL teacher one needs to not only to improve his/her language level and teaching styles but also to develop his/her classroom management (Devies & Pease, 2000). Managing EFL classroom effectively needs handling a range of variables from the side of the teacher (Brown, 2007). Examples of those variables include how the classroom space is organized, whether students are involved in pair/group work or they are working on their own and, organization of the class time, preparing an effective lesson plan, and handling students' misbehavior in the classroom. Besides, an EFL teacher needs to consider how s/he appears to the students and how s/he uses his/her voice during the class. The way an EFL teacher talks to students is another key factor in classroom management (Harmer, 2007).