Student´s Perspective about Good Practices in Classroom Management: A Quantitative Research in Ecuadorian Tertiary Education with A2 learners

Perspectivas de los alumnos respecto a las buenas prácticas docentes en el manejo de clase: investigación cuantitativa en nivel superior ecuatoriano con alumnos A2

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the main characteristics students expect from an English teacher in the classroom and analyzes the influence of their age in choosing one trait over another one. This study searched for a significant relationship between age and the most expected features in the classroom. The survey collected information about: Domain of subject, Confidence in the environment, Language and culture promoting, Good sense of humor, Patience, Students

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motivation, Class Dynamics, Promoting values, Flexibility, Friendly. Data originated from a sample of 100 randomly chosen students from the English Language Center from the third and fourth Levels of English. The study confirms that age does not influence the preferences in English learning students and those learners valued three domains: Teacher's knowledge, teacher's methodology, and teacher's personality.It also suggests that teachers should receive more training on identifying strategies for managing sizeable multiple level classes and combine that with ways of developing motivation in the classroom while adapting themselves to suit local contexts.

Key words: *Good teaching practices, classroom management, TEFL context, English teachers' characteristics*

RESUMEN

Surge una pregunta sobre qué es una buena práctica docente, especialmente en la enseñanza del inglés. Este artículo explora las principales características que los estudiantes esperan de un profesor de inglés en el aula y analiza la influencia de la edad de los estudiantes en sus preferencias al elegir un rasgo sobre otro. Este estudio buscó una relación significativa entre la edad y las características más esperadas en el aula. La encuesta recogió información sobre: Dominio de la asignatura, Confianza en el entorno, Fomento del lenguaje y la cultura, Buen sentido del humor, Paciencia, Motivación de los estudiantes, Dinámica de clase, Fomento de valores, Flexibilidad, Amabilidad. Los datos se originaron a partir de una muestra de 100 estudiantes de tercer y cuarto nivel de inglés, del Centro de Idiomas, elegidos al azar. El estudio confirma que la edad no influye en las preferencias de los estudiantes que aprenden inglés y que los estudiantes valoran tres dominios: conocimiento del profesor, metodología del profesor y personalidad del profesor. Sugiere que los profesores deberían recibir más formación sobre la identificación de estrategias para gestionar clases importantes en varios niveles y combinar eso con formas de desarrollar la motivación en el aula mientras se adaptan a los contextos locales.

Palabras clave: *Buenas prácticas docentes, gestión del aula, contexto TEFL, características de los profesores de inglés.*

INTRODUCTION

This work focuses on the teacher's figure and good teaching practices in the English classroom. Following the international community, UNESCO guides in the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) program the conception of good educational practices where features that characterize it are: innovative, effective, sustainable, and replicable(Michelsen & Wells-Niculcar, 2017). The concept of "good practices" has attached a transferable and exportable use (Durán Rodríguez &Estay-Niculcar, 2016), which includes being able to adapt to new and different contexts.

These innovative actions help to improve educational practices through the exchange of experiences that have given positive results; therefore, the transfer from one teaching situation to another has to ad to new contexts (Arellano, 2013).

This study explores the main characteristics students expect from an English teacher, what they considered good practice in TEFL, and it also analyzes the influence of age in their expectation towards classroom management.

According to Coffield and Edward (2009), there is a list of dimensions on good practices based on Context, knowledge, curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, management, teacher learning, and society.

This article aims to analyze the preferences regarding characteristics in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher as a proxy. It explores some categories such as Domain of the subject, Confidence in the environment, Language and culture promoting, Good sense of humor, Patience, Student motivation, Class Dynamics, Promoting values, Flexibility, Friendly environment.

The research question that guides this study focuses on what students consider good practice in classroom management in the TEFL context and analyzes if there is any difference among young, middle age and old adult learners' preferences.

The present work starts with the adoption of the conception of quality teaching from the terms "good and effective" teaching. As they expose it(Torche, Martínez, Madrid, & Araya, 2015), "Quality education reinforces the emphasis on training aspects, including the value dimension and life skills, in addition to giving more strength to the personal or filial dimension of the bond between teacher and student".

The work focuses its attention on the figure of the teacher and good teaching practices in the English classroom. By the international community, UNESCO guides in the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) program the conception of good educational practices where features that characterize it are: innovative, effective, sustainable, and replicable(Michelsen & Wells-Niculcar, 2017).

The concept of "good practices" has attached a transferable and exportable use (Durán Rodríguez &Estay-Niculcar, 2016). Its consideration, as such, emulates the overcoming of problems or difficulties and applies to other contexts.

On the other hand, Arellano (2014) indicates that when we speak of "good practice," it becomes a "good practice." The expression is based on empirically validated professional knowledge and formulated in such a way that it can be transferable. Its use is potentially useful for the benefit of the community.

Therefore, the dissemination of these good practices aims to provide and guide solutions to shared problems that allow learning from others, offering models, and encouraging the achievement of new initiatives.

These innovative actions help to improve educational practices through the exchange of experiences that have given positive results; therefore, the transfer from one teaching situation to another has to adapt to new contexts (Arellano, 2013).

Good practice in teaching the English language is the result of positive experiences and previous experiences that consist of putting them into actions directed by the teacher to carry out teaching-learning processes in students to achieve the development of communicative, academic, and digital competences (Arellano, 2014; Durán Rodríguez & Estay-Niculcar, 2016). According to Coffield & Edward (2009), there are some dimensions on good teaching practices, which are based on:

- Context: proposal for teaching and learning, student involvement from the antecedents, assessment, and considerations of the proposal, training programs, and relationships with other contexts.
- Knowledge: Valuations, organizational and professional capacities of the practice, and their relationship with their available capacities within other contexts.
- Curriculum: Selection of content and appropriate learning for students.

- Pedagogy: Methodologies, ways of developing proposals, and validating them concerning those existing in schools or classrooms.
- Evaluation: Effects of practice on student learning.
- Management: Planning, sequencing, and evaluation of teaching practice and its implementation.
- Teacher learning: competence, skills, and values in practice and the challenges they face when trying to develop it.
- Society: Influences, relationships, and adaptation of good practice with the context and professional training.

The dimensions that embrace good educational practices seek to emphasize the importance of the context, the curriculum, the pedagogy, the evaluation, the protagonists, and especially the role of the educator to interrelate the training needs with the right practice.

UNESCO (2019)mentions that a successful practice combines knowledge, skills, and attitudes to master the content of the subject, manage emotions and feelings, and create the necessary learning opportunities to increase the interactions that promote the use of the target language both in person and through various means.

A good practice reflects the following qualities:

- Creative, because it develops innovative or versatile solutions;
- Effective, it shows a positive and tangible impact on improvement;
- Sustainable, because they can be maintained over time and produce lasting effects;
- Replicable, because it can serve as a model to develop actions in other contexts;
- Reflective because it analyzes how actions are carried out before, during, and after, considering the context to achieve a specific objective.

According to Brookfield (1990), the teacher´s teaching philosophy is related to a person's conception of teaching and learning. It also showed a justification for why teachers taught in a specific way. Besides, Evrim, Gokce, and Enisa (2009) demonstrated that it was essential to create a relaxed and cooperative learning environment by considering the student's background that stems from their problems.

Researchers also found that a teacher could have "interactionalist" and "interventionist" orientations at the same time. However, different kinds of approaches were in place in

different circumstances. While an interactionalist orientation was shown on instructional and people management, an "interventionist approach was shown when managing behavior in the classroom (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

Fowler and Sarapli (2010) studied what TEFL students expected in the classroom and revealed that classroom management was just as important to students as it was for teachers. This research evaluated two particular areas of interest: intrinsic characteristics -the emotional dimension, including encouragement and acceptance- and extrinsic characteristics -the mechanics of classroom management- of the ideal classroom manager.The results suggested that the teacher needed to develop a safe classroom environment where students were able to discuss their feelings and ideas. Data also illustrated a positive response to the statement that the teacher was friendly and respectful toward students. Also, a motivational factor was shown as fundamental when 84% of the surveyed students favored teachers showing enthusiasm for the subject.

When discussing extrinsic characteristics meaning how students felt a teacher should physically manage the classroom, results indicated that students wanted to know at the beginning of the semester. Also, almost 50% of the university respondents said that they preferred a teacher who strictly controlled the classroom, but they disagreed on the importance to strictly enforce the attendance policy (Fowler & Sarapli, 2010).

Research questions:

1. What do students consider a good practice in classroom management in TEFL context?

2. Is there any difference among young, middle age and old adults' learners´ preferences regarding classroom management?

3. Is there any correlation between learner`s age and their preferences regarding classroom management?

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study was conducted at an English Language Center in a public university in January 2020. It follows a quantitative approach and a questionnaire with structured questions. The

questionnaire aimed to ask students about what they considered a remarkable feature in an English teacher.

Population and Sample Selection

The sample included 100 students from the English Language Center: young adults (39), middle-aged adults (43), and old age adults (18). Students who participated were from the third and fourth level of English. The sample was randomly chosen.

The researchers applied the questionnaires during a regular lesson on Saturday, maintaining participants and their answers confidentially.

Measures

The participants were classified into three groups of different ages: Young adults (16-25), Middle-aged adults (26 – 45), Old-aged adults (above 45). This particular survey was designed to evaluate students' preferences for these categories: (1) Domain of subject; (2) Confident environment; (3) Promoting language and culture; (4) Good humor sense; (5) Patient; (6) Motivating students; (7) Dynamic classes; (8) Promoting values; (9) Flexible; (10) Friendly.

RESULTS

1. **What do students consider a good practice in classroom management in TEFL context?**

In the group of young learners, the results showed that the most relevant features are: Domain of the subject (17%), Dynamic classes (15%), Confident environment (14%), sense of humor (13%) and promoting values (11%). Concerning the middle age group, the results demonstrated that confident environment was the most preferred feature (16%), followed by dynamic classes (15%), domain of the subject (14%), sense of humor (11%) and Promoting Values (9%). Regarding old age learners, the most relevant features are: domain of the subject (18%), confident environment (17%), sense of humor (15%), dynamic classes (15%) and Promoting Values (8%). See Table 1.

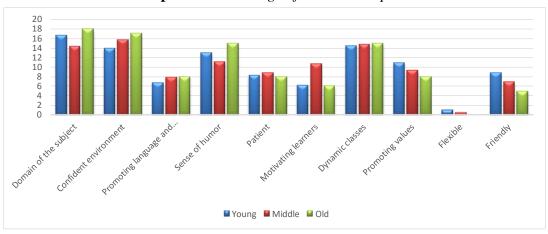**Table 1.** *Percentage of Students responses according to their groups of ages*

Items	Youngadults	Middle-aged	Old-aged
Domain of thesubject	17	14	18
Confidentenvironment	14	16	17
Promotinglanguage and culture	7	8	8
Sense of humor	13	11	15
Patient	8	9	8
Motivatinglearners	6	11	6
Dynamicclasses	15	15	15
Promotingvalues	11	9	8
Flexible	1	0	0
Friendly	9	7	5

Source: Questionnaires

However, the least preferred feature of the three groups was flexible with a 1% in the young adult group, 0% in the middle age adults group and 0% in the old age adults

Graphic 1. *Percentage of Students responses*

Source: Questionnaire

2. Is there any difference among young, middle age and old adults learners´ preferences regarding classroom management?

In order to determine the differences among preferences regarding classroom management in the three surveyed groups, it was used the one sample T- test statistic program (SPSS). See Table 2.

The results are as follows:

- Young Adults-Middle aged adults (t) 0,943> p:0.05; there is not significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults.
- Young Adults-Old aged adults (t) 0,064> p:0,05; there is not significant difference between young adults and old aged adults.

Middle aged Adults-Old aged adults (t) 0, 059> p:0,05; there is not significant difference between middle aged adults and old aged adults.

Table 2. *Comparison between means of grouped students*

	Test Value				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Young adults-Middle aged adults	.072	216	.943	.015	-.39	.42
Young adults -Old Aged Adults	-1.876	99	.064	-.500	-1.03	.03
Middle aged adults - Old aged adults	-1.913	99	.059	-.510	-1.04	.02

Source: Questionnaire

3. Is there any correlation between learner`s age and their preferencesregarding classroom management?

The Spearman correlation analysis was carried out to determine if there is an incidence of the variable age of learners in their preferences on classroom management styles; also this non parametric correlation analysis was selected since the data was ordinal and nominal. The level of significance (sig. 2-tailed) is 0.231, it is higher than 0.05, implying that there is no correlation between the variables. Moreover, the correlation coefficient (r) is -.053, which implies a lack of positive correlation and a very low inverse correlation. It can be infer that

ages does not execute any inference on students `preferences related to classroom management.

Table 3. *Spearman´s correlation analysis*

			Ages	Preferences
Spearman's rho	ages	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.053
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.231
	Preferences	Correlation Coefficient	-.053	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.231	.

Source: Questionnaire

In addition, considering the regression analysis where the predictor is the learner`s age and dependent variables represent their preferences, the results indicate that the adjusted R Square is 0.002. This information demonstrates that the age of learners only can influence their preferences in 0.20%. This finding supports the correlation analysis results where it was demonstrated an absence of correlation between both variables.

Table 4. *Regression analysis of learner`s age and their preferences*

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.060[a]	.004	.002	2.77171	.004	1.855	1	508	.174

a. Predictors: (Constant), ages

b. Dependent Variable: Preferences

DISCUSSION

Among the results of this research, it was possible to identify five common desirable characteristics in English teachers: Domain of the subject, Confident environment, Sense of

humor, Dynamic classes, and Promoting Values. These results are aligned with Bell (2005). He identified some characteristics of effective English teachers: "enthusiasm for the target language and culture, competence in the target language, extensive knowledge about language, and use of group work to encourage a greater degree of learner involvement" (Bell, 2005, p.26). Park and Lee (2006) also concluded that English proficiency, effective methodology, students' motivation, and promoting values were considered valuable characteristics in EFL teachers.

Fowler and Sarapli (2010) suggested that the teacher needed to build a comfortable classroom environment, which meant that students could be able to discuss their feelings and ideas. Data also illustrated a very positive response to the statement that the teacher was friendly and respectful toward students. Besides, a motivational factor was showed as fundamental when 84% of the surveyed students were in favor of teachers showing enthusiasm for the subject.

However, despite being a common perception regarding what excellent characteristics in English teachers must be, a study demonstrated that students wanted to know the expected outcome from them at the beginning of the class. Moreover, they indicated that a strictly controlled classroom was suitable for their environment (Fowler &Sarapli, 2010).

Even though there was no vast range of information with a comparison between classroom management preferences among young, adult and old learners, it was possible to find out that the desired behavior in an EFL teacher was similar among them. Additionally, it is observable that student`s requirements related to classroom managements styles is not affected by their ages, it implies that all of groups has specific needs as learners which are not related to their ages, but to their specific needs in EFL learning contexts (Ghenghesh, 2010). However, the rank between them has no significant variability; the most remarkable ones remained across ages.

CONCLUSION

In terms of best practices in EFL teaching, classroom management needs to be considered an essential factor, based on this study results and other similar studies around the world (Bell, 2005, Park & Lee, 2006; Fowler &Sarapli, 2010; Lee, 2010). Similar aspects have been found

about the learners` viewpoint. Hence, it can be concluded that one of the most important aspects are: Language domain, methodology, dynamic lesson, teacher's personality in the form of teacher's good sense of humor, in other words, it can be stated that learners valued three domains: teacher's knowledge, teacher's methodology, and teacher's personality. It was also possible to observe that these characteristics presented equal importance for young learners, middle and old-aged learners. Since teaching in tertiary education institutions deals with a variety of students' characteristics, it is vital to take these findings into account to facilitate the learning process.

To conclude, teachers should receive more training on identifying strategies for managing large classes and dealing with discipline. Moreover, teachers must learn to deal with multilevel classes and to develop motivation in the classroom; taking into account the "particularity, practicality and possibility" of pedagogies, in other words, teachers should focus on adapting methods, contents, and should be opened to adapt themselves to suit to local conditions and contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 540)

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