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Relationship between EFL teachers’ attitudes, teaching techniques and classroom (large and small)
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Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between EFL teachers, attitudes, teaching techniques and classroom type. To this end, 100 EFL teachers teaching in different contexts have been chosen, then a two-set questionnaire consisting of a five-point scale and Yes/No questions about large and small classes was distributed among them. Also, a per-formed interview was done with twenty randomly selected teachers. Results indicate that teachers have different attitudes toward using and applying teaching techniques in different class sizes. The data analysis reveals that: 1) all the teachers tended to work and use more teaching techniques in small classes than large ones. 2) Comparing male and female teachers’ attitudes showed that female teachers tended to use more teaching techniques in their teaching, processes than their counterpart. 3) Professional and non-professional teachers’ attitudes were the same regarding using teaching techniques in both settings.

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Keywords: Attitudes, classroom size, teaching techniques, professional and non-professional teacher;

1. Introduction

1.1. Conception and definitions of attitudes

The most frequently quoted definition of attitude is the one offered many years ago by Allport (1935). He defined attitude as “a mental and neutral state of readiness, which influences the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." According to Fraser (2001), the above definition shows that attitude is not an overt behaviour but a disposition which influences behaviour. Allport (1935, as cited in Fraser, 2001, p.238) expresses that "attitudes are reality and the reality is inside us. From Triantis (1971) point of view, an attitude is “an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to particular class of social situations.” It is divided into three components (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960): cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Based on their model, an individual's attitude causes an emotional response to be associated which

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leads to the predisposition of an action. Krech and Crutchfield (1962) put it in another way as enduring systems which contain positive or negative evaluation, emotions, and pro or con action tendencies with respect to social objects professional and non-professional teachers. The present study is then an attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Do EFL teachers’ teaching techniques differ depending on class type? (Large & small)?

2) Do professional and non-professional EFL teachers’ attitudes or perceptions differ depending on the class type (large & small)?

1.2. Teachers’ attitudes and expertise / professional and nonprofessional types

It seems plausible to claim that there should be two kinds of teachers based on their practical knowledge, e.g. expert and novice teachers. The latter group suffers from lack of expert knowledge of any sort. The teachers' planning, teaching, and perceiving of the classroom events, then, will be different based on being either novice or expert teachers. Summary of their characteristics are presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionals or experienced</th>
<th>Non-professionals or novices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Make a long term relationship between daily objectives and the overall curriculum or the purpose of the course</td>
<td>- Just think about the short-term planning and involves themselves just on the daily objectives</td>
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<td>- Use more strategies than novice teachers</td>
<td>- Mentally script each section of their lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Teach the lesson with less prior practice</td>
<td>- They lack the ability of having alternative to remove the problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Can easily change their teaching activities –Use guided and monitored practice</td>
<td>- See the class as a whole in order to alter a lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use variety of activities to remove the problem</td>
<td>- Are egocentric, and concerned with their own teaching rather than with students achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Try to see individuals and adopt their lessons based on the individual achievements</td>
<td>- Most of them are not aware of management problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Show sensitive behavior in identifying and solving the management problems in the classroom</td>
<td>- Just focus on the area of the room</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Simultaneously are able to scan the entire classroom</td>
<td>- Spend more energy on their own performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Show schemata –based teaching</td>
<td>- Are not able to make links between prior and new knowledge to teach new materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are able to link between prior and new knowledge when teaching new materials</td>
<td></td>
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2. Attitudes and methodology

Some speculations have been made concerning the relationship between teachers’ methodology and attitude. To this end, Gabrielatos (2000) stated that teachers have different attitudes toward methodology selection; they may combine any number of these attitudes in varying degrees. Some teachers use the course book and other published materials. Consequently, teachers need to adapt published materials according to the needs of particular classes. However, appropriate adaptation requires teachers; attitudes towards the teaching contexts, e.g., the course and the students. Teachers need to be conscious of their own methodological orientation, e.g., their theories and beliefs about the nature of language and teaching/learning (Woods, 1996). Such awareness is important because teachers' actual practice may contradict their perceived methodological orientation (Karavas-
Doukas, 1996; Scrivener, 1996). Therefore, the effectiveness of course book use is dependent on the level of the teachers' awareness and knowledge.

3. Attitudes and context

The most crucial factor that affects the teachers' attitudes, and as a result their actions, is the context where teaching takes place. Teaching English in large classes as a contextual issue is the issue that nowadays many high school teachers complain about. Size of the class or the number of students accommodated in, affects the way teachers cope with it. The issues raised by teaching in large classes are rarely addressed and teachers who have to cope with classes that contain 50 or more learners are often ill prepared to deal with the situation in which they find themselves in schools (Hayes, 1997). Most English teachers tend to view teaching English in large classes rather negatively. They often associate large English classes with disorderliness, lack of control, lack of students' attentiveness, lack of teacher–student interactions, and lack in efficiency and effectiveness (Xu, 2001). There are three problems associated with teaching in large classes (Xu, 2002), though:

a) Physical
b) Psychological
c) Technical

Among the variables pertinent to classroom setting, classroom size in terms of the number of the learners accommodated in it seems to create different atmosphere. The two significant contexts, to be addressed in this study, are large and small classrooms. Operationally defined, classroom with large number of population, more than twenty students, and classrooms with small number of population, less than twenty students are called large and small, respectively.

4. Conclusion

The statistical analyses of the first part on comparing the teachers' attitudes towards small and large class types and their teaching techniques showed that those in the small classes use more teaching techniques than those in the large classes. In other words, regardless of gender, being professional or non-professional teachers and educational degrees (BA, MA or PhD) all tended to use more teaching techniques in small classes than in large ones. This indicates that teachers tend to work better and more actively in small classes than in the opposite type. To investigate the effect of gender on using teaching techniques in different contexts, another data analysis was done. So, by comparing these two groups, it was proved that female teachers favored to use more techniques in both large and small classes than their male counterparts. Comparative data analysis showed that there was not any significant difference between the attitudes of novice or non-professional and experienced or professional teachers in using teaching techniques in their different class sizes. So both groups of the teachers, regardless of their gender, held roughly the same perceptions, feelings and attitudes towards applying teaching techniques in their large and small class sizes. Further data analyses more specifically those of the interview also showed that in each context, teachers had interesting attitudes as: female and male teachers’ attitudes were not the same in small classes in a sense that female teachers tended to use more teaching techniques than their male counterparts.

5. Pedagogical implications

The results of this investigation can help the teachers to adjust their methods, their teaching techniques, and themselves with the contexts, where they are to teach. When the contexts, students, courses and needs are different, it is not reasonable for teachers to resort to just one method for teaching in different environments where the needs of learners are very different. The teachers have to adopt one of the following ways if they are
going to be more effective and successful in their teaching career. First, teachers have to accept these two contexts e.g., large and small classes, as two separate contexts with different needs, requirements and features. Then, they have to try to introduce their teaching methodology, teaching techniques, and their procedures based on these needs and requirements. Second, teachers should be flexible and adopt themselves to the differences which exist between the large and small class contexts in order to introduce required method and appropriate attitudes matching the contextual requirements.

References