

A Review: 'Using Attitude Scales to Investigate Teachers' Attitudes to the Communicative Approach'

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, it is tried to review Evdokia Karavas-Doukas's article to find out that attitude scale can be used to investigate teachers' attitude toward communicative approach. Her article focused on the development and use of the attitude scale on a sample of fourteen Greek English language teachers who professed to follow communicative approach but in practice they were following traditional approaches. The applied tool for measuring this case was Likert scale. The author also observed that classes for exposing article and stated some ways to understand better and produce good attitude scale. The scores of the scale showed that the vast majority of the teachers seemed to hold mildly favourable to favourable attitudes to the communicative approach but in contrast when the teachers were observed, their classroom practices were considerably different. In other words, they responded the scale without understanding of many principles of the communicative approach. It also showed that the attitude scale had serious problem about the reliability and validity as a means of investigating teacher attitudes. To sum up, in spite of some defects of the attitude scale, it can be considered as an approach to help teachers or investigators develop appropriate frame and achieve new ways to improve.

KEYWORDS: Likert scale, communication approach, attitude scale

I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, I reviewed the article 'Using attitude Scales to Investigate Teachers' Attitudes toward the Communicative Approach' which is written by Evdokia Karavas-Doukas (1996). In particular, she argues the development and the use of the attitude scale on a sample of fourteen Greek English language teachers whose classroom practices were also observed. Second, she discussed the development of learners' communicative competence. Third, analyzed the identification of the discrepancy between prescribed theory and classroom practice. The theme of this well-researched and powerfully article argued that using teachers' attitudes may cause the discrepancy between prescribed theory and classroom practices which illustrated the reason why most teachers are taught to follow a communicative approach but in the classroom they teach traditional approach. In the first part of the article, she has tried to reveal the communicative approach and teachers' attitude which are supported by Bennet (1976), Nunan (1988) and some other famous authors about effect of teacher's behavior on their activities in the classroom. For instance, according to Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan and Raja (2009) there are teachers who regard learners as empty vessels and mind that need to be filled with knowledge. The teachers believe that the learners do not have any knowledge about subject matter that is going to be taught in classrooms. These teachers ignore the information that the learners may have, so they fail to understand and do not pay attention to the learners own unique experiences, and concepts, notions and views of the world.

The author in her article then claimed that attitude change is an essential part of the pedagogical innovation. As Kabilan and Raja (2009) stated, the current situation is that teachers widely practice the pedagogy of answers, whereby they provide the answers and solutions to learners subconsciously. They never realized that they are "spoon-feeding" the learners most of the time without learning deeply. By giving answers, teachers deny the learners' opportunities to ask right question, to doubt and to reject. In addition, the learners will not be exposed to challenge and stimulation of their thoughts which can be useful as Evdokia mentioned. She believed that the teachers' attitude can help them face accidental events in the classroom. Although both of the opinions are correct but this aspect should be regarded that attitude is unintentional, and teachers must control it and conform it to their teaching methods. They should also be prepared to ask questions in different ways in order to enhance the cognitive development of learners. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes and their functions in language classrooms are very important for learners to think creatively and critically. As indicated in third part, there are various methods to study the teachers' attitude and beliefs in educational research. According to Monroe and Pearson, (1999), some other attitude scales with their advantages and disadvantages concisely are reviewed that can be useful in the future researches.

II. OTHER ATTITUDE SCALES LITERATURE REVIEW

Thurstone Scales : Thurstone Scale has been described by Thurstone & Chave (1929) as a method of equal-appearing intervals. It requires the individual to either agree or disagree with a large number of statements about an issue or object. Thurstone scales typically present the reader with a number of statements to which they have to respond (Karavas-Doukas, 1995).

Advantages	Disadvantages
Items are weighted or valued rather than subjects	More difficult to construct than a Likert scale
Easier to construct than a Guttman scale	No more reliable than a Likert scale
	Measures only agreement or disagreement

Guttman Scales (Cumulative scales) : Guttman developed this scale in the 1940s in order to determine if a relationship existed within a group of items which are ordered from low to high according to difficulty so that to approve or correctly answer the last item implies approval or success of all prior ones (e.g. self-efficacy scale). The respondent selects an item that best applies. The list contains items that are cumulative, so the respondent either agrees or disagrees, if he/she agrees to one, he/she probably agrees to the previous statements. Arguably this scale does not give enough variation of feelings and perceptions, therefore the author suggests, this would not be appropriate for measuring attitude of online learners.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Reproducibility	Difficult to construct
More one-dimensional than Likert scaling	Scalogram analysis may be too restrictive, only a narrow universe of content can be used
	Cornell technique questionable
	Results no better than summated Likert scales

Semantic Differential Scaling : This scale is concerned with the 'measurement of meaning', the idea or association that individuals attach to words or objects. The respondent is required to mark on a scale between two opposing opinions or the position they feel the object holds on that scale for them. It is often used in market research to determine how consumers feel about certain products. Although this scale is comparatively easy for the respondent to complete, the author argues that this would not be suitable for measuring attitude of online learners as it tends to relate more to material associations than cognizance of feelings.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple to construct	Analyses can be complex
Easy for subjects to answer	
Allows for several types of analyses to take place	

Likert Scale (Summated scale) : This scale was developed by Rensis Likert in 1932. It requires the individuals to make a decision on their level of agreement, generally on a five-point scale (i.e. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with a statement. The number beside each response becomes the value for that response and the total score is obtained by adding the values for each response, hence the reason why they are also called 'summated scales' (the respondents score is found by summing the number of responses). Dumas (1999) suggests that, ' this is the most commonly used question format for assessing participants' opinions of usability.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple to construct	Lack of reproducibility
Each item of equal value so that respondents are scored rather than items	Absence of one-dimensionality or homogeneity
Likely to produce a highly reliable scale	Validity may be difficult to demonstrate
Easy to read and complete	

As discussed above, all reviewed scales have their own advantages and disadvantages. As a result, the point is to find the scale which is most consistent with the defined objectives of the research. For this reason, it should be considering the subject matter of the case and its objectives, they must be conforming to the scale's uses. In search for the tool in line with research objectives in Karavas's article, it is found out that regarding following reasons, the scale has been smartly chosen is Likert. According to the her research, Likert Scale is an ordered, one-dimensional scale from which respondents choose one option that best aligns with their views. One of its advantages of this scales is existence of questions which are usually easy to understand and so lead to consistent answers and so consistent answers would be guaranteed. However, there is an important disadvantage is that respondents may not fully agree with a few options.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discussed the methodology of the research. The main purpose of the research was to identify the usefulness of attitude scale (Likert scale) to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. The findings can help investigators and teachers to find out the dept of the teachers' knowledge. Data for the current research was collected through previous researches and studies. The actual data was collected by the author, Karavas-Doukas (1995). Respondents of the research were 101 Greek secondary school English language teachers, fourteen of whom were observed in their classrooms and interviewed.

Based on her findings, the responses were completely different meaningfully with each other; the analyzing of the observation illustrated that some points of the statements were perplexing as the principles of the communicative approach were not used as their teachers still used traditional methods rather than functioning the communicative method in the class.

Findings and Implications : This section revealed the findings of the research on the teachers' attitude to the communicative approach. Among 24 chosen statements, some points are missing. It is claimed that the new materials improve a more communicative approach, with student-centered learning, an emphasis on oral and aural skills, and language presented for use, not study (Kennedy 1996). A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Materials thus have the primary role of promoting communicative language use. Three materials currently used in CLT including label text-based, task-based, and realia (Kennedy 1996). Many followers of communicative language teaching have supported the use of authentic, from life materials in the classroom such as signs, magazines and so on. Teacher also has such a role as a needs analyst who must assume a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs, (Rechards and Rodgers 2001). Two forms are stated in the scale but it did not involve the realia. And as task-based material the author failed to mention about role plays, simulations and students-interaction. According to Richrds and Rodgers (2001) these task-based communication activities have been prepared to support communicative teaching classes.

Based on Kennedy (1996), the materials aim to improve English teaching with a departure from behaviorist theories of imitation, rote learning and grammar translation techniques. The teachers as an agent of change must be aware of two important features when they teach in order to educational program: cultural differences and strategies for the management of change. They must be aware of all the factors in order to encourage effective and smooth change. Sometimes unwillingness change stems from attitudes and beliefs, to get learners to change their attitudes and behavioral intentions requires, (Kennedy, 1996) Due to the influence of materials and teachers' beliefs in classroom interaction and language use, these materials must be stated in the applied scale. In addition, it should be stated that the order of the scale is quite confusing. It would better be ordered by their discussed subject, for instance, state number two, nine, thirteen and twenty- two can be consecutive because their common theme is about group work. Although, pair and group work have been suggested to use and practice function and forms (Rechards and Rodgers, 2001), but the author focused on the group work only.

As documented in this report, Likert scale is more reliable and useful to investigate with regard to the objectives of the research. It is recognized that middle point of the continuum is 72. Respondents' scores show that teachers showed favorable attitude to the communicative approach. In contrast the observation of the sample classrooms and interview with the teachers displayed that they were unable to understand the principles of the communicative approach or the statements were not as clear as possible. "Teachers must be persuaded to try the change and evaluate the outcomes. In evaluation, they should be persuaded not simply to reject the change, but to think of factors which led to its failure and to try again in the light of the evaluation. In this way the trainees feel that they are involved in the change with a professional evaluation process giving them a chance of participation and giving them a firm base on which to accept or if necessary reject aspects of the change in relation to their teaching contexts and needs. This approach may lessen the feeling of resentment of the power-coercive approach and give the trainees a sense of empowerment," (Kennedy 1996).

IV. CONCLUSION

This research examined the attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the communicative approach. Primary data were collected by randomly distributing questionnaires to five teachers. As mentioned earlier in introduction, the purpose of this study was to examine the appropriateness of the attitude scales (Likert scale) to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. The following conclusions can be drawn based on the finding of the study: This research has shown that the Likert scale is reliable scale to investigate teachers attitudes eventually to the clear statements. Secondly, in order to its options (strongly agree – strongly disagree) can make respondents to be confused or misunderstand. Due to the reliability of the scale, as it is mentioned in the article, it is recommended to use observation and interview as well to support the responses in questionnaire. I shall be claiming that this article's topic is perky because in spite of good view of the Likert scales and communicative approach in educational fields, the author could have explained its advantages and disadvantages with regard to the responses through using Likert Scale and bravely stated that teachers still have doubts about understanding of the communicative approach.

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