# The Working Experience Impact on The Iraqi In-Service Teachers' Perception of Managing FL Classes

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## Abstract

The study intended to examine the impact of working experience on the Iraqi secondary school teachers' perception of the importance of managing FL classes. It also tested the null hypothesis that the FL teachers' working experience does not affect the ways in which FL classes are managed. The mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach was selected as a research design for the present study. In terms of quantitative approach, the current study used descriptive statistics by computing the mean scores, frequency and standard deviation, lower and maximum scores of the Iraqi teachers' responses to the examined questionnaire. It used one-way analysis of variance ANOVA to determine the statistical significance in the variance of perceiving management of FL classes among the Iraqi secondary school teachers. In terms of qualitative approach, the participants' responses were descriptively analyzed. The present study randomly selected 100 Iraqi secondary school teachers working at five different schools located in Al Nasiriyah City south of Iraq. They were asked to respond to a twenty-item questionnaire to express their perception of managing FL classes. The results indicated that Iraqi secondary school teachers varied in their perception of managing FL classes where working experience had a significant contribution to account for that variance.

**Keywords**: perception, Iraqi FL context, Iraqi in-service teachers, secondary schools, and management of FL classes

## Introduction:

The responsibility of FL teachers is expanded to include methods and abilities for managing classrooms in addition to imparting delicate knowledge (Gilavand & Jamshidnezhad, 2016; Debreli & Ishanova, 2019). Among these abilities include the ability to inspire pupils, deal with annoyances, and manage behavioral issues among students. If FL teachers are unable to successfully manage courses, regardless of their professional qualifications, they risk failing to achieve the objective of educating and providing knowledge (Jones & Jones, 2012; Marashi & Assgar, 2019). Therefore, the ability of FL teachers to sustain an effective teaching-learning environment is primarily responsible for the achievement of FL students' optimal learning (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). If they don't

deal with the pupils' potentially disruptive behavior, there will be issues in the classroom. The ability of other students in the class to learn will be impacted by such disruptive behavior, which will make it difficult for the FL teachers to accomplish the pre-planned learning objectives. As a result, FL teachers are expected to employ management techniques that will help them ensure that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly and calmly (Abdullah, Bakar & Mahbob, 2012; Oliver et al., 2015). The upkeep of a well-managed environment in FL classrooms will assist in limiting the challenges, interruptions, and issues to facilitate the FL students' learning process. For many FL teachers, the possibility for disruptive behavior is a constant problem. Therefore, in order to achieve the best teaching and learning, FL teachers need figure out how to calmly preserve the calm environment of FL classrooms. Such an atmosphere cannot come into being inadvertently or by chance (Pagano &Langley, 2011; Salkovsky et al., 2015). There must be an analysis and a plan to address the needs of the FL students before the FL teachers may decide how to manage lessons in this regard. All FL teachers ought to have strategies, guidelines, and rules for handling common forms of student misbehavior. Due to a variety of variables, different FL teachers may have a different level of skill in managing their classes. One of these elements is the amount of time FL teachers have been employed (Rogers, 2015; Salehizadeh et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how Iraqi FL teachers' professional experience affects their capacity to sustain efficiently run FL sessions.

**Statement of the Problem**

The study intended to examine the impact of working experience on the Iraqi secondary school teachers' perception of the importance of managing FL classes. It also tested the null hypothesis that the FL teachers' working experience does not affect the ways in which FL classes are managed. It verified whether variances in managing FL classes will statistical significance according to the teachers' different years of working experience.

**Research Questions**

The study raised the following questions:

1. How do Iraqi secondary school teachers perceive management of FL classes?
2. How does the Iraqi secondary school teachers' working experience affect their perception of managing FL classes?
3. Does the Iraqi secondary school teachers' working experience have statistically significant contribution to their perception of managing FL classes?

**Purposes:**

Below are the aims of the present study:

1. Determine the perception of Iraqi secondary school teachers of managing FL classes.
2. State the variance in perceiving management of FL classes among Iraqi secondary school teachers according to their years of working experience.
3. State the statistical significance of perceiving the management of FL classes in terms of working experience.

**Significance of the Study:**

The current research is significant because it adds to the body of knowledge about FL instruction and curriculum in the context of FL teaching and learning in Iraq. The value of this study arises from the fact that it aids in the development of teaching strategies for Iraqi secondary school FL teachers. It also elucidates the numerous aspects that influence FL in-service teachers' perspectives on classroom management. It highlighted the possibility for working experience to have an impact on how Iraqi in-service teacher manage FL classes. The current study's expected outcomes are mostly focused on improving the FL teaching-learning process at the Iraqi context. Furthermore, the projected results may be valuable to other secondary school contexts where English is taught as a FL.

**Limitations of the Study:**

The current study is limited to the Iraqi secondary schools located in Al Nasiriyah City south of Iraq. Thus, the expected results are only restricted to the geographical location of these schools. They can also be of a great use to other Iraqi secondary schools located in other provinces of Iraq.

**Literature Review:**

Debreli and Ishanova (2019) looked into how EFL teachers dealt with various misbehaviors from EFL pupils. They looked at the methods used by FL teachers to curb pupils' misconduct. Misbehavior was defined by the researchers as any action, whether off-task or on-task, that obstructs or adversely affects the process of instructing and learning English as a foreign language. At three universities in Northern Cyprus, forty-four FL instructors who taught English prep courses provided the data. Semi-structured interviews and naturalistic observation were the study's primary data collection methods. The interview questions were focused on the forms of student misbehavior that the teachers were typically exposed to and how they dealt with it in the past. A question about managing the FL classes and strategies for preventing student misbehavior was also posed to the attendees. To confirm that the participants managed their FL classes using the strategies stated in their interviews, a naturalistic observation checklist was implemented. The interviewees identified the most upsetting misbehavior they had to deal with as students using their mobile devices to communicate during class. Additionally, the participants said they intended to refrain from using their mother tongue (Turkish) in the English classes.

Other kinds of students' misbehavior include excessive talks and low motivation towards learning English. As for strategies of managing FL classes, the participants emphasized that sticking to the rules of classroom management is the best way to achieve discipline in managing FL classes. The participants also refused punishment as a strategy to encounter students' misbehavior because it may lead to the creation of more aggressive students. Instead, the participants explained that they used constructive discussion to face students' misbehavior. They also added that they used to non-verbally express their discontent towards students' misbehavior through using body language such as gestures or eye contacts. The participants used to raise the intonation of their speech in an indication

of students' inappropriate behavior. The participants pointed out that they used to adopt positive attitudes towards students' misbehavior because this manner helped solve problems effectively and quickly.

Marashi and Assgar (2019) looked at how good classroom management by FL teachers affected the learning strategies and anxiety of EFL students. Three measures were used to gather the data: the Murdoch's checklist, the scale of FL classroom anxiety, and the approach inventory for language learning. Thirty foreign language instructors and their 750 EFL students from Tehran's Kish Way Language School made up the participants. The checklist was completed after distributing the questionnaire. To complete the checklist, Marashi and Assgar enlisted the help of an experienced FL teacher and a supervisor who worked at the aforementioned language school. There are three sections to the checklist. The first section of the checklist consists of twenty-four questions for evaluating ELT competencies, ten for evaluating general teaching competencies, and twenty for evaluating teaching competency. The data was examined by the researchers using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The findings indicated that there was positive correlation between the FL teachers' adopted strategies of effective classroom management and the EFL learners' learning strategies. However, there was negative correlation between the FL teachers' strategies of effective classroom management and the EFL students' anxiety. That is, the EFL learners' anxiety was reduced due to the high level of Iranian FL teachers' strategies of classroom management. The effective strategies of classroom management increase the Iranian EFL learners' learning opportunity, reduce their anxiety and create an enjoyable learning atmosphere. The negative correlation of between effective classroom management and anxiety is related to the concept of defense mechanism. That is, the Iranian EFL learners went through processes to defend their self-esteem and protect their emotional equilibrium. Marashi and Assgar recommended that FL teachers should be engaged in using more techniques of effective classroom management to reduce learners' anxiety and motivate them learning English.

Kavrayıcı (2020) carried out a descriptive cross-sectional study to explore the effect of the mediate role of problem-solving skills on the relationship between pre-service teachers' communication skills and their ability of classroom management. Four hundred and thirty-one Turkish participants, who were enrolled at Anadolu University located in the central Anatolia, were randomly selected to take part in the study. Data were elicited through three instrumental scales: classroom management scale, communication skills scale and problem-solving inventory. The five-point communication skills scale was developed by Korkut-Owen and Bugay (2014). It consisted of 25 items covering communication basic skills, willingness to communicate, nonverbal expressions, and personal expressions. The 32-item problem solving scale consisted of three elements: confidence of problem solving, style of approach avoidance, and personal control. The 16-item classroom management scale comprised three factors: management of teacher-student relationship in the classroom, instruction management, and student-environment recognition. Kavrayıcı reported that the participants' problem-solving skills totally mediated their classroom management competency. There was a significant relationship

between the participants' communication and problem-solving skills and their classroom management ability. The participants' communication skills played a vital role in enhancing the teacher-student relationship. Such skills served to transmit the participants' knowledge, ideas, opinions and information to their students.

Ozen and Yıldırım (2020) conducted a phenomenological study to discuss classroom management of fifteen Turkish public-school teachers affiliated to different disciplines. The study aimed to explore teachers' perception of classroom management strategies, students' learning strategies and how teachers educated knowledge and skills to their students. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed according to thematic content analysis. The participants defined classroom management as a skill which helps establish effective learning atmosphere. It also helps teachers to provide effective instruction and have good communication with their students. The participants considered guided effective instruction as the essence of their responsibilities while exerting empathy and emotional intelligence are main elements for establishing good communication with students. The participants believed that they had roles to rescue their learners from the learned helplessness sense, guide them with good practices and control their behavior and academic achievement through good observation skills. The positive classroom strategies were viewed, according to the participants, as their ability to enhance their students' cognitive skills. The participants considered the adoption of appropriate teaching method as a means of overcoming students' disruptive behavior. Ozen and Yıldırım recommended that classroom management varies among different classes due to the dynamic characteristics of each class. These dynamic characteristics, whether internal or external, may increase or decrease teachers' efficiency.

**Methodology:**

**Research Design**

The mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach was selected as a research design for the present study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Creswell; 2013; Aydin, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In terms of quantitative approach, the current study used descriptive statistics by computing the mean scores, frequency and standard deviation, lower and maximum scores of the Iraqi teachers' responses to the examined questionnaire. It used one way analysis of variance ANOVA to determine the statistical significance in the variance of perceiving management of FL classes among the Iraqi secondary school teachers. In terms of qualitative approach, the participants' responses were descriptively analyzed.

**Participants**

The present study randomly selected 100 Iraqi secondary school teachers working at 20 different schools located in Al Nasiriyah City south of Iraq. five in service teachers were selected from each school. The selected participants were 60 males and 40 females. Their age ranged from 23 to 58 years old. They were divided into two groups. Group A includes novice teachers whose working experience lasted ranged between one and two years. Group B comprises experience teachers whose working experience ranged above 5 to more than ten years.

**Procedure**

The researcher visited the intended schools to explain the project to the intended sampling population in order to obtain their consent to take part in the study. The questionnaire was sent to the participants via the email. along with a consent form. Participants were assured that all provided information will be dealt with confidentially and they should feel free to accept or refuse participation. Initially, the study was also online piloted using a sample of 20 Iraqi FL teachers. The purposes of the pilot study were to check for the participants' understanding of the questionnaire items, the clarity of these items, and know about the participants' feedback. The pilot study also aimed to verify the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient was .90 and all items were valid and related to measure the participants' perception of managing FL classes.

**Data Collection**

The current study elicited data based on a five-scale Likert questionnaire of teachers' perception of managing FL classes. The twenty-item questionnaire was developed based on other studies such as Lewis et al. (2011), Uysal et al., & Akman (2014); Marashi & Assgar (2019). The five responses are strongly agree (SD), agree (A), not sure (NS), strongly disagree (SD) and disagree (D). The questionnaire items are pertinent to strategies and skills of managing FL classes.

**Data Analysis:**

Table 1 introduces the frequency (F) of the Iraqi experienced (Exp.) and novice (Nov.) teachers' responses to the questionnaire-twenty items. It indicates that there is unanimity among the two groups of participants on the necessity of adhering to the rules and principles of managing FL classes as described in the questionnaire included items. However, it also indicates that the two groups of participants varied in the extent of their perception of adhering to these rules and principles. Successfully, the total frequency of experienced Iraqi teachers' strong agreement (1795) and strong disagreement (98) was higher than that of the novice Iraqi teachers (1618) and (87). However, they had less frequency in the agreement (105) and disagreement (2) responses compared to the group B participants (282) and (13) respectively. The finding resembled those reported by Marashi and Assgar (2019), Kavrayıcı (2020).

**Table 1: Frequency of Experienced and Novice Iraqi Teachers' Responses**

| No. | Items | SA | | A | | NS | | DS | | D | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Exp | Nov | Exp | Nov | Exp | Nov | Exp | Nov | Exp | Nov |
| 1 | Rewarding good behavior is a must | 95 | 85 | 5 | 15 | | | | | | |
| 2 | Prohibition of chatting among learners is a must | 97 | 84 | 3 | 16 | | | | | | |

| 3 | Permission is not a must for learners' free movement | | | | | | | 98 | 87 | 2 | 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Intervention is a must | 96 | 84 | 4 | 16 | | | | | | |
| 5 | Based on learners' input, rules of FL classes are created | 90 | 82 | 10 | 18 | | | | | | |
| 6 | Learners must comply to rules | 94 | 86 | 6 | 14 | | | | | | |
| 7 | Firm redirection of learners is a must | 97 | 88 | 3 | 12 | | | | | | |
| 8 | Learners' immediate obedience of rules is a must | 98 | 84 | 2 | 16 | | | | | | |
| 9 | Learners' involvement in active discussion is a must | 95 | 82 | 5 | 18 | | | | | | |
| 10 | Strict enforcement of rules is a must | 93 | 80 | 7 | 20 | | | | | | |
| 11 | Creation of learners' projects should be based on their input | 91 | 83 | 9 | 17 | | | | | | |
| 12 | Adherence of daily teaching routine is a must | 84 | 90 | 16 | 10 | | | | | | |
| 13 | Learners should do activities in groups | 97 | 90 | 3 | 10 | | | | | | |
| 14 | Guidance should be provided for learners to transit from one activity to another | 93 | 87 | 7 | 13 | | | | | | |
| 15 | Instruction | 97 | 84 | 3 | 16 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | adjustment should be based on learners' needs | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Direct instruction is the main essence of teaching | 98 | 85 | 2 | 15 | | | | | | |
| 17 | Encouragement of learners' interaction is a must | 94 | 88 | 6 | 12 | | | | | | |
| 18 | Management of FL classes is the essence behind learners' success in learning | 97 | 86 | 3 | 14 | | | | | | |
| 19 | Adjustment of the early planned learning activities is a must | 93 | 83 | 7 | 17 | | | | | | |
| 20 | FL classes should be based on collaborative learning | 96 | 87 | 4 | 13 | | | | | | |
| | Total Freq. | 1795 | 1618 | 105 | 282 | | | 98 | 87 | 2 | 13 |

The qualitative analysis showed that the Iraqi experienced teachers had higher frequency scores compared to group B participants in perceiving the rules and principles of managing FL classes. This is apparent in their higher perception of the questionnaire items. For instance, they highly perceived the necessity to intervene in order to prevent misbehavior, prohibit chatting, prohibit students' free movement without permission, firmly redirect their students, make their students immediately obey rule, etc. in other words, the experienced Iraqi secondary school teachers realized that prevention is the best solution to overcome any state of conflict within the classes. They were aware that well-management of class conflicts usually improve communication with the trouble makers. Thus, it often leads to fruitful results that pave the way for providing better learning atmosphere. In this regard, the novice Iraqi secondary school teachers need to learn strategies that enable them to immediately handle classroom conflicts. They need to be fully aware of all questionnaire items which their experienced counterparts strongly agreed to. Moreover, the Iraqi experienced teachers highly perceived the necessity for rewarding the students' good behavior. This strategy affirms the role of working experience in managing FL classes because the experienced teachers realized the contribution of such a strategy to reinforce the teacher-student relationship. Such

reinforcement will certainly sustain the teachers' efforts to provide an effective and useful learning atmosphere which will in turn motivate the Iraqi students towards leaning English and will encourage their participation in the FL classroom activities. Due to their working experience, the experienced teachers also surpassed their novice counterparts is their strong agreement to a number of classroom management strategies. For examples, they had higher perception of the necessity to readjust pre-planned activities in accordance with the students' needs, encourage collaborative and group work, adopt direct instruction, and provide guidance for students' transition from an activity to another. Such strategies reflect their awareness of the significant role of classroom management rules in responding to the Iraqi secondary school learners' needs. In this regard, the Iraqi novice teachers should be also advised to develop higher perception of such strategies that help make their teaching mission a success. The finding was similar to those reported by Aydin (2016), Debreli (2016), Debreli and Ishanova (2019), and Ozen and Yıldırım (2020).

In addition, the descriptive statistics of mean score and standard deviation as shown in Table 2 indicates higher perception of rules, principles and strategies of managing FL classes on the part of Iraqi experienced secondary school teachers. They had higher mean score (2.78) compared to their novice counterparts (1.25). They also had higher standard deviation in comparison to that of the novice Iraqi teachers. The descriptive statistics shows that there is higher variance in the responses of the first group participants on the contrary to that of the second group participants.

**Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Experienced and Novice Iraqi Teachers' Responses**

| Group | No. of Participants | Mean score | Standard Deviation | Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experienced | 50 | 2.7884 | 10.895 | 14,43718 | 18.98356 |
| Novice | 50 | 1.2587 | 7.521 | 7.06971 | 12.37015 |

Table 3 introduces the results of ANOVA to test the null hypothesis that perception of rules, principles and strategies of managing FL classes does not significantly differ in terms of working experience. Table 3 indicates that the Iraqi experienced teachers' perception of FL classroom management differed statistically and significant from that of the Iraqi novice teachers, where the p value was < 0.05. The result leads to the rejection of the above-mentioned null hypothesis. The finding was similar to those reported by Marashi and Assgar (2019) and Kavrayıcı (2020) which provide the statistical significance of the participants' independent variables of their classroom management strategies.

**Table 3: ANOVA of Experience Impact on the Participants' Perception of FL Classes Management**

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 231.215 | 50 | 94.361 | 253.272 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 15.046 | 50 | .415 | | |
| Total | 246.261 | 100 | | | |

**Discussion and Implications:**

The Iraqi experienced and novice secondary school teachers unanimously adhered to the rules, principles and strategies of managing FL classes. All participants considered classroom management as ways that facilitate the performance of educational activities in a collaborative manner. It also tends to minimize obstacles which hinder the teaching and learning process. It helps motivate learners and encourage their participation in learning activities based on group work. It sustains classroom organization in order to manage behavioral problems and make adjustment to lesson planning in consistency with learners' needs. However, there was variance in the extent of their perception of adhering to such rules, principles and strategies.

The Iraqi experienced teachers exerted higher perception of all rules of FL classroom management on the contrary to their novice counterparts. The frequency of their strongly agree and strongly disagree responses exceeded that of the Iraqi novice teachers. The differences among the two groups of participants were accounted on the basis of their different working experience. Due to the long experience in practicing the profession of teaching, the Iraqi experienced teachers had better awareness and perception of the rules, principles and strategies of managing FL classes. They realized that it was necessary to promptly intervene in order to prevent disruptive behavior, prohibit chatting and students' free movement without permission. The Iraqi experienced teachers realized due to their experience that intervention is the best strategy to overcome classroom conflicts. They were aware of the necessity of having good communication with the troublemakers in order to sustain the teacher-student relationship. They were also keen on rewarding the students' good behavior in another indication of the necessity of building up good interpersonal communication with their students.

On the other hand, the results revealed that the Iraqi novice teachers needed developing stronger agreement to the rules, principles and strategies which help them to manage the FL classes successfully. In this regard, the Iraqi novice teachers needed having further guidance, training and practice to reshape their perception about rules, principles and strategies of classroom management. They should be guided to maximize their commitment to strategies of classroom management in order to provide effective teaching and learning environment. The finding shed slight on the necessity to improve the earlier training and teacher-preparation programs to the Iraqi pre-service teachers. Such programs should emphasize that the Iraqi pre-service teachers should be strictly committed to the classroom management strategies. At these programs, the Iraqi pre-service teachers should be aware of the theoretical and practical importance of maintaining the discipline of FL classes in order to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. They should be also trained how to implement strategies which reinforce the teacher-student relationship in a way which helps motivate, encourage and educate the Iraqi FL students.

These findings were consistent with those reported by Aydin (2016), Debreli (2016), Debreli and Ishanova (2019), Marashi and Assgar (2019), Kavrayıcı (2020), and Ozen and Yıldırım (2020).

**Recommendations:**

The present study introduces the following recommendations for further research:

1. The current study can be replicable at different educational level such as the university level.
2. The present study can be replicable to investigate the influence of the Iraqi in-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession on their classroom management strategies.
3. An in-depth phenomenological study can be conducted to examine the Iraqi in-service teachers' FL classroom management using different data collection methods such as the semi-structured interviews.
4. A proposed study can discuss the perception of Iraqi in-service teachers of using the mother tongue in providing instruction of FL classroom management.
5. A longitudinal study can be carried out to investigate the Iraqi in-service teachers' communication skills on their ability to manage FL classes.
6. A cross-sectional study can be conducted to discuss the impact of the Iraqi in-service teachers' problem-solving skills on their adopted strategies of FL classroom management.

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