

Original Paper

The Relationship between Teaching experience of Iranian EFL Teachers with Their Classroom Management Strategies

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Abstract

This study has explored to investigate whether the teaching years have anything to do with teachers' classroom management strategies. Also this study has investigated the relationship between teachers' autonomy and their classroom management strategies. In other words, this study investigated the relationship between the level of teacher autonomy and the effectiveness of classroom management. Secondly, is there a relationship between teachers' classroom management and their level of autonomy based on their work experience? Also, the study wants to see if teachers' autonomy and years of teaching experience could predict their classroom management? And which of them is a predictor of their classroom management, teacher autonomy or teacher years of teaching? The participants of the study are 54 EFL teachers, working at grade 7-12, teaching at some high schools in Arak city. Most of the participants are BA and MA holders ranging in their year of experience from 2 to 30. Two questionnaires are used in this research, Instructional management scale adapted from Martin and Sass (2015) to measure classroom management strategies and teacher work autonomy scale developed by Friedman (2005) to measure teacher autonomy. Pearson correlation method, linear regression analysis as well as Kendall correlation are used to analyze the research data. The study findings show that the classroom management strategies of English teachers are influenced by their autonomy. The findings also revealed that there was no relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and their teaching experiences. Furthermore, the results indicated that teacher autonomy is a good predictor of classroom management.

Keywords

teacher autonomy, Classroom management, Teaching experience

1. Introduction

Education is a complex and dynamic system comprising various agents (Van Geert & Steenbeek, 2017). Teachers are the key elements in the implementation of educational reform. The teacher can consciously realize the different needs of his/her students and provide the best solutions to meet those needs with freedom of action, and this freedom of action is defined as the independence of the teacher or “teacher autonomy”. It seems that this teacher independence can be helpful and plays a key role in solving problems in current schools (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2014).

The vital role of teachers’ autonomy becomes clearer when its benefits on teacher retention, high job satisfaction and greater job performance in the classroom are revealed. It also has been appeared that autonomy is a teacher strongly desire in his job condition (Blase & Kirby, 2013). Successful teaching and learning cannot be created in poorly managed classrooms but rather in a well-managed atmosphere that produces an environment without stress in which students actually feel that they belong to classroom (Van der Wal, & Torenbeek, 2014). Teachers use wide variety of skills and techniques to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class. Evertson and Weinstein (2009, as cited in Korpershoek, 2016) define classroom management as the actions taken by teachers to create a helpful environment for the academic and social emotional learning of students.

Effective classroom management creates and maintains an organized environment in the classroom, increases meaningful academic learning and makes social and emotional growth easier, decreases negative behaviors and increases the time students spend engaging in the class academically. According to Doyle (2006, cited in Postholm, 2013), classroom management has two purposes. The first aim of classroom management is to establish a quiet and calm environment in the classroom so that the pupils can take part in meaningful learning. The second aim is that classroom management contributes to the pupils’ social and moral development, which means that it aims to develop the pupils academically and socially. When the teacher feels freedom to make different decisions and to choose different classroom managements strategies it seems that he has crucial key variables.

Glasser (2002, p. 17) believes that behavioral differences of all individuals are as a result of varying levels of needs such as feeling to belong to somewhere, power, freedom, and enjoyment. In the other hand his theory explains that all individuals are affected by four psychological needs, the need to belong, the need for power, the need for freedom, and the need for fun”. Indeed, students and teachers has chance to understand the individual behavioral differences of others. Today, this theory has become a strategy which is used as an instructional management and behavior management technique in classrooms. Glasser's theory states that students in school follow the rules and work hard to meet some of their needs for social belonging, freedom, power, and happiness. He tries to show that the teacher must manage the classroom in a way so that it can meets these needs of students (Dembo, 1999, p. 332 cited in Mousavi, 2020). When the environment is well-prepared physically and the learning and teaching process become easy by rules, the student's participation in class activities improves.

Management styles are divided into three groups: authoritarian, democratic, and non-intervention. In authoritarian style, the leader virtually sets all policies. In a democratic style, as far as possible, with the help of the leader, group decision and discussion with active participation establish the policies (Biabangard, p. 450 as cited in Mousavi, 2020). In the non-interference style, the leader lets the group members make decisions and he is more passive himself (Biller, R.2002). A combination of these three types of management are used by teachers although most of the time they are not aware of their classroom management method. The correct, scientific and standard management method at every moment of teacher is used and their classroom is always active. It is lively and full of vitality and students have motivation to learn (Mousavi, 2020).

2. Related Empirical Studies

2.1 Autonomy

In a study in 2016, Esfandiari and his colleague tried to show the relationship between these three factors. 207 language teachers working in language institutes in Tehran and Karaj were selected according to easy sampling and were given three questionnaires. They used Minnesota Job Satisfaction questionnaire (MSQ), developed by Weiss, Davis, England and Lofguist (1982), to assess language teachers' job satisfaction, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (2001), in order to assess teacher burnout and Pearson and Hall TAQ (1998) for teacher autonomy. They used three non-parametric statistical tests-Spearman rho correlations to examine the relationships between job satisfaction, teacher burnout, and teacher autonomy. IBM Spss version 20 were also used to analyze the data. According to the findings of this study, there was a weak negative relationship between teacher burnout and job satisfaction, and a correlated negatively relationship between teacher autonomy with job satisfaction. Moreover, there was no relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout.

Most recently in 2020, a study was done by Derakhshan and his colleagues. This study aimed to explain the impact of two factors of teachers 'professional identity and teachers' independence on the teacher's success". 190 Iranian teachers, including university professors and institution English language teachers, were asked to answer three questionnaires" teacher independence, teacher professional identity, and characteristics of successful language teachers". The results of correlation coefficient showed that there is a significant positive relationship between all three factors of professional identity independence and teacher success.

In a research done by Moomaw and Pearson in 2005, tried to find the relationship between teacher autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. 300 teachers who worked in three neighboring school districts/counties in Florida were chosen as the target population. To ensure full geographic and grade-level representation, two elementary, middle, and high schools but there were only 171 respondents. Teaching Autonomy Scale (TAS), (Pearson & Hall) with the 18 items was used. They used multivariate analysis of variance, and effect sizes were determined

using η^2 (the strength of the association between the teaching level variable and the scores).

The findings showed that as curriculum autonomy increases, on-the-job stress decreases. There was little association between curriculum autonomy and job satisfaction. It was also demonstrated that when general teacher autonomy increased, empowerment and professionalism also increased. As teacher's work experience increases, his or her understanding of teacher autonomy increases. According to the results of this study, autonomy does not differ across teaching levels.

2.2 Classroom Management Strategies

In a research done by Aliakbari and Heidarzadi in 2015, the researchers tried to find out and to analyze Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs toward classroom management and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices of classroom management according to individual variables such as gender, education degree, and teaching experience. The participants of the research were 227 English teachers of various public schools and private language institutes, selected through convenient sampling, in the city of Ilam province. They used a behavior and instructional management scale inventory and direct class observation. To measure the teachers' classroom management orientations, the investigator used a researcher made classroom management observation checklist. BIMS inventory to analyze the data descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient tests were used. Findings revealed that EFL teachers favored internationalist orientation on behavior and instructional management dimensions. No difference was seen between males and female's teachers in regard to their beliefs and actual practices. A significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices of classroom management among less experienced teachers was seen. Teachers had more control on behavior management than instructional management based on the findings. The most important point was that there was a significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices of classroom management among the less experienced teachers.

Marzano (2003) in their research argue that by combining suitable and useful levels of dominance and cooperation and an ability to notice student needs, teachers can have positive classroom dynamics". Gujjar and Naoreen(2009) in a descriptive study in province of Punjab ,tried to explore the competencies of secondary school teacher in classroom management. They wanted to find strength and weakness in the competencies of school teachers in classroom management. They developed a 13 items questionnaire on five – point (Likert) scale that was administered to 800 head teachers, 4000 secondary school teachers and 4000 secondary level students. To analyze the data, they coded the questionnaires and analyzed them through Ms – Excel in terms of frequency, percentage and mean score. Findings showed that the teachers were better in areas like punctuality, preparedness for class, seating arrangement. All the respondents were aware of national goals and objectives and they properly managed the classrooms.

A descriptive-correlational study was done by Jafari and some of his colleagues in 2017. 92 faculty members of Isfahan universities took part in this research. They used 3 questionnaires, the teacher's classroom self-efficacy questionnaire (Emer and Hickman, 1991), the Seker's (2004) teacher

competency questionnaire, and the attitudes and beliefs questionnaire in classroom control (Martin et al., 2010). They distributed the instruments among the respondents through stratified proportional sampling to analyze the data. Correlation, regression analysis and structural equation modeling using 22 - SPSS and 22-Amos software were used. They found that there is a significant correlation between competency, class management self-efficacy, class management attitude and demographic factors like experimental teaching and academic rank. Findings also showed that the faculty members' competence can be a predictor of their attitude toward classroom management.

2.3 Teaching Experience

Ellis (2018), believes that in a middle school, there is lack of effective classroom management strategies and teachers cannot teach students because of the student undesirable behaviors. She did a research to explore teachers' perceptions about their classroom management preparation, and to find professional development opportunities which enables the teachers to have skills in classroom management. 10 teachers participated in this qualitative case study. To collect data semi structured interviews, online journals, and document analysis as well as open coding were used. Classroom management strategies, a clear expectation, and professional development were 3 themes that were recognized through the collected data. The researcher used triangulation and member checking to validate the findings, and a 3-day professional development program was arranged to increase teachers' knowledge of proactive classroom management and effective ways to manage their classrooms. Findings revealed that when the teachers are empowered with the knowledge, skills and different strategies, they can manage their class more effectively and students are able to learn better.

A research done by Wolff and her colleagues in 2016. It is important for teachers to have ability to perceive and interpret classroom situations simultaneously. This ability is needed to have effective classroom management. The basis of this complex ability is based on the awareness of classroom events. In this study the researchers used eye tracking measurements and verbal think aloud to find out differences in how expert and novice teachers perceive problematic classroom scenes. There were 35 experienced teachers as experts and 32 novices (teachers-in-training) as the participants. 2 viewed videos of authentic lessons were played for them, and then their eye movements were recorded as they verbalized thoughts about what they had seen in the lesson and how it was relevant to classroom management. Teachers' eye movements were analyzed. Findings showed that novices' viewing was more dispersed whereas experts' was more focused. Expert teachers' attention had been focused on areas where relevant information was available but novice teachers had more scattered attention. More areas were carefully watched by experts. The novices skipped more areas. There was a word usage difference between them. Expertise used words with a higher frequency of words referencing cognition, perception, and events than novices.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 54 high school English teachers in Markazi Province in the city of Arak. Of these teachers 68% were females and 32% were male teachers. 31% had B.A degree, 60% teachers had M.A degree in TEFL and 9% had PH.D. The teachers' teaching experience ranged from 1 to 30 years. The following research questions will guide the study:

- 1) Is there any significant relationship between the classroom management of Iranian English teachers and their autonomy?
- 2) Is there any significant relationship between the classroom management of Iranian English teachers and their years of teaching?
- 3) Which one is a better predictor of classroom management? Teacher autonomy or their years of teaching?

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Two questionnaires were utilized to collect the data for the present study. The teacher work autonomy developed by Friedman 1999 and Instructional management scale adapted from Martin and Sass 2010. The TWA questionnaire enjoyed a Cronbach's alpha of .912 and classroom management questionnaire was .702 respectively.

The first questionnaire, TWA was divided in four subsections Teaching and assessment questions, school mode of operating questions, staff development questions, and curriculum development questions and 31 questions and tried to find out the teacher's opinions about their autonomy and classroom management strategies. The second one, BIMS consisted of 24 items which examined possible opinions, and expectations in the program.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sent the link of questionnaire, (made by porsline) to Telegram, and Whatsapp in educational group of Markazi Province English teachers, that were readily available to collect data. The participants could easily click on the link and got access to the questioners. The questionnaire were filled out then I collected the data. After the collection of the first questionnaire the researcher sent the second questionnaire, and the data was collected again. This data was the basis for the analysis of the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis

Pearson correlations used to probe any significant relationships between classroom management and autonomy and its four sub-sections. Kendall correlation used to explore any significant relationship between classroom management of Iranian teachers and their years of teaching in order to probe the second research question. A linear regression through backward method was used to predict classroom management though teacher autonomy and their teaching experience in order to probe the third research question.

Results and Discussions

Exploring First Research Question

Based on the results displayed in Table 4.5; ($r(52) = .751$, representing a large effect size (Note 1), p

< .05) indicated that there was a significant relationship between the classroom management and autonomy. Thus the first directional-hypothesis as “there was a significant relationship between the classroom management of Iranian English teachers and their autonomy” **was supported**.

Table 4.5 Pearson Correlation between Classroom Management and Autonomy

Classroom Management	
Pearson	
Correlation	.751**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	54

Exploring Second Research Question

The results of Kendall’s correlation ($\tau(52) = .044$ representing a weak effect size, $p > .05$) indicated that there was not any significant relationship between the classroom management of Iranian teachers and their years of teaching. Thus the second directional hypothesis as “there was a significant relationship between the classroom management of English language teachers and their years of teaching” **was rejected**.

Table 4.7 Kendall’s Correlation between Classroom Management and Years of Teaching Experience

		Classroom Management	
Kendall's tau_b	Experience	Correlation Coefficient	.044
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.685
		N	54

Exploring Third Research Question

A linear regression through backward method was run to probe which one of the two variables of teacher autonomy or years of teaching experience was a better predictor of classroom management. As displayed in Table 4.8 the regression model converged on two steps. On the first step, both teacher autonomy and years of teaching experience entered the regression model to predict 56.4 percent of classroom management; i.e. ($R = .751$, $R^2 = .564$). On the second step, years of teaching experience was excluded from the model without any change in percentage of prediction. That is to say; teacher autonomy alone predicted 56.4 percent of classroom management ($R = .751$, $R^2 = .564$). Thus; it can be claimed that **teacher autonomy was the sole predictor of classroom management**.

Table 4.8 Model Summary^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.751 ^a	.564	.547	6.423
2	.751 ^b	.564	.555	6.362

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy, Experience

b. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy

c. Dependent Variable: Classroom Management

4. Discussion

The first finding was confirmed by Miller (2012, cited in Rijal, 2015), who acknowledged the point that teachers should be provided with autonomy, Mastery of working with other colleagues, having similar goals with students and focusing on how to involve students to participate in activities. The research findings support the previous studies that showed that there is relationship between teachers' autonomy and their classroom management strategies. Yazici (2016) pointed out in his study that teachers, regardless of their gender and experience, need autonomy. They need to have autonomy, because it enables them to deal with different students.

The second finding is in line with previous research (Aali & Yazdi Sidamir, 2008). They also suggested that there is no relationship between teachers' teaching experience and their classroom management style. The outcome of the present research has been also endorsed by Ansari and Maleki (2016) who found no relationship between these two factors.

Eren (2020) studies indicated that teacher autonomy prepares a sound base for improving teachers' expertise. In their extensive literature review, Huang and Moon (2009) found that while 3% of the examined studies showed a negative association between teachers' years of experience and student achievement, 30% indicated a positive association (usually for only the first few years of teaching), the majority (67%) showed no correlation between teachers' years of experience and student achievement. So, using teacher experience as an indicator of teacher effectiveness appears to be a poor choice. A possible explanation for no relationship between teacher teaching experience and teacher classroom management is that most teachers reach their peak after about five years in the classroom. Teachers gradually reach a plateau after 3-5 years on the job, Glatfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006).

5. Conclusion

The study findings show that the classroom management strategies of English teachers are influenced by their autonomy. The findings also revealed that there was no relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and their teaching experiences. Furthermore, the results indicated that teacher autonomy is a good predictor of classroom management. This fact cannot be denied that teachers should be supported by educational system to be able to meet the needs of the students. Because the results of this research are in line with present educational programs, it seems that it is

valuable for improvement of them.

Moreover, it seems that the ministry of education should use enough budget to provide necessary materials and equipment which is necessary for practical use. But most vital of all is the teacher autonomy and sufficient freedom for his performance in the classroom and school. The findings of the study highlight the needs for higher autonomy for English teachers in dealing with different challenges in their classes. Lack of motivation is one of the most important problems of today's students. Teacher autonomy promotes the teacher's motivation and the result is the motivated students (Kalyar, 2018)

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