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## **Investigating the Manifestation of Teaching Expertise Feature among Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers\***

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### **Abstract**

The present study was an attempt to investigate the manifestation of teaching expertise of EFL teachers in Iranian formal educational context. More specifically, it was intended to study how teachers of English in Iranian high schools and General English instructors in a state university manifest features of teaching expertise. The study also compared the expertise features of novice teachers with those of experienced ones in both high schools and university. To achieve these goals, through a qualitative research, 10 high school teachers and 10 university instructors were purposively selected to be observed and interviewed. Each group consisted of 5 novice and 5 experienced teachers. After 2-3 sessions of observation (which functioned as the main source of data) and one session of interview with all participants, an attempt was made to extract cases or instances of expertise in their teaching practice. These instances were later categorized into 6 types of expertise: expertise in management, motivational expertise and providing guidance and feedback, instructional expertise, content knowledge expertise, expertise in making connections between subjects of study, and expertise in dealing with challenges. A table consisting of these expertise types and all those instances or cases of expertise (extracted from the observation reports and also the literature) was designed. The data for each teacher was analyzed closely again and those cases which were present in their teaching practice were checked in the table. The next step was to look carefully at the patterns of expertise in each group of teachers. The analysis of the collected data revealed that teaching expertise was manifested almost similarly in the teaching practice of the four groups of teachers. Three groups i.e. experienced high school teachers, and novice and experienced university instructors exhibited 100% success in at least one type of expertise, namely making connections between subjects of the study. This aspect of expertise in novice high school teachers proved to be just 60%. Experienced university instructors formed the only group who achieved perfect performance (100%) in two types of expertise, namely, content knowledge expertise and expertise in making connections between subjects of study. And novice high school teachers formed the only group who did not achieve perfect performance in any of the teaching expertise types.

**Keywords:** Teaching expertise features, Iranian formal educational contexts, novice and experienced teachers

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### Introduction

Since the 1970s, research on teacher thinking in the framework of cognitive psychology has led to the realization that teaching is a highly complex and cognitively demanding activity. Looking at teaching through the cognitive perspective reveals that underlying teaching behaviors are complex cognitive processes and that planning and interactive decision-making are central aspects of it (Chiang, 2003). Teaching expertise is one of the areas that clearly reflects the complexity of teaching.

Researchers have used the construct of expertise in order to explore the knowledge that superior teachers possess (Berliner, 1986; Borko & Livingston, 1989). Differences between expert and novice teachers have been researched from the perspective of teacher cognition. Comparisons of expert and novice teachers have shown that they differ in how they perceive and interpret classroom events (Calderhead, 1983), think and make decisions (Berliner, 1987; Clark & Peterson, 1986), and also of how they develop expertise in pedagogical and content knowledge (Berliner, 1986).

In the context of teaching English, researchers have also investigated the nature of professional decisions made by the teachers in planning and implementing their language programs. The findings suggest that the key factor leading to the teaching effectiveness of expert teachers may be the fact that they frequently utilize pattern matches to adjust their teaching during their interactive instruction (McMahon, 1995). According to Sii ssss sssss (1996), the experienced teachers reveal an eclectic blend of theoretical ideas with practical needs in the ESL instructional context. Milner (2001) has outlined the planning, thinking, and teaching of experienced English teachers and indicated that experienced teachers make responsive planning after learning and adapt lessons interactively. Similarly, Johnson (1992) claims that novice teachers have not developed a schema for interpreting and coping with what goes on during instruction, nor do they possess a repertoire of instructional routines upon which they can confidently rely.

Expertise is a complex phenomenon and its meaning and constituents cannot be easily defined or specified in a straightforward manner. In the field of ELT studying teacher expertise has not developed to its full potentials or as Farrell (2013, p.1071) puts it "[expertise] is still a very under-researched topic". Therefore, it seems that more research on this issue is needed to help us learn more about the professional development of successful teachers as this kind of research can shed more light on the performance of novice teachers who look for practical solutions to everyday problems they encounter in the classrooms and can help them learn how these problems can act as issues of further thought and reflection that can eventually not only help them to deal with difficulties, but also move them forward in their process of teaching development.

The present study first intended to investigate how expertise manifests itself in the teaching practice of Iranian EFL teachers at two levels of high school and university. Second, the expertise features that the teachers in these two educational contexts revealed were compared. Third, it aimed to explore how expertise would be realized in the teaching practice of novice and experienced teachers of the two contexts as far as the years of teaching experience was concerned.

The significance of the present study lies on the point that no study so far (known to the researcher) has attempted to study expertise in Iranian formal EFL educational contexts (high schools and universities). In addition, this study provided a comparison of expertise features found in two groups of novice and experienced teachers; high school teachers and university general English instructors.

The following research questions were formulated for the present study.

1. How is expertise manifested in teaching practice of novice and experienced Iranian EFL high school teachers?
2. How is expertise manifested in teaching practice of novice and experienced Iranian EFL university instructors?
3. Does teaching experience lead to teaching expertise? Do the novice and experienced groups reveal different patterns of expertise?

4. What aspects of expertise are more outstanding in each of these two educational contexts?
5. In what ways expertise differ in teaching practice of Iranian General English university instructors and high school EFL teachers?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Expertise**

Since expertise is a subjective phenomenon and is as complex as other concepts in the field of humanities, it seems very difficult to come to a comprehensive definition of the term. This idea has also been mentioned by Farrell (2013), and Pivosa and Janik (2011).

If you ask teachers, students, and parents about the concept of expertise in teaching, their answers may refer to a large body of experience, disciplinary features, and/or personal characteristics.

Saphier (2007, p.1) defines expertise as "having a repertoire of ways at one's disposal for handling the task of teaching, and then knowing how to choose and apply what is appropriate from one's repertoire".

#### **Expertise; state or process?**

Tsui (2009) reviewed the studies done on the teaching expertise and remarked that there are two perspectives about teaching expertise in the literature; expertise as a state reached after years of experience (Borg, 2009; Breen et al., 2001; Woods, 1996) and expertise as a process that adapts a view of teaching as situated and expert eeeee eee as ctttt ittt ed yy eæche aacccnnnnnmn aaaciice. It considers expertise as a process developed over time rather than a state (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1993). Several studies support each of these perspectives.

#### **Propositions about expertise features in pedagogy**

Farrell (2013) believes that it is not correct to regard teachers as experts only because of their years of experience in a classroom since the number of years of teaching experience does not necessarily translate into expertise. In his study, Farrell attempted to contribute to the literature on ESL teacher expertise by examining the experiences of three experienced ESL teachers as they reflected on their work over a 2-year period in a teacher reflection group with the aid of a

facilitator as part of their professional development. The findings identified five main characteristics of teacher expertise in order of frequency: knowledge of learners and learning, engagement in critical reflection, accessing past experiences, having informed lesson planning, and activating student involvement.

Kini and Podolsky (2016, p.7) reviewed 30 studies published within the last 15 years that analyze the effect of teaching experience on teachers' professional development and effectiveness and their students' success. The result of their study revealed that:

- "1. Teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement."
  2. As teachers gain experience, their students not only learn more, as measured by standardized tests, they are also more likely to do better on other measures of success, such as school attendance.
  3. Teachers are more effective at a greater age when they teach in a supportive and collegial working environment, and when they accumulate experience in the same grade level, subject, or district.
  4. More experienced teachers support greater student learning for their colleagues and the school as a whole, as well as for their own students."

They also warn the readers to be careful about interpreting the results of their study, since they believe that their research did not indicate that the passage of time will make all teachers better or incompetent teachers effective. However, it indicates that, for most teachers, experience increases effectiveness and learners' success.

### **Practical studies on the comparison of novice and experienced teachers**

Some researchers in the field of second/foreign language teaching have investigated the differences between novice and experienced teachers from different angles.

Pilvar and Leijen (2015) explored the differences in thinking between experienced and novice teachers when solving problematic pedagogical situations. They believe that solving problematic situations is an important part of developing teaching expertise. They introduced a test to explore differences in thinking between 29 experienced and 29 pre-service novice. Participants were asked to solve a problematic situation related to teaching. The test consisted of

a description of a pedagogical work-related incident and guiding questions. The situation was based on a real teaching situation. After analysis of the data, it turned out that the expected different results between the experienced and novice teachers based on the comparison of the two groups in the theoretical part did not occur in the empirical part of the paper as evidently as they did in the characteristics listed in the theoretical framework. Personal experiences related to the situation were associated with the use of some characteristics of problem solving. The results suggested that more experienced teachers used an action plan to search for information more often, which means that more experienced teachers generally structure their action plans better than novice teachers. In fact, experienced teachers were searching for information more frequently when making action plans, drew up more action plans overall and structured plans better than novice teachers.

Wolff et al., (2014) focused on the differences between expert and novice teachers in classroom management. They believe that classroom management represents an important skill and knowledge set for achieving student learning gains, but poses a considerable challenge for beginning teachers. They created a coding scheme for verbalizations describing classroom events and their relevance for classroom management. Four categories of codes emerged referred to perceptions/interpretations, thematic focus, temporality, and cognitive processing. Mixed-effects ANOVA on the number of significant effects related to classroom management verbalizations yielded a number of significant effects related to expertise level. Differences in focus included themes such as student learning, student discipline, and teacher interaction and influence. Experts focused on learning in the classroom while novices were more concerned with maintaining discipline and behavioral norms.

Concerning the studies done on the comparison of novice and experienced teachers in Iranian context, mention can be made of a few studies. For instance, Zarei and Afshari (2012) studied experienced and novice teachers in Iranian context. They found that experienced teachers were more concerned with maintaining discipline and behavioral norms.

factors (motivation, self- concept, anxiety, and autonomy) on teacher efficacy. 53 experienced teachers with more than 10 years of experience and 46 novice teachers with 3 years of experience participated in the study. A four-part questionnaire (each part measuring the perceptions of the teachers about one of the intrinsic factors) was administered to all the participants. A Mann Whitney U procedure was used to compare the views of experienced and novice teachers for each part. Results indicated that there were significant differences between novice and expert teachers as to the effects of anxiety and autonomy on teacher efficacy. However, the views of experienced and novice teachers did not differ significantly concerning the effect of these factors on teacher efficacy.

Kaana (2010) examined pedagogical knowledge in Iran. He examined the categories of pedagogical knowledge related to the act of teaching of novice and experienced teachers as gleaned from their verbal reports of what they were thinking about while teaching and compared the categories of pedagogical knowledge of novice and experienced teachers. The aim was to see whether differences between them could be attributed to differences in their number of years of teaching experience. Stimulated recall methodology was used to collect the data. The results indicated that novice and experienced teachers were to a large extent similar to each other in terms of major PK categories, however, there were differences both in the number and particularly the order of the thoughts experienced and novice teachers produced. Experienced teachers produced an average of 1.7 pedagogical thought per minute, while their novice teacher counterparts produced 1.31 thoughts.

### **The models and frameworks to study teaching expertise**

Researchers have proposed different models to study teaching expertise of which two will be elaborated briefly below.

Beairsto (2013) suggests that teaching expertise can be thought of four cornerstone competencies: managing relationships, instructing in curriculum, instructing in meta-skills and providing guidance.

As it is presented in figure 1, each of the four domains is internally complex, they overlap and they are in many ways interdependent, but taken together they provide a useful conceptual framework for the gestalt of a teach.

Beairsto (2013) believes that through such a conceptual framework a novice teacher may connect the dots of his/her pre-service training and this process would help him/her to make more cumulative sense of subsequent teaching and experiences.

As another useful source to inform the present study, Saphier (2007) suggests six categories to study teaching expertise: Management expertise, motivational expertise, instructional expertise, planning expertise, craft knowledge, and understanding the Connections between Concepts in the Content.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The type of sampling used in the present study was purposive sampling. According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010, p.156), "in purposive sampling ° also referred to as judgment sampling ° sample elements judged to be typical, or representative, are chosen from the population". The sample of the present study consisted of two groups: high school English teachers from four cities of Mazandaran province (the actual site of the study): Babolsar, Freidonkenar, Jouybar, and Qaemshahr and General English university instructors from Mazandaran University located in Babolsar. Each group consisted of 10 teachers, 5 novice and 5 experienced ones. Since the study was qualitative in nature and because of time limitation, it was not actually practical to include more than 20 teachers. Based on the related literature (Berliner, 2004; Turner, 1995), the novice teachers are those who are in the beginning years of their teaching practice (1 to 5 years of teaching experience). However, experienced teachers have more than 15 years of teaching experience.

### **Instruments**

As the study was qualitative in design, the required data was collected mainly through class observations. Furthermore, the teachers were interviewed in order to increase the dependability of the data.

### **Observation**

Following the grounded theory type of qualitative research based on which the research is grounded on actual data collected from the investigated context, the researchers observed the classes without making use of any specific type of observation scheme, though they



were already informed by the relevant literature on language teacher expertise. Such being the case, they just took notes of what happened inside the class as far as teaching expertise features were concerned.

### ***Interview***

The high school teachers and university instructors of both groups were interviewed separately after the observation sessions. This order (observation and then interview) was followed mainly because, otherwise, the questions of interview would have sensitized the teachers and instructors in their teaching practice.

The questions of the interview, which was structured in nature, focused on what the teachers think about expertise and their evaluation of their own teaching practice. They were asked to provide examples for what they claimed. Their conception of teaching, learning, and teachers in general, and English teachers in the Iranian context in particular were the key concepts that the researchers concentrated on. Their answers were compared by the data gathered through observation sessions. The answers to the interview questions were tape-recorded and then transcribed by the researchers.

### **Data collection procedure**

During the observation sessions, the researchers played the role of participant observers. They interacted with the participants enough to establish rapport with them but did not really get involved in the actual teaching practice and activities of the learners. The researchers' status as observer/researcher was known to the teachers and learners from the beginning of the study.

The purpose behind the observation sessions was to see how the teachers' teaching practice indicated features of expertise and because it was not actually possible to observe all intended aspects in one single session, following Nunan and Bailey (2008), every class of the teachers was observed for two or three sessions.

### **Credibility and dependability of the research findings**

Credibility in qualitative research addresses the truthfulness of the results of the study (Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen, 2010). In order to increase the credibility of the findings of the present study, two instruments were used in order to gather data: observation which was the primary source of data, and interview to affirm what was gathered

through observation. It was hoped that these two procedures (triangulation) would enrich the results and enhance the credibility of the research findings. Dependability was assessed using inter-rater agreement. The researchers and a second rater having enough experience in conducting qualitative research did the coding based on the coding rubric identified by the researchers. Codes were later on fine-tuned by comparing and grouping similarly coded transcripts with each other to identify and refine themes or ideas that were emerging. The specified codes by the raters were compared using the formula of Reiiiall tty=... of ageeeme//// odll bbbb er ff ageeemesss + aaaageeeme\*\*\*\*f\* (eeee & eeee mran, 1994, .. 64). eee ttt anred index of reliability was found to be 89.74 % for the analysis which meets the general check coding standard.

## Results

### Analysis of the data

As mentioned before, the participants were observed 2-3 sessions and were interviewed individually later. This process provided the researcher with several sheets of paper of raw material which needed to be classified and organized into manageable and meaningful units. In order to do so, the systematic approach to coding which was suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as explained by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) was utilized. This approach to grounded theory which was the type of qualitative research utilized for the present study consists of three stages: open, axial and selective coding. Each of these stages as well as the process of coding the data of the study are explained below.

### Codification of the data

#### Stage 1: Open coding

Open coding is defined by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010, p.646) as "the process of breaking down and categorizing qualitative data into aa aageaeer segee sss . ff eæ eeveaal eeaggggs ff eee aata, eee researcher should try to label and categorize phenomenon in the data using a comparative method. In this way similar incidents are grouped together and given the same conceptual label. And later these concepts are grouped together into categories".

The data obtained from observation sessions for each teacher consisted of a careful (as far as possible) description of what went on in the classroom from the very beginning up to the end of the class. Since observation constituted the main source of data, an attempt was made to take notes of the teachers' greetings, their teaching method, reviews, warm ups, questions, as well as the learners' reactions, answers, mistakes, and even the physical environment of the class. The teachers' answers to the interview questions were also transcribed and the underlying notions and themes expressed by them were identified.

The data was read for several times. Since the focus of the study was on teaching expertise, any related points in the data were labeled. Using comparative method, similar labels were grouped together. Then, it was time to reduce the raw data into some manageable concepts. Later in the next phase, these labels were grouped together into categories.

Consider the following example which is an extract of observation for one of the teachers who was a novice high school teacher, teaching the last grade of junior high school (grade 9) at the time of conducting the study.

*The lesson was about 'Festivals and Ceremonies' and the teacher had just finished talking about "Yalda Night" as an Iranian ceremony. Then, she asked her students to talk about "Norooz" and its traditions. One student talked about "Haftsin". Then, the teacher talked about the gold fish which is one of the favorable components of the Haftsin for students. She elaborated on the historical beliefs about gold fish and its importance in Ancient China.*

*The teacher: "Gold fish was originally discovered and used by Ancient Chinese in their New Year ceremonies. They believed that the color of this fish resembles the color of gold coins used at that time and therefore they believed that gold fish would bring them wealth in the New Year. Later, Iranians used this symbol in their Norooz ceremony, however with a different meaning. For them (Iranians) it became a symbol of life and movement."*

*When the students' textbook (Prospect series, volume 3), was examined by the researchers, they found out that the points explained by the teacher about gold fish were not mentioned in the book.*

This part of the extract was labeled as 'giving students extra information' and this concept was later categorized as "Content knowledge expertise".

### **Stage 2: Axial coding**

The next step in data analysis through codification is axial coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.123) define this stage of coding as "the process of relating categories to each other and linking a category at a level of analysis to its subcategories. The main goal of this stage is to put the broken data together and to form connections between a category and its subcategories.

The result of coding at the previous stage was several discrete cases of teaching expertise at micro level. Now, it was time to put all these broken parts of data together in a meaningful and organized way. Therefore, those instances of teaching expertise which were similar or were related to each other were grouped together and given a general term like the case mentioned above.

At this stage, the researcher also made use of the literature on the issue, i.e. teaching expertise and employed the two models suggested by Beairsto (2013) and Saphier (2007) which were introduced briefly above. The models helped the researcher to better organize the discrete instances into macro categories.

The final expertise categories developed for the present study was a combination of these two models plus one item added by the researchers derived from the data which seemed to be absent in the models, i.e. expertise in dealing with challenges. Each category contained some subcategories covering the instances of the same kind in the data.

Briefly, the expertise categories for the present study as indicated in figure 1 consisted of the following items: expertise in management, motivational expertise and providing guidance and feedback, instructional expertise, content knowledge expertise, expertise in making connections between subjects of study, and expertise in dealing with challenges.

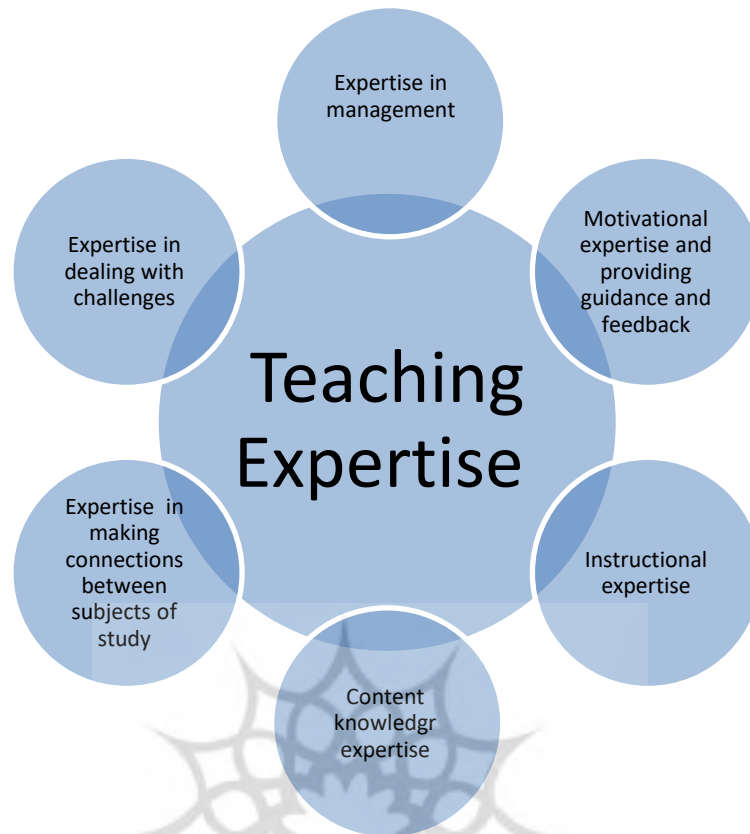


Figure 1. The teaching expertise features informing the study

At this stage, the teachers' answers to the first two questions of the interview were reviewed to see whether the categories found for teaching expertise (derived from the observation data) were also present in their comments. After reading and extracting the features of expertise that the participants of the study enumerated as features of teaching expertise, the researchers found that most of the categories and subcategories were mentioned by them, though sometimes they were stated by different terms and in different ways. For example, one of the experienced university instructors stated:

*"In my opinion teaching expertise refers to a number of features such as ..., having skills of understanding students' unown and knknown areas with respect to the content matter."*

The point mentioned by this instructor was formerly decided to be one of the subcategories of instructional expertise and was given the title

"building on what learners know in teaching new items" (through trying to activate students' background knowledge).

### Stage 3: Selective coding

The final step in codifying the data is selective coding. In this stage, the categories are placed in a larger group, in order to form an overall theory or theme. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010, p.650) define selective coding as "the process of systematically reviewing qualitative data to look for a specific category or theme".

First, the types of expertise which were prevalent in the teaching of each group of teachers were identified. For each group, the percentage of success in each of the expertise types was calculated and tabulated based on the number of checked cells divided by the total number of cells for each expertise type in a checklist which was specifically designed for this purpose. The tabulated data was finally converted to figures and charts which facilitated the comparison between and among the four groups of teachers.

Table 1. The percentage of expertise types for novice high school teachers

Expertise type	The total number of cells for each type	The number of checked cells	Percentage of success in each type
Management	25	21	84%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	55	36	64%
Instructional	90	83	92%
Content knowledge	10	9	90%
Making connections between subjects of study	5	3	60%
Dealing with challenges	10	5	50%

As it is shown, the first column shows the expertise types; the second indicates the total number of cells in each type of expertise, the third reflects the number of cells checked for teachers of each group

based on the classroom observations; and the last one is devoted to the percentage of success of each group for each type of expertise.

Table 2. The percentage of expertise types for experienced high school teachers

Expertise type	The total number of cells for each type	The number of checked cells	Percentage of success in each type
Management	25	18	72%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	55	35	63%
Instructional	90	78	87%
Content knowledge	10	9	90%
Making connections between subjects of study	5	5	100%
Dealing with challenges	10	3	30%

Table 3. The percentage of expertise types for novice university instructors

Expertise type	The total number of cells for each type	The number of checked cells	Percentage of success in each type
Management	25	23	92%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	55	42	76%
Instructional	90	75	83%
Content knowledge	10	7	70%
Making connections between subjects of study	5	5	100%
Dealing with challenges	10	2	20%

Table 4. The percentage of expertise types for experienced university instructors

Expertise type	The total number of cells for each type	The number of checked cells	Percentage of success in each type
Management	25	19	76%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	55	40	73%
Instructional	90	79	88%
Content knowledge	10	10	100%
Making connections between subjects of study	5	5	100%
Dealing with challenges	10	2	20%

In order to have a clearer understanding of the information presented in the above tables, an attempt was made to transform the information into a visual mode, as seen in the following bar graph. Instead of four bar graphs revealing the amount of success of each group in different aspects of expertise (in percentages), one bar graph (figure 2) was designed to show the performance of the four groups at once.

From the data gathered, organized and coded for the present study and based on the tables and the bar graph above, it can be inferred that the performance of all the four groups indicate degrees of success in all aspects of expertise investigated in this study.



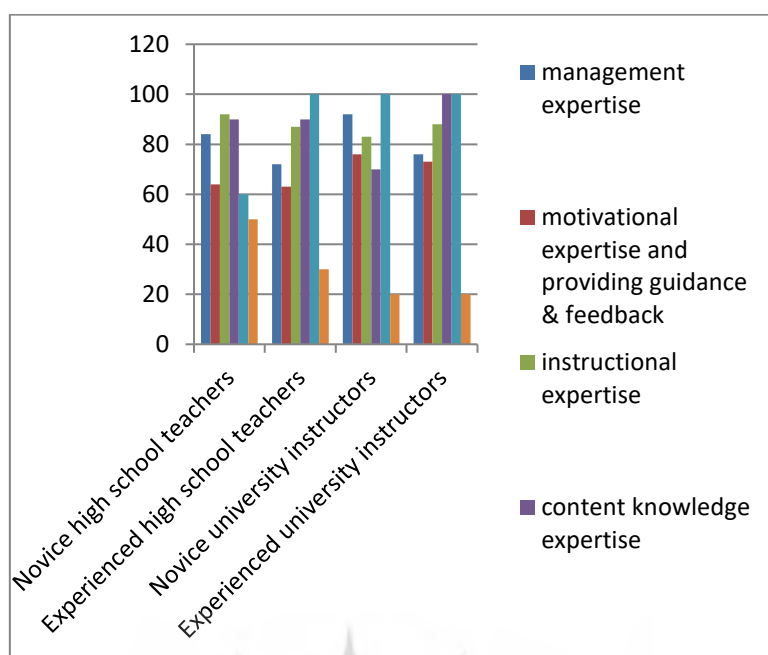


Figure 2. The bar graph indicating the percentage of success of each group of teachers regarding the expertise types

In order to be organized and systematic in elaborating the results of the study, two steps were followed. First, the degree of success in each type of expertise was presented and in the second step the most and least prominent expertise type(s) for each group of teachers were identified. The degree of success in this sense indicates how much the teaching performance of the teachers in each group manifested the categories of each expertise type.

### Step one

**Management expertise:** Novice university instructors ranked first in this type of expertise with 92% success which is quite high and novice high school teachers ranked second by 84%. Experienced university instructors ranked third by 76% and experienced high school teachers were the fourth by 72% success. As seen, the performance of the third and the fourth group in this type of expertise is very much alike.

**Motivational expertise and providing guidance and feedback:** The highest degree of success in this important type of expertise belonged to novice university instructors by 76%. Experienced university instructors ranked second by 73% which is quite close to the first

group. Novice and experienced high school teachers ranked third and fourth by 64% and 63%, respectively, which are again very close to each other.

**Instructional expertise:** Regarding instructional expertise, novice high school teachers ranked first by 92% success. Then, came experienced university instructors with 88% success. The third group was experienced high school teachers by 87% success. And finally the fourth rank went to novice university instructors by 83% success. As it is seen, in this type of expertise all groups indicated high degree of success.

**Content knowledge expertise:** Experienced university instructors achieved the first rank in this type of expertise by 100%. It means that the teaching performance of all teachers in this group contained all categories of this type of expertise. Novice and experienced high school teachers jointly ranked second by an equal degree of success (90%) and novice university instructors stood at the last place by 70% success.

**Expertise in making connections between the subjects of study:** One of the interesting findings of the study was related to this type of expertise. The three groups of novice and experienced university instructors as well as experienced high school teachers achieved the highest level of performance in this type of expertise by 100%. Novice high school teachers, however, ranked the second by 60% success.

**Experience in dealing with challenges:** This type of expertise showed the lowest degree of success for all groups. Novice high school teachers ranked first by 50%, experienced high school teachers ranked second by 30% and novice as well as experienced university instructors ranked third by an equal degree of success (20%).

### **Step two**

In the second step, as formerly explained, the performances of the four groups of teachers were presented. Therefore, each group of teachers was treated individually.

**Novice high school teachers:** This group exhibited a high degree of success in the two types of instructional and content knowledge expertise by 92% and 90%, respectively. Though the least successful

area was expertise in dealing with challenges by 50%, it was the highest degree of success for this expertise type among the four groups.

**Experienced high school teachers:** This group achieved perfect performance (100% success) for expertise in making connections between subjects of study. They also were successful in content knowledge expertise by 90% success and then in instructional expertise by 87%. Their least successful area concerned expertise in dealing with challenges (30%).

**Novice university instructors:** This group was considerably successful in making connections between subjects of study by 100% success. Their second area of strength was related to management expertise by 92% success and their least successful area was expertise in dealing with challenges by 20% success.

**Experienced university instructors:** This group was the only group that achieved two cases of complete success in performance (100% success) for content knowledge and making connections between subjects of study. They also achieved 88% of success in instructional expertise. Their least area of success again went to expertise in dealing with challenges by 20% success.

### Discussion

In this section, the research questions of the study are restated and answered based on the findings of the study and more points concerning the comparison of the four groups of teachers are presented. The results are also discussed in the light of the related literature.

#### **1. How is expertise manifested in the teaching practice of novice and experienced EFL high school teachers?**

On the whole, both groups of teachers achieved above 50% success in all types of expertise. The only exception was expertise in dealing with changes in which the experienced high school teachers had 30% success.

An attempt was made to convert the related information into pie charts through which the contribution of each type of expertise for these two groups of teachers can be examined more clearly.

If the concept of expertise can be considered as a whole (the circle), each type of expertise identified by one color represents just a part of it. As shown in the pie chart below, instructional and content knowledge expertise accounted for the largest portions and expertise in dealing with challenges made up the smallest portion of teaching expertise for novice high school teachers.

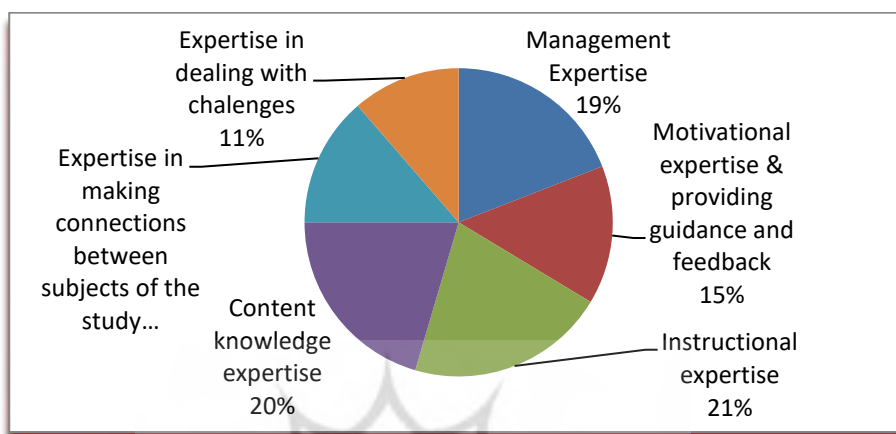


Figure 3. The contribution of each type of expertise for novice high school teachers

For experienced high school teachers, expertise in making connections between subjects of study, content knowledge, and instructional expertise formed the largest portions and expertise in dealing with challenges made up the smallest portion.

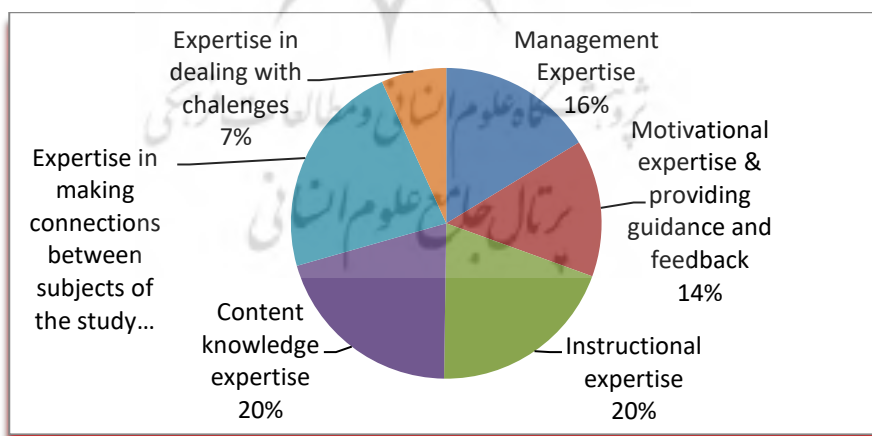


Figure 4. The contribution of each type of expertise for experienced high school teachers

In the following table, the degree of success for these two groups of teachers can be compared.

Table 5. Comparing the amount of success of novice and experienced high school teachers in the teaching expertise types

Types of expertise	Novice high school teachers	Experienced high school teachers
Management	84%	72%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	64%	63%
Instructional	92%	87%
Content knowledge	90%	90%
Making connections between subjects of study	60%	100%
Dealing with challenges	50%	30%

Concerning the management, motivational expertise and providing guidance and support, and instructional expertise, the analysis of data did not show a remarkable contrast between these two groups of teachers. As indicated in table 5, the difference does not exceed 12 percent. No difference is observed for content knowledge expertise, since both groups achieved the same percentage of expertise manifestation (90%).

Consequently, based on the result of this study it can be claimed, as far as high school teachers are concerned, increasing the years of teaching experience does not necessarily lead to a different and more successful pattern of teaching expertise types.

The findings mentioned above are in contrast with the existing literature in which the novices were described as failing to adapt instruction in response to students' cues due to their less well-elaborated schemas (Gagné, 1985). cc cggggggoo Weeeenrasss yyyyy (1991), novice teachers lack integrated knowledge about the overall curriculum, are not aware of student characteristics sufficiently, ignore eeeeeeeee eeeee eeeee ee e add eeaavrrr cee,, add eeeefrr e cattt

make the three stages of decision-making - preactive, interactive, and postactive - dynamically interrelated, as the expert teachers do. In other words, the studies mentioned above suggests that novice teachers usually teach each lesson as a discrete entity without tailoring it to the characteristics of students because they cannot use various sources of information in order to form internal goals.

Farrell (2009) believes that many teacher educators, teachers, students, administrators, and even novice teachers themselves assume that once novice teachers have graduated, they will be able to apply what they have learned in teacher-preparation programs during their first years of teaching. However, the transition from the teacher-education program to the first years of teaching has been characterized as a type of reality shock; the ideals that novice teachers may have formed during the teacher-education program are often replaced by the realities of the social and political contexts of the school. One reason may be that teacher- education programs are unable to reproduce environments similar to those teachers face when they graduate. Consequently, many novice teachers are left to cope on their own in a sink-or-swim situation.

Johnson (2002) also stated that for the novice teacher, the first years of teaching has been called an unpredictable and idiosyncratic activity, an anxiety provoking experience that involves a balancing act between learning to teach (i.e., furthering the professional knowledge and skills that were initiated during the teacher-education program) and attempting to take on an identity as a real teacher within an established school culture.

However, the findings of this study indicated a different pattern of teaching experience and expertise for novice teachers that is by no means similar to those mentioned in the literature.

What actually differentiates the performance of novice and experienced high school teachers participating in the present study is related to two expertise types of making connections between subjects of the study and dealing with challenges. While experienced high school teachers revealed perfect performance in making connections between the subjects of the study (100%), novice high school teachers were only 60% successful. The success of experienced high school teachers may be due to their comprehensive point of view which has

been developed through several years of teaching experience that inspire them to look at several lessons of the book as a continuum rather than discrete items. Novice teachers, on the other hand, may have been so overwhelmed by the requirements of each lesson that might have made them ignore the fact that these discrete items can be placed into a more general framework.

Discussing success or lack of success for dealing with challenges in classrooms is quite problematic. Table 5 suggests that novice teachers were 50% successful in dealing with challenges, while experienced teachers were only 30% successful. However, it cannot be concluded that novices were more able to deal with challenges than the experienced teachers. In fact, it can be assumed that since experienced teachers usually manage to offer instruction in the classroom fully, and successfully, and pay attention to the points of each lesson and also attend to their affective needs and moods, very few problematic cases of challenge took place in the class to be observed by the researchers. As a matter of fact, what actually revealed itself as a challenge for the novice teachers could have been regarded as an ordinary case for the experienced ones. This is where experience helps teachers to follow a smooth trend of teaching in their classrooms.

## **2. How is expertise manifested in the teaching practice of novice and experienced EFL university instructors?**

On the whole, both groups of university instructors achieved above 70% success in all types of expertise. The only exception again is expertise in dealing with challenges in which both groups had 20% success.

Once more the related information was converted into pie charts through which the contribution of each type of expertise for these two groups of instructors can be observed.

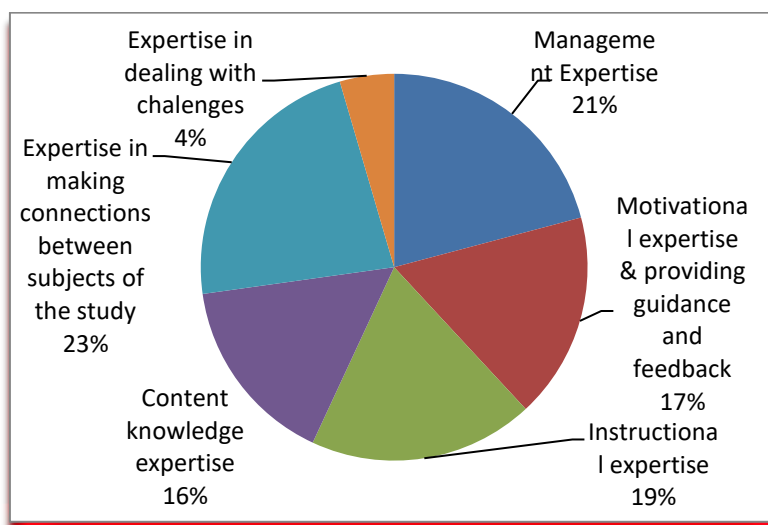


Figure 5. The contribution of each type of expertise for novice university instructors

As depicted in the above chart, expertise in making connections between subjects of study and management expertise accounted for the largest portions and expertise in dealing with challenges made up the smallest portion of contribution.

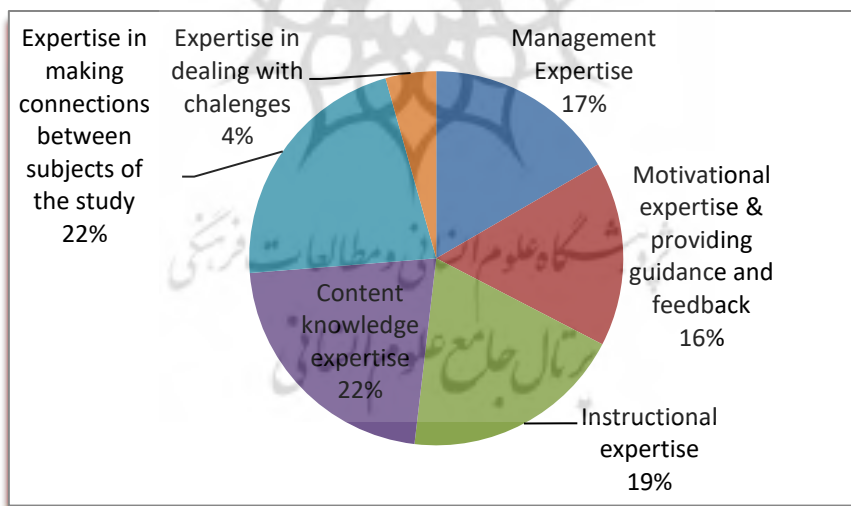


Figure 6. The contribution of each type of expertise for experienced university instructors

For experienced university instructors, expertise in making connections between the subjects of study, and content knowledge



formed the largest portions and expertise in dealing with challenges accounted for the smallest portion of contribution.

In table 6, the amount of success in the manifestation of teaching expertise for these two groups of teachers can be compared.

Table 6. Comparing the degree of success of novice and experienced university instructors in the teaching expertise types

Types of expertise	Novice instructors	Experienced instructors
Management	92%	76%
Motivational and providing guidance and support	76%	73%
Instructional	83%	88%
Content knowledge	70%	100%
Making connections between subjects of study	100%	100%
Dealing with challenges	20%	20%

Novice and experienced university instructors did not indicate much difference in areas of management, motivational expertise and providing guidance and support, instructional, expertise in making connections between subjects of the study and also dealing with challenges. However, there was a considerable difference in their patterns of expertise concerning content knowledge in which experienced university instructors outperformed the novice ones by 30%. Except for content knowledge, again the findings of the present study do not support the related literature. In fact, it seems that the two groups indicated somehow a similar pattern of teaching expertise.

### **3. Does teaching experience lead to teaching expertise? Do the novice and experienced groups reveal different patterns of expertise?**

The results of the present study question the common-sense belief according to which experience leads to expertise. In fact, the analysis of the data revealed that the teachers in novice groups (university and high school) and experienced teachers (university and high school)

indicated a number of similar features of expertise in their teaching expertise. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it cannot be claimed that different patterns of expertise features were observed between and among the four groups of teachers. Nor can it be claimed that experienced teachers outperformed the novices. Even based on the results, novice high school teachers and instructors outperformed experienced groups in two categories of management and motivational expertise. Therefore, based on the results of the present study, it cannot be concluded that an increase in years of teaching experience will necessarily lead to the manifestation of higher levels of expertise.

To provide more information regarding this important finding one can refer to the fourth question of interview which focused on the same issue. In this question, the teachers were asked: "*Do you believe that teaching experience (in the sense of years of teaching practice) and expertise are related to each other in any meaningful way? How? Do you think teaching experience will necessarily lead to the formation and development of teaching expertise? How? Please explain.*"

The analysis of the teachers' responses revealed that most teachers (all except two) believed that experience (in the sense of teaching practice) can be effective in developing expertise; however, it is not enough for its formation and development. They believed that many other factors are involved in the teachers' professional development such as exchanging ideas with colleagues, trying to be up-to-date, reading recent sources, and most importantly being reflective. Therefore, their ideas seem to be in-line with and support the findings of this study.

The relationship between experience and expertise has not been the focus of many studies in the field of second/foreign language teaching. In addition to those mentioned previously, Tsui (2009) also states that various criteria have been used to identify expert teachers. The most commonly adopted criterion is the number of years of teaching. Then, she asserts that experience does not entail expertise. Breiter and Scardamalia (1993) also express the same idea.

In this sense, it seems that the present study also confirms the literature such as Farrell (2013) and Kini and Podolsky, (2016) that

suggests teaching experience, though effective, cannot necessarily lead to the formation of teaching expertise.

#### **4. What aspects of expertise are more outstanding in each of these two educational contexts?**

The instances of teaching expertise manifested by high school teachers included their good performance on content knowledge, instructional, management expertise (for both groups of novice and experienced teachers) and making connections between subject of study (for the experienced teachers).

The instances of teaching expertise manifested by university instructors encompass making connections between subjects of the study, instructional, motivational expertise and providing guidance and support, and management (for both groups of novice and experienced instructors) and content knowledge (for the experienced instructors).

As such, it can be concluded that management and instructional expertise prove to be the common expertise features manifested in the teaching practice of high school teachers and university instructors.

#### **5. In what ways expertise differ in teaching practice of Iranian General English university instructors and high school EFL teachers?**

One aspect of difference between high school teachers and university instructors refers to the average degree of success of these two groups in the teaching expertise types which was calculated by adding the average of all expertise types for one group divided by six (the number of expertise categories investigated in this study). While this average is 72% for novice and experienced high school teachers as well as novice university instructors, it is 76% for experienced instructors. It should be reminded that experienced instructors were also the only group among the four groups who had two cases of 100% success for content knowledge and making connections between subjects of study.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study focused on the manifestation of teaching expertise in novice and experienced Iranian high school EFL teachers and

university instructors and aimed to investigate the following issues through observation and interview,

- whether the teachers who participated in the study, novice versus experienced and high school teachers versus university instructors reveal different pattern of teaching expertise in their classrooms,
- whether teaching experience in the sense of years devoted to teaching practice can lead to the development and manifestation of rich teaching expertise features for the experienced high school teachers and university instructors participating in the study.

The results of the study revealed that first, the four groups of teachers did not manifest different patterns of expertise features in their teaching practice. The degrees of success in different features of expertise for the four groups were almost similar to each other. Consequently, contrary to the extant literature, the novice high school teachers and university instructors were not noticeably different from experienced high school teachers and university instructors of the study in expertise in management, motivational expertise and providing guidance and feedback, instructional expertise, content knowledge expertise, expertise in making connections between subjects of study, and expertise in dealing with challenges.

Second, no evidence in this study could support the long-held belief that experience will definitely lead to expertise. Since the degree of success of the novice groups of teachers in different expertise features had almost the same pattern as that of experienced groups, the novices cannot be labeled as those who lack many aspects and features of teaching expertise.

The results of the study can have a number of implications for both teachers and teacher educators. Language teacher educators should be made aware of the fact that the statement "Experience leads to expertise" is more a myth rather than a fact. Such being the case, it can be suggested that the purpose and content of pre-service and in-service teacher training courses be revised. Traditionally, such courses usually target novice and partially experienced teachers and the experienced teachers are either exempted from them or they do not

take them seriously enough. Policy makers and curriculum developers in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology should pay much more attention to offering teacher professional development programs through needs analysis of language teachers which can be done by observing their classes and interviewing them. As a matter of fact, in some cases, it is the experienced teachers who need such programs rather than the novice ones.

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