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Teaching Quality of EFL Teachers: Do Years of Teaching Experience Matter?

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Abstract

Teaching quality plays a significant role in students' achievement which is the main goal of education. So far, teacher education has witnessed widespread reforms to improve this quality with no obvious evidence to uphold the claim that experienced teachers are more competent than beginning teachers. This study attempted to investigate whether years of teaching experience can make any significant difference in EFL teachers' teaching quality. To this end, classroom interactions of 90 English teachers who were teaching to 7th-grade students were observed by using Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Findings showed better teaching quality in terms of instructional and emotional support for beginning teachers (0-3 years of teaching experience), but this dimension declined for transitioning (4-5) and experienced teachers (more than 5 years) with no evidence of a significant difference between them. The only superiority of experienced teachers was having better classroom management compared to other teachers with beginning teachers in the lowest position. These findings suggest that directed professional development programs and evidence-based learning can be beneficial for all teachers regardless of their years of teaching experience.

***Keywords*:** Classroom observation, Professional development, Quality teaching, Teacher education, Teaching Experience

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INTRODUCTION

The Globalized world has resulted in the ever-growing use of English as an international language and knowing this language is accompanied by using it in real-life communication. The availability of international standardized language assessments has made comparing students' language performance much easier and at the same time more stressful since there is an extreme focus on factors supposed to impact school students' academic achievement (Sellar, Thompson, & Rutkowski, 2017). Therefore, concentration has shifted from disproportion in student achievement to absolute and relative decrease in performance, bringing about a growing inspection of "teaching" and "teacher quality" (Scholes et al., 2017). Scrutiny of teachers by developing models of teacher effectiveness, generating teachers' professional standards and certification, and replacement of formal inspections are samples of the actions taken in this regard (Sachs, 2016).

The Effectiveness of teacher preparation (Gale & Parker, 2017) and teacher education (TE) programs have also been criticized for inappropriately making teachers ready for the classroom realities (McMahon, Forde, & Dickson, 2015). This criticism is especially severe in terms of behavior management (Churchward & Willis, 2019; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012) with no careful search of what is being taught in TE, or if inexperienced teachers are less efficient at behavior management compared to teachers with more experience. The consequence of joining TE to teacher quality is framing beginning teachers as "the problem" and this results in framing the ways of solving this problem in turn (Mockler, 2020). In other words, a superficial concentration on TE and its graduates might convey that the real essence and extent of the issues affecting school training go on unresolved and undetected, whereas others are exaggerated more than their practical or actual importance (Graham, White, Cologon, Robert, & Pianta, 2020).

Current answers to the dilemma of quality teaching have consequently centered mainly on teacher education universities and the quality of their

graduates (Gore, 2016), without furnishing adequate empirical evidence to stand up for the claim that beginners are less competent than experienced teachers (Podolsky, Kini & Darling-Hammond, 2019). This might be due to the inadequate amount of empirical studies and the mixed evidence exists. For example, some scholars (e.g., Rice, 2013; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005) cast doubt on whether teachers keep on learning as they obtain more experience in the classroom context or not. Therefore, the current study has tried to identify the effect of Iranian EFL teachers' years of experience on their quality of teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of teachers in facilitating and improving students' achievements is undeniable and one crucial variable in teacher development and teaching quality is experience. According to Wang, Lin, Spalding, Klecka, and Odell (2011), teachers' skills, knowledge, and mind habits combine to generate patterns of practice called *quality teaching*. Experienced teachers might differ from beginning teachers in various ways. Less experienced teachers are possibly in need of professional development which is matched with knowledge and experience gathered during their occupations. However, it should be mentioned that expertise and teaching quality cannot essentially be obtained through teaching experience (Tsui, 2003). As Tsui (2005) stated, even though experienced teachers may try to benefit from chances to reflect on and enhance their professional knowledge and teaching enthusiasm, sometimes they are not as inclined towards professional development as beginning teachers. Also, in the available literature teaching quality is not a widely accepted concept. Instead, there are definitions grounded on different assumptions (Wang, et al., 2011).

At least three perspectives can be seen in these differences including teachers' cognitive resources, performance, and effect (Kennedy, 2008). Teaching quality from the cognitive resource position is associated with the beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and viewpoints teachers bring in. From this

position, several notions can be traced that seem to be essential to policy arguments connected to teaching. Firstly, quality teaching is connected to the teachers' competence as revealed on professional and academic tests. This competence is probably one of the chief factors that predicts teachers' effectiveness and a significant assumption underlying the debate around whether teachers from alternative programs have higher quality than those who graduate from traditional teacher education programs (Labaree, 2008). Secondly, quality teaching is related to the academic degrees teachers hold for teaching. This notion is particularly considered when it is discussed whether teachers' licenses are related to their field of teaching or not. Debates on easy entry to the teaching profession are also related to this position (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Another notion in terms of cognitive resource view presumes that teachers' skills, dispositions, and knowledge are the main predictors of teaching quality (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). This perspective has been incorporated into the standards of teacher education programs. Increasing teachers' disposition, skills, and knowledge have been the center of many professional development offerings and teacher education over the years (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

Quality of teaching has also been considered from a performance perspective focusing on what teachers do in their practices (Lampert, 2010). This underlying view which is a primary premise in the process–product studies on teacher effectiveness assumes that the special things teachers do in their classroom result in students' learning (Brophy, 1989). Observing teachers' performance in classrooms is also a significant aspect of evaluating and certifying them (Silvestro, Freeborne, Hunsberger, Lake, & Mackey, 1993). Since students' learning quality is related to the amount of teachers' experience, many teacher mentoring programs and continuing professional encouragement for teacher learning are partly based on this notion (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). In these programs, teachers are involved in learning and designing various types of teaching activities backed up by resources, teaching models, emotional help, and collegial culture (Wang & Odell, 2002).

Some scholars (e.g., Ball et al., 2008; García, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010) argued that no pedagogical behavior can produce satisfactory results in teaching all types of students or various kinds of content knowledge. In their views, the concept of quality teaching manifests in teacher performance and its features vary based on the learners, their contribution to the learning situation is, and the connection of these issues to the content knowledge that they will learn. With this notion of teaching quality as a foundation, culture-driven teaching was suggested to teach learners from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and subject-driven pedagogies were proposed for teaching various subject contents (Grossman, Schoenfeld, & Lee, 2005).

In the effect view, quality teaching is defined by taking teaching outcomes into account. Several concepts derived from this viewpoint are obvious in discussions about teaching policies and reform. These discussions have been associated with quality teaching concerning the knowledge, values, and skills students need to obtain based on available assessment standards and curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). From time to time, supporters of this view assume that quality teaching certainly happens when the results of the assessments improve without considering the nature of the assessment instrument or the value of the content knowledge being assessed.

An alternative notion rooted in the effect perspective of quality teaching conveys that teachers are able to affect the knowledge, values, and skills that learners require to contribute to an international economy (Loomis, Rodriguez, & Tillman, 2008; Zhao, 2010). Policymakers also use this argument to hold teachers responsible for their students' achievement. Even though it seems that this idea is not generated at the program and classroom level, it is frequently supposed that learners with high scores on relevant tests have been in exposure to high quality teaching which has been successful in preparing them for the future (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, Shelley, & Xie, 2010). Another concept emerging from the effect viewpoint considers teaching effective as far as it affects the knowledge, dispositions,

and skills students require to dynamically take part in making a fair and unbiased society (Burbules & Torres, 2000; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001).

Even if policymakers are inclined to consider a direct linear relationship between teaching quality and teachers' years of experience (Brandenburg et al., 2016), studies show a complex and non-linear relationship between a range of influencing factors including experience (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Attempts to investigate this complex relationship have given rise to mixed results (e.g., Chingos & Peterson, 2011; Rivkin 2005) due to the extent and incommensurability of the measures used in the studies, lack of consistency in conceptualizing teaching quality and the terminology used to classify experience. For instance, in some studies "beginning," "early career," and "graduate" are the terms used interchangeably to categorize teachers with less than five years of experience (Mockler, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). Some other studies have described teachers as "beginner/experienced" or "novice/expert" even without stipulating the number of years that make these categories (Palmer et al., 2005).

Differences are also observed in teaching quality conceptualization. Some studies equate quality with teacher effectiveness, which is mainly measured indirectly by using students' performance in standardized tests. Consequently, higher test scores represent quality teaching; however, in these analyses quality of teaching is defined based on its outcome (Flores, 2019), resulting in such problems as test score manipulation or excluding students with learning difficulties (Lauen & Gaddis, 2016). In other investigations, direct measures are used that generate a definite range of practices observed in actual teaching contexts. In such investigations, teaching quality is considered a multidimensional concept that comes from experimental studies recognizing a group of teaching activities that give rise to a constructive contribution to learners' academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

Results from the indirect measures of teaching quality which are mostly based on students' attitudes and performance in different assessments are

mixed and do not represent a strong set of conclusions. Some research has concluded that teachers' years of teaching experience have no or little effect on students' outputs (e.g., Graham, et al., 2020; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2009). On the contrary, some relevant evidence shows teachers' experience has some effect (Voss, Wagner, Klusmann, Trautwein, & Kunter, 2017; Podolsky 2019; Ulker, 2021). Results of some studies provide evidence for the early impact of experience which results in rapid improvement of beginning teachers, but this association decreases after they adjust themselves to the field (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Rockoff, 2004). In another large-scale research, Chingos and Peterson (2011) indirectly observed 84,031 teachers across the US and found that teachers usually become more qualified after the first year of teaching, but they go back to experience level-off when they have four or five years of teaching experience. Similarly, Rivkin et al., (2005) collected data from over half a million students in grades 3 to 7 and found a positive impact of first-year teachers' experience on students' scores on reading tests; however, this effect did not remain after four years.

Only a few studies have addressed the issue by investigating much more straight signs of quality teaching like observing teachers' classroom behaviors in fields of students' social support, instruction, and classroom management (Rucinski, Brown, & Downer, 2018). For instance, Stuhlman and Pianta (2009) examined the association between teaching quality and years of experience in 820 first grades in America by using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Years of teaching experience in their research ranged from lower than 1 to 41 years. Results showed no significant relationship between the target variables. In another research, Schachter, Spear, Piasta, Justice, & Logan, (2016) explored the impact of experience on language instruction among 222 teachers with no teaching experience to 36 years of experience. The Individualizing Student Instruction (ISI) was used to observe the classes. Findings revealed a negative correlation between the quality of instruction and years of teaching. Moreover, it was found that less experienced teachers achieved significantly

higher scores. Graham et al. (2020) also added to this evidence by finding no proof of less teaching quality among naive teachers (0-3 years of experience). On the contrary, results showed a decrease in quality teaching among teachers with 4-5 years of experience.

Another study related to language education attempted to investigate the relationship between teachers' gender and classroom practices and their students' academic English achievement (Akinmusire, 2012). Data was collected through a reading comprehension achievement test and teaching observation scale administered to 50 English language teachers and 320 secondary school students. Results showed positive relationship between teachers' practices and students' academic achievement. However, teachers' gender did not prove to be effective in this regard. Sarani and Rezaee (2017) also attempted to examine whether Iranian English teachers' years of teaching experience can make any difference in their job performance. They used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data from 100 English teachers and the findings revealed a significant correlation between the target variables. Moreover, Hamidi and Ghafournia (2021) tried to show the relationship between EFL teachers' gender, years of teaching experience and their self-regulatory trait. Findings did not reveal any significant relationship between teachers' self-regulatory trait and their gender but teachers with higher years of teaching experience were more self-regulated.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

By reviewing the available related literature, the paucity of studies concerning the role of teaching experience in the teaching quality of English teachers can be sensed. Hence, the present study attempted to fill up this gap by exploring whether there is any significant difference between Iranian English teachers' quality of teaching in terms of their years of teaching experience.

METHOD

Participants

In this study classroom observation data from 90 7th-grade English teachers were analyzed. Participating male and female teachers were selected from 32 state junior high schools in different provinces of Iran based on convenient sampling. All participants had a university degree in TEFL ages ranging from 23 to 52. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 6 months to 31years with an average of 11.48 years. The participants took part voluntarily in the research and were ensured that they would remain anonymous and keep informed about the findings.

The teachers were asked about their years of teaching experience and they were divided into three groups directed by the available research literature examining teaching quality. The groups included beginning teachers: 0-3 years (n = 33); transitioning teachers: 4-5 years (n = 27); and experienced teachers: more than 5 years (n = 30). The 0-3 year period shows novice or beginning teachers more precisely than would a 0-5 year category. It also reflects a decline or plateau in teaching quality after three years (Chingos & Peterson, 2011). The 4-5 year period represents a transitional stage in which this decline may begin, and when a great deal of the beginning teachers' attrition is believed to happen (Rivkin et al., 2005).

Instrumentation

In this study Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Hamre, Pianta, Mashburn, & Downer, 2007) was used to observe classroom interactions. As Graham et al. (2020) have mentioned this standardized observation tool is designed to evaluate the quality of classes from pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade. It consists of 3 domains (Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support) and 10 dimensions. Emotional Support consists of *positive climate*, *teacher sensitivity*, and *negative climate*. *Regard for student perspectives*, *behavior management*, and *productivity* are dimensions of Classroom Organization, and

Instructional Support consists of *instructional learning formats, quality of feedback, concept development,* and *language modeling*.

Each of the dimensions is rated according to observing the indicators of quality teaching on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1-2 showing very low scores, 3-5 showing mid-range scores, and 6-7 showing very high scores. This observation scale has shown acceptable criterion and predictive validity in investigations containing more than four thousand classrooms mostly as a result of objectivity and reliability sustained by the obligatory training of observers (Cortina, Miller, McKenzie, & Epstein, 2015). However, to ensure the content and face validity of this instrument and its appropriateness for the context of this study, 5 experts in the field of TEFL were asked to review whether it can measure teaching practices properly by rating each of the 10 items as necessary, useful but not necessary, or unnecessary. Since no item was rated as unnecessary, all of them were kept for final administration. Pilot testing was done by observing 20 classrooms across Tehran province to ensure reliability and internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated and the assessed index (.93) confirmed CLASS reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

The interactions in the classes were observed by using CLASS K-3 as an observational tool. It was used in the cycles of 30-min including 20 minutes of observation and 10 minutes of scoring. Each of the 90 classes was observed two times by two trained observers to ensure consistency. Observations were carried out within two months of the school year's second term. All observers were experienced EFL teachers holding master's or Ph.D. degrees in TEFL and passed a 5-hour training course to observe the existence or non-existence of indicators of teaching quality based on classroom interactions.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS version 26. The descriptive

statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores were calculated. Kolmogorov Smirnov test was also used to ensure that the data were normally distributed. Since the aim of the present research was to compare English teachers' teaching quality in terms of their years of teaching experience, a test of Multivariate analysis of variance (*MANOVA*) was used. Furthermore, post hoc *Scheffe* tests were run if any significant difference was detected in the multivariate tests.

RESULTS

The research question explored whether there is any significant difference between English teachers' quality of teaching in terms of their years of teaching experience. Table1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for CLASS Domains.

Classroom assessment	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Support	Beginning teachers	4.75	1.13	1.67	6.67
	Transitioning teachers	3.53	1.27	1.33	6.33
	Experienced teachers	3.63	1.64	7	7
Classroom Organization	Beginning teachers	3.26	1.18	1	5.33
	Transitioning teachers	4.35	1	1.67	6.67
	Experienced teachers	5.5	1.41	2	7
Instructional Support	Beginning teachers	5.27	1.32	1.5	7
	Transitioning teachers	4.15	1.16	1.25	6.25
	Experienced teachers	3.85	1.5	1.5	6.75

As it is shown in table 1, the means of emotional support (M = 4.75) and

instructional support (M = 5.27) **among** the beginning teachers are higher than those **of** the transitioning and experienced teachers, whereas the experienced teac hers scored highest in the classroom organization (*M* = 4.35). The bar chart below shows these results as well.

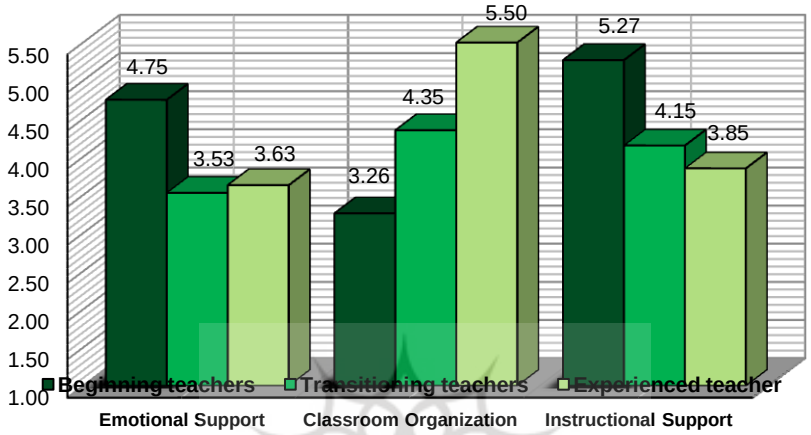

Figure 1: Distribution of CLASS Scores for each domain for the participants (n = 90)

To confirm the normality of the data and the legitimacy of using parametric tests the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. The findings revealed that the obtained probability values did not differ significantly from normal for all three domains of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System including Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support as *p* values were all over .05. Therefore, a Multivariate analysis of variance (*MANOVA*) at a .05 level of significance was used to find if there **was** any significant difference between English teachers' teaching quality considering their years of teaching experience. To do this, the main assumption underlying this test which is the homogeneity of the covariance matrix was examined through Box's M. The level of significance shows that (Box's *M* = 1.7, *F* =12 , *df*1= 12, *df*2 = 24373.1, *p* = 0.110) this assumption has been met. To examine the equality of error variances the *Levene* test was run and the following table represents its results.

Table3. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances.

Classroom assessment	F	df1	df2	sig
Emotional Support	2.2	2	87	.12
Classroom Organization	1.4	2	87	.26
Instructional Support	1.4	2	87	.24

The results show the homogeneity of the variances as the *F* values for all the three domains were more than 0.5.

Table. 3 Summary of *MANOVA* Test Comparing Quality of Teaching between Groups

Effect	Wilks Lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	sig	Eta	Observed Power
Group	.198	35.4	6	170	.001	.555	1.000

As the information in table (4) shows Wilk's index is significant at 0.01 (Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.198$, $F = 35.4$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta 2 = 0.555$). In other words, it can be inferred that at least there is a significant difference between the groups in one of the means. It is important to mention that for keeping an approximate experiment-wide alpha level in the data analysis a Bonferroni adjustment was employed. The overall alpha level was set at .05 for three group comparisons. Hence, .05 was divided by the number of comparisons (three), giving rise to a *p*-value of 0.016 for individual statistical decisions.

Analyzing between subject effects (table 5) showed that there were significant differences between the groups in all three domains including emotional support ($F = 7.71$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta 2 = 0.151$), classroom organization ($F = 26.01$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta 2 = 0.347$) and instructional support ($F = 9.84$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta 2 = 0.185$).

Table. 4 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for CLASS Domain

Source	Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig	Eta
Group	**Emotional**	255.6	2	127.8	7.71	.001	.151
	Support	708	2	354	26.01	.001	.374
	Classroom	562.9	2	281.5	9.84	.001	.185
	Organization						
	Instructional						
	Support						
Error	**Emotional**	1441.3	87	16.6			
	Support	1184	87	13.6			
	Classroom	2487.6	87	28.6			
	Organization						
	Instructional						
	Support						
Total	**Emotional**	14729	90				
	Support	17102	90				
	Classroom	31673	90				
	Organization						
	Instructional						
	Support						

A posthoc analysis (Scheffe) showed that there was a significant difference between the beginning, transitioning, and experienced teachers' means regarding emotional and instructional support. Beginning teachers had higher means (M = 4.76, M = 5.27) than transitioning (M = 6.56, M = 4.15) and experienced teachers (M = 3.63, M = 3.58) in these two domains. However, no significant difference was observed between experienced and transitioning teachers in this regard. Concerning the domain of classroom organization, a significant difference was observed among the groups' means. Experienced teachers (M = 5.50) had a better classroom organization than both transitioning and beginning teachers and transitioning teachers (M = 4.35) were better than beginning teachers (M = 3.26) in this domain.

Regarding CLASS dimensions, after confirming the homogeneity of covariance matrix through running Box's M-test ((Box's M = 30.44, F =

2.40, *df*1= 12, *df*2 = 34480.05, $p = 0.004$) and equality of error variances through *Levene* test (*F* values for all dimensions were over 0.5), results of *Scheffe* test showed that the transitioning teachers had mean scores similar to those of the experienced teachers in Positive Climate and Teacher Sensitivity with the transitioning group being fairly higher in the first two dimensions. However, the difference between these two groups was significant ($F = 37.03$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.460$) in Negative Climate and the transitioning teachers showed less negative classroom climate behavior than the experienced teachers. Significant group differences were found between the beginning teacher group and the other two groups in these dimensions as well ($F = 37.03$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.460$, $F = 21.56$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.331$, $F = 27.20$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.180$). The beginning teachers had higher mean scores compared to other groups in Positive Climate and Teacher Sensitivity and a lower mean in Negative Climate.

Moreover, findings revealed significant differences between beginning teachers and other groups in all dimensions of Instructional Support including Instructional Learning Format ($F = 18.99$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.304$), Quality of Feedback ($F = 7.98$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta 2 = 0.155$), Concept Development ($F = 16.45$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.274$), and Language Modeling ($F = 10.48$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta 2 = 0.194$). Results of multiple comparisons indicated that these differences were related to the beginning teachers who demonstrated better instructional support for their students. There was no significant difference between experienced and transitioning teachers in all these dimensions except Concept Development and results revealed that experienced teachers had a higher mean score than transitioning teachers in developing the concepts.

Finally, in terms of dimensions of Classroom Organization, results of the *MANOVA* test showed significant differences between groups in all dimensions. Table 6 represents these findings.

Table. 5 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Classroom Organizations Dimensions

Source	Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig	Eta
Group	**Regard for Student Perspective**	91.27	2	45.63	21.50	.000	.331
	Behavior Management	161.33	2	80.66	36.40	.000	.456
	Productivity	119.78	2	59.89	35.75	.000	.451

Multiple comparisons indicated that the experienced group demonstrated more regard for student perspective, behavior management, and productivity compared to other groups. Moreover, the transitioning group's scores were significantly higher than the beginning teacher group. These findings are also represented in Fig 2.

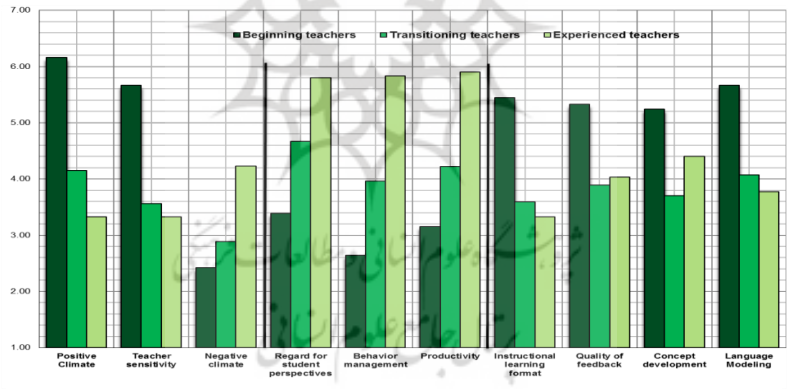

Figure 2: Distribution of CLASS Scores for each dimension for the participants (n = 90)

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of years of teaching experience on Iranian EFL teachers' quality of teaching by using CLASS scores obtained from observations of 90 grade 7 classroom English teachers who were categorized into three groups of the beginning, transitioning, and

experienced teachers. The results of data analyses reflected no domain difference between transitioning and experienced EFL teachers in terms of Emotional and Instructional Support; however, at the dimension level, the teachers in the transitioning group showed less negative attitudes and behaviors including criticism, humiliation, hostility, harsh tone, and shouting. On the other hand, the experienced teachers had a higher mean score on Concept Development. It means that these teachers used more instructional activities to promote their students' cognition and focused their attention on meaningful learning rather than on rote instruction.

Analyses at both levels of domains and dimensions did not provide any evidence to show beginning teachers (0 to 3 years of teaching experience) are inadequately prepared for providing their students with high-quality instruction. In fact, results showed a decline in Instructional Support after the first three years of teaching. These findings are consistent with previous studies which used CLASS for their classroom observation (e.g., Chingos & Peterson, 2011; Graham, et al., 2020; Rockoff, 2004). Ever-increasing responsibilities and workload, lack of initial support, along with emotional exhaustion might contribute to this decrease among more experienced teachers (Weldon, 2018). Some related studies associated this improvement in the quality of instruction among pre-five-year EFL teachers with leaving of less effective early career teachers and attrition of teachers with more years of teaching experience (e.g., Chingos & Peterson, 2011; Liu, et al., 2021). Overall, these results show that assessing beginning teachers' performance might be negatively affected by using broad teaching experience classifications which go beyond the first 0-3 year phase to possibly include a transitional phase and one that might be hard for some beginning teachers (Graham et. al, 2020).

Meanwhile, the findings of this study propose that putting emphasis on the authorization and accessibility of first-rate mentoring and constant professional training for all teachers might be more appropriate than the weakening of teacher education universities. This conclusion is derived from the mean scores obtained by all three groups of teachers in the present

study, which are not representative of all Iranian EFL teachers. The means established a trend of higher scores in Classroom Organization and Emotional Support domains and lower scores in Instructional Support for all three groups of teachers. The score distribution for these three domains also resembles the patterns obtained by Hamre and Pianta (2009). However, in the present study, there was more individual variation in the quality of teaching which was represented in a higher spread in scores.

The next important category for evaluation of teaching quality is classroom organization. The findings showed that the experienced teachers (M = 5.5) had better performance than the beginning (M = 4.35) and transitioning teachers (M = 3.26) in this regard. The results found in Mashhadlou and Izadpanah's study (2021) also confirmed that less experienced English teachers are less successful in managing the classroom. Therefore, it seems that experience has a positive impact on increasing the number of interactions with students and the classroom as a result of focusing on their views and interests and persuading them to be responsible for their own learning. Moreover, it affects the implementation of proactive strategies more effectively by having clear rules, expectations, and careful monitoring of students' behavior. And the last but not least, it has an effect on teachers' productivity which is operationalized in terms of efficient time management of instruction and materials through having consistent and clear routines. As a consequence, teacher education programs and universities should have well-defined plans for pre-service EFL teachers to equip them with appropriate approaches and techniques in this field (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). As Richards (2010) has mentioned, along with pedagogical and content knowledge, EFL teachers should have classroom management which helps them to run their curriculum, assess their students, and teach skills reflectively.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Today, waves of reform in language education and socioeconomic change

have called for more qualified English language teachers and imposed greater demands on them (Liu & Li, 2020; Wen & Zhang, 2020). Even though EFL teachers' teaching quality depends on their personality features (Chu, Liu, & Fang, 2021), it can contribute to successful teaching, promising educational results, and long-lasting professional development (Wu, 2005). Therefore, investigating other factors that can affect this quality might offer a valuable insight into implementing related policies in teacher education and teacher development programs. Regarding this critical importance, the present study attempted to highlight whether years of teaching experience can change EFL teachers' teaching quality. Based on the information obtained from observation of 90 beginning, transitioning, and experienced English teachers who were teaching in grade 7, it can be concluded that years of teaching experience cannot be necessarily considered as the only significant factor in improving the quality of instructional support since the beginning teachers performed better than transitioning and experienced teachers in all dimensions of this aspect. However, the quality of classroom organization might be increased by having more teaching experience as the findings showed that experienced teachers had better performance considering productivity, behavior management, and regard for their students' perspective. It also seems that beginning teachers provide their students with better emotional support compared to transitioning and experienced teachers.

The results of this study suggest that early-career EFL teachers (0-3) are performing well or even better than experienced teachers in some domains and dimensions of CLASS. Therefore, as Mockler (2020) has argued, instead of providing some professional development programs which fit all in-service teachers, it's better to specialize these programs after the first three years of teaching (0-3 years), and especially throughout the transitioning years (4-5), this professional support requires to become well-adjusted and individualized.

Even though this study attempted to represent an inclusive picture of Iranian EFL teachers' teaching quality, it is not free from limitations. First,

the structure of teachers' teaching quality was searched by observing the classes based on CLASS domains and dimensions. Further studies can validate this scale's structure and develop other observation scales by considering different contexts of language teaching before generalizing the results reported here. Conducting longitudinal qualitative studies is also recommended since in the present study it was not possible to observe the target classes for the whole school year. Moreover, interviewing both teachers and students is suggested to have a more in-depth view of teaching quality from both perspectives.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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