

An Investigation of Classroom Management Challenges Faced by English Language Teachers at Primary Schools of Iraqi Kurdistan Region

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Abstract

The current study investigates the classroom management problems, their causes, and possible ways to reduce these problems in primary schools located in Akre City, Kurdistan Region. A total of 100 teachers selected from primary schools between the first to ninth grades. Data were collected in a checklist containing a questionnaire containing 13 items. The study revealed that there was no common classroom management problems related to the process of teaching English as a foreign language. School location does not significantly influence teachers' views on identified causes and possible ways to reduce classroom management problems in primary schools in Akre city of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Keywords: Classroom management, English language, English teachers, primary schools

Introduction

Classroom management is an important concern of every teacher; experienced or novice, man or woman, old or young. Student teachers of English report to be experiencing a handful of problems related to CM (Merç, 2004). According to Luo, Bellows, and Grady (2000), for many graduate teaching assistants, controlling classroom environments can be overwhelming. Even teachers with 25 years of experience can still face classroom management problems (Kyriacou, 1991). Teachers vary in how they manage their classrooms, but little is known regarding the relationship between elementary school classroom management styles and student outcomes (Brannon, 2010). Disruptive behavior does not only affect the student who is noncompliant with the rules, but every other student in the classroom (Canter, 2003; Daly, 2005; Marzano, 2003).

Classroom management plays a major role in a student's classroom achievement. Unfortunately, many of the education reforms have failed to mention or address the relationship between student achievement and student discipline (American Association of School Administrators, 2002; Brannon, 2010). Even though several popular classroom management theories, such as Skinner (1967), Rogers, Wong (1990), Glasser (1985), and Canter (1990), are utilized in classrooms today, teachers are still concerned about classroom management and student achievement (Brannon, 2010).

As teacher concerns and mandates have evolved over the years, classroom management techniques have been divided into two major components: behavioral (BM) and instructional management (IM). Based on Martin and Sass (2010), "Behavioral Management (BM) is similar to, but different from discipline in that it includes pre-planned efforts to prevent misbehavior as well as the teacher's response to it" (p. 1126). A well-managed classroom requires a teacher who is characterized by high knowledge of content, context, pedagogy and personal discipline (Clark and Walsh, 2002). Ogunnu, (2000) opines that the success of classroom management effectiveness is dependent on teacher's personal attributes evident in his or her standard of impeccable ethical and social conduct.

Statement of the problem

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the academic classroom management problems facing primary school English language teachers in Duhok province, Akre city?
2. What are some of the causes of classroom management problems in primary schools?

Review of Related Literature

Classroom management is a major concern in schools today. According to Martin and Sass (2010), classroom management entails an "umbrella of definitions that include learning interactions, learning, and the behavior of students" (p. 1125). Walker (2009) stated, "The best teachers don't simply teach content, they teach people" (p.122). According to Marzano, Pickering, and Pollack (2001), to effectively teach their students, teachers need to employ effective behavior management strategies, implement effective instructional strategies, and develop a strong curriculum. More than thirty years ago, Veenman (1984) reviewed 83 different studies to investigate the

perceived problems of beginning teachers. On the basis of the outcomes of 83 studies in the field, the problems were categorized and ranked from the most frequently identified ones to less frequently identified ones. The results offered that 'classroom discipline is by far the most serious problem type experienced by beginning teachers. The other serious problems identified were motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, and relations with parents.

Luo et al.'s (2000) found that that international and US teaching assistants experienced many common problems, but each of the two types of teaching assistants also faced unique problems. More US teaching assistants than international teaching assistants reported experiencing classroom management problems. The years of teaching assistant teaching experience were significantly related to the number of classroom management problems and concerns teaching assistants reported. The study also found that teaching assistant type, teaching experience, and academic discipline, but not gender, were significant predictors of classroom problems and concerns. Moore (2008) assessed 270 students and 19 grammar school classroom teachers and concluded that "the findings of this research study suggest that relationships exist between some classroom management strategies and higher student achievement scores in diverse elementary settings".

Baker et al conducted a study (2002) which identified classroom management problems and coping strategies generated by the teachers. The possible classroom management problems and their possible solutions were categorized under the following titles: time and energy, classroom constraints, reading levels and language skills, student immaturity, safety concerns, required thinking skills, sequencing, support, and materials management.

Moreover, Kwo (1996) identified two major concerns of STs: pacing in relation to time constraints and unexpected learning difficulties. The three STs who took place in the study highlighted in their reflections that they had problems related to learners' own culture, challenging students to higher levels of learning, and responding to unexpected student questions throughout the teaching practicum.

Vanci Osam and Balbay (2004) investigated the decision-making skills of cooperating teachers and STs. Four cooperating teachers and seven students took place in the study through various research instruments: video-taping the students' lessons, the interviews held at post-teaching meetings, the written retrospectives, and the questionnaire. The outcomes of the study showed that while timing and classroom management were major motives for students to make shifts in their plans, cooperating teachers were more concerned about discipline problems. The students in the study indicated that they had to make immediate decisions related to classroom management quite often. These decisions were about changes in instructions and in seating arrangements of the students. The participant students also specified that they were not used to teaching teenagers and to the classroom atmosphere which would lead to possible threats to managing the classrooms.

However, Mau (1997) identified the teaching problems of 48 STs from different disciplines of teaching in Singapore with a questionnaire and focus-group interviews, and drew three main categories of problems: personal-survival concerns, pupil concerns, and teaching situation. Among the three categories of concern, the most highly indicated problem areas are, in turn, as follow: maintaining appropriate class control, challenging unmotivated students, and meeting the needs of different kinds of students. As a result, the researcher indicates that it is essential for STs to experience the real classroom teaching as much as possible in order to manage the classrooms better and to deal with individual students more effectively.

Methodology

Research Design

The questionnaire was designed according to what the researchers of the project need to know about Kurdish teachers of English language and their awareness about classroom management and its effectiveness in the process of teaching and learning among 25 preparatory schools, a study was carried out on (100) participants of both males and females teachers who teach the students around Akre city and areas around, in order to elicit information about the teachers' points of view towards the effectiveness of classroom management. The questionnaire is constructed to achieve aims of the study.

Participants

The participants in the questionnaire survey are (100) EFL teachers of both genders, males and females, who teach Sunrise course book from (1st to 9th grades) in (25) primary schools in Akre city and areas around during the academic year 2016 - 2017. So the participants represent (100%) of the population of this study.

Procedures

The tool of the research includes a questionnaire for the primary English language teachers. In this section; the questionnaire, the construction of the questionnaire, the teacher's questionnaire, the population of the questionnaire and the statistical method are explained.

Results of the Study

The answer to all questions gave by all the primary English language teachers; they gave their answers to the questions whom the researchers met. In some cases, some of the teachers had misunderstood the instruction of the questionnaire, so the researchers explained and helped them in order to answer the questions precisely as much as they could.

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
x	100	42.0400	5.10480	.51048

The researchers used T. test sample as an instrument to find out the problems of classroom management encountered and faced by English Language teachers at Primary Schools of Iraqi Kurdistan.

As shown in the above, the findings indicated that the sample size was (100) teachers in primary schools, and the actual mean was (42.04), the standard deviation was (5.10), and the hypothesized mean was (32.5). The T. statistics was (18.68), since the significant was (0.00) and was smaller than (0.05) , we can say that there was no problems that could affected the process of education and the English language teachers who were teaching at primary schools in Akre city of Kurdistan region.

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 32.5						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
x	18.688	99	.000	9.54000	8.5271	10.5529

Discussions and Recommendations

One of the factors that promote classroom learning is teachers' effective classroom management. Pupils' behavioral problems can be largely controlled through the teacher's classroom management style. Management styles are either proactive or reactive. This was manifested in the management style of the primary school teachers in Akre city. In this study of the 25 primary schools of the entire city of Akre, it was discovered that teachers adopt more of reactive management style than proactive. These teachers are bound to encounter more of pupils' behavioral problems in their classroom as behaviors will negligibly be allowed to manifest before solutions are sought.

It was discovered that this trend never changed or differed significantly as compared along with sex differences or geographical peculiarities such as being an urban or rural school. The high degree of reactive management tendencies of these primary school teachers demands for a re-orientation of teachers in this aspect of their profession.

The current paper should be replicated with larger, more diverse samples, with multiple sources of information regarding classroom management styles. Future scholars should consider assessing classroom performance across time, so that the effects of classroom management can be assessed in a pre-test post-test design of baseline measures, followed by instruction, followed by re-assessment to determine the in-year effect of classroom management styles. For example, successive years of standardized tests can be used in this exploration as the pre and post measures, with differences in classroom management occurring during the school year, between the measurement periods. Alternately, measures could be taken at the beginning and at the end of the school year to assess the classroom management that occurs during the school year.

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