

گۆڤارا زانستێِن مرۆڤاپەتى يا زانكۆپا زاخۆ مجلة العلوم الانسانية لجامعة زاخو Humanities Journal of University of Zakho (HJUOZ)

p-ISSN: 2664-4673

e-ISSN: 2664-4681

Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 705-713, Sept.-2023

Investigating EFL University Teachers' Classroom Management Competency

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Received: 02/ 2023 / Accepted: 05/ 2023 / Published: 09/ 2023 https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2023.11.3.1150

ABSTRACT:

The current paper aims to investigate university EFL teachers' classroom management competency. Classroom management is essential for establishing an atmosphere favorable to learning as it comprises the techniques and processes handled by teachers to create an atmosphere that encourages both teaching and learning. The paper focuses on three aspects of classroom management competency, namely establishing rapport with students, managing time, and controlling the class. To bring about the set aims, a 15-item Likert scale questionnaire was administered to a sample of 37 EFL university teachers at the Department of English Language at the University of Zakho, Nawroz University, and the University of Duhok during the academic year 2021-2022. The collected data were analyzed using the one-sample t-test on SPSS software. The findings demonstrated that teachers were competent in establishing rapport with students and possessed the competency to manage time effectively and control the class successfully. It is expected that such findings would make EFL teachers insightful to cope and catch up with modern professional teaching competencies.

KEYWORDS: Classroom Management, Competency, EFL University Teachers, Rapport, Time, Management.

1. Introduction

To meet the future demands of the community as well as the needs of learners in the 21st century, teachers must be equipped with the competencies and knowledge required to implement personalized pedagogies and instructional methodologies. To educate students in the real-world environment, Kazemi et al. (2020) observed that education systems emphasize 21st-century skills that rely on educational methods that foster cooperation and encourage critical and creative thinking, leverage technology, genuine educational resources, and internet resources. When students are unjustly marginalized in the classroom, serious procedural barriers might impede the efficient integration of life competencies. In addition, students' personal characteristics (such as introversion or extroversion, low or high self-esteem, talent, or lack of experience) may also be an obstacle that influences their cooperation or communication abilities and deters successful life competency practice in EFL classes.

On the one hand, life competencies may be promoted by using customized or tailored learning techniques based on student-centered learning and engagement in more selfdirected learning, taking into account students individual learning styles, needs, and interests. On the other hand, moving education toward a 21st-century perspective may make teachers be worried about the effective application of life competencies at the time there. Thus, teachers' professional development should focus on performancebased assessments, project-based learning, problemsolving skills, self-regulation, and career decision-making and on enhancing these universal cooperation competencies (Gleason & Jaramillo Cherrez, 2021; OECD, 2018).

Generally speaking, teachers' competencies fall into four main categories, namely: classroom management, instructional delivery, formative assessment, and personal competencies. This paper is confined to the classroom management competency of EFL university teachers in Dohuk governorate, Kurdistan Region-Iraq. As such, it aims at identifying EFL university teachers' competency in (1) establishing rapport with their students, (2) time management, and (3) controlling the class. On the basis of these aims, it hypothesized that

FL university teachers are competent in establishing rapport with their students.

FL university Teachers are not competent in time management.

FL university Teachers are not competent in controlling the class.

2. Competency: Historical Background

According to Caupin (2006), 'competency' roots back in the Latin word 'competentia' which has an equivalent

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meaning as "having the authority to judge" and/or "being entitled to speak" (p. 9). In the first half of the 20th century, the term "competency" attracted a tremendous amount of attention and interest from psychologists, as observed by the large number of empirical research published in the field of psychology (Shippmann et al., 2000). However, in the 1970s, a study titled 'Testing for Competency Rather Than for Intelligence' was published by professor David McClelland specialized in Psychology at Harvard University (Vazirani, 2010). For the investigation and application of the term, and after the publication of the above-mentioned study, countless practices and studies in Human Resource Management (HRM) were conducted (Guerrero & De Los Ríos, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2002; van der Klink & Boon, 2002; Vathanophas & Thai-Ngam, 2007).

2.1 Definition of Competency

Based on the particular context in which the term is employed, numerous scholars have provided their own interpretations and meanings of "competency" or "competencies." McClelland (1973) defines competencies as the primary factors influencing "clusters of life outcomes" performance (p. 15). They can be broadly interpreted to include any form of behavioral or psychological traits connected to success in a given situation. Competencies are also defined by Boyatzis (1982, 2008) as fundamental traits causally connected to how well people perform on the job. On their part, Spencer and Spencer (1993) view competencies as motivations, qualities, self-concepts, attitudes or principles, content knowledge, cognitive or behavioral skills - any individual characteristic that could be statistically analyzed consistently and that can be proven remarkably to distinguish between superior and regular performers or between efficient and inefficient performers (p. 4). Finally, competencies, according to Page and Wilson (1994), are the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities required of a "successful" or "superior" manager. However, this last definition places a strong emphasis on detectable and testable competencies, both explicitly (such as knowledge and skills) and implicitly (such as personal traits).

2.2 Foreign Language Teachers' Competencies

As far as a foreign language teacher's competencies are concerned, it is arguable that teachers being knowledgeable in the subject they teach, knowledgeable in pedagogy, and technology expert is not sufficient. An article titled "Competence and Performance in Language Teaching" was published in 2010 by Jack Richards, a prominent expert in the field of teaching foreign languages, lists the following ten major categories of foreign language teaching competencies:

- The language proficiency factor.
- The role of content knowledge.
- Teaching skills.
- Contextual knowledge.
- The language teacher's identity.
- Learner-focused teaching.
- Pedagogical reasoning skills.
- Theorizing from practice.

- Membership in a community of practice.
- Professionalism.

Since not all the preceding competencies are closely pertinent to the topic under discussion and they contribute to a better understanding of the topics to be stated later, just four of them will be elaborated on in the following lines:

- **2.2.1** The language proficiency factor: According to Richards (2010), who cites Canagarajah (1999), most language teachers worldwide, particularly those who teach English, are not native speakers of their own languages. Speaking of his own experiences, he states that he has seen native speakers occasionally cause disasters in their language classrooms while EFL teachers have worked miracles in the classroom. He interprets this as suggesting that teachers do not necessarily need to speak English as fluently as native speakers to teach English effectively. Richards (2010) highlights the following as some language-specific competencies that a teacher should possess:
- Comprehending texts that have been composed in the target language.
- Acting as a role model.
- Employing the target language consistently during class.
- Having proficiency in the target language.
- 2.2.2 The role of content knowledge: The extent to which language teachers need to be knowledgeable about the language they are teaching is covered in this element. The study of language teaching and learning produces pedagogical subject knowledge, which includes managing classrooms, preparing lessons, assessing student progress, creating materials, and teaching various age groups. Theoretical frameworks, linguistic analyses, and instructional approaches are all included in this knowledge. According to Richards (2010), teachers should be equipped with some of the following skills attributable to their educational content knowledge:
- Recognizing what learners need.
 - Identifying learners' learning difficulties.
- Creating sensible goals and objectives for language-learning sessions.
- Assigning and creating suitable learning assignments and activities.
- **2.2.3 Teaching skills:** Teachers' performance and competencies are often linked to this aspect of teacher competencies. It incorporates routines and common teaching strategies. The process of becoming a foreign language teacher includes discovering a variety of teaching techniques developed by actual teaching in a controlled setting, either employing peer teaching or microteaching practices, or by watching the techniques of more competent teachers. The following competencies for ELF teachers' preparation should be taken into account:
- Starting the lecture.
- Outlining and presenting the activities and assignments.
- Planning out learning.
- Testing understanding.
- Directing learners.
- **2.2.4 Learner-focused teaching:** In a learner-centered classroom, the teacher's primary goal and responsibility are not to deliver information or instruct the student in any particular way but rather to facilitate their own learning. According to Richards (2010), we can determine whether

a class is centered on the teacher or the students by looking at the following characteristics:

- The time the teacher spends speaking in the class.
- The degree to which class discussion and activity are guided by and

responsive to students' participation.

he teacher's primary focus on maintaining order and discipline in the classroom.

- The way the teacher effectively implements the lesson plan.

2.3 Characteristics of EFL-Competent Teachers

A teacher is indispensable to the learning process as they have a significant impact on learners. When teachers do not modify their teaching approaches to meet students' unique backgrounds, preferences, and needs, classrooms quickly become hostile environments where students would rather spend their time elsewhere. The qualities of an excellent teacher may vary depending on the learner. Despite the fact that there is a plenty of variables, there are a few that are highly prevalent. According to Cheung (2006), a competent teacher tends to:

1

ccupy their professions over longer durations;

2

pend more time in the classroom and developing lesson plans;

3.

e aware of their students' necessities;

4.

how patience and understanding when their learners make mistakes;

5

pend more time with challenging students;

6

ontribute to and engage in their students' educational experiences.

Stern (1975) states that these attributes represent the postmethod era's perception of a contemporary EFL teacher. This list, however, can be enhanced by including supplementary characteristics and qualities of a good teacher; some of which, according to Brosh (1996), are as follows:

- Being competent at organizing, explaining, and clarifying instructions;
- Possessing a command of the two languages;
- Producing and maintaining high levels of student engagement and

motivation:

- Demonstrating neither bias nor prejudice towards students;
- Maintaining constant accessibility to his/her students. In addition to these two listings, universally acceptable criteria, Pettis (2002) outlines three essential qualities of a competent teacher. First, in addition to being competent, the critical quality of a successful educator emphasizes the significance of morality and knowledge. The second criterion is that teachers who meet this criterion are always searching for opportunities to expand their existing knowledge and skills. Thirdly, teachers must have a personal investment in the progress of their careers. Pettis

(2002) notes that, in order to be a successful teacher, one must take a lifelong learning mentality.

2.4 Classroom Management: Definition

Classroom management can be defined as all of those actions crucial for creating and maintaining an organized learning atmosphere; for instance, setting the plan and preparing the teaching materials, classroom organizing and decorating, and definitely establishing and enforcing the procedures and rules (Tan, Parsons, Hinson, & Sardo-Brown, 2003). According to specialists in the field of education, the notion of classroom management tackles the encouragement and establishment of students' self-control in manners that promote positive student accomplishment and behavior. Therefore, classroom management is, in a straight line, associated with educational accomplishment, teacher efficiency, and the behavior of both teacher and students (Froyen & Iverson, 1999).

However, in the word of Doyle (1986), (as cited in Krause, Bouchner & Duchesne, 2003), classroom management certainly concerns itself with behavior; however, the definition of classroom management can extend broader to engage in planning, organizing, and controlling of learners, establishing a supportive environment for the learning process that can lead to maintaining a productive learning experience.

According to Everton and Weinstein (2006), classroom management is defined as a means of action-taking by the teacher in order to establish an environment containing support and focusing not only on the academic learning of the students but extending further to cover the emotional and social aspects as well. A set of actions, that teachers must adopt, are identified to ensure classroom management at a high quality, namely (1) establishing a positive and supporting rapport with students and facilitating a similar relationship among the students themselves; (2) being in charge of organizing and implementing instruction in innovative manners that enhance the accessibility of the students towards learning by improving positive teacher-student rapport; (3) engaging students in learning tasks via utilizing methods of group management; (4) supporting learners with behavioral issues, suitable interventions must be used by the teachers (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006); and (5) taking the lead to promote and develop the self-organization and social skills of the students; i.e. the notion of holding students accountable for the way they behave (Marzano et al., 2003).

2.5 Classroom Management Approaches

Instructional and behavioral classroom management can be categorized across a continuous spectrum from interventionist to noninterventionist to interactionalist, according to the theory of Wolfgang and Glickman (1980). Traditional approaches to classroom management have heavily prioritized discipline as the basis for behavioral and instructional management. McArthur (2002) demonstrated that teachers have known for a long time that students' misbehavior can destabilize the classroom atmosphere. Rosas and West (2009) observed that classroom management is a reasonable worry for educators, given that schools are expected to offer a safe,

orderly atmosphere with teachers being responsible for the academic progress of students.

Using a continuum ranging from interventionist to non-interventionist with interactionalists in the middle, Wolfgang and Glickman (1980) created a paradigm for understanding classroom management. According to this theoretical paradigm, interventionists respond to student behavior without penalties, while non-interventionists consciously organize their environment to support the classroom rather than react to students' actions. Classroom management strategies utilized by interactionists aim to combine the finest elements of both interventionist and non-interventionist approaches (Martin & Sass, 2010; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1980).

2.6 Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Classroom Management

Management of a classroom is a multifaceted term that encompasses the formation of norms and routines, the organization of the physical environment, the building of productive relationships, as well as the prevention and correction of inappropriate behavior. Some studies believe that it is advantageous to evaluate classroom management concepts and methods along the continuum ranging from teacher-centered to student-centered. Willower (1975), for instance, discovered that teachers varied along a continuum of views about how learners learn to behave and characterized this as one's student-control ideology. Custodial (teacher-centered) education resides at one end of the spectrum, while humanistic (student-centered) education is at the other.

The followings are categorizations of the extremes on the perception continuum:

1.

he teacher with a custodian perspective is likely to be extremely dominating, utilizing punitive consequences, morality perspectives, very impersonal interactions with learners, general mistrust attitudes, and a greater focus on maintaining order.

2

ctive communication and interaction, intimate personal relationship with students, positive attitudes, mutual respect and understanding, and flexibility of standards, as well as student self-determination, self-discipline, and independence, are likely to be developed by the teacher with a more humanistic perspective (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967).

The three philosophical "faces" of discipline identified by Wolfgang (2001) are relationship-listening, rulesconsequences, and confrontation-contracting. These three disciplinary philosophies can be seen as occupying a scale of authority, from least (student-centered) to most (teacher-centered) use of authority by teachers. Rogers and Freiberg (1994) conclude by theorizing on the nature of classroom management in teacher- and student-focused environments (See Table 1). Although teacher-centered and student-centered classroom management can be regarded as two extreme values on a continuum, it is exceedingly rare that any teacher truly employs either model in its purest form. Even so, these perspectives are beneficial for evaluating the prevalent pedagogical approach in a given classroom.

Table 1: Summary of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered approach

Leadership is shared Management is a form of guidance
Students are facilitators for the operations of the classroom
Discipline comes from the self
students have the opportunity to become an integral part of the management of the classroom
les are developed by the teacher and students in the form of a constitution or compact
Consequences reflect individual differences
Rewards are mostly intrinsic
Students share in classroom responsibilities
rtnerships are formed with business and community ups to enrich and broaden the learning opportunities for students
-

Source: Rogers, C. & Freiberg, J. (1994)

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

In order to provide a general and reliable evaluation of the classroom management competency of university EFL teachers, the population in this research was represented by 120 EFL teachers of different academic status teaching in the departments of English Language and Literature at the Zakho University, the University of Dohuk represented by the College of Basic Education-Amedi and the College of Basic Education-Amedi and the College of Basic Education-Akre, and Nawroz University in Dohuk Governorate-Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Their qualifications ranged from (Master's degrees) to (Doctoral degrees). A sample of 37 male and female teachers teaching different linguistics and literature subjects was randomly selected from among the population already referred to by using the random sampling method.

3.2 Research Method

The quantitative method was adopted to investigate the classroom management competency of University EFL teachers in the present paper. Leedy (1993) defined that the quantitative research method systematically analyzes phenomena and their interrelationships using numbers and quantifiable variables as it is employed to answer questions about the correlations between quantifiable variables to understand, predict, and manage a phenomenon. Significant data were acquired via an instrument as it produced insights and empirical evidence to investigate the university EFL classroom management competency in detail. SPSS was then utilized to analyze and interpret the target data in a structured manner.

3.3 Research Instrument

In order to perform this research, a questionnaire was constructed to collect data from the selected sample of EFL university teachers. Utilizing the Likert scale, the questionnaire subsumed the following three main categories:

- Establishing Positive Relationships consisting of 6 items;
- Handling Time / 3 items; and
- Controlling the Class / 3 items.

To ensure validity and examine whether the current study fits its context, the questionnaire was sent to a panel of juries whose feedback and comments were taken into account by making some changes and modifications required. As for the reliability of the questionnaire, it was piloted to a sample of EFL university teachers selected from among the population on two occasions with an interval of 2 weeks. The Cronbach's alpha stability equation was applied, and the value of Cronbach's alpha

coefficient was 0.872; indicating that the questionnaire items were stable and ready for administration to the main sample.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26) for statistical accuracy. Using Likert Scale, the One-sample T-test technique was utilized to obtain mean scores and standard deviations of all items in the questionnaire categories. Taking into consideration that the current study attempts to answer its questions, achieve aims, and refute or confirm the hypotheses.

4. Results and Discussion

This section demonstrates and discusses the findings of the current research.

Analysis (1):

- Constructing rapport with students

Aim (1): Identifying EFL university teachers' competency in establishing

rapport with their students.

Hypothesis (1): EFL university teachers are competent in establishing rapport

with their students.

The EFL university teachers' responses to the first category show they can build positive relationships with their students. Across the items, the majority of EFL university teachers have made it clear that they can care about students' interests and play a crucial role in motivating them. In other words, teachers emphasize that they should look after their students' interests and push them to meet those interests. Moreover, respecting students and demonstrating an objective position with them is fundamental for positive classroom management for most teachers.

The statistical analysis shows that the teachers are flexible or try to be as much as possible when dealing with students. The findings also demonstrate that teachers believe that providing weak students with individual support can lead to building a positive rapport with students. This confirms the first hypothesis concerning EFL university teachers being competent in establishing a positive rapport with their students. The mean scores and standard deviation of each item inserted in this category are displayed in (Table 2).

Table 2: The mean scores of establishing rapport with students.

One-Sample Statistics					
Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
I care about students' interests and motivate them.	37	4.35	.588	.097	
I maintain an objective and respectful position with the students.	37	4.22	.630	.104	
I often establish a good rapport with my students.	37	4.11	.699	.115	
I do respect my students.	37	4.68	.475	.078	

I try to be flexible in dealing with my students.	37	4.38	.681	.112
I provide individual support for weak students.	37	3.92	.759	.125
The mean score of the whole category		25.66		

Analysis (2)-

- Handling Time

Aim (2): Identifying EFL university teachers' competency in time management.

Hypothesis (2): EFL university Teachers are not competent in time

management.

Teachers' responses to the second category, i.e., the competency of handling time, illustrate that teachers demonstrate punctuality on their arrival to the classes. To manage time properly, teachers insist on being on time for their classes. Being in the classroom on time indicates that teachers are passionate and serious about their job and setting themselves as role models for their students, who will eventually be the successors of their teachers.

Additionally, regarding teachers' departure from the class on time, the results show that the teachers respect the students' time as they do not tend to spend longer time than they should. This indicates that the teachers are aware of the time of the lecture; thus, they manage their time accordingly.

Furthermore, the statistical analysis displays that the teachers have the skills required to divide the class time appropriately in the manner that each language skill takes its portion following the purpose of the course. The responses refute the second hypothesis of the current paper regarding EFL being incompetent in handling time. The mean scores and standard deviation of each item inserted in this category are shown in (Table 3).

Table 5: the mean scores of the time management

One-Sample Statistics				
I am punctual on coming to my classes.	N 37	Mean 4.38	Std. Deviation .681	Std. Error Mean
I leave the classroom on time.	37	4.19	.660	.108
I divide class time appropriately for the different language skills according to the purposes of the course.	37	3.97	.833	.137
Total scores of the whole category		12.54		<u> </u>

- Analysis (3)

- Handling the Class

Aim (3): Identifying EFL university teachers' competency in controlling the

class.

Hypothesis (3): FL university Teachers are not competent in controlling the

class.

Concerning handling the class, the vast majority of teachers' responses demonstrate that they have the ability to manage the classroom well. It is obvious to the teachers that what leads to successful classroom management are equal and effective eye contact, tone of voice, and body language. Besides, engaging and involving students in the class content goes under effective classroom management.

Furthermore, the results show that most of the teachers find the presence of the students highly significant as the strong presence of the students indicates the strong relationship the teachers have with their students. Stressing students' presence in the class signifies that the teachers take their class seriously.

Last but not least, the statistical analysis of the data shows that a noticeable number of teachers do not encounter difficulty when it comes to establishing discipline in their classes as they are able to practice their authority to control unexpected situations and misbehaviors. This refutes the third hypothesis concerning EFL university teachers' inability to handle the class. The mean scores and standard deviation of each item inserted in this category are demonstrated in (Table 4)

Table 6: The mean scores of controlling the class

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I have the ability to manage the classroom well.	37	4.43	.728	.120
I emphasize the presence of students in the classroom.	37	4.16	1.014	.167
I do not face difficulty in establishing discipline in my class.	37	4.46	1.464	.241
The score of the whole category		13.05		

5. Conclusions and Pedagogical implications

5.1 Conclusions

The present research has come out with the conclusions that EFL university teachers are competent in:

- establishing a positive rapport with their students through motivating them, respecting them, and providing individual support for those in need;
- being flexible when dealing with students taking into account the different backgrounds of students;
- caring about their students' progress and improvement as they strictly emphasize the presence of the students;
- showing and being punctual, passionate, and serious about their profession as they make sure to attend their classes on time and also depart the classes on time, thus respecting students' time
- dividing the class time appropriately for different language skills according to the requirements of the course; and
- controlling the class as they are able to establish discipline and wisely deal with unexpected situations in the class.

5.2 Implications

Based on the preceding concluding points the following pedagogical implications have been drawn upon:

- To prove that they play a crucial role in bringing about students' learning, teachers' attendance to students' varied characteristics can contribute to better assimilation of the material taught and duly better retention of knowledge;
- To put into practice what the profession of teaching demands, teachers are aware of the fact that time management, classroom control, and implementing discipline are all crucial factors that can contribute to students' better commitment and learning.

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التحقيق في كفاءة إدارة الفصول الدراسية لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعة

المستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من كفاءة مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في إدارة الفصول الدراسية. تعد إدارة الفصل الدراسي أمرًا ضروريًا لتهيئة مناخ ملائم التعلم إذ إنها تشتمل على التقنيات والعمليات التي يتعامل معها المدرسون لخلق جو يشجع كل من التدريس والتعلم. تركز الدراسة على ثلاثة جوانب لكفاءة إدارة الفصل الدراسي ، وهي تكوين علاقات إيجابية مع الطلاب ، وإدارة الوقت ، والتحكم في الفصل. لتحقيق الأهداف المحددة ، تم إجراء استبيان بمقياس ليكرت المكون من 15 عنصرًا لعينة من 37 معلمًا جامعيًا في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة زاخو وجامعة نوروز وجامعة دهوك خلال العام الدراسي SPSS . أظهرت النتائج أن المعلمين كانوا أكفياء الدراسي SPSS . أظهرت النتائج أن المعلمين كانوا أكفياء في تكوين علاقات إيجابية مع الطلاب ولديهم الكفاءة الإدارة الوقت بشكل فعال والتحكم في الفصل بنجاح. ومن المتوقع أن هذه النتائج ستجعل مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية يتمتعون برؤية ثاقبة للتعامل مع كفاءات التدريس المهنية الحديثة ومواكبتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إدارة الفصل ، الكفاءة ، مدرسون جامعة اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية ، العلاقة، إدارة الوقت.

پۆختە:

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