

Job Performance of Iranian English Teachers: Do Teaching Experience and Gender Make a Difference?

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Abstract

In the available teacher development literature, the linkage between teaching experience, as one the crucial factors in teacher development (Tsui, 2005), and English teachers' job performance with regard to gender differences has remainwidely underexplored. To fill up this lacuna, this study investigated whether there was any significant correlation between Iranian English teachers' years of experience and their job performance as well as how teaching experience can impact the job performance from the participants' viewpoints. To meet the aims, 100male and female English teachers were selected through convenience sampling approach in Loestan Province, Iran. To gauge the participants' job performance, they completed a validated questionnaire developed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) and 20 teacherswere invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Their years of experience were requested. The findings indicated that there was a significant correlation between teaching experience and teachers' job performance. In addition, it was found that there was not any statistically significant difference between the Iranian male and female English teachers' job performance. Meanwhile, the results of the interviews unraveled that teaching experience can affect positively job performance from the participants' perspectives.Finally, the implications for educational policy makers, teacher educators, and teachers were presented and discussed.

Key words: Teacher development, Teaching experience, Jobperformance, Iranian English teachers

1. Introduction

It is a crystal clear that teachers in education play a crucial factor in facilitating and improving student achievements. One of the important variables in teacher development and effectiveness is experience. In many diverse and important ways, experienced teachers may differ from novice teachers. For instance, teachers with a high level of experience are probably in need of professional development which is in harmony with the knowledge and experience they have gathered during their occupations. At the same time, it should be remembered that expertise cannot necessarily be obtained by teaching experience (Tsui, 2003, 2005). According to Tsui (2003), though experienced teachers might take advantage of opportunities to reflect on and improve their professional knowledge and refresh their enthusiasm for teaching, sometimes theyare not as receptive to professional development as are novice teachers,.

In the literature, there has not been a comprehensive consensus over what constitutes the definition of teacher experience. Novice teachers, as Gatlinton (2008) simply put it, can be easily defined as the teacherswith little or no classroom experience. They are often student teachers or teachers who don't have more than 2 years of teaching experience. In contrast, providing a definition of experienced teachers is much more complex and difficult. Experienced teachers might be defined as the teachers who have taught for many years. In actuality, they are able to motivate students and hold their attention, know how to run their classroom effectively, and more importantly can adapt course in the middle of a lesson to benefit from unforeseen opportunities to provide an efficient setting for their students learning. However, In the literature, there has been a tendency to defined experienced teachers principally based on the number of years taught; time-related criteria can range from 2 years or 3 years (Bastick, 2002) to 9 years or more (Atay, 2008). In most cases, research studies consider experienced

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teachers as those who have been teaching approximately 5 years or more, for example, Gatbonton(1999),Martin, Yin, and Mayall(2006), Richards, Li, and Tang, (1998), and Tsui(2003, 2005).

This view that those who are experienced are expert as well, seems to be, in practice, subjective and arbitrary and all stakeholders may not agree with this view. The beliefs that teachers hold about the expert instruction may not always be in correspondence with their own instructional practices. Take an example, Farrell and Lim (2005) discovered that there is not a complete match between the beliefs of two experienced teachers who they examined and what they actually did in the classroom. Although the teachers claimed that they employ student-centered strategies to run the classroom, both teachers were observed to be adapting a teacher-centered, traditional approach.

Drawing on the work by Tsui (2003), Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 7), point out that expert language teachers, most commonly, have the following characteristics, setting them apart from novice or non-expert language teachers:

- A rich and elaborate knowledge base
- Ability to integrate and use different kinds of knowledge
- Ability to make intuitive judgments based on past experience
- Desire to investigate and solve a wide range of teaching problems
- Deeper understanding of students' needs and student learning
- Awareness of instructional objectives to support teaching
- Better understanding and use of language learning strategies
- Greater awareness of the learning context
- Greater fluidity and automaticity in teaching
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness in lesson planning

In fact, language teachers' experience plays a key role in teacher development. A well-experienced teacher, according to Richards (2005), must be qualified in individual and institutional perspectives. From the point of view of the language teachers' individual aspect a number of areas can be identified. They include 1) subject-matter knowledge; 2) pedagogical expertise; 3) self-awareness; 4) understanding of learners; 5) understanding of curriculum and materials; and 6) career advancement. On the other hand, institutional development intending to directly or indirectly improve the performance of the institution as whole covers a number of goals including institutional development, career development, and enhanced levels of students learning.

Regarding the other variable involved in the study called job performance, it is a term which is mostly related to and discussed in the area of industrial and organizational psychology (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992) and has been underexplored in the field of language education. To put it simply, job performance, as highlighted by Viswesvaran and Ones (2000), concerns with the workplace and refers to the way employees perform in their careers. Indeed, job performance can be defined as scalable actions, behavior and outcomes which employees involve in or bring about to contribute to the goals that their organization aim to achieve (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Put it in other words, an individual's performance can be evaluated from diverse dimensions, the most important of which are those directed to the main goals and policies of their organizations. In this regard, Mawoli and Babandako (2011) argue that job performance is a multidimensional construct consisting of various kinds of behavior. After reviewing previous literature on job performance, Mawoli and Babandako (2011) came to the conclusion that it is a multidimensional construct comprising various kinds of behavior. They offers a broad and comprehensive definition of job performance as "the extent to which an employee is able to accomplish the task assigned to him or her and how the accomplished task contributes to the realization of the organizational goal" (p. 2).

As Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) put it, a whole raft of factors such as work engagement and organizational commitment may affect job performance. They hold that work engagement includes a combination of enthusiasm to work (e.g., dedication, involvement, commitment, conscience) and the capability to work (e.g., energy, strength, stamina). On the other hand, the organizational commitment, in exact words of Stride, Wall, and Catley (2007, p. 39), refers to "people's affective reactions to their employing organization as a whole". Organizational

commitment is made up of three components: 1) organizational identification represents pride in the organization and internalization of its goals and values; 2) organizational loyalty reflects affection for and attachment to the organization, a sense of belongingness manifested as a wish to stay; and 3) organizational involvement refers to engagement with the work itself because of its contribution to the organization as a whole (Buchanan, 1974). Overall, Viswesvaran (2001) believes that job performance should be considered as an abstract construct without one single physical manifestation. There are various manifestations of an individual's job performance, based on the contexts in which he/she is involved in.

2. Empirical Studies in the Literature

Here, a number of the studies related to the current study were briefly reviewed. In one of the earliest attempts, Schiefelbein and Valenzuela (1993) explored whether there was any meaningful relationship between the years of experience of teachers and their students' academic achievement in secondary high schools in the United States of America. The findings revealed that a positive correlation exists between the teaching experience of the teachers and the students' academic achievement. Based on these results, they concluded that teachers with more teaching experience could likely perform better in the classroom situation than those with less experience.

Moreover, Tuckman (1990) did cross section research of high school performance using two teacher characteristics, teacher experience and teacher qualification. In sum, he found that teachers with more than two years of teaching experience have positive influence on the high school performance and outcome. The analysis on experience and performance in teaching showed that the number of years of teaching experience can largely determine the level of performance and quality of any educational institution.

In another work conducted by Bastick (2002), the link between teaching experience and kinds of teachers' motivation were examined in Jamaica. The results indicated that experienced teachers in Jamaica were less extrinsically motivated (e.g., motivated by salary) and significantly more intrinsically motivated (e.g., motivated by the emotional rewards of working with children) compared to novice teachers who were more extrinsically motivated (e.g., motivated by getting a good job).

In addition, Martin, Yin, and Mayall (2006) found that experienced teachers managed their classrooms more effectively than less experienced teachers. They undo novice teachers on controlling and establishing classroom routines and monitoring group work and were less controlling and reactive in dealing with individual student behavior compared to the novice teachers. Similarly, Gatbonton (2008) found that novice ESL teachers in K-12 programs were more preoccupied with student behavior and reactions than with pedagogy and student outcomes. Experienced ESL teachers were more concerned with ensuring that learning was taking place and less concerned about students' negative reactions to class activities or to the learning processes

Furthermore, in Nigeria, Oyewole (2009) investigated the impact of teaching experience on job performance of secondary school teachers in Ekiti State. A descriptive survey research design was employed and through stratified random sampling method 500 teachers were selected for the study. The teachers' job performance questionnaire designed and developed by himself was utilized to collect the needed data. Overall, the findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between teacher's years of experience and their job performance.

In a study pertaining to language education, an attempt was made to examine teachers' classroom practices and gender as correlates of students' academic achievement in English language in Ondo state (Akinmusire, 2012). In order to collect the necessary data, Teaching Observation Scale and English Reading Comprehension Achievement Test were administered on 55 English language teachers and 320 secondary school students respectively in 12 schools in Ondo state. The findings revealed that the effectiveness of English language teachers has significant impact on the academic achievement of students in English learning. Likewise, it was found that there was no significant difference between the academic students' achievement taught by male English language teachers and those taught by female English teachers.

Finally, Oviawe (2016) sought to investigate the relationship between teachers' effectiveness and students' academic achievement in basic technology knowledge at secondary schools in Nigeria. Using descriptive survey research design, the required data were elicited with teachers' effectiveness rating scale and basic technology achievement test. The findings of this study showed that basic technology teachers' effectiveness was low. More importantly, teachers' effectiveness had positive influence on student's achievement and there was not any significant difference in students' achievement due to teachers' gender.

As it can be inferred from the above studies, there has been paucity of research regarding the importance and linkage of language teaching experience, as a key factor in teacher development, and job performance among English teachers. Therefore, this study aims to fill up the lacuna by exploring the relationship between teaching experience and Iranian English teachers' job performance. Furthermore, an attempt is made to examine if there is any statistically significant difference between male and female English language teachers' job performance in the Iranian context.

Thus, the current study aimed to deal with the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant correlation between teaching experience and job performance in Iranian English teachers?
2. Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian English teachers' job performance?
3. How teaching experience can affect job performance from the English teachers' perspectives?

3. Method of the Study

3.1. Design of the Study

The current research study, in terms of the aims, can be considered as mixed methods, since the required data were collected through distributing a questionnaire and administering semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Participants and Setting

In order to carry out the study, 100 English teachers were selected through convenience random sampling. In fact, the research was run in a number of cities in Lorestan Province including Khoram Abad, Poldokhtar, and Borujerd, Iran in fall 2016. The participants included both male and female, with equal numbers of two genders, aged ranged from 20 to 55. Regarding the teaching experience, they have been teaching English at state high schools with diverse years of experience. The participants were asked to take part voluntarily in the study and they were kept informed about the findings.

3.3. Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

To do the study, the following instruments and procedures were employed. In order to obtain the required data, Successful Iranian English Teacher Questionnaire developed and validated by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) was administered to measure the participants' job performance. The questionnaire comprises 49 items requiring English teachers to evaluate their teachers' job performance based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). Moafian and Pishghadam examined the questionnaire validity through factor analysis, principal axis factoring with Varimax rotation, and found out that it measured 12 factors concerning the characteristics of successful English teachers, including *teaching accountability, interpersonal relationship, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism*. Besides, in order to measure the questionnaire reliability, prior to running the main study, it was distributed among 30 English teachers with the same characteristics. Using Cronbach's alpha consistency, findings revealed that the questionnaire enjoyed a high level of internal consistency (0.85). It should be noted that the questionnaire items were translated into the participants' mother tongue, Persian, to avoid any possible misunderstandings on the part of the teachers and increase the

validity of responses. The participants were given enough time to fill up the questionnaire with the aim of decreasing the probability of overlooking the items. What is more, they were asked to include their years of experience on the top of the questionnaire.

To collect the required data for the qualitative section, semi-structured interviews were held with 20 participants. The interviewees were met at their own convenience in their workplaces. During the semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked to present their view regarding the effects of teaching experience on their job performance. It should be highlighted that the semi-structured interviews were run with the mother tongue of the participants so that they can express their ideas with ease.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Using SPSS version 20, the obtained data were analyzed. The descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation and so on were calculated. Thus, through running One-sample KS test, we made sure that the data were normally distributed. Spearman correlation coefficient test clarified the kind and amount of correlation between teaching experience and English teacher job performance among the participants. Furthermore, an independent sample t-test was run to find out whether there is any statistical significant difference between Iranian Englishmale and female teachers with regard to their job performance. At last, to analyze the qualitative data recorded in the semi-structured interviews, the voices of the participants were carefully analyzed and meticulously transcribed. Through content analysis, the results of the semi-structured interviews were examined and the major themes were extracted and presented.

4. Results

In this section, the results of the data analyses are presented in details. As outlined above, before running the main study, a pilot study was conducted to make sure about the reliability of the teachers' job performance questionnaire. The results, including reliability (0.85), are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Pilot Study

	Min	Max	Mean	S.D	Reliability
Pilot Study	7	45	25.00	11.55	0.85

The first research question explored whether there is any statistical significant correlation between teaching experience and job performance among Iranian English teachers. As it was shown below, Table 2 reports the basic descriptive statistics consisting of mean, standard deviation, and variance for the variables, English teaching experience and teachers' job performance.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Teaching Experience and Job Performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D	Variance
Job Performance	100	8	45	27.15	9.89	97.8
Teaching Experience	100	2	29	13.27	7.35	54.09

Before exploring the correlation between teaching experience and teachers' job performance through running Pearson correlation formula, the normality of the data was examined through One-Sample Kolmogorov-Simirov test. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. The Results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Simirov Test

	Job Performance	Job Experience
N	100	100

Normal Parameters	Mean	27.15	13.27
	Std. Deviation	9.89	7.35
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.09	.11
	Positive	.06	.11
	Negative	-.09	-.08
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.95	1.11
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.32	.16
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			

As seen, since the calculated Sig (0.32, 0.16) is more than significance of error ($P > 0.05$), it can lead us to the conclusion that the data have the acceptable normality. Therefore, Pearson correlation coefficient for the first research question and an independent sample t-test for the second question can be employed.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Relationship between Teaching Experience and Job Performance

		Job Performance	Job Experience
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.92**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Job Experience	Pearson Correlation	.92**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

As table 4 indicates, there is a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.92$, $n = 100$, $p < 0.05$) between teaching experience and English teachers' job performance. That is, the participating teachers who enjoy more experience in teaching English perform better in diverse ways.

The second research question investigated if there is any statistical significant difference between Iranian English male and female teachers' job performance. Table 5 reports the basic descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and variance for the male and female participants.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the Male and Female Participants

Gender	Min	Max	Mean	S.D	Variance
Female	10	45	27.4	9.68	93.72
Male	8	45	26.8	10.19	103.85

Before examining whether there is a statistical significant difference between the English male and female teachers' job performance through an independent sample t-test, the normality of the data was tested. As reported earlier, the results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test indicated that the data collected are normal.

Table 6. Results of Independent Sample T-test for the English Male and Female Teachers' Job Performance

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		Sig.	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Differenc e	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
							Lower	Upper		
Job Per	Equal variances assumed	.08	77	.31	8	.75	.62	1.98	-3.32	.56
	Equal variances not assumed		31	7.74	75	.62	1.98	3.32	.56	

As can be observed, since the calculated sig (0.75) is more than level of significance (0.05), it can be concluded that there is not a statistically significant difference between the means of the English male and female teachers' job performance in the Iranian context.

Finally, the third research question explored how teaching experience can affect the job performance from the English teachers' perspectives. Here, to answer the question, some parts of the qualitative results are presented. One of the teachers interviewed asserted,

"I think that there exists a direct and positive relationship between teaching experience and English teachers' job performance in the Iranian context. I mean, the more experience you have in teaching English, the better you perform".

He added more that:

"Since, personally speaking, the more I teach, the more useful things I learn which can help me later".

Another teacher believed that:

"It is obvious that teaching experience can affect English teachers' job performance positively. Well-experienced teachers can be better performers. Take a tangible example, well-experienced teachers not only have a better command on educational materials but they can also make them more digestible for students with the help of their previous experiences".

A young teacher pointed out that:

"I believe that teaching experience can play a key role in performing better in classroom. Though having a comprehensible knowledge of theories and hypotheses of applied linguistics in necessary, it is not sufficient. When you are involved in teaching, you get to insights that you have never heard or read about them".

She added more that:

"Regarding this question whether male or female teachers can perform better, I think that gender cannot be so important to teach in a qualified way".

Furthermore, another teacher remarked that:

"My opinion is that experiences can help you have a better performance through getting a deep understanding between Persian and English, having a more comprehensive knowledge on contents, knowing the problems of your students in advance, and more importantly, you can learn better and more English when you teach it".

He put it more that:

"I'm not in agreement that gender plays any influential in English teachers' job performance. I depends on other variables such as job motivation, job satisfaction, and the climate of school".

As can be induced from extracts, it can be concluded that the job performance of the English teachers is affected by their years of experiences in English teaching. In other words, the more experience a language teacher has, the more effective job performance she/he has in language teaching regardless of the gender.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

To get a comprehensive picture about language teacher development and effectiveness, various variables should be taken into account. It can be argued that the differences between experienced and novice language teachers can be regarded as one of the determining factors. In fact, it is worth examining how teaching experience can correlate and affect language teachers' job performance in the classroom. Despite this necessity, in the literature, there has been a scarcity of research targeting the contributions of language teaching experience to language teachers' job performance, most specially, in the EFL context of Iran. In order to fill up the lacuna, the present study set out to cast light on the linkage between teaching experience and English teachers' job performance in both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

In actuality, the current study covered three research questions. The first research question explored whether there is any significant correlation between teaching experience and job performance of the Iranian English teachers. The answer to the question was positive. Based on the results, it was found that there is a strong and positive correlation between the years of experience and English teachers' job performance. That is, those who have been teaching English for a long time have a more effective performance in teaching English compared to the teachers who have attended to English teaching more recently.

At least, in the Iranian context, according to the gained findings, teaching experience is significantly correlated to job performance and plays a vital role in English teachers' job performance. One possible reason that can be suggested to clarify this relationship is that well-experienced English teachers might have become creative and flexible in their thinking and professional development with the cross of time. In their day-to-day teaching activities, the long-experienced English teachers may not be unfavorably willing to learn new content knowledge and professional practices. Because, as reported by Harbison and Hanushek (1992), it has been observed that English teachers with more years of experience seem to be more highly disposed to improvement in the teaching profession in comparison with short-experienced teachers. Another reason for the obtained results may lie in the fact that the English teachers can perform their job more efficiently because they are familiar with what typical classroom activities, expected problems and proper solutions are like (Berliner, 1987).

This study lends support to Harbison and Handshake's (1992) findings that teaching experience is significantly correlated with students' learning. This, accordingly, implies that years of experience can affect teachers' job performance. In line with the findings of present study, Schiefelbein and Valenzuela (1993) concluded that there is a positive correlation between the academic achievement and teaching experience. The results of this current study are also in accordance with Oyewole's (2009) findings that there was a significant relationship between teacher's years of experience and teacher's job performance.

The second research question addressed to investigate if there is any statistically significant difference between Iranian English male and female teachers' job performance. The answer to this question is negative. According to the obtained results, it was uncovered that gender may not affect Iranian English teachers' job performance. This finding is in contrast to common belief that women act better than men in English teaching occupation. One reason to this finding can be attributed to the fact that language teachers who want to have a highly qualified performance should possess three crucial kinds of knowledge such as professional knowledge, procedural knowledge, and personal knowledge (Kumaravadivalu, 2013). Years of experience and other factors may affect these dimensions not the gender of teachers. One possible reason for the findings may be related to the level of motivation in the English teachers. It may be hypothesized that the level of job motivation may be equal in the two genders. If the English teacher's job motivation is high, there is the possibility that their level of performance will improve.

The findings of the current study are in accordance with Hussin (2006) making a comparative study of attitude of school teachers toward teaching profession. The investigator found no significant difference in the attitude score of male and female teachers toward teaching profession. In addition, the results are in line with SoodmandAfshar and Doosti's (2016) study in which they found out that there is not a significant difference between the job performance of male and female teachers. Put it in a nutshell, the deduction of the findings is that gender difference with respect to job performance is neutral when the workplace is equal for both males and females.

The third research question investigated how teaching experience can affect the job performance from the English teachers' perspectives. Totally, the findings of the semi-structured interviews indicated that teaching experience can influence the teaching effectiveness of language teachers in Iran. A number of most attested themes contributing to teachers' job performance in the views of the teachers are listed below.

- A more experienced English teacher may speak and read English well and with good pronunciation.
- A more experienced English teacher may be more familiar with differences between Persian and English.
- A more experienced English teacher may have good knowledge about cultural differences between students' local culture and target culture.
- A more experienced English teacher may be more motivated and create a more motivating climate in classroom
- A more experienced English teacher may know better how to teach and test the educational materials.
- A more experienced English teacher may create a non-threatening climate and have a more friendly relationship with students.
- A more experienced English teacher may less need a lesson plan to run the classroom.
- A more experienced English teacher may know much better how to deal with unpredictable events.

In general, some implications for policy makers, teacher educators, school principals, and English teachers can be suggested. The results of the current study, according to Moafian and Pishghadam (2009), can benefit English teachers by making them aware of the influential effects of teaching experience to get success in their careers. By informing the teacher participants on the correlation of teaching experience and job performance, they can consider the time they devote to teaching as a valuable opportunity to improve their job performance. In addition, the findings may direct the attention of policy maker at ministry of education to make use of years of experience as an important criterion in the appointment of teachers to duty posts such like principals, vice- principals and heads of departments and schools. It may also suggest that more experienced teachers should be employed and retained to teach English in our educational system.

Finally, it is a reality that no research cannot be done without its limitations and the present study, to be sure, is no exception. The present study was conducted with English teachers located only in Lorestan Province. Nevertheless, for the results to be generalized to the country population, further research should be conducted with more teachers in other cities, in public schools, and at other academic levels like elementary schools and universities. Moreover, it is suggested to investigate the impacts of job motivation and job satisfaction on the performance of the English teachers. Further, it seems necessary to investigate the effects of teaching experience on the English teachers' job performance in a longitudinal study.

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