

# IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TEACHER CLASSROOM JUSTICE TRAINING

Masoomeh Estaji<sup>a</sup> and Kiyana Zhaleh<sup>b</sup>  
(<sup>a</sup>mestaji74@gmail.com; <sup>b</sup>k\_zhaleh97@atu.ac.ir)

*Department of English Language and Literature, Allameh Tabataba'i University  
South Allameh St, Modiriat Fly-over, Chamran Highway, Tehran, Iran*

**Abstract:** This study explores language teachers' perceptions about receiving training on the main aspects of classroom justice. A group of 77 Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, chosen through maximum variation sampling, completed a demographic informational scale and an open-ended classroom justice questionnaire. The data were analyzed through MAXQDA software, taking an interactive (i.e., both deductive and inductive) approach to content analysis. The research results reveal that the teachers mainly (1) had no prior experience of receiving classroom justice training; (2) approved the essentiality of EFL teachers' being trained for the rudimental elements of classroom justice; (3) expected to learn more about the different dimensions, principles, and domains of classroom justice in teacher justice training courses; and (4) had positive attitudes toward the usefulness of classroom justice training for enhancing teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices. These results can encourage L2 policymakers and teacher educators to inculcate training courses on theory and practice of classroom justice into L2 teacher education programs with the prospect of empowering teachers to implement justice in their classroom behaviors and ultimately, increase their professional effectiveness.

**Keywords:** classroom justice training, foreign language teaching, professional development needs, teacher's expectations, teacher's perceptions

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The unparalleled importance of language teachers' role in the academic outcomes of their students and in the functioning of Second/Foreign Language (L2) education as a whole puts a heavy burden on the teachers' shoulders to seriously attend to the quality of their performance in the instructional context (Pishghadam et al., 2021). For L2 teachers to effectively tackle the day-to-day intricacies and challenges during their career journey, they are expected to be educated about not only the linguistic but also the psychological, social, interpersonal, and affective aspects of L2 teaching (Borg, 2018). Accordingly, pre- and in-service language teachers can take appropriate actions to meet their continuing professional development needs by becoming involved in research undertakings, joining language teachers' communities of practice, seeking membership in teacher professional development associations, or attending teacher education programs and teacher-training workshops/courses (Coombe & Hiasat, 2020).

Through these avenues of learning, teachers will nourish their repertoire of content and pedagogical knowledge. Content knowledge relates to what teachers are expected to teach, which in the particular domain of L2 education is mainly about knowledge of the target language. In contrast, pedagogical knowledge pertains to what teachers do to create productive learning and teaching environments, requiring knowledge about any factor which might deteriorate or enhance the teachers' professional effectiveness (Derakhshan et al., 2020). One such factor, regarded as a core value in education, is teacher justice in the instructional context (Chory et al., 2022; Sabbagh, 2021).

Regarding the origin of the teacher justice concept, it should be mentioned that research on the social psychology theories of justice was commenced in the domains of organizational behavior and political and social sciences, where perceptions and enactment of justice were conceived to be happening at both individual and social levels (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). In this respect, organizational justice was introduced as an overarching term, involving the main dimensions of procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001). For years, organizational justice researchers have been interested in understanding the degree of perceived fairness existing in the treatment of individuals who are internal to an organization or workplace (Adams, 1965). Early scholars such as Dalbert and Maes (2002) have asserted that justice is a building block of any successful education program, having been mainly neglected for years in instructional communication and general education research (Walzer, 1983). To address this concern, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004) expanded the organizational justice theory to the instructional context and coined the term teacher classroom justice.

They conceptualized teacher classroom justice through the procedural and distributive dimensions and defined it as "perceptions of fairness regarding outcomes or processes that occur in the instructional context" (p. 254). Three years later, Chory (2007) added the interactional dimension to this definition, which, in line with the organizational justice theory, approved the multi-dimensional view of justice. It was posited that for implementing justice in the classroom, teachers should meet certain justice principles (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975). In this respect, teacher distributive justice refers to the amount of perceived fairness enacted by the teacher when allotting classroom outcomes and resources to students. Distributive justice is realized through the *equity*, *equality*, and *need* principles, referring respectively to allocating resources and outcomes based on the students' efforts and performance, equally to all students, and based on the students' idiosyncrasies and unique needs (Berti et al., 2010; Jasso et al., 2016).

In the same vein, procedural justice refers to the amount of perceived fairness enacted by the teacher's decision about the classroom rules, procedures, and policies. This dimension is implemented when the teachers' policies and rules are implemented invariably among students/across time (the *consistency* principle), and are neutral (the *bias suppression* principle), in congruence with ethical and moral conventions (the *ethicality* principle), logical, and sensible (the *reasonableness* principle). Procedural justice is also enacted when classroom procedures are established on exact and precise information (the *accuracy* principle), consider the students' views and concerns (the *voice* principle), are vivid and clear to students (the *transparency* principle), and are adjustable and correctable (the *correctability* principle) (Cropanzano et al., 2015; Estaji & Zhaleh, 2021a).

Finally, interactional justice refers to the amount of perceived fairness enacted by the teacher when communicating with students and building relationships with them. It is implemented through informational principles of *truthfulness* (the teacher's being viewed as credible and trustworthy), *timeliness* (the teacher's well-timed conveying of information to students), and *justification/sufficiency* (the teacher's provision of sufficient explanations and justifications to students). Moreover, it is implemented through interpersonal principles of *caring* (the teacher's heeding about students' feelings, needs, and rights), *propriety* (the teacher's having decency and decorum), and *respect* (the teacher's respect for students) principles (Bies & Moag, 1986; Rasooli, DeLuca, et al., 2019). Furthermore, some researchers (e.g., Rasooli, DeLuca, et al., 2019; Rasooli, Zandi, & et al., 2019; Sabbagh, 2021) have posited that the three teacher justice dimensions and their unique justice principles find their way through and influences all domains of classroom, including the *teaching*, *assessment*, *interactions*, or *learning* that happen in the classroom.

Although the concept of classroom justice was originally introduced in American culture (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004; Chory, 2007), due to its importance in various spheres of education (Resh & Sabbagh, 2016), it instantly grabbed the attention of educational scholars around the globe. During the last two decades, many researchers have attempted to empirically investigate the social psychology theorization of classroom justice in their particular instructional contexts. Due to the noticeable impact that enactment or violation of teacher justice dimensions has had on the students' educational, psychological, or behavioral outcomes, a good number of studies have examined how teacher (in)justice influenced some student variables such as academic engagement (Di Battista et al., 2014), the joy of learning (Ehrhardt-Madapathi et al., 2018), agency (Grazia et al., 2020), willingness to talk (Kaufmann & Tatum, 2018), academic cheating (Sabbagh, 2021), and academic achievement (Gasser et al., 2018).

However, most of the studies have been purely quantitative, gathering numerical data from the participants at a single period through employing closed-ended justice questionnaires (Rasooli, 2020). Instead of seeking to explore minute details about the reasons/antecedents of teacher (in)justice in different educational settings, such studies were mainly concerned with statistically investigating the associative/predictive relationship of (in)justice with student-related outcomes. In other words, the quantitative studies on classroom justice drastically outnumbered the few recent qualitative studies, which attempted to obtain rich, descriptive, and textual accounts of justice from their participants' perspectives. For instance, Chory et al. (2017, 2022), Estaji and Zhaleh (2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b), Horan et al. (2010), and Rasooli, DeLuca et al. (2019) employed open-ended justice questionnaires allowing the participants to explicate their responses to the extent that they desired. On the contrary to the majority of studies in the literature, which were mainly psychometrically-driven, these qualitative studies engaged in the content and thematic analyses of the obtained textual data and calculated frequencies only where needed.

Another concern about the classroom justice literature is that most of the studies in this area have attended to the students' perceptions of justice, failing to look into the teachers' perceptions of their justice implementation/violation in the classroom. This obsession with studying students' perspectives is to some extent understandable when considering that the definitions provided by Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004) and Chory (2007) for the three classroom justice

dimensions all focused on students' perceptions of fairness. Moreover, the closed-ended justice scales, developed and validated in these studies and being still the most widely used instruments in this domain (Rasooli, 2020), are measures of students' perceptions of fairness. However, in step with new findings in this domain has come the realization that the mere focus on students' views of justice does not accurately guide us toward finding all pieces of the classroom-justice-enactment puzzle. This is because the teacher's role is as essential – if not more significant – as that of students in the justice give-and-take process (Estaji & Zhaleh, 2021a).

Horan and Myers (2009) and Berti et al.'s (2010) studies of teachers' perceptions of justice dimensions and principles lighted the way for ensuing the research undertakings in this area, such as those of Gasser et al., (2018), Ehrhardt-Madapathi et al. (2018), Sonnleitner and Kovacs (2020), Kobs et al. (2021), and Estaji and Zhaleh (2021a, 2021b, 2022b). Overall, the findings of these studies reveal that the teachers' perceptions of justice could be different from those of their students; teachers care about treating their students justly; they attempt to implement justice in all classroom domains of assessment, interactions, learning, and teaching; it is beneficial to educate teachers for justice through implicit or explicit methods of instruction; and increase in the teachers' awareness and knowledge of justice can influence their justice perceptions and practices.

All the previous research undertakings were done either in the domain of instructional communication or general education. There is paucity of evidence on the teachers' or students' perceptions of classroom justice in L2 education. Only through the recent studies conducted by Chory et al. (2022), Estaji and Zhaleh (2021a, 2021b), Zhaleh et al. (2022), Estaji and Zhaleh (2022a, 2022b), and Estaji et al. (forthcoming) have the social psychology theories of classroom justice been extended to the context of L2 learning and teaching. This is surprising considering the social and relational essence of language classes where teachers' just treatment of students is a desideratum for maintaining teacher-student interpersonal relationships and teachers' conveying the content knowledge to students (Gasser et al., 2018; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

In these pioneering studies, Estaji and Zhaleh (2021a, 2021b), through adopting a purely qualitative approach to research, explored a group of Iranian EFL teachers' understanding, knowledge, perceptions, experiences, and challenges of implementing justice dimensions and principles in their pedagogical practices. For analyzing their data, based on the theoretical underpinnings of classroom justice, they introduced a three-level coding of justice instances, in which teacher justice *dimensions*, *principles*, and *domains* were neatly juxtaposed in L2 education. Nevertheless, the line of research on teacher classroom justice in L2 education is still in its infancy and contains many caveats and lacunas, which should be attended to if any conclusive and comprehensive results are to be reached in this respect.

Finally, there is a shortage of studies in the area of teacher classroom justice about how much L2 teachers typically receive instruction on the essential aspects of classroom justice; how much justice training is included in teacher education programs intended for enhancing pre- and in-service L2 teachers' professional effectiveness; and how much L2 teachers are willing to receive training on the main aspects of classroom justice. To attend to these research concerns and promote the integration of classroom justice-oriented training into L2 teacher education, the present qualitative study attempted to explore Iranian EFL teachers' prior experience of receiving any classroom justice training, perceptions about the necessity and usefulness of

receiving trainings on teacher classroom justice for their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices, and their expectations from teacher classroom justice-training courses. More particularly, the following research questions were posed in this study.

1. What level of formal/informal training do Iranian EFL teachers report on teacher classroom justice?
2. To what extent do Iranian EFL teachers feel receiving a training course on teacher classroom justice is necessary for them?
3. What do Iranian EFL teachers expect to learn in a teacher classroom justice training course?
4. To what extent do Iranian EFL teachers think explicit instruction on classroom justice dimensions can be fruitful for enhancing their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices?

## METHOD

### Participants

Seventy-seven teachers, who were teaching EFL at private language institutes in Iran, participated in this qualitative study. Although generalizability is not an aim in qualitative research, to enhance the chance of sample-to-population extrapolation of findings, the participants were selected by applying the maximum variation sampling technique. This technique is used to collect data from the widest range of possible views regarding the issue at hand (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the participants ranged to the widest possible extent regarding their demographic variables of gender, university majors, teaching proficiency levels, teaching age levels, and teaching location.

More particularly, the participants were from different university majors (*Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL) = 59; *English Language and Literature* = 13; *Applied Linguistics* = 3; *TESOL* = 1; *Linguistics* = 1), different teaching proficiency levels (*Beginner* = 47; *Early intermediate* = 52; *Intermediate* = 36; *Advanced* = 23; *Proficient* = 5), different teaching age levels (*Children* = 46; *Teenagers* = 55; *Adults* = 31), and different cities of Iran (e.g., Maragheh, Gorgan, Gonbad, Tehran, Rasht, Babolsar, Khorramabad, Urmia, Mashhad, Tabriz, Behshar, Sari, Shahindezh, Alborz, Bandar Turkmen, Isfahan, Borujerd, Ilam, Sanandaj, Ardabil, and Juybar). They were also selected from various age groups (*Less than 20* = 5; *20-29* = 52; *30-39* = 14; *40-49* = 4; *50 or more years old* = 2), various education levels (Last academic degree: *High School Diploma* = 25; *BA* = 28; *MA* = 20; *PhD* = 4), different levels of teaching experience (*0-4* = 48; *5-9* = 11; *10-14* = 11; *15-19* = 5; *20-24* = 1; *25 or more years* = 1), and both genders (*Female* = 60, *Male* = 17). The reason that the proportion of participants is heavier on one gender is practicality; female teachers, compared to their male counterparts, were more willing to participate in this study.

### Instruments

A demographic information scale, eliciting non-sensitive information of age, city of domicile, level of education, gender, major, teaching experience, teaching proficiency, and age levels, was distributed among the participants. Furthermore, to examine the Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions regarding their expectation from teacher justice training courses, their

prior experience of receiving classroom justice training, and the necessity and usefulness of teacher classroom justice training courses, an open-ended questionnaire was developed by the researchers containing four items (Appendix A).

The authors initially wrote the items. Subsequently, to establish their trustworthiness and content validity (Nassaji, 2020), four university instructors of applied linguistics, having sufficient experience of engaging in qualitative research undertakings, checked their content relevance and linguistic clarity. The experts and the present study researchers jointly discussed the items and made necessary modifications to their sequencing and wordings, which helped in arriving at the final list of the items. The participants' written responses to these items could be at any length depending on the amount of details they desired to provide.

### **Data Collection**

Before collecting the data, the participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time, and that the researchers took necessary actions to meet the participants' concerns for anonymity of their identity and confidentiality of their data. They were also notified of the goals of this research undertaking and the length and type of their involvement in the study. The participants completed a consent form, confirming that they cooperated in the study based on their willingness. Afterward, they answered the demographic information scale and the open-ended questionnaire, which, overall, took around 20-30 minutes of their time.

Since the participants were all EFL teachers, who benefited from adequate self-perceived proficiency in English, the instruments were developed and responded to in English. As data collection happened during the COVID-19 outbreak, to protect against the coronavirus spread, both of the researchers jointly collected the data virtually. To this end, the scales were created in Google Forms, and an invitation link to complete the form was sent to the participants through WhatsApp, email, or Telegram. In the end, all the collected responses were saved in the Microsoft Word program for later content analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, both researchers were involved in the data analysis process to achieve investigator triangulation and credibility of findings (Nassaji, 2020). The MAXQDA program (version 2020) was utilized to do open, selective, and axial coding of the data, create visual illustrations of the obtained themes, sub-themes, and categories, and arrive at frequencies for the codes and themes. An interactive process of content analysis was taken (Berg, 2001) as data were analyzed iteratively through both deductive (i.e., devising a codebook derived from Estaji & Zhaleh's (2021a) three levels of coding justice *dimensions*, *principles*, and *domains*) and inductive (i.e., letting codes and themes emerge from the data) approaches. Since there is a "dynamic relationship" between the four domains (Rasooli et al., 2018, p. 164), the subdomains cannot be transparently categorized under just one domain. The subdomain of teacher feedback, for instance, can be categorized under not only the assessment, but also the learning and teaching domains. Hence, we coded the data based on the subdomains, taking into account that the subdomains happen within the main domains of interaction, learning, teaching, and assessment.

As advised by Gao and Zhang (2020), five steps of cleaning the data, creating open codes, generating axial codes (i.e., themes), categorizing the obtained themes, and reporting the results were done. To reach participant validation of the findings, a member checking technique was employed. Thus, five participants checked and approved the transparency and accuracy of all the data, findings, and interpretations, and in this way, the credibility principle in qualitative research was achieved (Nassaji, 2020). To check the inter-coder agreement, a university professor expert in doing qualitative research in the field of applied linguistics independently coded 20% of the data. There was complete convergence between the codes created by the present study researchers and the independent coder.

To demonstrate the confirmability of the data and results (Nassaji, 2020), the audit trail strategy was utilized, meaning that the researchers recorded and rationalized all the decisions made and steps taken about coding and analyzing the data. In this methodology section, adequate details and rich descriptions about data collection and analysis stages were presented to increase the transferability of the obtained conclusions and interpretations of this study to other similar contexts as well as enhancing the dependability principle in qualitative research (Nassaji, 2020).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

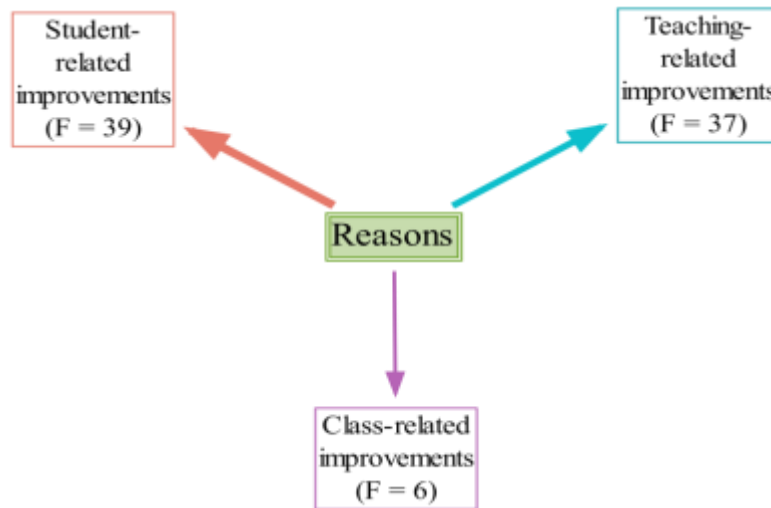
### **Findings**

#### ***The Iranian EFL Teachers' Prior Experience in Receiving Teacher Classroom Justice Training***

To respond to the first research question, the data elicited from the participants' responses to the first item of the open-ended questionnaire were content analyzed. Twelve EFL teachers reported having prior experience of receiving formal or informal training on the concept of classroom justice *as part of MA and Ph.D. programs [T20], through attending different webinars [T29], or in a testing course at university [T67]*. They mentioned that the trainings were *quite satisfying, informative, and helpful*. However, 65 teachers reported not having any prior experience of receiving such trainings in their entire life.

#### ***The Necessity of Receiving Training on Classroom Justice Elements for the Teachers***

As for the second research question, the participants were asked if they thought receiving training on classroom justice was necessary for their professional effectiveness. Except for three teachers who did not consider such training necessary and one teacher who did not answer this question, the rest of the participants ( $n = 73$ ) approved the essentiality of EFL teachers' being trained on the rudimental aspects of teacher just behavior in the classroom. They brought different reasons in this regard, which were categorized under relevant themes and sub-themes as portrayed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Teachers' Reasons on the Necessity of Receiving Classroom-Justice Training**

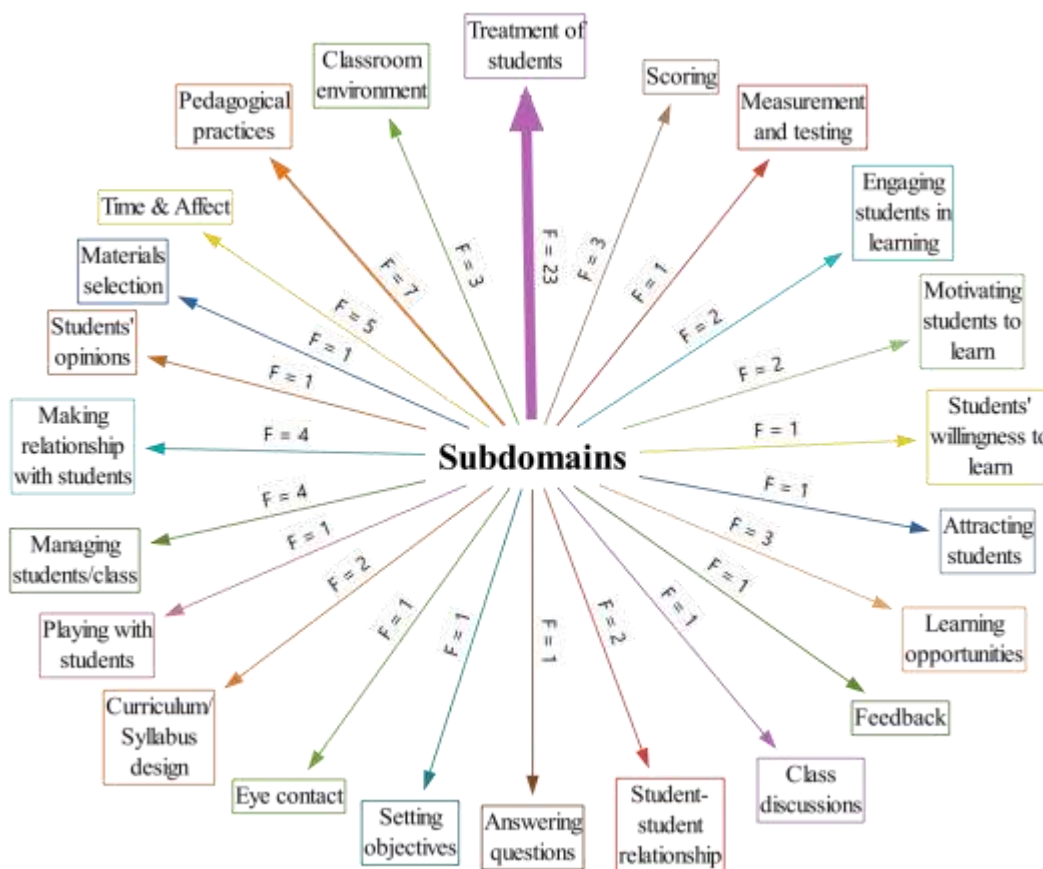
As shown in Figure 1 and Appendix B, three main categories of reasons emerged from the data. The first category pertained to *student-related improvements*. The participants mentioned that training on justice is a desideratum for the teachers' treating the students fairly (F=10), treating the students equally (F=6), improving teacher-students relationship (F = 4), increasing the students' willingness to attend classes (F=3), paying equal attention to students (F = 2), facilitating the students' meaningful learning (F = 2), enhancing the students' more focusing on their goals (F = 1), and fine-tuning strategies to the students (F = 1). It is also essential for teachers' increasing the students' interest in teacher and subject matter (F = 1), better understanding the students' differences (F = 1), increasing the students' class participation (F = 1), helping students in a better way (F = 1), valuing the students' opinion and voice (F = 1), caring about the students' feelings (F = 1), preparing better students for the society (F = 1), controlling one's emotions toward students (F = 1), respecting students (F = 1), and providing learners with moral aspects of education (F = 1).

The second category of reasons was related to *teaching-related improvements* (F = 39). The teachers accentuated that receiving classroom justice training is necessary for EFL teachers to enhance their teaching quality (F = 21), update their knowledge (F = 10), make fair decisions (F = 1), set clear standards (F = 1), correct their wrong class policies (F = 1), actualize their plans (F = 1), become familiar with the cultural and economic inequalities (F = 1), and understand the sensitivity of their job (F = 1). The third category of reasons was about *class-related improvements* as the teachers believed that such training is essential for creating a fair learning environment (F = 2), managing classes effectively (F = 2), creating a non-threatening class atmosphere (F = 1), and running classes smoothly (F = 1).



### *The Iranian EFL Teachers' Expectations from Classroom Justice-Training Courses*

Content analysis of the teachers' responses to the third item of the questionnaire revealed that they expected to become informed of other teachers' experiences, real examples, teaching styles, teacher rights, different viewpoints and opinions, methods, rules, useful skills, techniques, strategies, new knowledge, tips, international criteria, and new research findings in the area of classroom justice in teacher classroom justice-training courses. Through these sources of information, they expected to learn more about different dimensions, principles, and domains of classroom justice. More particularly, they expressed their enthusiasm toward learning about the *equality* (F = 12), *need* (F = 9), and *equity* (F = 2) principles of distributive justice; the *caring* (F = 9), *propriety* (F = 1), and *sufficiency/justification* (F = 1) principles of interactional justice; and the *bias suppression* (F = 10), *ethicality* (F = 1), *correctability* (F = 1) principles of procedural justice. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 2, they expected to learn how to enact justice in various classroom subdomains.

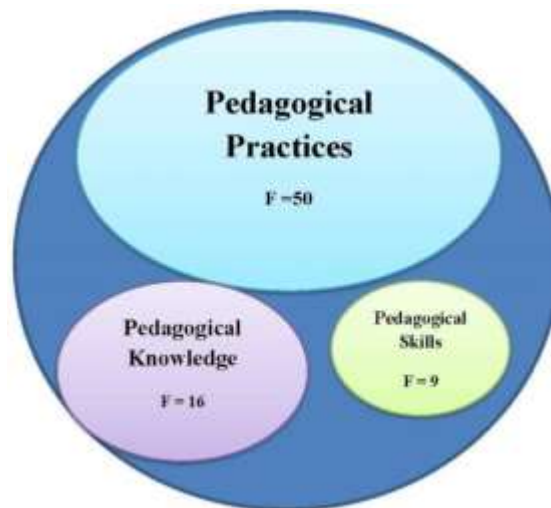


**Figure 2. Teachers' Expectations of Learning Justice Enactment in Different Classroom Subdomains**

According to Figure 2, through training courses, the teachers are expected to learn how to enact justice in a wide range of classroom subdomains. They were most concerned with learning how to act justly when *treating their students* (F = 23). They were also eager to learn how to implement justice when *providing pedagogical practices* (F = 5), *providing time and affect to students* (F = 5), *making relationship with students* (F = 4), *managing classes* (F = 4), *providing learning opportunities* (F = 3), *scoring the students' papers* (F = 3), *designing curriculum/syllabus* (F = 2), *engaging students in learning* (F = 2), and *motivating students to learn* (F = 2), among others.

### ***The Usefulness of Classroom Justice Training for Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Practices***

Analysis of the responses to the fourth item of the questionnaire indicated that, overall, the teachers had positive opinions about the usefulness of classroom justice training. More particularly, 34 and 32 teachers believed that such trainings enhance their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices of teachers *to a large extent* and *to some extent*, respectively. While 11 teachers had no idea in this regard, none of the participants questioned or rejected the usefulness of receiving classroom justice trainings. Figure 3 portrays the frequency of Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the usefulness of classroom justice training for the teachers' *pedagogical skills* (F = 9), *knowledge* (F = 16), and *practices* (F = 50). The participants delineated that during teacher training sessions, teachers can develop their pedagogical skills through learning various justice enactment strategies and techniques. Similarly, they can build their pedagogical knowledge by learning different dimensions and principles of justice and increasing awareness of classroom justice.



**Figure 3. The Usefulness of Classroom Justice-Trainings for Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Practices**

As portrayed in Figure 3, the usefulness of justice training was most recurrently mentioned in relation to the teachers' pedagogical practices. The participants pointed out that training on classroom justice can positively influence 13 aspects of teachers' pedagogical practices as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Aspects of Teachers' Pedagogical Practices Enhanced through Teacher Justice Trainings**

Aspect	Frequency
Implementing justice in teaching	14
Creating better classes	8
Treating students equally	7
Encouraging students' learning	7
Treating students fairly	3
Behaving in a better way in class	3
Efficiently communicating with students	2
Taking into account students' perspectives	1
Creating better teacher-student relationships	1
Increasing teacher trustworthiness	1
Efficiently planning courses	1
Having teaching creativity	1
Reflecting on teaching	1

Overall, the results of this study indicated that while many of the teachers did not have any prior experience of receiving classroom justice training, they held positive attitudes toward attending such training courses and thought they could potentially enhance the teachers' perceptions and practices of justice in EFL instructional contexts.

## Discussion

The main objective of the present study was to unfold the perceptions of EFL teachers of receiving (in)formal training for the main aspects of teacher classroom justice behavior. The content and thematic analyses of the data revealed that the majority of the teachers had no prior experience of receiving any classroom justice training in their entire life. Only few cases were reported to experience such trainings as part of MA and Ph.D. programs, through attending different webinars or in a testing course at university. Based on these findings, it can be stated that while classroom justice behavior is a rudimental characteristic of successful teachers' practice (Chory et al., 2017; Sabbagh, 2021), rarely has its knowledge been inculcated into L2 teacher education and preparation programs run in the language education context of Iran.

To effectively function in the instructional context, L2 teachers are expected to be perceived as trustworthy, honest, and reliable, have respect for students, be warm and friendly toward them, maintain good teacher-student interpersonal relationships, create an enjoyable learning

environment, and have open and sufficient communication with students (Gasser et al., 2018; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). These qualities all overlap with the justice principles (e.g., *truthfulness, justification, respect, and caring*), categorized under the procedural, interactional, and distributive justice dimensions. Despite their importance, based on the findings of the present study and Derakhshan et al.'s (2020) argument, teachers typically receive little training regarding how to develop teacher effectiveness qualities in the foreign language education system of Iran.

While in some university courses on psychology/sociology of language, undergraduate or graduate TEFL students might learn about various social or psychological factors playing a role in the teachers' classroom performance, in the majority of such cases, the instructions remain at the theoretical level. Thus, L2 teacher students find little chance to implement and test their gained knowledge in their actual teaching experiences and examine whether or not they can successfully practice what they have personally theorized. This argument is in congruence with previous research studies, which similarly pinpointed the inadequacies of EFL teacher education programs in Iran (e.g., Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016; Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Khanjani et al., 2016).

Such programs mainly focus on nourishing the teachers' content knowledge at the expense of developing their pedagogical expertise, which is equally — if not more — significant for their efficient classroom performance (Derakhshan et al., 2020). They also fail to educate independent pre- and in-service L2 teachers, who enthusiastically go for meeting their continuing professional development needs, one of which is teacher classroom justice (Rasooli, DeLuca et al., 2019; Resh & Sabbagh, 2016). Such teachers might neglect to develop their knowledge and practice of instructional justice by personally seeking for training themselves about the main elements of classroom justice through engaging in practitioner or action research, subscribing to professional journals, participating in online teacher discussion forums, or attending teacher justice development webinars, courses, or workshops run worldwide. This argument is supported by the findings of the present study, which revealed that neither Iranian foreign language education programs provide training on classroom justice for EFL teachers nor the teachers independently went for receiving such training outside the confines of the education system they were involved in.

Moreover, the research findings uncovered that the majority of the participants approved the necessity of receiving training on the rudimental aspects of teacher classroom justice for Iranian EFL teachers. This finding is in line with the results of other studies, which indicated that implicit or explicit increasing of teachers' knowledge and awareness of justice dimensions or principles could positively influence their justice perceptions and practices (Estaji & Zhaleh, 2022b; Kobs et al., 2021; Sonnleitner & Kovacs, 2020). The participants of this study explained that such trainings are essential because the teachers' just behavior in the classroom associates with improving the teacher-student relationships and increasing the students' meaningful learning, class participation, more focusing on academic goals, and interest in teacher and subject matter. These findings are empirically supported by those of previous studies, which reported the positive influence of teacher justice on the students' favorable educational outcomes (e.g., Di Battista et al., 2014; Ehrhardt-Madapathi et al., 2018; Grazia et al., 2020; Kaufmann & Tatum, 2018).

Similarly, the teachers mentioned that through receiving such trainings, EFL teachers can learn how to treat students fairly, pay equal attention to all, fine-tune teaching strategies to students, better understand students' differences, value students' pinions and voices, care about students' feelings, control their emotions toward students, respect students, help them in a better way, set clear standards, and correct their wrong class policies. Based on the social psychology theories of classroom justice, these are all instances of implementing the *caring, correctability, transparency, equality, respect, voice, and bias suppression* justice principles in the classroom context (Cropanzano et al., 2015; Jasso et al., 2016; Rasooli DeLuca et al., 2019).

In corroboration of previous studies, which reported that teacher (in)justice can happen not only in the assessment but also the interactional, learning, and teaching domains of the classroom (Chory et al., 2017; Estaji & Zhaleh, 2021a, 2021b; Horan et al., 2010; Rasooli Deluca et al., 2019), the additional results of the current study revealed that the teachers expected to become informed of how to enact justice principles and dimensions in various subdomains of language classes. For instance, the participants expected to learn how to implement the equality, need, and equity principles of distributive justice, the caring, propriety, and sufficiency/justification principles of interactional justice, and the bias suppression, ethicality, correctability principles of procedural justice when they want to *provide pedagogical practices, provide time and affect, manage classes, provide learning opportunities, make teacher-student relationships, score papers, design curriculum/syllabus, give feedback, answer questions, select materials*, among others. These findings corroborate Estaji and Zhaleh's (2021a) findings, which showed that Iranian EFL teachers are aware of this notion that teachers should incorporate justice in almost every aspect of their instructional practices.

The final parts of the results uncovered that the teachers had positive opinions about the usefulness of classroom justice training for enhancing their pedagogical skills, knowledge, and practices. More particularly, in the majority of the cases, the participants emphasized the usefulness of such trainings for improving their pedagogical practices, such as how to implement justice in teaching, create better classes, treat students equally, encourage students' learning, behave in a better way in class, treat students fairly, efficiently communicate with students, consider the students' perspectives, create better teacher-student relationships, increase their trustworthiness, efficiently plan courses, have teaching creativity, and reflect on their teaching. The teachers' emphasis on boosting their pedagogical practices can be justified by pinpointing the theory-based nature of L2 education programs in Iran, where the gap between theory and practice is vividly evident (Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016; Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Khanjani et al., 2016). Thus, the teachers working in Iran's language education system might feel this need to promote their actual instructional performance substantially more than their pedagogical knowledge and skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present qualitative study sought to explore a group of Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and expectations of classroom justice training. Content and thematic analyses of the data evinced that teachers mainly (1) had no prior experience of receiving classroom justice training; (2) approved the essentiality of EFL teachers' being trained for the rudimental elements of

classroom justice; (3) expected to learn more about the different dimensions, principles, and domains of classroom justice in teacher justice training courses; and (4) had positive perceptions toward the usefulness of classroom justice training for enhancing the teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices. Based on these results, it can be concluded that while EFL teachers normally receive no instruction or training on classroom justice during their career journey, they have positive attitudes toward attending classroom justice training courses and think that receiving such instructions/trainings can enhance their professional effectiveness as an EFL teacher.

On the whole, the results of this study, being one of the first attempts to explore EFL teachers' perceptions about teacher classroom justice training, can present significant lessons for L2 teacher educators, policymakers, teachers, and institution managers, among others. For instance, L2 policymakers are encouraged to inculcate courses on teacher classroom justice into the curricula that they plan and design for BA, MA, or Ph.D. programs in TEFL, where student teachers can be theoretically trained for the main dimensions, principles, and domains of teacher justice enactment. When the teacher's knowledge and awareness of justice is enriched, they are more prone to implement justice in their actual instructional practices.

Similarly, L2 teacher educators can take appropriate actions to further promote teachers' just classroom behavior by educating teachers for the practical strategies of enacting distributive, interactional, and procedural justice in the instructional context, the challenges and barriers that L2 teachers typically face when trying to behave justly toward students, and useful skills to overcome the external and internal barriers to justice implementation, with the ultimate aim of preparing teachers for becoming just language teachers. In the same vein, institution managers should choose their teachers very wisely, selecting those who obtain a sufficient level of both content and pedagogical knowledge. Such teachers can not only convey knowledge of the target language to students but also create a fair and enjoyable learning environment for learners by drawing on their knowledge repertoire of the psychological, social, cultural, affective, and cognitive aspects of language teaching and learning, to which knowledge of teacher classroom justice is an integral element (Estaji & Zhaleh, 2021a).

Last but not least, EFL teachers are advised to make personal strides toward training themselves for the main components of teacher classroom justice. To accomplish this objective, L2 teachers can read academic books about justice, follow new research findings in this domain, engage in collaborative or individual research undertakings on teacher justice, do action research to solve justice enactment problems that they face in their actual classes, attend conferences, workshops, or courses that train teachers for justice, observe other teachers' classes, ask peers to observe their classes and provide feedback regarding their classroom (in)justice behaviors, and reflect on their justice practices during and after each session.

There were some limitations to this study, which can be addressed in future studies in this emerging area of research. To start with, this qualitative study was conducted based on the data elicited from a group of 77 EFL teachers. While sample-to-population generalizability of results is not a goal in qualitative studies, and maximum variation sampling was employed to increase the transferability of findings to the population of Iranian EFL teachers, if accessible, other researchers can target a larger sample and examine if they reach similar results. Moreover, due to accessibility and practicality issues in research, the present study was done only on Iranian

EFL teachers. Thus, the obtained findings cannot be readily discussed in reference to all EFL teachers worldwide. To address this issue, future researchers can explore EFL teachers' perceptions and expectations in other cultural contexts of instruction (e.g., China, Italy, Switzerland, or Poland) and scrutinize the ways their results converge or diverge with those arrived at in the current study.

The theoretical rationale behind conducting the present study was mainly to precipitate the extension of the social psychology theories of classroom justice to the L2 education context. As initial strides toward reaching this goal, the present study and the ones published very recently by Estaji and Zhaleh (2021a, 2021b) inspected the EFL teachers' classroom justice perceptions, expectations, experiences, and challenges. While English, as an international language, is the most frequently learned and taught L2 around the globe, there are still teachers of languages other than English such as those teaching Persian, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, or French to non-native speakers of these languages. Thus, future researchers are encouraged to target not only EFL teachers but also teachers of languages other than English to increase the scope of empirical investigations in this area and examine if the target language as a mediating variable can affect the teachers' perceptions and practices of classroom justice.

Additionally, in this study, the sample was comprised only of in-service EFL teachers who were teaching at private language institutes at the time of data collection in this study. Future studies can include pre-service as well as in-service public schools EFL teachers and examine if such groups also felt the need for receiving training on the main aspects of teacher classroom justice. Likewise, the qualitative data for the current research were collected by employing an open-ended questionnaire. Future researchers can employ other qualitative data collection instruments used in the field of language education, including narrative writing, audio journal, interview, case study, observation, reflective journal, or portfolio writing.

The present study was primarily concerned with teachers, who are one of the key actors in the language education scene. However, since other educational stakeholders like L2 policymakers, teacher educators, institution principals, materials developers, or authorities responsible for recruiting teachers have their own shares in the educational system effectiveness, it is beneficial that future researchers ask for their opinions regarding the integration of classroom justice training into L2 teacher education programs. As a final point, the present study did a needs analysis of what EFL teachers expect and like to learn about teacher classroom justice. Based on the findings of this study, future researchers can go a step further by designing actual classroom justice training courses and workshops for EFL teachers in the form of experimental studies and exploring to what extent such interventions can enhance L2 teachers' justice perceptions and practices.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A. The Open-Ended Questionnaire Items**

1. Have you ever received any formal/informal training on teacher classroom justice?
2. Do you feel that receiving a training course on teacher classroom justice is necessary for you? How? Why?
3. What would you like/expect to learn in a teacher classroom justice-training course?
4. To what extent do you think explicit instruction on classroom justice dimensions can be fruitful for enhancing teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practices? Why?

**Appendix B. Reasons for the Necessity of Training on Classroom Justice**

<b>Class-related Improvements</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Student-related Improvements</b>	<b>F</b>
Creating a fair learning environment	2	Treating students fairly	10
Managing classes effectively	2	Treating students equally	6
Creating non-threatening class atmosphere	1	Improving teacher-students relationship	4
Running classes smoothly	1	Increasing students' willingness to attend classes	3
<b>Teaching-related Improvements</b>	<b>F</b>	Paying equal attention to students	2
Enhancing teaching quality	21	Facilitating students' meaningful learning	2
Updating teachers' knowledge	10	Facilitating students' more focusing on their goals	1
Becoming familiar with cultural and economic inequalities	1	Fine-tuning strategies to students	1
Sensitivity of teachers' job	1	Increasing students' interest in teacher and subject matter	1
Actualizing teachers' plans	1	Increasing students' class participation	1
Making fair decisions	1	Valuing students' opinion and voice	1
Setting clear standards	1	Better understanding students' differences	1
Correcting wrong class policies	1	Respecting students	1
		Helping students in a better way	1
		Caring about students' feelings	1
		Preparing better students for the society	1
		Providing learners with moral aspects of education	1
		Controlling one's emotions toward students	1