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The Implementation of Co-teaching Model in English Department at College of Basic Education: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

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Keywords: <i>Co-teaching</i> <i>Teacher Education</i> <i>Teacher Perspective</i> <i>Student Perspective</i>	Abstract In spite of the growing interest in co-teaching in teacher education programs, there is a paucity of research on its use and effectiveness in the Kurdish context. This paper aims to address this gap by investigating Kurdish EFL teachers' and students' perspectives toward implementing co-teaching model in English department in the academic year 2019-2020. To achieve this aim, a focus group interview with 5 teachers was carried out to elicit the required data. As for the students' perspectives, a questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The data was analysed quantitatively. The study revealed that Kurdish EFL teachers had apposite perspectives toward co-teaching model; furthermore, the teachers also showed approving perspectives toward implementing co-teaching in their department. Hence, co-teaching model can be regarded a promising pedagogical practice for future use.
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تطبيق التدريس المشترك في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية
كلية التربية الأساسية: من وجهة نظر المدرسين والطلاب

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<p>الملخص:</p> <p>على الرغم من الاهتمام بالتعليم المشترك في برامج إعداد المدرسين، هناك قلة في البحث في مدى فاعليته وتطبيقه في البيئة الكردية. يهدف هذا البحث الى سد هذه الفجوة بدراسة وجهتي نظر المدرسين والطلبة الكرد في اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية من أجل تنفيذ أنموذج التعليم المشترك في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية في العام الدراسي ٢٠١٩-٢٠٢٠. ولتحقيق هذا الهدق تمت مقابلة مجموعة من خمسة مدرسين للوصول إلى البيانات المطلوبة. أما بالنسبة لوجهة نظر الطلبة، تم إعداد استبيان للحصول على البيانات. تم استخدام التحليل الكمي للبيانات. وبينت الدراسة أن موقف مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية الكرد من أنموذج التعليم المشترك كان إيجابيا، وإضافة لذلك أبدى المدرسون وجهة نظر مؤيدة لتطبيق التعليم المشترك في قسمهم. ولهذا يمكن النظر إلى التعليم المشترك كممارسة تعليمية واعدة في المستقبل.</p>	<p>الكلمات الدالة:-</p> <p>التعليم المشترك تعليم المدرسين وجهة نظر المدرس وجهة نظر الطالب</p> <p>معلومات البحث</p> <p>تاريخ البحث:</p> <p>الاستلام: ٢٠٢٠/٦/١٢</p> <p>القبول: ٢٠٢٠/٧/٢١</p> <p>التوفر على النت</p>
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1.1 Introduction

As the trend toward cooperative teaching is progressively gaining recognition, co-teaching approach occurs more commonly in the educational scenes as teachers and stakeholders perceive how crucial is to have two teachers sharing responsibility for instruction.

Reviewing the relevant literature reveals that different terminologies have been used to describe co-teaching, as Mewald (2014) refers to “diverse definitions of co-teaching

in various settings”. The terms collaborative teaching, team teaching, peer teaching, and co-teaching are used interchangeably in the literature.

According to Cook and Friend (1995), who are considered the pioneers in co-teaching research, co-teaching refers to a situation where “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (p.1).

DeBoer and Fister (1995) explicate co-teaching as an instructional delivery structure wherein teachers with different knowledge, experience, and skills assume joint responsibility to design, deliver, monitor, and evaluate instruction for heterogeneous classrooms.

Cain and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2006) consider team teaching as a well-suited strategy that has been utilised by institutions so as to meet the extensive skills required in contemporary teaching. It is a teaching and learning option that creates a culture of sharing expertise instead of fostering isolated and individual problem solving.

Dalal (2014, p.108) describes team teaching as a “thinly-disguised teacher training” that can be utilised in the context of teacher development where a peer, rather than an outsider, directs, i.e. a peer expert is ‘advising’ rather than ‘instructing’. He believes that a successful implementation of team teaching should be preceded by a re-orientation of individual staff members and departmental administrators.

If we contemplate the above-mentioned definitions, we find that there is an important element essential in co-taught classes: shared accountability of teachers. Hence, co-teaching help to bring the strengths of two teachers who have different expertise together so as to better meet students’ needs. From this standpoint, a main rationale for implementing co-teaching is expanding instructional approaches so as to increase opportunities for student success and result in greater academic gains. This benefit could not be derived if just one teacher was teaching the class.

1.2 The Problem

Practicing a traditional model of teaching has been dominant for decades in the universities of KR. Lately, especially with the educational reform launched in 2007, the teaching instruction in Salahaddin University has witnessed an orderly transition to the student-centred model of teaching. This change contributed to yield good results in terms of students’ attainment. In addition, this reform coincided with the global push to rethink education systems so as to appropriately meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

College of Basic Education, aspiring above and beyond the normal education, has always pioneered to experience new models of teaching. Subsequently, it formed the opinion to approach the status quo of current teacher preparation program, which has remained to some extent constant and unrevised for many years. It made a decision to

implement co-teaching model of teaching so as to empower the teachers to meet the urgent needs of their students and to better serve the mission of the college. The main reason that fuelled the motivation to consider implementing the model of co-teaching is the fact that College of Basic Education graduates teachers who will teach the future generation, and teacher preparation is considered a collective responsibility. Hence, the co-teaching model seemed to be a good fit with serving this aim since this model would afford an opportunity to develop collaborative teaching skills and strengthen relationships with peers. Secondly, The push towards promoting the quality of education being offered at the college, which is part of the strategic plan of the deanery, has resulted in deciding on practicing some more innovative models of teaching. Above all, English department always seeks innovation and newness in teaching, and its staff members regularly initiate new teaching techniques. Finally, the aspiration to provide a high standard pedagogy which is accompanied by the decline in public spending on workshops and teacher development courses made the college administration decide on getting greater use of its internal strengths and delicately manipulating its human resources.

The present study is carried out with the intention to answer the following questions:

1. What are teachers' perspectives toward the implementation of co-teaching model in their department?
2. How do teachers rate the barriers to co-teaching at their department?
3. What are students' perspectives toward the implementation of co-teaching model in their classes?

1.3 Approaches to Co-teaching

Depending on the instructional needs of the students, co-teaching can be presented in different formats. In this respect, Friend et al (2010) present six approaches to co-teaching and which have been widely utilised throughout the literature. It is worth mentioning that in these different models, specific roles and responsibilities are assigned to the teachers so as to ensure the success of delivery of instruction. These approaches are the following:

- One teach, one observe, where one teacher leads the instruction while the other observes the class and collects data.
- Station teaching, where the students are split up into three or more groups; hence, student teacher ratio is decreased. The students rotate from station to station; receive instruction from the teachers at two stations and working autonomously at the third.
- Parallel teaching, where the students are split into two homogeneous groups, present the same material to foster instructional differentiation and promote student engagement.

- Alternative teaching, where one teacher works with the at-risk group of students while the other continues to provide accelerated instruction.
- Teaming, where both teachers lead large-group instruction by both teachers lecturing, representing, and illustrating topics so as to deliver instruction and provide student support.
- One teach, one assist, where one teacher leads instruction while the other circulates among the students offering individual assistance.

1.4 Teacher Collaboration Cycle

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) assert that teacher teaming is essential in elevating education standards. They put forward a framework that includes four inter-related elements of the teacher collaboration: dialogue, decision making, action taking, and evaluation.

- Dialogue is considered an integral component of an effective cycle of teacher collaboration. High-functioning teams always collaborate, recognize the diverse viewpoints, address and resolve their differences through collegial dialogue.
- Decision making is a part and parcel of a teacher team cycle of collaboration. Having a collective agreement to implement general instructional strategies, choosing updated textbooks, and creating discipline procedures would naturally result in the targeted improvements in practice or increases in student learning.
- Undoubtedly, a decision does not produce results unless it is put into practice; hence action taking becomes a key component of a teacher team cycle of collaboration. It is worth mentioning that teacher planning is unrelated to organizational performance; teachers do themselves would take actions as a result of their team decisions.
- Evaluation of practice is an indication of fully developed teacher team collaboration, and this is why educators are urged to continually assess their effectiveness based on some tangible evidences from students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Teachers in high-functioning teams would conduct a systematic collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information to inform their dialogue and decision making.

The above-mentioned cycle of teacher collaboration, if employed appropriately, can lead to considerable increase in teacher skills, the quality of instruction, and student learning. Related to this point, Dalal (2014) recommends teachers to follow these tips in order to ensure the best practices of co-teaching:

- go along with each other's' differences in opinion and teaching style,
- share the interest to learn from each other,

- allocate an equal amount of time in both phases: preparation and teaching,
- appreciate the contribution of the partner and refer to each other's ideas, and
- feel accountable for teaching, managing, and assessing the students.

1.5 Issues in Team Teaching

Tobin (2014, p.193) best depicts co-teaching as an approach to learning to teach where the partners “learn to teach by teaching at one another's elbow”.

Generally speaking, team members have various statuses. For the most part, a senior teacher serves as a mentor to a less experienced teacher. In other cases, all members of a team have similar professional status. It is worth mentioning that the quality of this relationship relies on the attributes of the teachers themselves and the degree to which partners take part in holding the responsibility to make the implementation a fruitful one. It is essential for the administration to consider their staff resources and use them shrewdly. Hence, manipulating the strengths of individual teachers is crucial in co-teaching. That is to say, the degree to which co-teaching is effective is dependent on the mutual trust and esteem among team members; whether partners trust each other to fulfil classroom responsibility and whether they open to feedback and accept critique (Brennan et al, 1973).

Concerning team member selection, in most cases this issue is determined by a principal on the basis of the experience, expertise, perceived personality of the teachers involved and their preference (Cain and Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2006).

Another important point relevant to co-teaching, as pointed out by Hang and Rabren (2009), is thoughtful pre-arranged co-planning. An effective co-teaching requires co-teachers to spend some time together to get to know each other and share teaching skills and instructional strategies.

According to Cain and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2006), team functioning plays a vital role in making collaborative teaching successful. It is important for team members to coordinate and have a common philosophy, similar order of priorities, and a vision and work towards a common goal. It is imperative for them to collectively plan, prepare, and dialogue about delivery. Team members need to hold consultation as how to direct their class and share responsibility for designing activities.

Tobin (2014, p.196) asserts that “the ‘co’ in co-teaching is very important”, where it emphasises cooperation and collaboration. It is essential for teachers to plan together and teach together in a coordinated way with the intention of promoting the learning of their students. This cooperation informs them when to step forward to play their roles and when to step back to give the floor to their partners. Hence, it can be said that co-teaching necessitates collective responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning.

As for Cain and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2006), administrative support is deemed a central factor in the provision and maintenance of a supportive environment for the success of co-teaching program. Teachers should be entitled to establish the boundaries and be given the freedom to arrange and plan instruction in a manner that is well-tailored to their students' needs. Hence, it is imperative for administrators to develop a policy that establishes criteria for effective practices in co-teaching classes.

1.6 Co-teaching in Teacher Education Programs

The effectiveness of co-teaching in teacher education programs has increasingly echoed in the literature. Baeten and Simons (2016) maintain that the teacher students, when teach collaboratively, receive considerable support and individual assistance from their mentors. The co-teacher can help and scaffold, or even create opportunities for students' participation and putting them on the right track. This would eventually lead to increasing their co-teachers' self-confidence and professional development.

Bacharach and Heck (2012) maintain that co-teaching is of great importance to conduct reform in teacher preparation programs. Co-teaching can assist both the cooperating teacher and teacher candidate when they collaboratively plan, organise, deliver, assess, and share the physical space of the classroom. This model allows the cooperative teacher to share with the teacher candidate rather than give away responsibility. Furthermore, they propose three reasons for adopting co-teaching model in teaching, namely: strengthen the teacher preparation program, overcome the challenges of placing teacher candidates, and maximize the human resources in the classroom.

Hence, by being co-taught by two teachers, our teacher candidates would become thoughtful teachers who deeply understand that the teaching process goes beyond the walls of a classroom; it is a profession that has a wide array of things about psychological, social, and cultural contexts.

1.7 Advantages of Co-teaching

The advantages of co-teaching have been highlighted by many researchers. Meanwhile, these advantages have been proposed with reference to both students and teachers. Friend's famous quotation (2007, p.48) "In classrooms filled with students with a variety of learning needs, two teachers can be better than one", is widely used to call attention to the significance of co-teaching in today's classrooms.

According to Cain and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2006), the most obvious advantage of co-teaching lies in the fact the teachers jointly draw on their expertise to decide on suitable content. Consequently, this would open up ample opportunity for teachers to exchange experiences as they plan for their students. Furthermore, they accentuate the role of

collegiality and collaborative work in “promoting teacher development and in eliminating professional isolation”. An additional advantage of co-teaching is demonstrated by the spirit of cooperation among teachers, which can act as an ideal prototype for the students.

Bacharach and Heck (2012) mentions some advantages of co-teaching for students: more individual attention, immediate answers for questions, exam papers are graded and returned sooner, and individual differences are better attended to.

Similarly, Buick (2016) believes that being introduced to multiple perspectives is a pivotal benefit of co-teaching for both teachers and students. It would pave the way for constructive dialogue and increased student participation. On the other hand, teachers’ collaborative work enables them to realise their potentials and diagnose their own weaknesses. Thus, greater professional development will take place.

Correspondingly, Baeten and Simons (2016) are of the belief that co-teaching lends emotional and professional support and leads to learning gains on the professional and personal levels.

It seems that in co-taught classrooms, teachers are more likely to act dutifully and achieve pedagogical gains. As for students, they are offered more varied lessons which lead to more academic gains.

1.8 Disadvantages and Challenges of Co-teaching

In spite of the significant advantages of co-teaching mentioned above, researchers ascribe some challenges and disadvantages to co-teaching.

According to Mewald (2014), merging the diverse strengths, experiences, and viewpoints of the people involved in co-teaching is an intimidating job. He believes that it is a daunting job for the different sides to reach an agreement on how to teach. Teachers may not easily reach a consensus on instructional practices inside the class.

Among the major barriers to implementing co-teaching is the inadequate leadership. Although stakeholders claim to support democratic ideology and foster development; yet, sometimes they impede collaborative practice and impose their authority and centralised power. Another barrier to co-teaching is team tension. The positive results of co-teaching can be quickly weakened and even spoiled if team members do not work harmoniously (Buick, 2016).

Baeten and Simons (2016) assert that it can be bewildering for students when they face several teachers in the classroom. Besides, multiple teachers answering and directing students what to do may lead to confusion. What is worse, students may feel at a loss as for whom to go to with inquiries.

Chitiyo (2017) maintains that not having enough university training in co-teaching is a major challenge for applying co-teaching. This implies that lack of professional preparation of teachers in managing co-taught classes is threatening to the success of co-teaching approach. Furthermore, unplanned scheduling is also a challenge to the implementation of co-teaching. Teachers need to allot sufficient time for discussion so as to ensure a successful implementation. Additionally, Chitiyo draws attention to an important factor that constitutes a serious impediment to the implementation of co-teaching; that is teachers' resistance or disapproval of incorporating this new model into their teaching. Some teachers regard their classrooms as their own territory where they are the master of the situation; hence, having an outsider teacher is regarded as a trespass on their sphere of influence that threatens their autonomy. On that account, some teachers disapprove the idea that other teachers will question the quality of their teaching and are not volitional to share their instructional rights and duties.

Some other teachers, as Friend (2007) argues, are unwilling to co-teach because they are unable to realise their full potential and feel degraded since they are considered as a 'teacher assistant'.

According to Tobin (2014), problems arise when the two teachers have difference in epistemology and do not accept each other's point of view. More specifically, he asserts, when teachers adhere to "a one-size-fits-all approach to what constitutes effective teaching" (p.199), disagreement emerges for they disagree on what they regard the best way to teach is.

Finally, Hamdan et al (2016) maintain that implementing co-teaching is not without challenge. It needs constant follow up and sustained efforts to overcome the challenges. They assert that this implementation should be carried out with the help of legislation. Hence, they argue for opportunities where the teachers can be exposed to courses and training about co-teaching practices and its essential components.

2. Methodology

2.1 Population

The sample for the current study consisted of teachers and students in English department/college of basic Education during the academic year 2019-2020. Five teachers attended a focus group interview, which was carried out so as to elicit teachers' perspectives toward the actual implementation of co-teaching in their teaching and find out the challenges they encountered throughout their co-teaching. On the other hand, 98 students from English department (from all grades 22 first year, 32 second year, 22 third year, and 22 fourth year) acted as the subject of the current study. Data was derived both from teachers and students at the end of the academic year 2019-2020.

2.2 Instrumentation

A mixed method approach was adopted to collect data in the current study. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods complementarily for data collection helped the researcher obtain extensive data and acquire a thorough insight into the topic. Deriving data from both teachers and students allowed the researcher to examine the effectiveness of co-teaching approach from different perspectives, which upheld and complemented each other.

The qualitative data was obtained from a focus group discussion with the teachers. Rabiee (2004) believes that focus group is effective for the provision of in-depth group information where purposive participants are chosen to discuss a given topic. Since focus-group discussions are flexible, the type and range of information obtained through the social interaction of the members are more detailed and deeper than those obtained from individual interviews. Focus groups “supply information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals”.

Prior to the interview session, the researcher asked permission to record the interview so the data may be reviewed. Consent to be audio-recorded during the interview was obtained from four teachers in the department, and they served as the sample for the current study.

The focus group session helped to draw upon teachers’ attitudes, experiences, and reactions since these were more likely to be disclosed via this type of social gathering. Throughout the focus group session, the researcher tried to act out the role of a moderator and conduct the focus group with utmost integrity and impartiality.

Concerning the quantitative data, it was gathered by distributing a questionnaire to the target sample of the study (98 students). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items using five points Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). It was designed with the intention to elicit students’ perspectives toward implementing co-teaching in their learning.

2.3 Data Analysis and Discussion

The collected data was analysed in order to reach reasonable answers for the research questions raised previously in this research:

1. How do teachers rate the effectiveness of the co-teaching model at their department?
2. How do teachers rate the barriers to co-teaching at their department?
3. What are students’ perspectives toward the implementation of co-teaching in their classes?

The focus group interview served to collect data required to answer the first and second research questions; whereas, the student questionnaire was used to collect the needed data to answer the third research question.

2.3.1 The Focus Group

In the current study, the focus groups discussion provided insight into the practice of co-teaching in terms of the elements of teacher collaboration cycle: dialogue, decision making, action taking, and evaluation of practice.

The researcher analysed the data derived from the focus group discussions quantitatively so as to come up with answers to the first and second research question. Concerning the first research question, it was necessary to interpret teachers' responses to the interview questions 1-16 in order to extract information as regards their perspectives and actual practice of co-teaching in their classes. The data was managed and sorted into themes according to be ready for analysis.

1- Have you joined team teaching volitionally? What urged you?

To start with, almost all the participants reported that they have not joined team teaching of their own volition. That is to say, they have been mandated on the part of the department to employ the co-teaching approach. One participant said "I joined team-teaching unexpectedly, as a matter of must due to the teaching plan of the teaching plan of English department for the academic year 2019-2020". Furthermore, the majority of the participants said that they were not even consulted in choosing their partners.

2- Have you been introduced to co-teaching or received any training on it prior the implementation of co-teaching approach in the department?

The majority of the participants indicated that they have not been familiarised with the conceptual knowledge of co-teaching prior to implementing co-teaching approach. In fact, all the participants identified lack of professional training as the cause of their concern and worry at the beginning of the academic year. However, they asserted that they have searched the net and did their best so as to acquire some familiarity with the new model. One participant reported that after the confirmation of implementing co-teaching, the scientific committee of the department endeavoured to ease the process and laid down the main guidelines concerning each teacher's role and duty in order to lessen teachers' worry and ensure the successfulness of the implementation phase. One participant felt that the aim behind introducing this new model was attributed to oversupply of teachers and insufficient classroom space. She explicitly stated that co-teaching was introduced to "fill the gaps in teachers' timetable".

3- Do you feel that you have equal clearly defined roles and responsibilities?

The majority of the participants maintained that they and their partner co-teachers assumed relatively equal responsibility; i.e., the work went fifty-fifty. Even though 5

of the participants in the interview did not perceive distributing roles and responsibilities as problematic, 2 of them felt that holding the responsibility was one-sided because their partners were not cooperative. It was also reported that her “eagerness to teach and convey her own message to the students made her strive to take a more active role in the classroom”.

4- Do you switch roles during the lesson?

The participants differed on this question. Only 2 participants mentioned that they switch roles during the lesson; the rest of the participants asserted that usually they do not switch roles and responsibilities because they decide on these before they start teaching. Yet, they affirmed that they were always prepared to cooperate with each other whenever it was necessary.

5- Do you both move around and come in contact with all students?

Most of the participants proclaimed that they effectively utilised the space of the classroom and circulated around the classroom. This movement helped them to provide scaffolding to individual students and encourage their interest and involvement. Hence, they were able to give students immediate feedback and promote their participation. Moreover, moving around the classroom helped them build relationships with students and made them feel that the teachers were friendly and approachable. One participant remarked that their movement in the classroom was dependent on the nature of the lecture whether it was introducing a new topic, revision, or doing exercises.

Another participant stated “Walking around the classroom enabled me to see students from different angles. It facilitated monitoring student activity and assured they were making progress in their learning”. Another participant said that we teach our students some moral lessons while we move around. She proceeded “We often inclusive language (us, our, we) during class in order to show students integrity and be a good model for them to imitate”.

6- What is your effective mode of communication (email, text, phone, face-to-face, online)?

From the responses provided, not all participants indicated a preference for a particular mode of communication. It was evident that the majority of the participants used face-to-face mode of communication to assign roles and decide on instructional practices inside their classrooms. However, other participants said that they regularly text each other about pedagogical issues.

7- Are you both involved in planning for all students? Do you both have input into the unit/lesson plan?

This part of the focus groups was used to elicit information on participant role in planning the instruction. Discussion centered on whether both partners have equal roles in making decisions about content and methodology. Most of the participants remarked

that they are hand in glove with each other and they jointly plan and decide on their instruction. Similarities of opinions among the participants were observed in their responses.

8- Do you feel that there is imbalance of authority and responsibility in your class?

Approximately all the participants admitted that balancing authority and responsibility did not pose serious problems to them. It seems that they took into their consideration each other's abilities to successfully execute the duties assigned to them. Furthermore, they readily accepted each other's ideas and interventions and set aside time to regularly consider how to work in a complementary way. Consequently, this had a profound influence on the success of their instruction. A participant maintained "We clarified our expectations of my role and of my partner's role within each of the co-taught lesson". Doubtless to say, putting teachers into a position to succeed is a key factor that should be carefully attended to. Hence keeping the balance between authority and responsibility would lead for success to be realized. Another participant said "We had equal responsibility and our inputs were interwoven with one another and we felt that the students achieved higher levels of integration in their study of the material provided by both of us".

9- Do you harmoniously resolve issues related to classroom management?

Most of the teachers mentioned that they managed their classes arm in arm and expressed their satisfaction in working in conjunction. One participant's comment "We established classroom routines in our co-taught classes in terms of latecomer students, attendance records, missing assignments, extension activities, etc." illustrates this harmony. They admitted that a culture of collegiality and mutual cooperation made the implementation of co-teaching smooth and successful.

10- How do you monitor and evaluate student progress?

Most of the participants remarked that the availability of two teachers in the classroom coincidentally yielded additional observational information that was conducive for the assessing the students. For instance, they evaluated students discretely based on activities, quizzes, and daily participation. They also said that each teacher had his/her own participation records and they regularly negotiated on students' evaluation. One respondent added "As a matter of fact, various measures were used for grading students, which paved the way to employ formative assessment tools successfully". However, one participant maintained that assessing students' achievement was a controversial aspect of co-teaching for the two teachers did not have the same perception on how assessment should be carried out.

11- What are some teaching and non-teaching skills that you have developed via co-teaching?

Relatively, most of the participants agreed that they developed some non-teaching skills throughout their co-teaching experience. They mentioned:

- Promoting interpersonal skills
- Increasing collegial cooperation
- Getting developed professionally
- Being introduced to other colleagues' pedagogy
- Being acquainted with new assessment criteria

12- How would you describe co-teaching to someone who is unfamiliar with the concept?

This question elicited a variety of responses from the participants that can be divided into positive and negative perspectives as regards co-teaching. The group responses are presented below:

- A new enjoyable, yet demanding experience
- Teaching hand in hand with a colleague
- Co-planning and co-instructing
- Offering more creative lessons and in-depth knowledge
- Continually negotiating on objectives and updating content
- Fluid positioning of teachers in the classroom

The teachers expressed satisfaction that their students in co-taught classes have made gains in the co-taught class has successfully met student needs.

13- Can you share a personal experience where you enjoyed co-teaching?

The majority of the participants contended that they did their best to make the most of a co-teaching partnership. It was necessary to have a plan to organise and manage the classroom smoothly without creating any confusion and chaos in the class. They nurtured the co-teaching relationship and endeavoured to manipulate it for the benefit of their students. They jointly utilised different strategies to enliven their classes and meet the wide range of student learning needs. One participant remarked that "co-teaching allowed us to know each other as people and build personal rapport and mutual trust". Another participant reported that co-teaching "sharpened my expertise, mastery, and delivery of the subjects being taught".

After 13 questions related to teachers' attitudes and practices of co-teaching, it was felt pertinent to investigate the challenges that they have undergone throughout its implementation. With this question, the researcher moved the focus of the discussion

in an effort to find an answer for the second research question which reads: How do teachers rate the barriers to co-teaching at their department?

14- Tell me about your biggest concerns for your work as a team?

When the researcher posed this question, the participants voiced their worry and apprehension about co-teaching, especially their indecisiveness in how to assign roles and manage the classroom at the beginning of the implementation. Among the most serious concerns identified by them was the fact that they were not adequately prepared for the implementation; therefore, they were led by their intuition and teaching experience.

One participant said that it was difficult for them to build the needed trust in their student for they were hesitant and confused whether to rely on the lead teacher or to depend on her co-teacher. “We endeavoured to let them feel that both teachers have equal trustworthiness and play equal role in decision making and managing the class”.

15- What are the most challenging aspects of co-teaching?

Although the participants indicated that co-teaching was an invaluable and a worthwhile experience; yet, they admitted that it was not without challenge. They maintained that the less experienced teachers with little preparation in instructional methodology might find co-teaching a formidable approach to employ. They focused on the need to receive preliminary training before initiating any new model of teaching in order to familiarise teachers with the fundamental concepts. It seems that the newly introduced model of teaching was abrupt and no effective practical measures were taken to ensure the successful implementation of the model. Hence, teachers were left to their own intuitions and teaching experiences to guide them on how to practically employ the model.

One participant added “the most challenging aspect of co-teaching was assessing students and preparing exam sheets”.

16- How can teachers overcome these barriers?

This was the only question for which participants replied with unfamiliarity. They asserted they did not know the straight precise answer to this question. However, and based on their own experience, they were of the belief that providing basic hands-on training to teachers would help them to become well-performing teachers since it provides teacher with sufficient coverage of how to implement co-teaching.

A participant asserted that the administration of the department/college should “shoulder the responsibility of drawing the main lines for teachers and provide them appropriate scaffolding when needed”. As for teachers, they need to promote their own

professional development and update their knowledge regularly. One of the participants said “The teacher is the master of the situation and he/she knows what meets his/her students’ needs. It is important for the teacher to decide on the most suitable type of co-teaching that best serves the nature of the module they are teaching”.

The responses by focus group participants to the above mentioned prompts revealed an apparent readiness on the part of the teachers to integrate new approaches to their own teaching, co-teaching as an example. Most of the participants showed genuine enthusiasm in sharing their classrooms with peers and enjoyed joint planning and joint delivery of lessons. Furthermore, the positive outcomes that emerged from the co-teaching experience were boundless and unlimited. Moreover, teachers who engaged in co-teaching improved their instructional skills and their ability to meet the needs of diverse students within the mainstream education classroom. Although co-taught classes required a reasonable amount of work, yet it was effective and thought-provoking. Consequently, more creative lessons and in-depth knowledge were conveyed.

2.3.2 The Questionnaire

Hang and Rabren (2009, p.259) consider student satisfaction as necessary to “measure social validity of instructional approaches”. Based on this conviction, students’ perspective toward the effectiveness of implementing co-teaching approach was investigated in this study. The student questionnaire sought to find an answer to the third research question, which reads: What are students’ perspectives toward the implementation of co-teaching model in their classes?

The first item of the questionnaire obtained 83.68% of the students’ agreement. They maintained that they understood the course content more quickly. This reveals the positive effect of co-teaching approach on their understanding of the content. As for item No2, 86.53% of the students reported that being exposed to different styles of teaching was motivating. This implies the importance of being taught by two teachers. Teachers are viewed as dominant figures who shape the learning environment and motivate the students to learn; hence, having two teachers in the classroom means that the students will get more words of encouragement and double motivation.

As for item No3, 87.35% of the students agreed that they received more individual attention in their co-taught classes. When two teachers share the physical environment of a class, they can provide increased attention and enhanced instructional support to their students, which would result in improved academic performance on the part of the students. In item No4, 84.90% of the students admitted that getting two perspectives of the topic was interesting. Benefitting from the expertise of two teachers is doubtlessly supplemental to the learning process.

As for item No5, 86.12% of the students believed that more creative lessons were offered. It seems that pairing of teachers allowed them to mould their two styles together for the sake of their students’ benefit. This implies that increased emphasis

was laid on cognitive strategies and study skills. This fact is further emphasised in item No6, where 84.90% of the students reported that more in-depth knowledge was provided in their co-taught classes. As for item No7, 86.94% of the students remarked that collaboration between the two teachers promoted students' interpersonal and social skills.

In item No8, 85.31% of the student said that assignments were graded and returned faster. Usually students get worried when they wait so long to get their assignments. It seems that co-teaching reduced this duration of waiting and let them receive their assignments faster, which in turn was relieving their anxiety. As for item No9, 83.67% of the students maintained that better discussions were held in co-taught classes. Doubtlessly, holding proactive class discussions result from thoughtful planning, which is seemingly easier when two teachers cooperatively plan for their students.

In item No10, 88.16% of the students asserted that co-teaching increased opportunities to participate and share ideas. Co-teaching maximises the likelihood to encourage students' discourse since two teachers are available in the classroom to improve instruction for all students.

As for item No11, 73.47% of the students reported that co-teaching reduced shyness and interaction difficulties with their teachers. Shyness might impede student's learning ability and social development. Therefore, involving two teachers in teaching and eliciting students' conversation is very effective in lessening students' shyness and evoking their learning.

Item No12 attained 79.59% of students' agreement that the atmosphere in the classroom was more relaxing. When two teachers share the same classroom, there is probably more opportunity to value all student contributions and explore ways of dealing with students' mixed abilities and interests. Consequently, a more supportive encouraging learning environment will be created.

This result is further affirmed by item No13, 83.27% where % of the students asserted that they dared to ask questions more openly. This demonstrates the fact that the improved classroom community led to promotion of their social skills.

In item No 14, 84.90% of the students proclaimed that complementary rather than contradicting information was offered throughout their co-taught classes. This shows the thoughtful planning or collaboration between the two teachers. However, 15% of the students disagreed with this item, i.e., only few cases of this contradicting information were experienced by the students.

In item No15, 36.33% of the students agreed that less material was covered in the co-taught classes. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers might have spent much time on issues of control and micro politics, which instead of triggering learning; it hindered the outcomes delayed learning. On the other hand, 64% of the students agree that material good was covered.

As for item No16, 51.43% of the students maintained that they faced no problems in assessment and grading issues on the part of the two teachers. It seems that half of the students are satisfied with their results. However, the second half of the respondents was dissatisfied with their results. Therefore, co-teachers need to step up and plan how to assess their students' performance; otherwise, their students would feel discriminated and the assessment would be unreliable.

As for item No17, 77.27% of the students asserted that in spite of having two authorities in the classroom no interruption of learning occurred. It is essential for the co-teachers to cooperate and agree on the broad lines of classroom management in order to arrive at the right balance. If not, they will not be able to set clear and consistent boundaries with their students, which would negatively impact the course of the lessons.

In item No18, 89.39% of the students reported that the teachers worked cooperatively with each other. When two teachers share the same physical space, it is expected to have slight interruption of classroom routine. However, it is necessary for the co-teachers to plan the route and not to let interruption become a recurring problem in their classes. If the co-teachers do not navigate their interruption, the students would find providing two explanations confusing. In item No19, 83.67% of the students agreed that they found the two explanations enriching rather than confusing.

As for item No20, 34.67% of the students expressed their disapproval and mentioned that time was unnecessarily wasted. Co-teachers should have a good time management plan and keep a check of the amount of time they spend over each activity. It is important to prioritize these activities based on how necessary they are for the students.

Scrutinising students' responses to the questionnaire reveals the fact that the majority consider co-teaching model a new and pragmatic approach since it succeeded to obtain their agreement with the effectiveness of the model. Most of the students share the consensus that co-teaching is beneficial in different ways. Its utilitarian plan on the part of two teachers allows students to obtain the utmost benefit from the lesson delivered by two teachers. Almost, the majority of the students acknowledge notable contributions which have been made by this model in their learning.

2.4 Conclusion

In this research, preliminary information is provided concerning teachers' and students' perspectives toward implementing co-teaching model of teaching in EFL classes in the Kurdish context. It proved to be a crucial step towards enlivening classrooms and it held considerable promise for developing complex teaching skills on the part of teachers, and assuring that all students were enabled to be exposed to different styles of teaching and work closely with their teachers.

On one hand, the teachers reported that they witnessed marked improvement in their teaching skills as they jointly planned and delivered instruction and harmoniously

resolved issues related to classroom management. This feeling of mutual partnership and constant cooperation resulted in bringing about considerable changes in the quality of the instruction they provided in their co-taught classes. Hence, co-teaching can be considered a successful investment that yielded the sought after consequences for teachers.

On the other hand, the students acknowledged that they gained profound understanding of the course content. Being open to two different views on the topic and being offered relevant and complementary information made the students feel the great progress they made in their learning and fully appreciate the efforts made by the co-teachers which allowed them to get more individual attention.

2.5 Recommendations

Teachers should be properly introduced to any instructional delivery model before it is put into practice, co-teaching being one of these. Teachers need to be sufficiently trained in the use of classroom practices established on the philosophy of collaborative teaching. These training sessions are intended for familiarising teachers with the newly introduced model of teaching; in addition, these are of great significance for the sustainability of practices as well as improving teacher skilfulness.

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Appendix (1) The Focus Group Meeting Questions

This interview is carried out to investigate Kurdish co-teachers’ attitudes of the four domains of teacher collaboration: dialogue, decision-making, action, and evaluation.

Good morning and welcome to our online meeting. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about Kurdish EFL teachers’ motivation in KR. You were invited because you currently teach EFL in the college of Basic Education, so you're familiar with co-teaching model that has been recently incorporated to the teaching plan of the department. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful. I am tape recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The reports will be kept for the researcher.

Please, you are required to answer a list of questions that would serve the aim of this study:

1. Have you joined team teaching volitionally? What urged you?
2. Have you been introduced to co-teaching or received any training on it prior the implementation of co-teaching approach in the department?
3. Do you feel that you have equal clearly defined roles and responsibilities?
4. Do you switch roles during the lesson?
5. Do you both move around and come in contact with all students?
6. Is inclusive language (us, our, we) used by both during class?

7. What is your effective mode of communication (email, text, phone, face-to-face, online)?
8. Are you both involved in planning for all students?
9. Do you harmoniously resolve issues related to classroom management?
10. How do you monitor and evaluate student progress?
11. What are some non-teaching skills that you have developed via co-teaching?
12. How would you describe co-teaching to someone who is unfamiliar with the concept?
13. Can you share a personal experience where you enjoyed co-teaching?
14. Tell me about your biggest concerns for your work as a team?
15. What are the most challenging aspects of co-teaching?
16. How can teachers overcome these barriers to team-teaching?

Appendix (2) students' questionnaire

Items	Mean	SD	Agreement %
1- I understood the course content more quickly.	4.18	0.49	83.67
2- Being exposed to different styles of teaching was motivating.	4.33	0.59	86.53
3- I received more individual attention.	4.37	0.49	87.35
4- Getting two perspectives of the topic was interesting.	4.24	0.48	84.90
5- More creative lessons were offered.	4.31	0.51	86.12
6- More in-depth knowledge was provided.	4.24	0.69	84.90

7- Collaboration between the two teachers promoted our interpersonal and social skills.	4.35	0.60	86.94
8- Assignments were graded and returned faster.	4.27	0.49	85.31
9- Better discussions were held in co-taught classes.	4.18	0.60	83.67
10- Co-teaching increased opportunities to participate and share ideas.	4.41	0.54	88.16
11- Co-teaching reduced shyness and interaction difficulties with my teachers.	3.67	0.78	73.47
12- The atmosphere in the classroom was more relaxing.	3.98	0.65	79.59
13- I dared to ask questions more openly.	4.16	0.48	83.27
14- Complementary rather than contradicting information was offered.	4.24	0.48	84.90
15- Less material was covered.	1.82	0.63	36.33
16- We faced no problems in assessment and grading issues.	2.57	0.98	51.43
17- In spite of having two authorities in the class, no interruption of learning occurred.	3.88	0.72	77.27
18- The teachers worked cooperatively with each other.	4.47	0.58	89.39
19- I found two explanations enriching but not confusing.	4.18	0.49	83.67
20- Time was unnecessarily wasted.	1.74	0.70	34.67