

آراء المعلمين حول فوائد وتحديات استخدام F-move في صفوف تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية  
كلغة أجنبية

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**كيفية اقتباس البحث**

صوفى ، شعله حميد ، دلخشان يوسف عثمان ، آراء المعلمين حول فوائد وتحديات استخدام F-move في صفوف تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آب 2026، المجلد: 16، العدد: 8.

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## Teachers' Perspectives on the Benefits and Challenges of F-move Use in EFL Classrooms

### Teachers' Perspectives on the Benefits and Challenges of F-move Use in EFL Classrooms

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#### المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في استخدام استراتيجية F-move في التفاعل الصفّي للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعة، وفوائدها وتحدياتها. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، تم استخدام منهج نوعي، حيث أجريت مقابلات شبه منظمة مع أربعة عشر معلماً كردياً يُعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تُفُذت الدراسة في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية الأساسية وكلية التربية في جامعة صلاح الدين - أربيل. تكشف النتائج أن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الأكّراد يستخدمون استراتيجية F-move بشكل متكرر. علاوة على ذلك، أفاد المعلمون المشاركون بالفوائد العديدة لإستخدام هذه الاستراتيجية، بما في ذلك تنمية مهارات الطلاب التواصلية واللغوية، وزيادة دافعيتهم وثقتهم للمشاركة، وتعزيز التفكير النقدي، وتوفير بيئة صفية داعمة. مع ذلك، فإن ضيق الوقت، وكثافة الطلاب في الصفوف، وخجلهم، وارتفاع مستويات القلق لديهم، وانخفاض تقديرهم لذاتهم، وقلة مشاركتهم، واختصار إجاباتهم، وتأثير الامتحانات على أدائهم، كلها عوامل تحدّ من قدرة المعلمين على استخدام استراتيجية F-move بفعالية. في تدريس اللغات المعاصر، برزت أهمية

أسلوب "الخطوة الأولى" (F-move) في تعزيز التعلم العميق. تشير الأطر النظرية إلى أن الجولة الثالثة من تبادل "السؤال والجواب" (IRF) قادرة على تطوير الحوار الصفّي من مجرد سؤال وجواب إلى محادثة حقيقية، مما يُمكن المعلمين من تصحيح أخطاء الطلاب، والحفاظ على التفاعل، وتشجيع مهارات التفكير العليا. عملياً، يبدو أن المعلمين يطبقون أسلوب "الخطوة الأولى" (F-move) في أبسط صورته، فقط لتقييم إجابات الطلاب.

### Abstract

This study investigates the use of the F-move strategy for EFL university classroom interaction and its perceived benefits and challenges. To this end, a qualitative approach was employed, in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen Kurdish EFL teachers. The study was carried out in the English departments of the College of Basic Education and the College of Education at Salahaddin University-Erbil. The findings reveal that Kurdish EFL teachers use F-move very frequently. Furthermore, the participating teachers reported several benefits of using F-move, including the development of students' communicative and linguistic skills, increased motivation and confidence to participate, enhanced critical thinking, and a supportive classroom environment. However, time constraints, large class sizes, students' shyness, high levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of participation, brief responses, and exam washback tend to constrain teachers' ability to use the F-move effectively. In contemporary language teaching, the importance of F-move in promoting deep learning has been identified. Theoretical frameworks suggest that the third turn of the IRF exchange can develop classroom dialogue from a simple question-answer routine to an authentic conversation, enabling teachers to correct students' errors, sustain interaction, and encourage higher-order thinking. In practice, teachers seem to implement F-move in its most restrictive form, merely to evaluate students' responses

### Introduction

Classroom discourse, as an example of institutional talk, differs from ordinary conversation in several ways. Firstly, classroom communication is goal-oriented, aimed at achieving teaching, curriculum, and learning objectives. Secondly, classroom communication can be seen as a regular dialogic mode. Thirdly, classroom communication is characterised by the



school's organisational features as a public institution. The teacher, as the institution's representative, has the most speaking rights (Strobelberger, 2012).

In classroom interaction, conversations between teachers and students can be co-constructed, following a typical pattern of interaction (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). It is common for interlocutors not to speak at the same time, but to take turns in an orderly, cooperative manner (Levinson, 1983). In the classroom, this reciprocal interaction between participants frequently occurs in three turns (moves) known as Initiation, Response, and Feedback/ Follow-up (henceforth IRF) (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Based on Halliday's (1981) systemic functional grammar, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) conducted a study at the University of Birmingham and developed a model based on a hierarchically structured system of ranking to describe teacher-student talk. Their model of analysis consists of five types of rank: *Lesson*, *Transaction*, *Exchange*, *Move*, and *Act*. These discourse units are related to one another in a hierarchical structure with Lesson at the highest rank of discourse and Act at the lowest.

In contemporary language teaching, the importance of F-move in promoting deep learning has been identified. Theoretical frameworks suggest that the third turn of the IRF exchange can develop classroom dialogue from a simple question-answer routine to an authentic conversation, enabling teachers to correct students' errors, sustain interaction, and encourage higher-order thinking. In practice, teachers seem to implement F-move in its most restrictive form, merely to evaluate students' responses (e.g., 'Well done', 'very good', 'excellent') rather than using it to provide more space for students to engage in the learning process. Another problem is that many Kurdish EFL teachers lack the knowledge of the benefits of using F-move and its effects on students' learning. Furthermore, Kurdish university teachers encounter several pedagogical and non-pedagogical impediments while implementing F-move, which constrain teachers in using the third move effectively. Additionally, the class time limit forces teachers to move quickly during class discussion to cover the syllabus within the prescribed time. This makes teacher time talk dominate student time talk.

Therefore, undertaking this study is significant because, to date, no research has been conducted in the Kurdistan context to explore how

university EFL teachers understand, implement, and experience F-move. Moreover, the literature has not provided a clear picture of the benefits of using F-move and the challenges teachers encounter when implementing it.

The aim of this study is three-fold, which includes exploring how often Kurdish EFL teachers incorporate F-move in their teaching, identifying the benefits of using F-move, and discovering the challenges Kurdish EFL teachers face when using F-move.

The current research tries to provide answers to these three questions.

1-To what extent do EFL teachers at Salahaddin University-Erbil incorporate F-move in their teaching?

2- What are the benefits of using F-move?

3- What challenges do Kurdish EFL teachers face when implementing F-move?

## **1.Literature Review**

### **2.1 Initiation-Response-Feedback/follow-up (IRF)**

IRF describes the most typical pattern of classroom interaction introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975. It occurs within an exchange rank and consists of three moves. IRF model opens with an initiation move usually in a form of question posed by the teacher (I), then followed by a response from an individual student (R), the second move is followed by the third move (F), in which the teacher provides some form of feedback or follow-up to the answer given by the student (Cullen, 2002).

Each move in the IRF sequence shows how both teachers and students interpret the previous move. Thus, students' answers illustrate how they understand the question posed by the teacher, and teachers' feedback shows their interpretation of students' answers (Al-Saedi, 2015). This results in what Drew and Heritage (1992 cited in Al-Saedi, 2015) referred to as context-shaped and context-renewing, meaning that each utterance is based on its predecessors and will shape what follows. The three moves are illustrated in the example below:

T: What's the boy doing? (I)

S1: He's climbing a tree. (R)

T: That's right. He's climbing a tree. (F) (Cullen, 2002: 117)

### **2.2 The Concept of F-move**



F-move stands for feedback or follow-up move. It is the teacher's utterance, given in reaction to the student's answers to the initiating question (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). It is the third and final move of the IRF teaching exchange identified by Sinclair and Coulthard in their well-known analysis of classroom discourse (Cullen, 2002).

F-move is considered an essential aspect of the IRF exchange structure, and students are expected to improve their proficiency when receiving feedback (Saswati, 2018). The primary aim of F-move is to provide an assessment or a reaction to the student's answer (Lee, 2007). As stated by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 48), the purpose of F-moves is to help students recognize how well they have performed. Furthermore, F-move is described as "the lynchpins of a lesson" by Brown and Wragg (1993: 34). According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 51), "feedback is so important that if it does not occur, we may be certain that the teacher has purposefully withheld it for some strategic purpose".

Originally, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) used the term "Feedback" for the third move (F) in the IRF exchange structure. F-move had an evaluation function that consisted of three categories of act: accept (including reject), evaluate, and comment. Later, Coulthard and Brazil (1992) critically examined the IRF sequence and replaced the old term feedback with a more common term, follow-up. Consequently, the term follow-up has emerged as the preferred term because feedback represents the function of the move rather than the move itself (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982). That is, F-move can serve a variety of functions in addition to being evaluative. Similarly, Coulthard and Brazil (1992: 70) stated that the term feedback was 'an unfortunate choice' because it was defined semantically rather than structurally. It led, at times, to be narrowly interpreted mainly to represent evaluation whose function is to inform the student 'how well he has performed'. Thus, the term follow-up encompasses a wide variety of actions such as elaboration, reformulation, asking for clarification, or extending the speech (ibid).

### **2.3 Previous Studies**





Wells (1993), who examined the IRE exchange, observed that the content of the teacher's feedback to the student's answer often shapes the subsequent discussion. He maintained that teachers either assess the student's answer and end the IRF sequence or follow the student's answer with comments and further extend the exchange. Thus, he concluded that students' learning opportunities were enhanced and their participation increased when teachers in the third turn followed up on students' answers by asking them to elaborate on their thinking, clarify or justify their opinions, or make connections to their own or other experiences.

To improve the quality of teacher-student interaction, Nystrand et al (1997) suggested that teachers should focus more on how they evaluate student responses. There can be more 'high-level evaluation' that goes beyond merely evaluating a student's answer as correct or incorrect by incorporating the students' answers into subsequent questions. Nystrand and colleagues termed this process uptake, and they proposed that teachers' questions should be shaped by what immediately precedes them so that they are genuine questions. They further argued that when such high-level evaluation occurs, it acknowledges the significance of students' contributions and creates the possibility for them to influence the subsequent course of the classroom discussion in some way. Thus, high-level evaluation ties teacher questions and student responses together to enable the discourse to gradually take on a conversation-like quality, which in turn encourages greater student participation.

Nassaji and Wells (2000) investigated the instructional practices of nine elementary and middle school teachers and their implementation of the IRF pattern. They found that teachers in the F-turn had a wider range of choices other than evaluation. According to Nassaji and Wells (2000), when teachers used the feedback portion of the IRF exchange for evaluation, it suppressed students' participation because students thought that the exchange had ended and the teacher wanted no further information from them. However, when the third turn is treated as a follow-up, it promotes further discussion, particularly when students are asked to expand on their initial response (e.g., by requesting justification, connections or counter-arguments).

## **2.Methodology**



This study employed a qualitative methodology for data analysis, utilising interviews. Fettermann et al (1996) considered interviewing as the most significant data collection instrument in qualitative research. This approach allows participating teachers to be asked follow-up questions to gain in-depth knowledge (Creswell, 2014) regarding the benefits and challenges of using F-move. The semi-structured interview consisted of five particular questions. All participants were asked the same questions. Follow-up questions were also asked based on their provided answers to prompt further details.

The participants in the current study were all Kurdish university EFL teachers in the Kurdistan Region, as the primary focus of this paper is to explore the benefits and the challenges of using F-move from the teachers' perspective. Interviews were carried out with fourteen experienced teachers who taught various subjects in the English department of the colleges of Education and Basic Education at Salahaddin University-Erbil. The interviewees were eight males and six females. Regarding their academic titles, five of them were assistant professors, seven were lecturers, and two were assistant lecturers. The participants' teaching experience ranged from five to twenty-five years, indicating a wide diversity of teaching experience. In addition, this study employed convenience sampling, which is the most common type of sample in L2 research (Dörnyei, 2011). Convenience sampling, also called opportunity sampling, is a non-probability sampling where members of the target population are selected because they meet several criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at a certain time and willingness to take part (ibid)

The interview questions were piloted with two Kurdish EFL teachers three weeks before the administration of the actual interviews to rate the usability of the questions and to eliminate any ambiguous or redundant questions. As a result, one question was removed from the interview because it was ambiguous and not relevant to the topic. Moreover, the two piloted interviews were excluded from the data used in the current study.

Before conducting the interviews, all the participating teachers were introduced to the topic of the study and its aims. They were also informed about the expected duration of the interview. The interviews were conducted in person to ensure that the questions were clear and sufficient,



and to request further details or clarification if needed. Collecting data took over 14 days, and each interview lasted for 15-20 minutes. All the interviews were recorded. In addition, consent forms were filled out by the teachers who participated in the interviews. They were assured of the confidentiality and privacy of their answers and any personal information they provided. They were also informed that their responses would be used for this research purpose only.

After completing the interviews, each interview was labelled as teacher one, two, three, up to fourteenth, to maintain anonymity and facilitate data analysis. Then the recorded interviews were transcribed into written form to be analysed easily, and each transcript was read twice for familiarity. After that, a thematic analysis was conducted in which several codes were identified and highlighted. Similar codes were grouped to constitute a category, and then developed into themes, which were analysed comparatively. Finally, the highlighted codes, categories, and themes were used in the results section under each research question.

### **3.Results**

This section presents the collected interview data to answer the research questions, which is organised into three parts. The first part presents interviews data to examine the frequency with which Kurdish EFL teachers use F-move during classroom interactions at Salahaddin University-Erbil. The second part reports interview data on the benefits of providing F-move. The third part of this section outlines the interview data on the challenges teachers encounter when implementing F-move in their teaching.

#### **4.1 First Research Question: How Often do Kurdish EFL Teachers Incorporate F-move in their Teaching?**

When the interview participants were asked about how often they incorporate F-move in their teaching, all the teachers (100%) reported using it frequently. The teachers used terms such as “*almost in every lesson, frequently, often, always, all the time, most of the time, usually, and every time*” to describe how often they provide F-move in their teaching practices. As teacher 2 stated, “*I frequently use F-move in my classroom after a student’s contribution to enhance engagement.*” Teacher 6 also noted, “*Yes, of course, F-move is provided at all times to*



ensure that students have a complete understanding of what they are studying.” Furthermore, teacher 13 added, “I often use F-move, but according to the different situations in the class, because F-move is not a teacher’s action, but a student’s scanning behaviour.”

#### **4.2 Second Research Question: What are the Benefits of Using F-move for Students?**

When asked about the benefits of providing F-move, the interview participants reported several benefits of using the F-move strategy. The advantages of F-move are classified into four primary categories, including linguistic and communicative, interactional and interpersonal, motivational and affective, and cognitive and learning-related. Each group is presented below, supported by the excerpts from the interviews.

##### **A-Linguistic and Communicative Benefits of F-move**

One of the noticeable advantages identified from the interview data was the role of F-move in developing students’ linguistic and communicative skills. Six of the interviewees (43%) stated that the implementation of the F-move may enhance students’ linguistic and communicative skills. For example, teacher 2 mentioned, “F-move can improve students’ communicative and linguistic skills. The teacher’s continuous reformulation of the students’ answers helps them recognise their errors and use language more accurately in the future. Also, students improve their communicative skills when teachers use F-move to encourage students to speak more and practise the language more naturally, as if they are in real communication.” This could be because students learn from their errors and do not make them again. As teacher 10 stated, “F-move enables students to learn from their mistakes so they can acquire the right forms and not make that mistake again. It could develop communicative competence for the students to become more competent in the language.”

##### **B-Interactional and Interpersonal Benefits of F-move**

Additionally, the interview data revealed that the use of F-move can enhance students’ engagement and classroom interaction as well as build a stronger teacher-student relationship.



Five teachers (36%) reported that the use of the F-move had a significant role in increasing students' participation and classroom interaction. They explained that F-move can make the classroom dialogic especially when teachers ask follow-up questions to open more spaces for further discussion. As teacher 7 highlighted, *"F-move makes lessons more interactive, not be I mean traditional, because students participate more actively and continue speaking when they are asked not only to recall information but also to talk more when they are asked to explain, extend, clarify, and give examples. I mean to hear what they think or what they believe."*

According to interview data, two teachers (14%) reported that using F-move can build positive teacher-student rapport. For example, teacher 10 stated, *"F-move could build a rapport between the teacher and students."* As students believe that their teachers value their responses when use F-move after their responses. As teacher 14 mentioned, *"Honestly, students feel that their contributions are valuable when teachers use F-move to acknowledge, reformulate, or extend students' answers, which in turn strengthens the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and students."*

### **C-Affective and Motivational Benefits of F-move**

Analysis of the interview data showed that the use of the F-move contributed to creating a supportive classroom environment, increasing students' motivation and confidence, and finding the lesson enjoyable.

Six of the interview participants (43%) noted that the use of the F-move may contribute to creating a positive learning environment where students fell safe to participate. As teacher 1 stated, *"Teachers' use of F-move can create a supportive classroom environment where students are not afraid to take risks and feel safe to speak."* In addition, teacher 5 said, *"F-move makes the classroom more engaged, motivated, and create positive classroom environment. That's the main hint to use. In an active classroom, the students would be motivated to listen."*

Similarly, six teachers (43%) in the study described students as being more motivated when F-move was used. Students can be motivated when teachers provide positive evaluation during F-turn. As teacher 1 remarked, *"F-moves enables students to be motivated for example I*



*noticed that when I provide positive evaluation after student's response like very good or excellent, students are more motivated to participate more actively."* Another way to make students motivated during F-turn is by encouraging students' participation in classroom discussion. As teachers 3 said, *"the students are very much motivated, yeah, if I just speak in the classroom without letting them have their own voice, the class will be very boring and the students feel that the focus of their learning is only on the examination."*

However, only the ninth teacher (7%) reported that the use of the F-move can increase students' positive attitude towards the lesson. He remarked, *"F-move helps students like the lesson, they like the subject, and certainly they are going to follow up with themselves. I think autonomous learning is going to be improved here."*

During the interview, six participants (43%) said that the use of the F-move helps students feel confident participating in classroom interaction. As teacher 14 stated, *"I believe one of the best benefits of F-move is increasing students' confidence. Yeah in an interaction, in communication or in discussion."* This confidence could be due to teacher's support or providing more opportunities for students to participate. As teacher 10 expressed, *"F-move gives the students confidence. For example, when they know that the teachers support them and also when the teachers provide more space for them to talk, it gives them, I mean, more confidence."*

### **D-Cognitive and Learning-related Benefits of F-move**

In addition to the reported benefits, the interview data revealed further advantages of implementing the F-move strategy on students' cognitive engagement and learning processes. Some of the interview participants reported that the use of F-move helps students understand the subject more effectively, enhance their critical thinking, and reflect on their own performance.

Five teachers (36%) reported that the use of the F-move helped students develop a clearer understanding of lesson content. As mentioned by teacher 2, *"F-move help students understand the subject matter better when teachers provide corrective feedback, or explain the subject and add more details to the student's response."* This is because F-move



facilitates higher-order thinking, in which the topic will be clear and straightforward. For example, teacher 6 explained, *“F-move also improves understanding of the material because it enables students to reach a higher order thinking skill, making things more understandable for other students.”* Similarly, teacher 7 stated, *“The benefit of F-move for the students is that the topic is going to be clear, straightforward, and so students understand the topic better.”*

Four of the interviewed teachers (29%) mentioned engaging in critical thinking as a benefit of providing F-move especially when F-move is used to ask follow-up questions. For example, teacher 3 remarked, *“I think F-move also enhances students' critical thinking. Of course, critical thinking, imagination, fantasy, creativity. These four things I never forget in my literature classes.”* Teacher 11 added, *“Another important advantage I should not forget based on my teaching experience when I ask students why they think so, or whether they agree or disagree with this answer, such types of questions make students to think critically and reflect on their own thought.”*

However, only the seventh teacher (7%) reported that the F-move helped students to evaluate their performance. He said, *“F-move helps students to self-evaluate themselves. Yeah, whether their answer or their peers' answers are good or not.”*

### **4.3 Third Research Question: What are the Challenges Teachers Encounter when Implementing F-move?**

In addition to the reported benefits, the interview data revealed various challenges EFL Kurdish teachers at Salahaddin University-Erbil encounter when implementing F-move in classroom interaction. These difficulties are classified into four groups, including challenges related to teachers, students, classroom, and assessment.

#### **A-Teacher-related Challenges in Implementing F-move**

During the interview, two teachers (14%) reported that teachers' lack of awareness of the F-move strategy constituted a major challenge. They stated that the effective implementation of F-move requires teachers to have full awareness of its strategies. As teacher 12 explained, *“I believe the main challenge arises from teachers' limited knowledge of F-move and how to make it effective. Most of EFL teachers do not have enough*





knowledge of F-move, and many of them use it without even knowing its name. For me, this is the first time I hear this word.”. This lack of knowledge of the F-move is due to the lack of teacher training and research in this field. As teacher 2 noted, “This is because of a lack of professional training and workshops on F-move, and also a lack of research in this field in our context.”.

### **B-Student-related Challenges in Implementing F-move**

Additionally, the interview data revealed several student-related constraints associated with the use of F-move. The participants reported that factors such as lack of student participation, students' resistance to engage in active learning, fear of making mistakes, shyness, psychological impediments, low language proficiency, and limited student responses constrained teachers' ability to implement F-move.

Five teachers (36%) noted that many students do not engage actively in classroom interaction, which was considered one of the main challenges. As teacher 10 argued, “Sometimes you try to ask follow-up questions, but you find students are silent, not participating. I noticed that some students avoid eye contact so as not to participate. They only answer your questions when the answers are written in their books or handouts.” However, when the students want to respond to the teacher's follow-up questions, they usually provide brief answers. As stated by teacher 12, “When I ask students questions like why or how, they give one-word or brief answers”. In addition, lack of participation is frequent especially among Early year students. As teacher 14 remarked, “Many students do not participate and prefer to be silent, especially among first and second year students.”

Two teachers (14%) mentioned students' reluctance to participate actively as a challenge when implementing F-move. Teacher 7 stressed, “There are students who are reluctant to participate. They don't want to participate, and they don't care.” The Kurdish EFL students are generally used to a more teachers-directed learning style. For example, teacher 13 stated, “The main challenges for me are time pressure and students' resistance when they are accustomed to passive learning.”

Only one teacher (7%) reported that she noticed students' fear of making mistakes as a challenge when providing F-move. Teacher 1 said, “I face challenges such as students' fear of making mistakes and time





*constraints. That's why some students often avoid giving detailed responses. I overcome these by creating a supportive classroom environment and balancing feedback with engagement."*

Similarly, another cited challenge was students' shyness, which was identified by only teacher 5 (7%). He said, *"One challenge is that some students feel shy to speak in front of their colleagues, especially if they know that their answers will be judged as correct or incorrect. They often remain silent and sometimes answer my question by nodding."* When teacher 5 was further asked what he usually does in such a situation. He added, *"I usually either answer the question or elaborate on the students' short answer to rescue the student"*

In addition, three teachers (21%) highlighted psychological impediments (e.g. anxiety, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem) as constraints on their use of F-move. As teacher 4 stated, *"Certainly, there are challenges such as time limits, large class sizes, and some psychological impediments like student silence, lack of self-confidence, and low self-esteem."* Teacher 11 also maintained, *"Sometimes we feel students' anxiety. Some students feel anxious or embarrassed when receiving feedback orally, which I think reduces their engagement."*

Another challenge cited by five teachers (36%) is students' low language proficiency. As teacher 2 mentioned, *"Many students are not able to respond to the elaborative F-move because they have little vocabulary and poor pronunciation."* Moreover, the students prefer to rely more on memorized answers rather than producing spontaneous responses. As expressed by teacher 14, *"Many students have low language proficiency level and they prefer memorised answers to spontaneous ones. So, they prefer display question than referential questions, making it difficult to open spaces for further discussion."*

Finally, two of the participating teachers (14%) reported that students' limited responses influenced their provision of F-move. As teacher 9 explained, *"Many students just give one brief answer, possibly because their linguistic abilities are not very good to communicate for a long time."*



### C-Classroom and Contextual Challenges in Implementing F-move

The interview data revealed that Kurdish EFL teachers face classroom and contextual challenges that hinder the implementation of F-move. These challenges include time constraints, large class size, and pressure to complete the course book.

In this study, time constraints were frequently cited as a major challenge affecting the implementation of F-move. Eleven teachers (79%) reported that limited classroom time restricts the consistent application of F-move. As teacher 8 stated, *"One of the main challenges is a lack of time. I don't have enough time to ask follow-up questions because I have a lot of things to teach in the classroom."* Moreover, lack of time often lead teachers to rely on evaluative F-moves rather than elaborative or discursive F-moves that promote extended student responses. As mentioned by teacher 10, *"When you are teaching a very large class and have very limited time, you may not give detailed F-moves but focus on evaluative F-moves. So you only and mostly focus on the content that you want to teach."*

Large class size was also reported as the second classroom and contextual challenge that influences the effective use of F-move. Half of the participating teachers (50%) noted that the large number of students in the classroom makes it difficult to use the elaborated F-move consistently. As teacher 2 said, *"Time limitations and having large classes enclose the F-move, but giving a group feedback is one solution."* Teacher 10 also stated, *"A big number of students in a classroom is one of the issues that I cannot follow everyone inside the class. Sometimes I ignore some students."*

Analysis of the interview data revealed that the pressure to complete the curriculum was the third type of classroom and contextual challenge associated with the use of F-move. Three teachers (21%) described the need to complete the material as a barrier to implementing F-move effectively. The teachers stressed the need to finish the curriculum in the prescribed time. Teacher 10 stated, *"When you have a specific and concrete course book to finish, you are just chasing to finish the topics, and you cannot give every student elaborated F-move."*



### D-Assessment-related Challenges in Implementing F-move.

Finally, the interview data also revealed the washback of the exam as a challenge related to the assessment factor. This barrier was reported by only one teacher (7%). As teacher 2 indicated, *“For me and I don’t know whether it is the same thing for other teachers or not, I can say the washback effect of the exam is a challenge to the successful use of F-move”*. When he was further asked how the exam constrains the effective use of F-move, he reported that the washback effect of the exam strongly influences the way he provides F-move as exams focus on correct responses. He said, *“The focus of the exam here in our region is often on the correct answers, which makes teachers think that preparing students for the exam is more important than preparing them for natural or authentic discussion; that’s why you can see that most teachers use F-move for its evaluative purposes rather than interactional ones, as the teachers ask students to recall information to check their understanding of the subject.”*

### 5. Discussion

This section discusses the results obtained from the interview data, follows the same order as the results section.

#### 5.1 First research question: How often do Kurdish EFL teachers provide F-move?

The first research question examined how often teachers use F-move in their teaching. The findings suggest consistently high use of F-move among Kurdish EFL teachers at Salahaddin University-Erbil. It seems that interaction in these classrooms adheres to the three-part teaching exchange (IRF), particularly teachers’ implementation of the F-move strategy has become an integral part of their teaching practices.

This result is not surprising, as IRF exchange has been identified as the dominant pattern in EFL and ESL classrooms (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1997; Cazden, 2001). Moreover, research has shown that F-move occurs frequently in classroom discourse, as teachers constantly evaluate students’ responses to their questions (Cummings, 2009). Additionally, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:51) stated that F-move is highly significant in classroom interaction and that teachers almost always provide it after a student’s response. Its absence may indicate that the teacher has



purposefully withheld it for some strategic purpose. Therefore, it is deviant for teachers to withhold the F-move continually. This is because if it is not provided, students may not understand the purpose of the teacher's questions (ibid).

## 5.2 Second Research Question: What are the Benefits of Using F-move?

The second research question examined the advantages of using F-move for students. The findings indicate four different types of benefits of providing F-moves. Each type will be discussed below.

### A-Linguistic and Communicative Benefits of F-move

The interview data show that F-move helps students improve their linguistic and communicative skills.

First, during F-move, teachers usually provide immediate feedback (e.g., correction, confirmation, reformulation) on students' responses. Such feedback facilitates the development of students' linguistic skills because it helps students recognise their errors, understand the appropriate language use, and not make errors continually (Irawan & Salija, 2017). Earlier studies have found that error correction helps students notice mismatches between their own output and the target form (Daughty and Varela, 1998; Long, 1996; Lyster and Ranta, 1997). This aligns with the noticing hypothesis, which suggests that students should consciously notice linguistic features in the input so that input can become intake and lead to acquisition (Schmidt, 1990).

Second, the interview data also revealed that F-move can develop students' communicative competence. It refers to the appropriate and meaningful use of language in natural communicative settings (Savignon, 2002). During F-turn, teachers often ask students to extend, clarify, and engage in genuine conversation, thereby providing more opportunities to use the target language appropriately in context, improving their communicative skills and increasing their competence in the language (Canale and Swain, 1980). According to the communicative competence theory (Hyme, 1972), F-move enables students to develop their communicative abilities by promoting meaningful language use and fostering engagement.

### **B-Interactional and Interpersonal Benefits of F-move**

The second type of benefit of F-move is enhancing students' engagement and building a positive teacher-student rapport.

First, F-move increases students' participation by transforming the classroom from traditional into a more interactive one. For instance, prompting and extending F-move can foster dialogic interaction between the teacher and students as these kinds of F-moves keep interaction open and encourage students to participate more actively in classroom discussions (Mercer, 1995). Similarly, Walsh (2002) argued that teachers can promote students' participation by using direct error correction, giving content feedback aligned with pedagogical goals, checking for clarification and confirmation, and encouraging students' participation through self-managed turn-taking with minimal teacher intervention, and providing scaffolding along with necessary input during students' language breakdowns. These teachers' practices are closely related to the F-move of the IRF exchange. When the third turn is used not only to evaluate students' responses but also to clarify, scaffold, or extend their answers, students are encouraged to elaborate on their answers and involve actively in classroom interaction, hence increasing their engagement.

Second, F-move can also lead to a strong and positive teacher-student relationship. Del Carmen Santana (2019) stated that teachers' recognition of students' efforts and providing positive feedback can establish positive teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, students feel that their answers are valued, especially when their teachers acknowledge students' responses and provide supportive F-move, which in turn increases trust and creates a positive relationship between teachers and students (Walsh, 2011). Therefore, this kind of positive relationship in the classroom may provide a favourable learning environment, positive classroom experiences, positive learning attitudes, and enhanced performance (Song et al., 2022).

### **C-Affective and Motivational Benefits of F-move**

Many teachers in the interview reported that F-move helps create a supportive classroom environment, increasing students' motivation, making the lesson enjoyable, and boosting students' confidence.







To begin with, the use of F-move appears to foster a supportive classroom environment. In this type of environment, students feel safe and comfortable participating in classroom interaction without fear of making errors in front of peers. Earlier studies have found that a positive classroom environment is strongly shaped by the way teachers provide feedback on students' responses during classroom interaction (Cazden 2001). When teachers use F-move to scaffold students' ideas, provide constructive feedback, and encourage continued participation, students feel safe and are encouraged to engage further in classroom interaction.

In addition, the findings of the interviews suggest that the use of F-move in the form of positive feedback increases students' motivation. Positive feedback from teachers to students' responses leads to increased perceptions of competence and a corresponding increase in intrinsic motivation (Wood, 2017). Similarly, Ellis (2009) argued that positive feedback plays a vital role because it provides students with affective support and strengthens motivation for sustained learning. According to the affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashan (1982), positive feedback helps lower students' affective filter, thereby increasing their motivation and willingness to participate, which in turn facilitates language acquisition. This is why motivated students are likely to master another language faster and to a greater degree (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Further, only one teacher in the study reported that F-move can have a significant role in shaping students' positive attitude towards the lesson. Earlier studies suggest that teachers can make use of the F-turn to make the lesson more engaging and interesting for students by acknowledging students' responses or extending interaction (Cullen, 2002; Walsh, 2011). Therefore, these forms of F-moves are likely to create a positive classroom context in which most students are motivated and engaged.

Another notable benefit of F-move identified in the interview is its role in increasing students' confidence. Students usually feel confident to participate in classroom interaction when they know that their teachers scaffold activities or when they are provided non-threatening F-moves like negative evaluation. Such supportive interaction makes students feel safe and reduces their stress (Thrash et al., 2007), and students know that their teachers will help them to overcome the difficulties they encounter (Harris et al, 2014).

### **D-Cognitive and Learning-related Benefits of F-move**

The study's analysis identified some cognitive and learning-related benefits of F-move, including helping students understand the subject more effectively, enhancing their critical thinking, and enabling them to reflect on their own performance.

Firstly, F-move helps students better understand the lesson content. When teachers use F-move to correct students' responses, elaborate on them, or ask follow-up questions, students are provided opportunities to refine their thoughts, and correct misunderstandings. This aligns with Long's (1996) interactionist hypothesis, which highlights the significant effects of feedback and negotiation of meaning on comprehension. According to this hypothesis, input comprehensibility increases as students interact and use various types of interactional modification (e.g. confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and clarification requests) to overcome communication breakdowns.

Secondly, the findings also indicate that the use of F-move enhances students' critical thinking. When Follow-up questions and prompts are used to encourage students to explain, justify, or extend their answers, they are engaged to think deeply about their initial responses (Jaegar, 2019). This is because teachers' follow-up moves engage students cognitively with the content and move beyond simple recall towards higher-order thinking. Students are required to analyse and reflect on the content rather than giving brief and memorised answers. Thus, follow-up questions can be seen as a powerful strategy for deepening students' understanding and encouraging critical thinking (ibid).

Thirdly, only one teacher reported that the use of F-move enables students to reflect on their own performance. This is because, through feedback, prompts, and requests for self-correction, F-move helps students to become more aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. Such awareness helps students differentiate between correct and incorrect answers. As a result, students may take responsibility for their learning and adjust their learning strategy accordingly.

### **5.3 What Challenges do Kurdish EFL Teachers Face When Implementing F-move?**





The third research question examined the challenges EFL teachers face when providing F-move. The findings indicate four different types of difficulties teachers encounter. Each type will be discussed below.

### **A-Teacher-related Challenges in Implementing F-move**

The study's findings indicate that a lack of awareness is one of the challenges some teachers may face when implementing F-move as they are required to have adequate knowledge of F-move to make it effective. However, some EFL teachers at Salahaddin University-Erbil have a limited understanding of F-move. According to the results, this could be due to a lack of training courses and workshops on F-move as well as limited research on this topic in the Kurdistan context, which highlights the need for continuous professional development among teachers. Previous studies showed that many EFL teachers use the IRF model, and particularly F-move by default (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, Wells, 1993), meaning that teachers use this model naturally without being formally trained in it.

### **B-Student-related Challenges in Implementing F-move**

The results indicate that several student-related factors frequently create a barrier to interaction, limiting the opportunities for meaningful follow-up. Specifically, lack of student participation, students' resistance to engage in active learning, fear of making mistakes, shyness, psychological impediments, low language proficiency, and limited student responses hinder the successful implementation of F-move.

The lack of students' participation appears to be one of the primary barriers to the effective use of F-move. This refusal to participate could be due to psychological barriers such as shyness and a high level of anxiety. As the results show, when students are prompted for elaboration, they either avoid eye contact with the teacher to avoid participating or give one-word or brief answers. During F-move, teachers usually ask students to engage actively in interaction, which demands public performance. Some students feel shy or psychologically unsafe speaking in front of their peers, thereby raising their affective filter (Krashan, 1982). As a result, students prefer to remain silent rather than to risk public mistakes. Another reason for students' lack of participation could



be their low language levels. As noted in the results, this phenomenon is frequent among first-and second-year university students.

Students' reticence to participate in classroom interaction is another impediment to the implementation of F-move. As noted in the results, teachers attempted to initiate extended feedback sequences, but students were unwilling to participate because they were accustomed to passive learning. In the Kurdistan Region, it appears that students have been acclimated to teacher-centred environments, where they listen passively to their teachers and hold the belief that teachers are the sole providers of knowledge.

Moreover, beyond students' lack of participation and resistance to participation, student-related emotional barriers, specifically the fear of making mistakes, shyness, and certain psychological impediments, emerged as challenges to the implementation of F-move. For the effective use of F-move, the classroom should support interaction. To create such an environment, teachers should ask follow-up questions and encourage students to participate actively (Walsh, 2011). However, some students are afraid to make mistakes for fear of appearing incompetent in front of their peers. To save their social face, some students remain silent or speak in monosyllables. Therefore, it is very challenging for teachers to implement F-move effectively, as they cannot ask students to correct their errors or elaborate on their ideas if they barely speak.

Similarly, students' shyness is another barrier to using F-move effectively. The data indicate that some students feel shy speaking in public, especially if they feel that their responses will be judged. Thus, these students usually avoid participation or provide brief answers rather than extended elaboration. As the results show, to rescue these shy students, teachers themselves answer the questions or elaborate on students' brief answers.

Furthermore, certain psychological impediments, specifically students' high levels of anxiety, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem, constrain the effectiveness of F-move that promotes interaction. These traits tend to result in students' silence (Dörnyei, 2005). It is likely that when teachers use the third turn to provide immediate evaluation or ask students probing questions, students' level of anxiety might rise, leading them to choose not to participate. Likewise, students with a lack of confidence or low



self-esteem might view F-move as threatening rather than a learning opportunity, as it requires them to engage in meaningful interaction. Another major challenge that limits teachers' ability to utilise F-move effectively is the language barrier, specifically low language proficiency. Some students may lack the necessary linguistic resources (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) even if they are confident, not shy, or not afraid of making mistakes. For a meaningful F-move, students are required to elaborate, clarify, or defend their ideas (Nassaji & Wells, 2000). This elaborated interaction demands that students produce syntactically complex sentences and a wide range of vocabulary. As noted in the analysis, many students are unable to express their thoughts because of their limited linguistic proficiency. Thus, teachers often accept students' simple or fragmented responses. As a result, F-move is provided to check students' understanding rather than to push them to elaborate. In addition, the limited responses from students appear to make the implementation of F-move consistently difficult. The interview data indicate that students often provide monosyllabic responses to fulfil the immediate obligation of answering. This might be because students may fear making errors or losing face, or they may not possess the necessary linguistic skills. Additionally, the effectiveness of the third F-move is often contingent on students' responses, as they need to be longer (Nassaji & Wells, 2000). This may be because teachers are unable to build on ideas, engage students in meaningful interaction, or create dialogic interaction if students continuously provide brief answers.

### **C-Classroom and Contextual Challenges in Implementing F-move.**

The findings suggest that EFL teachers encounter three challenges related to the classroom and context. They include time constraints, large class size, and pressure to complete the material. Time constraint seems to be the contextual factor that has the greatest effect on the implementation of F-move because the majority of participants revealed that time constraint is a major barrier to the effective use of F-move. This widespread reference to time constraints indicates that teachers suffer from allocating insufficient time for elaborated F-moves, and thereby they stick to evaluative F-moves because they are quick and efficient (Cullen, 2002). Moreover, some of the teachers associated time constraints with extensive



curricular content, in which a substantial amount of material should be covered in each lesson. According to Walsh (2006), IRF is prevalent in ESL classrooms because it is a time-efficient way of moving classroom discussion forward; however, the interaction is limited as students provide brief answers and teachers evaluate the students' responses. In such interaction, students have limited opportunities to expand, negotiate meaning, or interact with their teachers or peers.

The second challenge is a large class size. According to interview data, a large number of students often restrict teachers from managing the classroom interaction and providing elaborated F-moves. Large classrooms often follow a teacher-centred approach where students have little opportunity to participate in classroom discussion (Todd, 2006). Furthermore, teachers are unable to provide individualised feedback because it requires a significant amount of time and effort. Therefore, under such constraints, teachers are obliged to adopt a more controlled interaction pattern by implementing evaluative types of F-move rather than dialogic F-move.

The third challenge, related to the contextual factor, is the pressure to cover the material within the prescribed time. In the context of the Kurdish EFL university classroom, some teachers prioritise syllabus coverage over extended F-moves. As a result, these teachers often use F-turn to check students' understanding of the content of the lesson.

Furthermore, it appears that these three contextual challenges are interrelated, as they collectively constrain teachers' implementation of dialogic F-moves. For instance, large class sizes require additional time to provide effective F-move and Kurdish EFL teachers have limited time; meanwhile, they have to cover the course book.

#### **D-Assessment-related Challenges in Implementing F-move.**

Finally, the analysis of the study identified the washback of the exam as a challenge that some Kurdish EFL teachers face. The washback of the exam was less prominent in the interview data because only one participating teacher reported that it prevents the successful implementation of F-moves. The washback effect of the exam can be reflected in teachers' instructional practice, as teachers may prioritise brief, evaluative F-moves over extended or dialogic feedback because



they want to check whether the students have absorbed the material or not.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study aims to explore how often Kurdish EFL teachers employ the F-move strategy in the university classroom interaction. The study also examines the benefits of using F-move and the challenges that hinder its effectiveness. It can be concluded that Kurdish EFL teachers frequently implement F-move in their teaching. It can also be concluded that applying F-move offers several benefits for students. While F-move can develop students' communicative and linguistic skills, it can also enhance their engagement, increase their motivation, build their confidence to participate. Additionally, F-move can create a positive classroom environment, enhance students' critical thinking, builds strong teacher-student rapport, and make the lesson enjoyable for students. Moreover, the study concludes that despite these benefits, there are some barriers that constrain teachers' ability to utilise F-move appropriately. Teacher-related challenges include the teacher's lack of knowledge of the F-move. While student- related challenges include lack of participation, fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, low self-esteem, low language levels, and brief responses. Classroom or context-related challenges, on the other hand, include time constraints, large class size, and completing the course book. Assessment-related challenges, include the washback of the exam. Therefore, based on these conclusions, the current study recommends the following. First, teachers should acknowledge all the benefits of using F-move and use it not only to evaluate students' knowledge but also to create a dialogic, interactive classroom, promote students' engagement and deeper learning, as well as open spaces for further discussion. Second, continuous training courses and workshops should be conducted among university EFL teachers to increase their knowledge of F-move, thereby improving their classroom interactional competence and overcoming the challenges they encounter. Finally, further research should be conducted to explore students' perspectives on F-move to understand how it facilitates or hinders their learning.



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