Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy, English Proficiency, and Instructional Strategies: A Study of Nonnative EFL Teachers in Iran

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Abstract

This study examined the efficacy beliefs of nonnative English speaking (NNES) Iranian EFL teachers. EFL teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy in terms of personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and their perceived English language proficiency level were examined. A modified version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was used to assess efficacy for management, engagement, and instructional strategies. Based on Chacón's (2005) study, two other subscales (self-reported proficiency and pedagogical strategies) were also used. The results showed that the teachers' perceived efficacy was positively correlated with self-reported English proficiency. The findings also revealed that the more efficacious the teachers felt, the more inclined they were to use communicative-based strategies. The study has implications for the preparation of NNES teachers and the support they need to develop their language proficiency, which in turn is related to their perceived self-efficacy.

Introduction

Understanding teachers' perceptions and beliefs is important because teachers, heavily involved in various teaching and learning processes, are practitioners of educational principles and theories (Jia, Eslami & Burlbaw, 2006). Teachers have a primary role in determining what is needed or what would work best with their students. Findings from research on teachers' perceptions and beliefs indicate that these perceptions and beliefs not only have considerable influence on their instructional practices and classroom behavior but also are related to their students' achievement (Grossman, Reynolds, Ringstaff & Sykes, 1985; Hollon,

Anderson & Roth, 1991; Johnson, 1992; Morine-Dershimer, 1983; Prawat & Anderson, 1988; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988). Thus, knowing the perceptions and beliefs of teachers enables one to make predictions about teaching and assessment practices in classrooms.

Teachers' beliefs about their own effectiveness, known as teacher efficacy, underlie many important instructional decisions which ultimately shape students' educational experiences (Soodak & Podell, 1997, p. 214). Teacher efficacy is believed to be strongly linked to teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Although a number of studies have investigated teacher efficacy in different subject matters, little research has been conducted to explore the perceived efficacy of nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) in different ESL and EFL contexts. Because of the fast worldwide spread of the English language, the number of NNESTs has increased tremendously over the last decades. As NNESTs become a focus of research and pedagogical interest in applied linguistics, the issue of their English language proficiency is gaining significance (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). Among the self-perceived challenges that NNESTs face are the lack of teacher confidence, biased attitudes of students and other teachers because of their nonnative status, as well as English language needs (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Although language proficiency is often listed as an area of interest in many papers (Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Mahboob, 2004; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004; Brinton, 2004; Brady & Gulikers, 2004; Lee, 2004), there are few articles that explore the question in detail. In their 1994 survey of 216 native and nonnative EFL teachers in different countries, Reves and Medgyes found that 84 % of the NNES subjects acknowledged having problems with vocabulary and fluency aspects of the language; other areas of difficulty included speaking, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and writing. Similarly, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) report that 72% of their nonnative speaking graduate student subjects admitted that their insufficient language proficiency impeded their teaching.

Based on the research discussed above, there is a need to examine NNESTs' perceptions of their self-efficacy in terms of personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and their perceived English language proficiency level. Thus, this study explores self-efficacy beliefs among high school Iranian EFL teachers taking into consideration that both teaching tasks and the teachers' assessment of their capabilities form part of their efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

Background

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy can potentially influence both the kind of environment that they create as well as the various instructional practices introduced in the classroom (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are confident that even the most difficult students can be reached if they exert extra effort; teachers with lower self-efficacy, on the other hand, feel a

sense of helplessness when it comes to dealing with difficult and unmotivated students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). The literature widely documents the pervasive influence of self-efficacy beliefs and corroborates social cognitive theory that places these beliefs at the roots of human agency (Bandura, 2001).

There are two major dimensions of teachers' perceived efficacy discussed in literature on teacher's sense of efficacy: Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) and General Teaching Efficacy (GTE) (Coladarci, 1992; Soodak & Podell, 1997; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Tschannen-Moran & Wookfolk Hoy, 2001). Personal Teaching Efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about their own ability to make a difference in their students' learning, whereas General Teaching Efficacy comprises teachers' beliefs about the power of factors outside of the school and teacher's control in affecting student performance. Both GTE and PTE were the two items measured in the earliest teachers' efficacy studies headed by Rand Corporation (Armor et al., 1976; Berman et al., 1977), which asked teachers to rate their responses to two statements based on a five-point Likert scale:

> (a) "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment," (GTE)

> (b) "If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students" (PTE).

On the other hand, other researchers have treated teacher efficacy as a one-dimensional construct (Evans & Tribble, 1986; Guskey, 1988). Yet another group of researchers have argued that teacher efficacy is multidimensional and should be examined differently according to specific situations and tasks (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Wookfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

Relation between Teachers' Efficacy and Other Factors

Teacher efficacy has been linked to several personal and contextual variables, important teacher behaviors, and student outcomes. Guskey (1988) and Ghaith and Yaghi's (1997a) studies examined, among other things, how teachers' sense of efficacy affects their attitudes toward implementing instructional innovation. Guskey's (1988) study involved 120 elementary and secondary school teachers who attended a staff development program which focused on mastery learning of instructional strategies and instructional innovations for the study's participants. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of four sections that combined a variety of scales. The results of the study showed that teachers who regarded instructional innovation practices (mastery of learning strategies) as congruent with their present teaching practices rated them as easier to implement. Similarly, those who deemed instructional innovations as very different from their current teaching methods rated them as more difficult to implement and therefore less important.

The relation among teachers' teaching experience, efficacy, and attitudes toward the implementation of instructional innovations was also explored by Ghaith and Yaghi (1997a). The 25 teachers in their study responded to three questionnaires

after a staff development program using the program, Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD), as a cooperative learning instructional innovation. In addition to answering a demographic background questionnaire and the same measure used by Guskey (1988) to assess teachers' attitudes toward instructional innovation, the study used a shortened version of Gibson and Dembo's (1984) teacher efficacy scale which contained 16 items. Ghaith and Yaghi (1997a) found that with more years of teaching experience, teachers tended to view STAD as being more difficult and less important to implement. Further, more experienced teachers also felt that their ability to bring about positive changes in students' learning is limited by factors beyond school control. Another finding of this study was that teachers with a higher sense of personal teaching efficacy saw STAD as more congruent with their present teaching practices, less difficult and more important to implement.

Using the 16-item version of the Gibson and Dembo (1984) teacher efficacy scale, Soodak and Poodell (1997) looked at how teaching experience influenced teacher efficacy among 626 elementary and secondary preservice and practicing teachers in the greater New York metropolitan area. The main finding from this study was that for the elementary teachers, personal teaching efficacy was initially high during the pre-service teaching years but in the first year of teaching, this sense of personal efficacy fell dramatically. However, with more years of teaching experience, their personal efficacy gradually increased but their sense of their own effectiveness never reached the same levels achieved by secondary-level teachers. On the other hand, the secondary teachers in this study were more homogeneous and stable in their personal efficacy beliefs.

Ghaith and Shaaban (1999) investigated how teaching experience, gender, and grade level taught correlate with personal and general teacher efficacy and perceptions of teaching concerns among 292 Lebanese teachers from different school backgrounds. Gibson and Dembo's (1984) 16-item teaching efficacy scale, in addition to a 28-item measure that addressed teaching concerns (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997b) was adopted. Results of the study revealed that personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy were not internally related and represented two distinct indices. Personal teaching efficacy, rather than general teaching efficacy, was found to be related to the perception of teaching concerns. Specifically, the study's results showed that teaching experience and personal efficacy were negatively correlated with the perception of teaching concerns; that is, the longer their years in teaching and the more confidence they had in their personal ability to provide effective teaching, the less they were concerned about problems related to teaching such as the relations with parents and supervisors (self-survival) or meeting students' individual needs (impact). On the other hand, gender, grade level taught, and general efficacy were not found to be related to the teachers' perceptions of any of the categories of teaching concerns. This contradicts Pigge and Marso's (1987) findings that females and elementary teachers had higher teaching concerns than males and secondary teachers.

Chacón (2005), meanwhile, looked at self-perceived efficacy of a group of 100 EFL middle school teachers in Venezuela and how this related to their self-reported English proficiency. Using the short version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale based on Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and two other subscales (self-reported proficiency and pedagogical strategies), Chacón

(2005) found that teachers' perceived efficacy was positively correlated with self-reported English proficiency. As for the relation between teachers' sense of efficacy and their use of pedagogical strategies (communication-oriented vs. grammar-oriented), the results indicated that the efficacy did not have an influence over the kind of strategies these teachers preferred. The EFL teachers in this study seemed to be more inclined toward adopting grammar-oriented methods of teaching.

Goker (2006) studied the impact of peer coaching on self-efficacy and instructional skills of EFL pre-service teachers in Northern Cyprus. Using Bandura's (1995) General Self-Efficacy Scale, Goker found that peer coaching improved pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. The findings of this study, similar to Hoy and Woolfolk (1990) and Sia (1992) study, show that experiential activities, such as teaching practicum or other mastery experiences seem to have a great impact on self-efficacy of pre-service teachers.

Language proficiency of NNESTs is one of the important variables related to language teachers' self-confidence. Therefore, there is a need to examine NNESTs' perceptions of their self- efficacy in terms of personal capabilities to teach EFL and their perceived English language proficiency level. Furthermore, there is a need to expand teachers' self-efficacy studies to other countries and contexts. As Goker (2006) points out, teacher efficacy is strongly influenced by unique features of the inherent cultures and by cultural and social backgrounds of the teachers. Thus, this study explores self-efficacy beliefs among an understudied group of teachers (high school Iranian EFL teachers) taking into consideration that both teaching tasks and teachers' assessment of their capabilities form part of efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

Nonnative English Speaking Teachers' Language Proficiency

Teachers' target language proficiency and their beliefs about language learning are two major factors that determine their classroom teaching practices and their use or non-use of the target language in their classes (Kamhi-Stein & Mahboob, 2005 and 2006). However, in spite of the common-sense nature of this statement, research in this area is limited. Although language proficiency is often listed as an area of interest in NNEST studies (Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Brinton, 2004; Brady & Gulikers, 2004; Lee, 2004; Mahboob, 2004; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004), few scholars appear to have explored the question of teacher proficiency in detail. One exception is Butler (2004) who studied teachers in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, and looked at the gap between teachers' self-perceived language proficiency and their perceived minimum level of proficiency needed to be effective teachers at the elementary school level. Butler's study showed consistent gaps in all three countries between the teachers' self-assessed language proficiency and the proficiency they believed would enable them to teach elementary school English most effectively.

Language proficiency constitutes the foundation of the professional confidence of non-native English teachers. Language competence has been rated as the most essential characteristic of a good teacher (Lange, l990). Berry (1990) conducted

a study of two groups of English teachers teaching at the secondary level in Poland. His aim was to determine which of three components (methodology, theory of language teaching, or language improvement) they needed most. Language improvement was ranked as the most important for both groups, and methodology was second, while the two groups ranked theory a poor third. According to Doff (1987), a teacher's confidence in the classroom is undermined by a poor command of the English language. Poor command of the language can affect the self esteem and professional status of the teacher and interfere with simple teaching procedures. Furthermore, it can keep the teacher from fulfilling the pedagogical requirements of a more communicative approach to language teaching. As shown by research perceived language proficiency is an important issue for NNES teachers and has an impact on their professional self-esteem and confidence (Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Brinton, 2004; Kamhi-Stein & Mahboob, 2005).

Based on the research presented above, language proficiency seems to be a factor related to EFL teachers feeling of self-efficacy. Therefore, one aim of this study is to examine the relationship of self-efficacy and language proficiency in Iranian EFL teachers.

The EFL Context in Iran

English as a foreign language is formally taught to Iranian students from the first year of junior high school for three years, during high school for another three years, and for another year during the pre-university level (generally three hours a week).

Considering the content of the current EFL textbooks and Ministry of Education guidelines, it seems that EFL teaching in Iran is based on the students' future need to read and sometimes translate English books, journals, and magazines. Likewise, reading and translation are the most emphasized skills at the university level, and students study English basically for academic purposes (EAP). The orientation is therefore towards a combination of grammar-translation and audiolingual methods in most schools (Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004).

The curriculum in Iran is, for the most part, top-down and product-oriented in all its aspects, directed by the Ministry of Education through the monitoring of "educational groups" at various organizational levels. Compared to EFL learners in other contexts, Iranian EFL students do not have much exposure to English outside the classroom. Very few English programs are broadcast on TV or radio (Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004). Nevertheless, some changes have been observed recently. Advancements in technology, people's ever-increasing use of the Internet and satellite, and a rapid growth of public interest in going to private language institutes in Iran have brought further opportunities for English language learning. Furthermore, there is a growing need and tendency towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). A major principle in CLT is to use language for a variety of purposes and to convey meaningful messages. The implementation of CLT requires EFL teachers to be competent in the English language in order to teach it. It is expected that EFL teachers use English with functional ability in communicating across the language skills.

In Iran, EFL teachers are mainly hired through two different channels: (a) state-sponsored TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) programs and (b) free hiring of B. A. or M. A. holders of English translation or English literature majors. First and most traditionally, there have been teacher education programs at the levels of Teacher Training Centers (TTCs) and universities in charge of developing teachers' competency in both English and education.

Methodology

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the perceived levels of self-efficacy for interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies among high-school EFL teachers in Iran?
2. What are the levels of self-reported English proficiency of Iranian high-school EFL teachers in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills?
3. What self-reported pedagogical strategies do Iranian high-school teachers use to teach EFL?
4. What are the correlations among Iranian EFL teachers' sense of efficacy for students' interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies and their self-reported English proficiency (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills)?
5. What are the correlations among Iranian EFL teachers' sense of efficacy for students' interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies and their self-reported use of pedagogical strategies (i.e., grammatically-oriented or communicatively-oriented)?

Participants

Forty Iranian EFL teachers with one to five years of experience teaching English at different high schools in different school districts in Tehran participated in this study (21 females and 19 males). None of the teachers had traveled or studied in English speaking countries. Twenty-nine held bachelor's degrees in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), English Literature, or Translation, and 11 others either held a Master's degree in TEFL or were in-service teachers pursuing their Master's degrees in TEFL.

The surveys were first taken to the central Education Organization in Tehran where they were appraised and then officially approved by the officials in charge of supervising research-related issues in all schools and organizations administered by the Education Ministry. Convenient and snowball sampling procedures[1] were used for participant selection. If the teachers agreed to participate, then the surveys were administered at the teachers' work sites.

Instrument

The Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), Chacón (2005), and Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) instruments provided the framework for

the instrument used in this study. Based on informal interviews with six novice Iranian EFL teachers as well as researchers' experience and background information about the Iranian context of teacher education and English language teaching, the instrument for this study was developed.

The instrument comprised the following components:

a. The teachers' demographic information
b. The teachers' perceived efficacy for engaging students in learning EFL
c. The teachers' perceived efficacy for managing EFL classes
d. The teachers' perceived efficacy for implementing instructional strategies to teach EFL
e. The teachers' self-reported English proficiency
f. The teachers' self-reported pedagogical strategies to teach EFL (grammatically or communicatively oriented)

The instrument was translated into Persian (Farsi). The rationale was to guarantee the participants' understanding of the survey items. The translated version was given to two highly proficient English-Persian bilinguals to review and give comments on the felicity, intelligibility, and faithfulness of the translated items. Based on the comments, some minor changes were made to the translated versions and then administered to five English teachers at Tehran international School (where one of the researchers teaches). Based on the teachers' comments, more minor changes were implemented and the translated instrument was finalized for administration to the participants of the study.

Language proficiency was another important construct in this study. Because scholars take multiple perspectives toward language proficiency, the researcher must define the construct and assess it in a manner consistent with the particular study's objectives (Butler, 2004). This study investigates those aspects of teachers' language proficiency that researchers feel are relevant to English teaching in Iran. As a result, the assessment of language proficiency in this study is oriented toward the four skills used to describe teachers' competencies in their respective contexts. Language proficiency was self-assessed because such assessments are efficient and relatively easy to administer; they take less time than other types of proficiency assessments (LeBlanc & Painchaud, 1985), and show reasonably acceptable correlations with other objective measures (Blanche & Merino, 1989). Moreover, teachers' perceptions of their language proficiency, and not necessarily the actual language proficiency (Kamhi-Stein & Mahboob, 2005) would more likely influence their perceived self-efficacy.

To investigate the teachers' perceived English proficiency, the survey used by Butler (2004), and Chacón (2005) were used. Based on those two instruments, a 12-item survey was developed. The items were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree'(5).

Another part of the instrument was focused on grammatically-oriented or communicatively-oriented strategies. Although different definitions have been proposed for the term communicative, in this study, the definition given by Spratt (1999) has been adopted. Spratt defines communicative activities "as those that involve learners in using the language for communicative rather than display purposes, that focus on fluency rather than accuracy and which involve learners

in pair or group work as a setting for that communication" (p. 148). This definition corresponds with Quinn's (1984) "characteristics of communicative approaches" and with the "weak version of communicative teaching" outlined by Howatt (1984). The survey used by Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) was used as a base for this part of the instrument. There were 10 items in this section ranked on a Likert scale, ranging from 'almost never' (1) to 'almost always' (5).

The reliability of the instrument was assessed by computing Cronbach alpha coefficients for each of the five major subscales mentioned above, which resulted in .69 for EFL teachers' self-efficacy in engagement, .69 for their self-efficacy in management, .65 for self-efficacy in implementing instructional strategies, .85 for their self-reported English proficiency in all four skills, and .48 for EFL teachers' self-reported pedagogical strategies.

Results

Both descriptive and inferential statistics (correlational analysis) were used. Descriptive statistics were computed for each item and subcategory of the EFL teachers' self-efficacy instrument. Also the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient r was computed between the subcategories of the main variable (teacher self-efficacy) and the other variables (i.e., teachers' self-reported English proficiency and their self-reported use of grammatically or communicatively oriented strategies). [I've asked the authors for the error levels to be inserted.]

Efficacy for Engagement, Class Management, and Instructional Strategies

The descriptive statistics for the self-efficacy beliefs for students' interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies are displayed in Table 1 showing the range of 1 (nothing) to 5 (a great deal).

Table 1. Iranian EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Items of efficacy subscales	Mean*	SD
Efficacy for student engagement		
1. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in learning English?	3.92	0.62
2. How much can you do to make the English class enjoyable for all students?	4.07	0.65
3. How much can you do to make students believe that they can do well in English?	4.20	0.72
4. How much can you do to make students appreciate the potential benefits associated with learning English?	3.92	0.76
Total	4.02	0.52
Efficacy for class management		
5. How much can you do to maintain high attendance in your English class?	4.30	0.68
6. How much can you do to get students to turn in assignments or papers promptly?	4.25	0.66

7. How much can you do to calm down a student who is noisy or uncooperative in your English class?	4.27	0.78
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	4.02	0.88
Total	4.17	0.54
Efficacy for instructional strategies		
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies in your English class?	4.00	0.98
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when your students are confused?	4.47	0.59
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	4.30	0.64
12. How well can you implement alternative instructional strategies when a certain strategy does not work?	4.20	0.68
Total	4.26	0.53

* Significant at the .05 level.

The means of the three subscales indicate that the EFL teachers in Iran rated themselves as more efficacious in instructional strategies ($\bar{x}$ = 4.26) than in managing the class ($\bar{x}$ = 4.17) and engaging students interactively ($\bar{x}$ = 4.02). This suggests that the EFL teachers judged their abilities to motivate and engage students to learn English and to manage the class to be lower than their use of effective instructional strategies. Items 1 and 4 in the engagement subscale had the lowest mean. These items are both related to students' motivation and attitudes towards English. It seems like teachers perceived their abilities to change the motivation or the attitude of the students toward the benefits of English language was not as high as their other abilities such as modifying their explanations (item 10) and controlling disruptive behavior (item 7).

Perceived English Language Proficiency

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the 12 items measuring the EFL teachers' English proficiency.

Table 2. Iranian EFL Teachers' Self-Reported English Proficiency

Items of English proficiency subscales	Mean*	SD
1. In face-to-face interaction with an English speaker, I can participate in a conversation at a normal speed.	4.12	0.59
2. I know the necessary strategies to help maintain a conversation with an English speaker.	4.05	0.71
3. I feel comfortable using English as the language of instruction in my English class.	4.47	0.84
4. I can watch English news (for example, CNN) and/or English films without subtitles.	3.52	0.96

5. I understand the meaning of common idiomatic expressions used by English speakers.	3.37	0.74
6. I can understand when two native English speakers talk at a normal speed.	3.92	0.82
7. I can understand English magazines, newspapers, and popular novels.	4.37	0.58
8. I can draw inferences/conclusions from what I read in English.	4.32	0.61
9. I can figure out the meaning of unknown words in English from context.	4.15	0.73
10. I can easily write business and personal letters in English and can always find the right words to convey what I want to say.	3.65	0.76
11. I can fill in different kinds of application forms in English such as a bank account application.	4.02	0.86
12. I can write a short essay in English on a topic of my knowledge.	4.32	0.69
English skills		
Speaking	4.2	0.54
Listening	3.6	0.70
Reading	4.29	0.51
Writing	3.99	0.60

* Significant at the .05 level.

As shown in table 2, Iranian EFL teachers perceived themselves as more proficient in reading ($\overline{X}$ = 4.3) and speaking ($\overline{X}$ = 4.2) and less proficient in listening ($\overline{X}$ = 3.6) and writing ($\overline{X}$ = 3.9). High proficiency in reading is indicative of EFL contexts with a heavy emphasis on reading. As displayed, item 3 received the highest value ($\overline{X}$ = 4.47) of all, especially among speaking items, meaning that teachers regarded themselves as fairly fluent in their use of English for instructional purposes. As for speaking, the teachers rated themselves less able to use strategies to maintain a conversation (item 2), which could be related to their strategic competence. In addition, writing a short essay in English was perceived to be the easiest. Writing business and personal letters was deemed to be the most difficult. This is again a reflection of a highly academic orientation to English learning and teaching in EFL contexts. Teachers judged themselves to be least proficient in listening, especially in watching English news and English films without subtitles and understanding English speakers using common idiomatic expressions in their daily talks.

Self-reported Use of Pedagogical Strategies

The descriptive statistics for the EFL teachers' self-reported use of pedagogical strategies are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Iranian EFL Teachers' Use of Pedagogical Strategies

Items of pedagogical strategies subscales	Mean*	SD
1. I use students' native language rather than English to explain terms or concepts that are difficult to understand.	2.47	1.06

2. I ask students to memorize new vocabulary or phrases without showing them how to use the words in context.	1.82	0.95
3. As a classroom exercise, I ask students to translate single sentences in the English text into their native language.	2.00	1.19
4. I give students the opportunity to get into groups and discuss answers to problem-solving activities.	4.10	0.9
5. I play audio tapes that feature native English speakers' conversation exchanges and ask students to answer questions related to the conversation.	3.97	1.32
6. I use grammatical rules to explain complex English sentences to students.	3.27	1.19
7. I play English films and videos in class and ask students to engage in discussions about the films or videos.	2.77	1.29
8. I pay more attention to whether students can produce grammatically correct sentences than whether they can speak English with fluency.	2.85	0.92
9. I ask students to converse with one another in English and encourage them to find opportunities to speak English outside the classroom.	4.17	01.10
10. I present students with real-life situations and ask them to come up with responses or answers in English that are appropriate to these situations.	4.07	01.04
Strategy subscales		
Grammatically-oriented	2.48	0.65
Communicatively-oriented	3.87	0.80

* Significant at the .05 level.

As shown in table 3, there were 10 items in this section. Of the 10 items, 5 items were related to grammar related activities (1, 2, 3, 6, and 8) and the other 5 to communicatively related ones. Probably, the most interesting finding of this study lies in the participants' overriding orientation towards communication-based instructional strategies ($\bar{X}$ = 3.87) in comparison with their self-reported use of grammar-oriented activities ($\bar{X}$ = 2.48). The teachers reported using memorization for new vocabulary (item 2) and sentence translation (3) as least frequently used activities and reliance on metalinguistic explanations of complex sentences (item 6) as the most frequently used grammar-related activity. As for the communication-oriented instructional strategies, having dialogues with peers in English (item 9, $\bar{X}$ = 4.17) as well as creating real-life problem-solving situations (item 10, $\bar{X}$ = 4.07) received the highest mean values. In contrast, EFL teachers' use of original English movies or incorporation of video-mediated language learning in class was reported to be the least frequently-used strategy among the teachers (item 7, $\bar{X}$=2.77).

Self-efficacy and Language Proficiency

As noted, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationships among the subscales of the EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their self-reported English proficiency in all four skills.

Table 4. Self Efficacy Subscales and Proficiency + Pedagogical Strategies Subscales

Variables	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	GOS	COS
Engagement	0.23	0.15	0.19	0.13	-0.04	0.37*
Management	0.31*	0.20	0.20	0.18	-0.08	0.25
Instructional strategies	0.39*	0.30*	0.22	0.38*	0.19	0.30*
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) GOS=Grammatically Oriented Strategies COS=Communicatively Oriented Strategies						

Positive correlations were found between the Iranian EFL teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs for students' interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies and their self-reported English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Table 4). The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for the teachers' sense of efficacy for classroom management and speaking skill (r = 0.31) and among their self-efficacy for orchestrating instructional strategies and their self-reported proficiency in listening (r = 0.30), speaking (r = 0.39), and writing (r = 0.38). These findings reveal that, first, the more proficient the Iranian EFL teachers perceived themselves in speaking English, the higher their sense of efficacy for management. Second, the more proficient the teachers perceived themselves in listening, speaking, and writing abilities; the more efficacious they felt in designing effective instructional strategies in the L2 classroom.

Contrary to the researchers' expectations and the related literature (Chacón, 2005), the correlation coefficients among the EFL teachers' self-efficacy subscales and their reading proficiency were not found to be statistically significant. This finding is of interest since these teachers rated themselves as most proficient in reading. More important, the Iranian EFL teachers' sense of efficacy for motivating and engaging students in effective language learning activities was not found to be significantly correlated with their self-reported English proficiency in any of the four skills evaluated in this study. This was consistent with the teachers' low rating on changing students' motivation or attitude towards English (Table 1).

Self-efficacy and Use of Instructional Strategies

As noted in Table 4, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationships among the subscales of the teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their use of grammatically or communicatively oriented pedagogical strategies.

An important finding of this study was the significant positive correlation between the teachers' self-efficacy subscales (i.e., students' interactive engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies) and their use of communicatively oriented language teaching strategies. The relationship between teachers' self-efficacy for engagement and management and use of grammatically oriented strategies was negative although not statistically

significant. The most notable positive correlation was found between the teachers' sense of efficacy for student engagement and their use of communicatively oriented strategies (r = 0.37) and their self-efficacy for instructional strategies and use of communication-oriented strategies (r = 0.30). These findings suggest that the higher the Iranian EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy, the more likely they were to use communication-oriented strategies, and the less likely they seemed to be oriented towards the use of grammatically oriented strategies.

Discussion

On the basis of the data analyzed, the results suggest the following aspects of interest. First, the study shows that novice Iranian EFL teachers feel more efficacious in applying instructional strategies than in managing an EFL class. They also perceive their efficacy to motivate and engage students to learn English not as high as their efficacy for instructional strategies. Second, the teachers perceive their reading skill to be the most highly developed language skill and listening to be the least developed language skill. Third, the teachers report that their use of grammatically oriented strategies is lower than that of communicatively oriented strategies.

The most important finding was the positive relationship between perceived level of language proficiency and sense of self-efficacy. The higher the teachers' perceived proficiency in language skills, the more efficacious they felt.

Moreover, the higher the teachers' sense of self- efficacy the more tendency they had to use communicative-based strategies in their classes and inclination to focus more on meaning rather than accuracy. This result is different from the findings of other studies (Chacón, 2005; Sato, 2002), which show grammar was the central focus of EFL teachers' instructional activities.

This study adds to the previous literature by examining the relationships among teachers' sense of efficacy and other factors. However, this is a new contribution to the field of teacher-efficacy since self-efficacy of foreign language teachers in general, and EFL teachers in particular, is an understudied area of research. Furthermore, this study was conducted to fill in the gap in the literature and to study the relationship of language proficiency of EFL teachers and their sense of self-efficacy.

Based on the premise that teachers are key agents of change (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999) and that their self-efficacy should be considered in the successful implementation of educational practice, these findings suggest implications for programs concerned with professional development of teachers. School administrators should develop intervention programs either to maintain or enhance teachers' sense of efficacy. Since language proficiency was related to a teachers' sense of self efficacy, it is suggested that teacher education programs and schools provide English language enhancement classes for EFL teachers in order for them to maintain or improve their language proficiency. EFL teachers require adequate preparation in all four skills so that they build a strong sense of efficacy to use the language and engage students in learning English.

Further research is needed in order to determine the various factors that contribute to teachers' sense of efficacy. The teaching experience of the teachers in this study ranged from 1-5 years. Further research is needed to examine how years of experience influence the development of teachers' sense of efficacy and under what conditions efficacy is maintained and enhanced. More specifically, it would be useful to examine the role of such factors as teachers' English language enhancement, professional preparation, readiness to teach, and in-service training in maintaining and enhancing teachers' sense of efficacy.

The findings in this study are based on self-reported data which has some built-in limitations. The desirability factor, meaning that teachers may have reported what they perceived to be desirable, is a limitation of this self-reported data. It is therefore important to investigate whether and under what conditions teachers actually implement communicatively oriented instructional strategies they reported. Observational studies need to complement the results of this study and determine the difference or similarity of actual use of instructional activities with the reported data. It would also be insightful to investigate students' perceptions and compare it with that of teachers (Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004).

Further studies should look at the personal and environmental factors collectively in explaining teacher efficacy. The construct of teacher efficacy should be further developed to reflect the standards and competencies that EFL teachers in different settings are expected to perform. Longitudinal studies should follow teachers to determine if personal and environmental factors influence teacher efficacy at different points throughout the teacher development process.

Finally, we need a comparative analysis of the perceived self-efficacy of teachers in different countries and different subject areas. Such a study would make it possible to discern the country and discipline specific factors and would reveal how different factors might interact with teachers sense of self-efficacy in different settings.

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Notes

[1] Snowball sampling is a technique for developing a research sample in which

current study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball.

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