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TEACHER'S SENSE OF EFFICACY IN TEACHING ENGLISH AMONG IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS

Zahra Mirsanjari¹, * Alireza Karbalaei² and Shahram Afraz¹

¹*Department of English, Qeshm International Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran*

²*Department of English, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran*

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

The widespread acknowledgement of English as a “global language” has led Iranian English Language Teaching policy makers to the radical changes in its policies and practices concerning English education. The ability to communicate in English is essential if they want to play an active and important role in world political and economic activities in the era of globalization. The present study, by adopting the notion of teacher's sense of efficacy as the theoretical framework, has explored Iranian guidance school teacher's confidence in teaching English. The study has also examined teacher's attitudes toward the English language and the current Iranian guidance English education policy and practices, respectively. For this purpose, 40 guidance school teachers responded to the survey designed for the present study. The teachers in the present study rated their self-efficacy in teaching English at the moderate level. They rated their efficacy or confidence higher for Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management, and Student's Engagement than Oral English Language Proficiency. Their low confidence in carrying out teaching tasks related to the use of English in an English class indicates there is a need to support teachers in order to enhance their efficacy in this area more than the other areas. Several important theoretical and practical implications for teacher development and policy-making in the Iranian guidance school English education context have emerged from the present study.

Key Words: *Attitude, Teacher's Efficacy, Confidence, Guidance School*

INTRODUCTION

According to Henson (2002), researchers in education have documented that teacher's sense of efficacy has strong impacts on various aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, studies have shown that it is related to students in terms of their achievement, motivation and sense of efficacy, and to teachers in terms of their enthusiasm for teaching, job satisfaction and persistence against difficulties (Milner and Hoy, 2003).

According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), teacher's sense of efficacy, also referred as “teacher efficacy,” “teacher's self-efficacy,” or “teacher's self-efficacy beliefs,” is defined as “the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p.223). Thus, teacher's sense of efficacy can be understood as self-perceived beliefs about their ability to successfully carry out their teaching tasks in their specific teaching contexts.

On the other hand, the widespread acknowledgement of English as a “global language” (Crystal, 1997) has led Iran to the radical changes in its policies and practices concerning English education. Because of the importance of learning English, people have come to this conclusion that they should develop the ability to communicate in English if they want to play an active and important role in world political and economic activities in the era of globalization.

As a result of such sociopolitical atmosphere, despite strong debates on its appropriateness and effect, English was introduced into Iranian schools. This decision was made based on the belief that longer exposure to English would improve student's communicative ability (Park, 2003). From guidance teacher's point of view, however, this change meant that many of them had to teach a new subject, English. However, even from the very beginning of English teaching at the guidance school, teacher

Research Article

preparation or development in teaching English can be regarded as one of the main concerns (Jung and Norton, 2002). To be fair, in order to address this problem, the government has provided in-service training programs on English teaching in Teaching Training Centers (TTC) in Iran. However, it seems that even after 40 years of English teaching in the guidance school, concerns surrounding teacher qualifications in English teaching are still very strong, particularly those related to teacher's lack of English language proficiency.

In this context, the teacher's lack of English proficiency has been associated with their lack of confidence in teaching English and thus, ineffective teaching (e.g., Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003). For example, Nunan (2003) stated, "a major problem is that many English teachers simply do not have the proficiency, and therefore the confidence, to teach in English" (p.601). In reaching this conclusion, he neither inquired into teacher's confidence in teaching English in their context nor cited a study examining teacher confidence and/or its relationship with language proficiency. Yet, based on this largely unexamined relationship, he went on to make suggestions that guidance school teachers have to improve language proficiency, and policymakers should provide strong support for the end. Without carefully exploring the relationship, however, it would be premature to accept the assumed causal relationship and to frame the educational policies and practices concerning teacher education within it.

In fact, Chacón (2005) and Shim (2001) showed inconsistent findings in terms of how English teacher's sense of efficacy is related to their language proficiency. While Chacón (ibid) found that the Venezuelan middle school English teacher's sense of efficacy was positively related to their perceived language proficiency, Shim (2001) found the Korean middle and high school English teacher's sense of efficacy was not significantly related to their perceived language proficiency. These inconsistent findings suggest a need for further research on the relationship between the two, instead of simply assuming a causal relationship as in the previous studies in TESOL (e.g., Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003), as well as a need for investigating teacher's confidence about their capability in teaching English, that is their sense of efficacy in teaching English. In addition, a literature review found no studies that have examined teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching English at the guidance school level. The present study aims to address these needs by examining Iranian guidance school teacher's sense of efficacy or confidence in teaching English and its relationship with their perceived English language proficiency.

In addition, there may be other factors influencing teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching English, as Shim (2003) pointed out. One of the possible factors can be found in the recent work on pre- and in-service nonnative English speaking English teacher's perceptions about the English language and themselves as English speakers (Samimy, 2000).

Although the teacher's confidence itself was not the main focus, these studies have indicated pre- and in-service teacher's perceptions about the English language and themselves as English speakers are significantly related to their confidence as English teachers. For example, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), in a graduate seminar, provided alternative discourses (i.e., English as an International Language (EIL), World Englishes (WE), and Cook's (1999) multicompetence model) to help the students (re)construct a more positive self-image as English users and teachers. By doing so, they observed a change in the student's self-perceptions from less competent and illegitimate English speakers/teachers to more competent and legitimate speakers/teachers.

These findings suggest a significant implication for Iranian teachers of English in the Iranian EFL context. Namely, teachers with the same levels of pedagogical and subject matter knowledge may differ in terms of their beliefs about their capabilities to teach English, depending on their attitudes toward the English language. In other words, provided that other factors are the same, two teachers with different attitudes may present different degrees of sense of efficacy in teaching English. One with an attitude close to the Native Speaker (NS) model may have a lower sense of efficacy in teaching English, due to his/her self-perception as an illegitimate and deficient nonnative English speaker, while one with an attitude close to the non-native perspectives may feel a higher sense of efficacy, due to his/her self-perception as a legitimate non-native speaker.

Research Article

However, this possible relationship has not been empirically examined in the previous studies in TESOL. Thus, the present study explores Iranian guidance school teacher's attitudes toward the English language and the relationship with their sense of efficacy in teaching English.

Significance of the Study

By investigating Iranian guidance school teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching English in relation to other selected factors, the current study can make several contributions to expanding the current state of knowledge in the TESOL field. First, the study addresses the need to inquire into teacher's beliefs or confidence in their capability for teaching English by adopting the notion of teacher efficacy.

Although many educational researchers have documented the powerful impacts of teacher's sense of efficacy on various student and teacher aspects in teaching and learning (Henson, 2002; Tschannen-Moran *et al.*, 1998), only a few studies (Chacón, 2005; Shim, 2003, 2006) have studied it in the TESOL field. In addition, currently, there is no study that looks at guidance school teacher's sense of efficacy in an EFL setting such as Iran. Given the short history of English teaching in Iranian guidance schools and the importance of teacher development in that context, it is highly valuable to investigate the teacher's sense of efficacy level to provide a general picture of the current status of guidance school English education from the teacher's perspective.

Second, the current study examines the relationships between teacher's sense of efficacy and other factors such as their attitudes toward the English language, and their selected educational and professional profiles. While English language proficiency was examined in relation to teacher's sense of efficacy (Chacon, 2002; Shim, 2003), the relationship between teacher's sense of efficacy and their attitudes toward the English language has not been subject to an empirical inquiry. By adding one more factor that has been indicated in the literature to be related to English teacher's confidence, the present study has attempted to provide a more comprehensive picture of Iranian guidance school teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching English in terms of possible factors related to it.

Last, the findings of the study provide useful information for both teacher educators and policymakers in (re)conceptualizing in-service (and pre-service) teacher education programs by suggesting possible links between different factors being examined. The implications of the present study for teacher education and policymaking, however, may not be limited to the Iranian EFL context. Rather, it is my belief that it can be extended to a broader context, such as East Asian countries in general, including Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan. In fact, scholars have noted the similarities among the countries in terms of English education policy and practices (e.g., Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003). In this regard, the current study can provide a meaningful case for the teacher educators and policymakers in this region.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the present study:

1. What are the current levels of the self-efficacy for teaching English among in-service guidance school teachers?
2. What are the teacher's attitudes toward the English language?
3. What are the teacher's attitudes toward the current Iranian guidance school English education policy and practices?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is a view of human functioning which emphasizes human agency (Bandura, 2006) and a dynamic interplay between personal, behavioral, and social factors in human change and adaptation (Bandura, 2004).

According to Pajares (2002), Bandura's social cognitive theory differs from behaviorist theories conceiving human change as the product of environmental or external stimuli. Unlike with behaviorist perspectives, in social cognitive theory, human change cannot be reduced to the result of external stimuli, because human thoughts also have an influence on behaviors through introspection. Similarly, Pajares also points out that Bandura's social cognitive theory differs from the theories overemphasizing the

Research Article

influences of biological factors on human change and adaptation, because they fail to consider social and contextual influences. Thus, social cognitive theory equally emphasizes human agency and environmental influence in conceptualizing human change and adaptation, rejecting a duality between human agency and social structure (Bandura, 1997).

In social cognitive theory, people as active agents “are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them” (Bandura, 2006). According to Bandura (2006), personal agency is socially developed. In other words, a baby is born without any personal agency, but she develops a sense of agency as she interacts with her environment (including other people). Bandura (2006) proposed four core properties of human agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness.

Intentionality is the most central property in human agency, as indicated in Bandura’s (1997) statement that “Agency refers to acts done intentionally” (p. 3).

Forethought, involving “the temporal extension of agency” (Bandura, 2006), enables people to “set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts” (p.164). It is a human being’s symbolizing capacity that enables people to engage in forethought. Self-reactiveness refers to “the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (p.165) during the execution of the action. Self-reflectiveness refers to a “metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions” (p. 165). In relation to self-reflective capacity, Bandura (1997) cautions that the self should not be converted to object in the self-reflecting process, because the self is both agent and object. As he puts it:

Social cognitive theory rejects the dualistic view of the self. Reflecting on one’s own functioning entails shifting the perspective of the same agent rather than converting the self from agent to object or reifying different internal agents or selves that regulate one another. The shift in perspective does not transform the person from an agent to an object, as the dualist view of the self would lead one to believe. In social cognitive theory, the self is not split into object and agent; rather, in self-reflection and self-influence, individuals are simultaneously agent and object (p. 5).

On the other hand, it is important to note that in social cognitive theory, the human agency does not operate autonomously. Instead, it operates through a dynamic interplay among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. This conception is reflected in Bandura’s (1986) triadic reciprocal causation model. In this multi-directional model, as shown in the below figure, personal factors, behavior, and environment reciprocally interact with each other. Here, “human functioning is viewed as the product of a dynamic interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences” (Pajares, 2002).

Self-efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy beliefs are conceived as the most central and pervasive mechanism of human agency in social cognitive theory. In relation to this, Bandura (2006) states:

Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than belief of personal efficacy. This core belief is the foundation of human agency. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act, or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one’s actions. (p. 170)

Defining perceived self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997), Bandura distinguishes self-efficacy from other constructs such as self-concept and self-esteem. First, he states that self-concept refers to “a composite view of oneself that is presumed to be formed through direct experience and evaluations adopted from significant others” (p. 10), thus it is mostly concerned with global self-images.

Unlike self-concept, self-efficacy beliefs vary according to the domain of activities, the levels of difficulty, and the specific context. For example, one who has low efficacy beliefs in swimming may have high efficacy beliefs in soccer, while the global nature of self-concept construct may not do for this domain specificity.

Research Article

Self-efficacy beliefs are also different from the construct of self-esteem, which refers to “whether one likes or dislikes oneself” (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy beliefs are concerned with judgment of personal capability while self-esteem is concerned with judgment of self-worth. Therefore, one’s judgment of his own capacity to perform a certain activity as quite low does not necessarily entail a loss of self-esteem.

For example, one’s judgment about his capability to swim is least likely to impact his self-esteem as an English teacher, unless he invests his self-worth in that activity. Also, self-efficacy beliefs predict “the goals people set for themselves and their performance attainments, whereas self-esteem affects neither personal goals nor performance” (p. 11). In summation, in Bandura’s conception, self-efficacy is specific to a domain, the level of difficulty within the same domain, and the context. These aspects make self-efficacy beliefs different from other global constructs of self-concept and self-esteem.

The importance of self-efficacy beliefs in human functioning is summarized in Bandura’s (1997) statement that “people’s level of motivation, affective states, and actions are more based on what they believe than what is objectively true” (Bandura, 1997).

As Pajares (2002) aptly points out, “how people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have” (p.4). While a mismatch between belief and reality is very common, belief often guides when one engages in a course of action (Pajares, 2002).

Therefore people’s attainments are generally better predicted by their self-efficacy beliefs than by their previous attainments, knowledge or skills (p.5).

In terms of how self-efficacy beliefs influence human functioning, Bandura (2006) contends that they influence “people’s goals and aspirations, how well they motivate themselves, and their perseverance in the face of difficulties and adversity” (p. 171).

Also, self-efficacy beliefs “shape people’s outcome expectations” and determine how opportunities and impediments are viewed” (p.171). For example, a person of high efficacy may be more resilient in the face of adverse situations while a person of low efficacy may easily give up trying.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Methodology

1.1. Participants

The survey questionnaire phase adopted a convenience sampling method in which “a certain group of people was [are] chosen for study because they were [are] available” (Frankel and Wallen, 2003).

This sampling method was chosen for the purpose of having as many guidance school teachers as possible, given that the present study aimed to explore the current state of guidance school English education from the teacher’s perspective and thus provide a foundation for further research.

In order to ensure a large sample, I contacted not only my personal friends in Shiraz (i.e., guidance school teachers and university professors) but also guidance schools and in-service teacher educational institutes in Tehran. The survey invited all of the teachers working in the identified schools and in-service teacher education programs to respond the questionnaire, regardless of their English teaching experience.

1.2. Instruments

1.2.1. Confidence in teaching English

This section was designed to measure the teacher’s sense of efficacy (or confidence) in teaching English. For this, the 12-item version of the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) was modified to fit the English teaching context in Iran.

Also, six items were added in order to include teaching tasks particularly emphasized in the Iranian guidance school English teaching context.

The reliability of the original questionnaire was .87 with all of the 12 items (.82 with the instructional strategies items, .80 with the classroom management items, and .75 with the student engagement items).

Research Article

1.2.2. Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE)

This section was designed to measure the participant's Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) (Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy, 1993). For this, the five item scale for PTE (Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 1993) was used without modification. Participants were asked to rate the five statements on a scale of one to six, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

The inclusion of this non-subject matter specific measure of PTE in the questionnaire was due to the rather conflicting findings of Chacón (2002) and Shim (2001) in terms of the relationship between English teacher's self-reported English language proficiency level and their PTE.

The reliability of the five-item PTE scale was reported as .71 in Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy (1993) and .68 in Shim (2001).

1.2.3. Teacher's Attitudes toward English Language

This part of the questionnaire sought information about the teacher's attitudes toward the English language. It consisted of nine Likert-type items and four non-Likert type ones. For the Likert-type items, the participants were asked to rate the degree of agreement on a six-point scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree). Non-Likert-type items were included in order to gain information that would be valuable but difficult to obtain by a Likert-type scale. I adapted the items from earlier studies (e.g., Matsuda, 2000; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005) on English learner's and teacher's attitudes in the "Expanding Circle" (Kachru, 1992) toward the English language.

1.2.4. Teacher's attitudes toward the current Iranian guidance English education policy and practices

This section was designed to examine the teacher's attitudes toward the current guidance school English education policy and practices. It also included both Likert-type and non-Likert-type items, eight and two items, respectively. I developed the items based on the literature on Iranian guidance school teacher's perceptions about guidance school English education. Like the above items, for the eight Likert-type scale items, the participants were asked to rate each statement on a scale of one to six, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research question 1

"What are the current levels of the self-efficacy for teaching English among in-service guidance school teachers?"

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of the items. The mean scores indicated that the teachers did not rate their confidence high. Rather, the mean scores on 15 out of the 18 items ranged from 5.10 (Items 8) to 5.65 (Items 10), indicating that their self-efficacy in teaching English was at a moderate level. It was also found that the mean scores of four items (Items 2, 5, 6 and 18) were below the moderate level ($M = 5.00$). This indicated that the teachers were less confident concerning the tasks related to English use (e.g., using classroom English, teaching English using English only) than others (e.g., controlling disruptive classroom behaviors, helping students to value learning English).

The mean score of each component was calculated in order to examine the teacher's level of self-efficacy in teaching English. Cronbach's reliability coefficients of the scales were: 0.78 (Instructional Strategies), 0.73 (Classroom Management), 0.84 (Student Engagement), and 0.79 (Oral English Language Use). In order to calculate the mean score of each component, component scores were first calculated by summing up the scores of the items that loaded on the component and then dividing the summed score by the number of the items.

The teachers rated their self-efficacy in teaching English at the moderate level in the dimensions of Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management, and Student Engagement (Table 2). In other words, they believed that they could have some influence in the three dimensions. The teachers responded that they felt more confident in classroom management ($M = 5.86$; $SD: 1.10$) than in any of the other dimensions.

Research Article

In the meantime, it was found that the teachers felt least confident in their oral English language use ($M = 4.71$).

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the IGSTSETE Items

Items	Mean	SD
1. How well can you control disruptive behavior in your English class?	5.22	1.28
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in learning English?	4.98	1.20
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in English?	5.35	1.30
4. How well can you help your students value learning English?	5.64	1.54
5. To what extent can you use classroom English without great difficulty?	4.62	1.31
6. To what extent can you craft good questions for eliciting responses from your students in English class?	4.20	1.32
7. How well can you get students to follow classroom rules in your English class?	5.62	1.28
8. To what extent can you effectively teach oral language skills (listening and speaking) to the students?	5.10	1.28
9. To what extent can you effectively teach written language skills (reading and writing) to the students?	5.23	1.31
10. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy in your English class?	5.65	1.37
11. How well can you establish a classroom management system with your students in English class?	5.36	1.29
12. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies in your English class?	5.14	1.32
13. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example in English class when students are confused?	5.11	1.41
14. How well can you assist parents to help their children learn English?	5.02	1.42
15. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your English class?	5.24	1.30
16. How well can you help the students understand foreign countries' culture(s) related to their English learning?	5.38	1.49
17. To what extent can you help the students achieve the English learning objectives?	5.50	1.26
18. How well can you teach English using English only?	3.85	1.70

Note: 1 = Nothing/not at all, 3 = Very little, 5 = some influence, 7 = Quite a bit, and 9 = A great deal

Table 2: Means and standard deviation of teacher efficacy in teaching English

Variable	Mean	SD
Instructional Strategies	5.14	1.10
Classroom Management	5.86	1.22
Student Engagement	5.43	1.13
Oral English Language Use	4.71	1.27

Note: 1 = Nothing/not at all, 3 = Very little, 5 = some influence, 7 = Quite a bit, and 9 = A great deal

In examining the teacher's self-reported efficacy or confidence levels in teaching English, note that the present study did not report the overall teacher efficacy level by aggregating the four factors. The researcher believed that each dimension had its unique domain, while not convinced of the absolute value

Research Article

of the overall score in explaining the teacher's sense of efficacy in English teaching in general. The present study, found a new dimension, Oral English Language Use, which marked the lowest mean score, indicating it was the teacher's least area of least confidence. This made the researcher hesitate to mingle its score with the other dimensions that demonstrated stability across the studies conducted in different cultures as discussed earlier.

In relation to the teacher efficacy levels among the teachers in the present study, it is important to note that the teacher's self-reported English teaching efficacy or confidence levels in the present study were found to be lower than those in the previous studies adopting the TSES. For example, in the only study that adopted the TSES to examine teacher's English teaching-specific self-efficacy beliefs in the EFL context, Chacón (2002, 2005) reported that her Venezuelan middle school English teachers rated their capabilities to carry out teaching tasks with their confidence at the "quite a bit" level ($M = 6.59$ on student engagement; $M = 6.89$ on classroom management; $M = 7.13$ on instructional strategies). Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007), taking a non-subject specific approach, have documented similar degrees of self-efficacy beliefs reported by U.S. teachers. Although one should be cautious in making direct comparisons of the scores reported in different cultures due to the possibility that survey responses may reflect cultural biases, such a comparison can provide useful information in examining where the teacher efficacy levels reported by teachers in the present study are located in relation to other teachers. The comparison with other studies in terms of the degree of teacher efficacy beliefs indicates that the teachers in the present study feel less confident in carrying out the teaching tasks than the teachers in other studies. Irrespective of the absolute value of the degrees of teacher efficacy reported in other studies, the gap found in the degrees of the teacher's sense of efficacy here seems to indicate there is a need to enhance the teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching English given the powerful impact of the teacher's efficacy beliefs on various aspects of teaching and learning (Tschannen- Moran *et al.*, 1998; Woolfolk Hoy *et al.*, 2006).

2. Research question 2

"What are the teacher's attitudes toward the English language?"

Overall, based on the mean scores (Table 3), the teachers demonstrated a tendency to agree with all of the statements, while the strengths of agreement differed considerably depending on the item. There were no items on which the teachers showed rather obvious disagreement. However, the teachers tended to agree more strongly on some items than others. More specifically, Items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 had higher scores than Items 4, 6, 8, and 9.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the items of the attitudes toward English scale

Statements	Mean	SD
1. In Iran, knowing English is more useful than knowing any other foreign language.	5.01	1.12
2. English is an international lingua franca.	5.24	.92
3. I want to pronounce English like an American.	4.77	1.20
4. The English spoken by Indian or Philippine people is not authentic English.	3.65	1.10
5. Its okay not to speak like an American, because English is an international language.	4.40	1.14
6. American English is the best model for Iranian learners of English.	3.42	1.23
7. A command of English is important in understanding people from other countries and their cultures.	4.48	1.05
8. I don't feel embarrassed with my Iranian accent when I speak English.	3.82	1.14
9. It seems that English spoken by Asian countries is different from that spoken by Americans.	4.23	1.06

Research Article

According to the survey results, the majority of participants perceived that English was an international *lingua franca* and knowing English was more important than knowing other foreign languages in Iranian society. In the same vein, respondents were generally affirmative of English being important in understanding people from other countries and their cultures. Interview data corroborated the survey results. All of the interviewee teachers considered English the default language to learn in Iranian society. They mentioned that today's world is globalized and English is the medium language of international communications. They believed Iranians would need the language in order to succeed in today's world politics and economics.

Interview results provided useful insights into these seemingly conflicting attitudes among the teachers about the English language. While a majority of the interviewees believed American English was the best model for Iranian learners of English, a few thought it was not necessarily so. However, in the case of the teachers who did not perceive American as the best model, they proposed British English as the only alternative to American English. This finding was in accordance with Kim's (2002) study in which teachers that were uncomfortable with the idea of American English as the best model also provided British English as the only alternative. The fact that British English was the only other type proposed by the teachers suggests that those who disagree with the idea of American English as the best model for learning may have an NS view, not an EIL view of the English language.

To summarize, the survey and interview data showed that the NS view concerning the English language was dominant among the teachers. This was in accordance with previous studies on attitudes toward English language in Expanding Circle countries (e.g., Matsuda, 2003; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005). One valuable insight from the interview results was that there was a discrepancy between the attitudes toward English language as an English user and as an English teacher. This discrepancy is suggested as the possible reason for the seemingly conflicting responses to some of the Likert scale items, indicating the teacher's attitudes toward English being complex, not monolithic. In fact, No (2006) also found that a large percentage of her participants (Guidance school teachers) perceived that their students should learn American/British English while nearly one half of them also believed Iranian learners of English should not have to be obsessed about learning specifically American/British English.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Items of the Attitudes toward English Scale

Statements	Mean	SD
1. It was a correct decision to start English education in guidance school.	4.11	1.18
2. Oral language skills are more important than literacy skills in English education in the guidance school.	4.54	1.14
3. Oral language skills are more important than grammar in English education in the guidance school.	4.50	1.21
4. Guidance school students learn English best when English class is entirely conducted in English.	3.08	1.11
5. The Ministry of Education has done a good job in getting teachers ready for teaching English.	2.34	1.02
6. It's necessary to use Persian as well as English for maximizing student's learning of English in the guidance school English class.	4.43	0.85
7. Developing and keeping students interested in English is particularly important in the guidance school English class.	5.24	.74
8. Building up a foundation of English communicative ability development is the way to go in English education in guidance schools.	4.90	1.16

Research Article

3. Research question 3

“What are the teacher’s attitudes toward the current Iranian guidance school English education policy and practices?”

In order to analyze the eight Likert scale items, descriptive statistics (Table 4) were examined. It was found that the participants were affirmative at the *Somewhat Agree* level about the decision to start English education in guidance school ($M = 4.11$). Despite the mean score falling into the affirmative side of the scale, it needs to be pointed out that a considerable proportion of the teachers demonstrated their disagreement with the decision: nearly one fourth of the respondents chose one of the negative choices. The findings indicated that the English education implementation in the guidance school setting was not equally welcomed by all the teachers.

It was found that the teachers did not perceive that the Iran Ministry of Education did a good job in preparing teachers for teaching English ($M = 2.34$). More than four fifths of the teachers demonstrated their negative opinions about what Ministry of Education did to prepare teachers for English teaching.

In summation, the majority of the respondents perceived that it was a correct decision to introduce English to the guidance schools. However, the fact that more than one fourth of the respondents showed disagreement indicated that not all teachers welcomed the implementation of English education in the guidance schools. It was found that the teachers were affirmative about the goals and premises of guidance English education prescribed by the Ministry of Education. More specifically, they agreed that English education is to be conducted in a way that it could develop/maintain the student’s interest in English and build a foundation of English communicative skills, and oral language skills are more important than other skills (i.e., literacy and grammar skills) in the guidance English classroom.

Concerning the native language (i.e., Persian) use in the English classroom, the teachers agreed that using Persian language is necessary to maximize student’s learning of English ($M = 4.43$), while demonstrating a sense of disagreement with the statement that students learn best in English-only classrooms ($M = 3.08$). This interpretation of the mean scores was supported by the fact that nearly 85% of the respondents provided an affirmative response concerning the necessity of Persian language in the English classrooms. Lastly, it is notable that the teachers perceived that the Ministry of Education did not do a good job in preparing teachers to teach the subject of English ($M = 2.34$).

Conclusion

The present study provides both theoretical and practical implications for teacher development and policy-making in the guidance school English education context. In this section, I discuss the implications based on the findings of the study.

The teachers in the present study rated their self-efficacy in teaching English at the moderate level. They rated their efficacy or confidence higher for Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management, and Student’s Engagement than Oral English Language Proficiency. Their low confidence in carrying out teaching tasks related to the use of English in an English class indicates there is a need to support teachers in order to enhance their efficacy in this area more than the other areas.

However, it should also be noted that the current efficacy or confidence levels for the other three dimensions of English teaching (i.e., Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management, and Student Engagement) were found to be a moderate level. In fact, as discussed earlier, compared to other studies that adopted the same instrument as the present study (i.e., Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy’s, 2001) the self-efficacy scores reported in the current study were considerably lower. This indicates that the teachers in the present study did not feel in general very confident in carrying out tasks related to teaching English to the guidance school students, and there is much room for enhancing their confidence.

According to the social cognitive theory (Pajares, 2002), one’s belief about his/her own ability to perform a certain task is critical because it often better predicts how he/she performs than what he/she can actually accomplish. This point has been confirmed in the education field by teacher efficacy research that has documented the powerful impact of teacher’s sense of efficacy on various aspects of teaching and learning (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2006). Given the importance of teacher’s

Research Article

sense of efficacy, it seems critical to prepare teachers with strong positive beliefs about their capability to teach English at elementary level. Therefore, the moderate or low confidence levels of teachers in the study indicate the need for teacher development programs in order to seek ways to enhance teacher's efficacy levels. In terms of how we can help teachers to enhance their English teaching efficacy levels, it is highly informative that the present study has found teacher's English language proficiency (particularly oral skill domains) and attitudes toward the English language (particularly, EIL view) were significant predictors of efficacy for teaching English. This finding implies that teacher's confidence in English teaching can be enhanced by improving English language proficiency and promoting EIL views among teachers.

Research will need to sample teaching tasks and the kinds of English the teachers need to carry out the tasks in different contexts "to account for substantial variation in learning and teaching practices" (Butler, 2004).

The present study has found that the teacher's participation in the in-service basic and advanced programs was related with neither their English teaching-specific efficacy beliefs nor their English proficiency. This has indicated that the current in-service training programs may have little impact on their confidence in teaching and improving English proficiency. These findings thus provide the implication that there is an urgent need to revisit the current in-service programs offered for the purpose of enhancing the teacher's English ability.

Another related implication is that in-service programs need to provide level appropriate training. In the present study, a few interviewees with low English proficiency had stopped attending the English conversation classes offered for teachers due to discrepancies in English ability between them and others, despite their wish to enhance English ability. They did not want to lose face in front of other teachers who were already "good" at English. Thus, in order to benefit all teachers who have different levels of English proficiency, it would be important to provide different levels of classes (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced). The contents of the levels will need to be carefully designed so they are coherent within the framework of developing the kinds and levels that elementary school teachers need in order to carry out English teaching tasks. In this framework, one who completes a "lower" level can advance to a "higher" level until he/she reaches the English proficiency needed for teachers.

The present study has found that teachers do not perceive students learn best in English-only classrooms. Instead, they believe that a mixed use of Persian and English could maximize student's learning. A majority of the interviewees made it clear they would not conduct an English-only class even if they had the English ability to do so because students, with the exception of a small number of them who were already good at English, could not understand and thus learn little from the class. Although they acknowledged the value of using only English in that it could provide students with opportunities to be exposed to the target language, they put more emphasis on the importance of comprehensible and meaningful input to the students. They believed using Persian could assist in making both the target language input and the learning process more comprehensible and meaningful to the students. They also spelled out how and when using Persian would be particularly useful.

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Research Article

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