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On the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs and Their Teaching Styles

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Abstract

Teachers are one of the most influential elements for the success of any educational system. This study investigates the relationship between two key personality factors of teachers, namely self-efficacy and teaching styles in an Iranian EFL context. For this purpose, 102 EFL teachers were selected according to available sampling from different high schools in Mashhad and Zahedan – large cities in the Northeast of Iran. The research data were collected through the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale and Teaching Styles Inventory. Analysis of the data revealed a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their teaching styles. Also, findings indicated a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their teaching styles. On the one hand, high self-efficacy was joined to some teaching styles (delegator and personal model) and on the other, low self-efficacy was connected with some other teaching styles (expert and formal authority). The results of the present study have implications for teacher education programs.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Teacher self-efficacy, Teaching styles

1. Introduction

In the new educational climate, knowing teachers and their characteristics has become dominant and necessary for better teacher education and pedagogical success. Research on foreign-language teacher preparation and development has grown toward complexity and sophistication during the last two decades. Knowing teachers' personal and psychological factors is one of the complex areas of teacher preparation and development research.

Saha and Dworkin (2009) consider teachers and their activities for learning processes as the central element at all levels of educational system. Nowadays, teachers are not looked upon as passive figures and only performers of prescribed methods, but are considered as active and decision-makers with different personal characteristics and psychological factors. Most scholars, such as Coburn (2003), Rosenholtz (1991), Runhaur (2008), Spillane et al. (2002), and Veen et al. (2005, cited in Thoonen et al., 2011) believe that teachers' personal and psychological factors are the key elements affecting their teaching and learning.

Sense of self-efficacy and teaching styles are among those personality factors which have crucial impact on teachers' orientation toward the educational process. Each of these factors has been the subject of much research and investigation in education. Bandura's self-efficacy (1997) and Grash's teaching styles (1996) make the theoretical framework of the present study. In what follows, each of these teacher's personality variables will be briefly reviewed.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a part of social cognitive theory conceptualized by Albert Bandura in 1977. Bandura (1997, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." He said that these beliefs influence how much effort individuals put forth; how long they will persist in the face of obstacles; how resistant they are in dealing with failures; and how much stress and depression they experience in coping with demanding situations. Bandura (1997) proposed that because self-efficacy beliefs are explicitly self-referent in nature and directed toward perceived abilities for the given tasks, they are powerful predictors of human behavior.

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, P. 233). The idea that teachers' self-beliefs are determinants of teaching behavior is a powerful idea which is also related to students' own sense of efficacy (Anderson, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2005). When people believe they can bring about the desired outcomes by their actions, they are likely to be more motivated to apply effort and persevere when confronted with obstacles (Bandura, 1995).

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), the four main sources of teacher efficacy are: mastery experiences (direct teaching experiences that are challenging but highly successful); vicarious experiences (watching peers of similar ability levels teach challenging ideas with high success); physiological and emotional states (feelings of success and confidence); and

social and verbal persuasion (receiving positive feedback from students, peers and superiors). Of these four sources of efficacy, mastery experiences are considered to have the most powerful influence on teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Successes raise the expectation that a task can and will be mastered (Schunk, 1996; Britner & Pajares, 2001) and failures lower expectations. Increasing confidence is the result of mastery experiences combined with classroom events that demonstrate the impact of the instructional strategies used.

Teachers' confidence in their ability to perform the actions that lead to student learning i.e. teachers' self-efficacy is one of the few individual characteristics that reliably predicts teacher practice and student outcomes (Ross, 1994; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). A plethora of studies have related teachers' sense of efficacy to student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992), motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), and sense of efficacy (Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988). Teachers' sense of efficacy has also been related to teacher behavior in the classroom including teaching styles (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1988; Milner, 2002), their ideology about the control of pupils (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990), enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994; Ashton, 1984), level of stress experienced in teaching (Smylie, 1988), burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000), quality of teaching (Raudenbush, Bhumirat, & Kamali, 1992), commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), school context (Goddard & Goddard, 2001), and commitment to the profession (Burley, Hall, Villeme, & Brockmeier, 1991; Milner, 2002). Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy were less critical of students when they made errors (Ashton & Webb, 1986), and more willing to support and cope with students' emotional and behavioral difficulties (Poulou & Norwich, 2002). In addition, pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy has been related to their personal theories (Harrison, Moore, & Ryan 1996) and teaching practice (Clement, 1999; Kushner, 1993; Poulou & Spinthourakis, 2002; Smith, 2000).

There has been some research on the influence of teachers' efficacy beliefs on general classroom teaching practices and teaching styles. For example, teacher self-efficacy has been found to be associated with the quality of instruction, use of innovative teaching methods and teaching styles (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy were found to use more effective instructional strategies and teaching styles, manage classroom behavior more effectively, exert more effort in organizing and planning, set higher goals for instruction, and engage students to a greater extent in learning compared to teachers with low self-efficacy (ibid).

2.2 Teaching Styles

The notion of style refers to an individual's preferred way of using his/her abilities and in this way differs from ability (Fan & Ye, 2007). Style is a very important factor in trying to account for the marked individual differences in performance shown by people as they think, learn, teach or carry out various tasks (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997; cited in Fan & Ye, 2007). Teaching styles refer to a teacher's preferred way of solving problems, carrying out tasks, and making decisions in the process of teaching (Fan & Ye, 2007). It is evident that all teachers have individual attributes relating to their teaching processes and they teach

differently because of their psychological differences (Kabadayi, 2007).

Grasha (1996) considers teaching style as those enduring personal qualities and behaviors that determine how teachers conduct their classes. To this end, he outlined different teaching styles that represent teacher orientations or beliefs about teaching.

Researchers in the field of English language literature have suggested different classifications for teaching styles. For example, Stensurd and Stensurd (1983) introduced visual, auditory and kinaesthetic teaching styles. Henson and Borthwick (1984) proposed a six-approach model of teaching styles: task-oriented, cooperative-planner, child-centered, participant-centered, learning-centered and emotionally exciting. Grasha's classification of teaching styles was used in the present study since the validity of Grasha's typology of teaching styles has been supported in many studies (e.g. Dincol et al., 2011; LaBillois & Lagace-Seguin, 2009).

Grasha (1996) identified five main teaching styles that are linked to different outcomes in learners. He classified teaching styles based on the teacher's role in the classroom as the Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator and Delegator. He asserted that these styles are not isolated qualities that affect only a few teachers. But they are prevalent aspects of teachers' presence in their classrooms and provide us with ways to understand the nature of teacher-students encounters. Each teaching style category will be briefly defined based on Grasha (1996).

The first category in this framework is expert. The expert teacher possesses knowledge and expertise that the students need. This teacher is concerned that students receive the correct information and are well prepared in the discipline. An expert gains respect from the students by being very knowledgeable in the field at hand. The disadvantage of the expert model is that the display of knowledge the teacher exhibits can be intimidating to many students.

The second category is formal authority. The formal authority teacher possesses status among students because of knowledge and role as a school member. He/she is concerned with providing positive and negative feedback, establishing learning goals, expectations, and rules for students. The teacher with this style emphasizes the correct, acceptable and standard ways of doing things. He/she provides students with the structures they need to learn. The disadvantage of this style is that it can lead to rigid and less flexible ways of managing students and their concerns.

Personal model is the third category in this model. The personal model teacher believes in teaching by personal example and encourages students to observe and emulate the teacher's approach. In this model emphasis is placed on observation and following the teacher as a role model. Teachers who utilize this approach tend to feel that their approach is the most effective as a means for instruction. A strong investment on this style may lead to feeling of inadequacy if the students cannot live up to such expectations and standards.

The facilitator style is the fourth which is characterized by a focus on the personal nature of the student-teacher interaction. The teacher guides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encourages them to develop criteria to make

informed choices. The overall aim of the teacher is to develop in students the capacity for independent action, initiative, and responsibility. The teacher works with students on projects in a consultative fashion and tries to provide as much support as possible. This teaching style is often time consuming and can make students uncomfortable if it is not employed in a positive and affirming manner.

The last category is delegator in which the teacher is concerned with empowering students to function in an autonomous fashion. The teacher is available at the request of students as a resource person. Students are expected to work independently on projects or as part of autonomous teams. The disadvantage of this style is that it may contribute to students' anxiety as the students may be given too much autonomy before being ready.

Such classifications, however, do not mean that teachers can be classified neatly to one of above-mentioned categories. Grasha (1996) emphasizes that almost every teacher possesses each of the five teaching styles to varying degrees. In effect, each individual style is like a different color on an artist's palette. Like those colors, they can be blended together. This implies that rather than talking about individual teaching styles we may talk about clusters of teaching styles. Grasha (1996) reported that the following clusters were dominant in the 761 classrooms which he examined. Cluster 1: Expert/Formal Authority (38%); Cluster 2: Personal Model/Expert/Formal Authority (22%); Cluster 3: Facilitator/Personal Model/Expert (17%); Cluster 4: Delegator/Facilitator/Expert (15%). Each cluster of teaching style helps to create the mood of a class (Grasha, 1996). When used in a very traditional manner, the styles of cluster 1 send a message to students that I'm in charge here and tend to create a cool emotional climate. In contrast, an emphasis on the Delegator/ Facilitator/ Expert blend of cluster 4 creates a different picture. It sends a message to students that I'm here to consult with you and to act as a recourse person. A warmer emotional climate is created and students and teachers work together, share information, and the boundaries between teacher and student are not as formal.

Great numbers of researchers have found that teachers should fit their teaching styles to students' learning styles in order to achieve learning goals and the level of learning style-teaching style congruency is highly related to academic performance (Dunn & Dunn, 1975; Cooper & Miller, 1991; Felder & Henriques, 1995; Vaughn & Baker, 2008; Amir & Jelas, 2010; Naimie et al., 2010).

Teachers' teaching styles have been found to be associated with teachers' personality (Cooper, 2001), their content knowledge (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), their behaviour in the class (Zhang, 2007), how they manage their classes (Yilmaz & Çavaş, 2008), the context of teaching (Rahimi & Nabilou, 2010), self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) and locus of control (Kennedy, 1991).

Akbari et al. (2008) investigated three teacher-related variables, i.e. teaching styles, teachers' sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity to see how they relate to students' achievement gains in ELT. The results revealed that the three variables can significantly predict students' achievement outcomes. According to Thoonen, Sleegers, Oort, Peetsma and Geijsel (2011), there is some research evidence that psychological factors such as teachers' self-efficacy,

motivation and autonomy affect teachers' learning and improve their teaching styles. Since teachers' self-efficacy and teaching styles seem to be related concepts and have pervasive effects on each other, they were chosen as variables worth investigating in an EFL context.

3. The Rationale and Purpose of the Study

There is nowadays a rich body of research which shows that teachers have the most crucial effect on students' achievement and success (see e.g. Saha & Dworkin, 2009; Akbari et al., 2008). Since teachers play a main role in pedagogical success, there is an urgent need to know them and their personality factors. Most of the research regarding teacher efficacy has been conducted in the US and other western nations and the theory has been criticized for its western bias (Gorrell & Hwang, 1995; Lin & Gorrell, 2001; Rich et al., 1996).To the best of researchers' knowledge, no similar research has ever been conducted in an EFL context to look for the relations between teachers' self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles. So lack of research in this area provides sufficient reason to conduct this investigation. To partially fill this gap, the present study has two research objectives. The first objective is to investigate the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles. The second aim is to examine the differences in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their dominant teaching styles. Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were proposed:

1) Is there any significant relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles?

2) Is there any significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their dominant teaching styles?

4. Method

4.1 Participants and Procedure

The participants of the study were 102 (62 females and 40 males) high school teachers in Mashhad and Zahedan – cities in the Northeast of Iran. Based on practicality and feasibility, the participants were selected from EFL in-service classes which are held by Ministry of Education for teachers in the intended cities. Teachers held either B.A. (n=93) or M.A. (n=9) degrees with teaching experiences ranging from 7 to 11 years. Besides, teachers ranged in age from 29 to 35 years and they came from different socio-economic backgrounds. Permission of authorities was obtained to distribute Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) and Teaching Styles Inventory (Grasha, 1996) among teachers. The purpose of the study was explained to them. The researchers assured them that the collected information will be kept confidential and will be used just for research purposes. Besides, all the questionnaires were coded numerically and the participants weren't asked to write their names on the questionnaires. Teachers took the questionnaires home, filled them in, and then returned them the following session.

4.2 Data Collection

In the present study two instruments as the followings were used for gathering the data.

4.2.1 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale was utilized. It was designed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and has the advantage of comprehensiveness, integrity, and ease of administration. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, also called the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES), encompasses two versions: long form (including 24 items) and short form (including 12 items). The long form – which was utilized in the present study – comprises three subscales: efficacy in student engagement; efficacy in instructional strategies; and efficacy in classroom management. Each subscale loads equally on eight items, and every item is measured on a 9-point scale from 1(nothing) to 9 (a great deal). The scale authors reported the split-half reliability for the long form as $\alpha = .94$. This scale has repeatedly shown excellent internal consistency reliability with pre- and in-service teaching populations, cross-culturally (see for example Charalambous et al., 2008; Klassen et al., 2009).

4.2.2 Teaching Styles Inventory

A 40-item what named Grasha's Teaching Styles Inventory (1996),version 3.0, was used in this study. It categorizes responses into five teaching style categories: Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator. Teachers were asked to complete the scale about themselves and their teaching preferences. Each item is scored using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Mean score ranges for each of the sets of items related to the individual teaching styles were then calculated, and the mean scores will be categorized as either low, moderate, or high (based on standards developed by Grasha,1996) where high corresponds to a preferred teaching style. Regarding this instrument, Grasha (1996) reports acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.68$-0.75 on individual scales, and $\alpha = 0.72$ for the entire test) and validity.

4.3 Data Analysis

Contrary to the researchers' expectations, Pearson correlations could not be run to determine any possible relationship between self-efficacy and teaching styles. Pearson correlations are based on the assumption that both variables of the hypothesis are continuous scores (Brown, 2005), whereas teaching styles here were nominal data. Hence, a one-way ANOVA was run to get a more comprehensive view of the relationship between self-efficacy and teaching styles (see e.g. Akbari, Mirhassani & Bahri, 2005).Then the *post hoc* Scheffe's test was utilized to find the place of differences in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their teaching styles. Meanwhile, all the statistical analyses were performed in the environment of the SPSS software version 18.0 and the *alpha level* (level of the study) was set at 0.05.

5. Results

A one-way ANOVA was run to determine the possible relationship between self-efficacy and teaching styles. Consequently the obtained results are presented in the Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. One-way ANOVA for Self-efficacy and Teaching Styles

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	42.297	4	10.574	13.037	.000
Within Groups	78.677	97	0.811		
Total	120.974	101			

As the level of significance is less than 0.05 level of the study in the ANOVA table, it can be concluded that a teacher's self-efficacy has significant influence on having different teaching styles (see Table 5.1). As a consequence, teachers' sense of self-efficacy is significantly related to their dominant teaching styles.

At this phase, the *post hoc* Scheffe's test was utilized to find the place of differences in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their teaching styles (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Scheffe's Test for the Differences in Self-efficacy for Each Teaching Style

(I)Teaching Style	(J) Teaching Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Expert	Formal Authority	-0.250	.263	.924	-1.078	0.578
	Personal Model	-0.657*	.286	.000	-1.556	0.241
	Facilitator	-1.319	.424	.054	-2.652	0.013
	Delegator	-1.731*	.283	.000	-2.621	-0.841
Formal Authority	Expert	0.250	.263	.924	-0.578	1.078
	Personal Model	-0.407	.247	.610	-1.186	0.370
	Facilitator	-1.069	.399	.137	-2.324	0.185
	Delegator	-1.481*	.244	.000	-2.249	-0.713
Personal Model	Expert	0.657*	.286	.000	-0.241	1.556
	Formal Authority	0.407	.247	.610	-0.370	1.186
	Facilitator	-0.661	.414	.638	-1.964	0.641
	Delegator	-1.073*	.268	.005	-1.916	-0.230
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

Table 5.3. Scheffe's Test for the Differences in Self-efficacy for Each Teaching Style (continued)

(I)Teaching Style	(J) Teaching Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Facilitator	Expert	1.319	.424	.054	-0.013	2.652
	Formal Authority	1.069	.399	.137	-0.185	2.324
	Personal Model	0.661	.414	.638	-0.641	1.964
	Delegator	-0.411	.412	.910	-1.708	0.884
Delegator	Expert	1.731*	.283	.000	0.841	2.621
	Formal Authority	1.481*	.244	.000	0.713	2.249
	Personal Model	1.073*	.268	.005	0.230	1.916
	Facilitator	0.411	.412	.910	-0.884	1.708
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

As it is marked by asterisks in the second column of the above table, there are significant mean differences of self-efficacy among teachers' with different teaching styles except for facilitator style. Based on the results of the Scheffe's test (see Table 5.2), it is concluded that there is a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their teaching styles. Also, it is observed that delegator teachers have the highest amount of self-efficacy and afterwards personal model, formal authority and expert teachers can be placed respectively.

6. Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the possible relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their teaching styles as well as to see whether there is a difference in teachers' self-efficacy with regard to their teaching styles. Analysis of the data revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles. Also, it was observed that the mean differences of self-efficacy for expert, formal authority, personal model and delegator teaching styles were significant. But, there was no significant mean difference of self-efficacy for facilitator style which may be due to the limited number of teachers (n=6) in this category.

Delegator teachers had the highest amount of self-efficacy and afterwards personal model, formal authority and expert teachers were placed respectively. This finding can be explained in the light of the nature of each teaching style and its prerequisite amount of self-efficacy to fulfill it. If Grasha's (1996) typology of teaching styles be looked at carefully, it can be considered as a continuum. One end of the continuum starts with expert then goes to formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and lasts at the other end with delegator style. As we

move along the continuum form expert to delegator style responsibility of the teacher for making students independent and caring about their needs increases. The expert teacher insists on lecture-based style of teaching and is just concerned with transmitting information. While at the other end, the delegator teacher advocates a more humanistic and student-centered style of teaching and concerned with making student independent and autonomous. Consequently, moving from expert teaching style to delegator style at the other end of the continuum entails higher amount of teacher self-efficacy.

Scholars in the field of efficacy have linked high teacher efficacy to many democratic teaching practices, including cooperative learning, autonomy support, and a more humanistic approach to classroom management (see e.g. Akbari et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Allinder (1994; cited in Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998) finds teachers with high personal teaching efficacy are willing to try different teaching approaches and better ways of teaching to meet the needs of students. Akbari et al. (2008) believed that teachers with high sense of self-efficacy are more prone to implement instructional practices and strategies to boost student learning, rather than just covering the curriculum.

However, there are some situations which may be troublesome to get a clear picture of the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their teaching styles. For example, an efficacious teacher (supposed to have a facilitator or delegator style) may have an expert style due to the pressure of some external powers such as educational system or school requirements. Therefore, other variables need to be considered concomitant with teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their teaching styles to gain a more comprehensive view of the relationship between them.

Traditional teacher education programs usually insist on pedagogical and technical skills. While both of these skills are necessary in preparing the teacher for the classroom, they are not sufficient and focusing on teachers' personality factors would be rewarding as well. Therefore, the findings of the present study can contribute greatly to English teacher training programs. Also, the results can be informative regarding what kinds of teaching styles are most common in high schools and how better to prepare pre-service teachers to exceed the current practice. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study may be useful for different individuals such as language policy makers, material developers (especially those who write English teacher training materials), school administrators, teacher educators, English language teachers, and students.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study suffers some limitations which need to be removed in future studies. First, the participants were selected according to available sampling. The study should be replicated using procedures that allow a higher degree of randomization and ultimately more generalizability. The second limitation of this study is that the teachers' self-efficacy and teaching styles were assessed via questionnaires. Using qualitative approaches such as interviews, case studies, and observations to investigate these personality factors would allow researchers to understand not only the potential relationships between the variables of the

current study, but also the processes by which these constructs develop in the classroom context. Third, the findings of this study are limited by the measure of teacher self-efficacy. This measure only assessed individual teachers' self-efficacy. However, collective self-efficacy is another type of teachers' self-efficacy which represents the judgment of teachers in the school as a whole about their abilities "to organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, some future studies should examine any possible relationship between teachers' collective efficacy and their dominant teaching styles.

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