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Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Professional Self-Concept: English Teaching Efficacy, Self Reported English Proficiency and Pedagogical strategies: A Case Study in Turkish Context

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Abstract

This study touches upon one of the prominent problems in foreign language teacher education in Turkey: professional self-concept. Among the obstacles in growing competent language teachers and maintaining their quality are their self-perceptions regarding the efficacy of their teaching and their proficiency levels. Besides external factors like educational conditions, pre/in-service training, workplace facilities, teachers self- perceptions regarding their teaching efficacy and ability must be considered to improve teacher competencies. Teachers' beliefs in their efficacy are shown to have a role in their personal growth and professional success. To delve into Turkey millieu in depth, following Eslami (2008), the present study examines pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy regarding their personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and of their English language proficiency levels in Turkish context. For data collection, a modified version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was used to assess perceived efficacy for classroom management, and instructional strategies. In addition, self-reported proficiency and pedagogical strategies scales used by Chacón (2005) were also used. The present study pinpoints that pre-service language teachers should be encouraged and informed through awareness-raising procedures to improve their self-concept, which will in turn enhance their personal and professional growth.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy; Language Proficiency; Teacher Education

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1. Introduction

"Possunt quia posse videntur"
"Those who are able, are seen to be able" (literally)
"They can because they think they can"
          (Virgil, a Roman poet; author of the epic poem `Aeneid' from 70-19 BC)

Self concept is a new concept. However, we are all familiar with it as apparent in Virgil's words. Self-Concept is a general term that simply refers to a collection of an individual's beliefs about himself that includes how he views, evaluates or perceives himself regarding his attributes and who/what the self is" (Baumeister, 1999). Self-concept is also one's reflection formed as a result of the interactions with others and their reactions to him as first coined by Cooley (1902) with the concept of the "looking glass self" which explains that we see ourselves reflected in other people's reactions to us and then form our self-concept based on how we believe other people see us (A Primer on Communication, n.d.). Self concept is the perceived self of an individual with an evaluative judgment based on culture. It is the formation of self through the experiences with the environmental reinforcements and the significant others (Shavelson et al., 1976). In the construction of self concept how the traits of the individual are evaluated by the others designates the value of the individual, either positive or negative.

Skaalvik (1997) in his review of the related literature lists several aspects related to the construction of "self-concept".

Frames of reference. There are several standards or criteria to judge one's own traits and accomplishment. Which trait of the individual is to be validated is determined through social comparison to contruct a viable self concept. often serves as the most potent source of information for self-concept. Frames of reference play a particularly important role in the development of academic self-concept (Marsh, 1986, 1987).

(2) *Causal attributions*. The attributions associated with the individuals failures and successes are important in that they affect how he views himself.

(3) *Reflected appraisals from significant others* are made use of to construct self-concept. The belief of how the others view the individual lead the individual to view himself in the same way

(4) *Mastery experiences* which are self-schemas created from individual's past experiences in a particular domain. (Bong and Skaalvik, 2003 pp. 3-4).

(5) *Psychological centrality*. Rosenberg (1979), in his analysis of selfesteem, claimed that self-esteem is based on self-assessments of qualities that are perceived as important or psychologically central by individuals.

Self concept and self efficacy are used interchangibly, there are conceptual and empirical differences between them. Some researchers think that self concept is the generalized form of self efficacy while the others argue that self efficacy is a par t or a kind of self-concept. In essence, they represent different views of oneself
To Bandura (1977),

> perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of
> action required to produce given attainments. . . Such beliefs influence the course of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize (p. 3).

Self –concept is multi-dimensional and hierarchical in a way that it covers various domain-specific self-concept perceptions (e.g., academic, physical, social) (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Bornholt & Goodnow, 1999a; Byrne, 2002; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2002). Shavelson's hierarchical model (Shavelson et al., 1976) splits self-concept into academic and nonacademic branches. Academic self concept is related to the knowledge of subject matters, academic performance, the like whereas non-academic self-concept relates to social, emotional and physical aspects of self like gender roles and racial identity (Pajares &Schunk, 2001). The distinction between self concept and efficacy applies here as well. Self concept is at con   the other s at task level beliefs. Defining "*academic self-concept" as an individual's perception of self-efficacy in academic subjects* (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; MacMillan, Gresham & Bocian, 1998; Snow et al., 1996), Eccles (2005) highlights seven primary features of self-concept: organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative and differentiable.

Academic self-concept has an important aspect of success in personal development as well as in professional life. Learners having different self concepts were shown to demonstrate different levels of achievements at school

(Bandura, 1997; Bong &Skaalvik, 2003). Language teachers' self concept perceptions of their linguistic, educational and managerial traits will probably create a similar change or difference in their professional teaching lives. Taking self-efficacy perceptions, perceived proficiency levels, pedagogical strategies of language teachers as the components of academic self-concept, this study scrutinizes how pre-service teachers in a Turkish setting view and evaluate themselves in terms of their teaching efficacy, language proficiency levels and pedagogical strategies they adopt.

1.1. The Aim of the Study

This study aims to delve into the academic self-concept perceptions of English language teachers that are thought to be composed of their self-efficacy levels, self-reported language proficiency and pedagogical strategies to be used in their professional lives in Turkey setting. Self-efficacy was tested for management, engagement, and instructional strategies in their professional lives.

The study specifically aims to answer the following questions:
1. What are the beliefs of pre-service English language teachers about their
   - teaching efficacy levels
   - self-reported proficiency levels
   - pedagogical strategies ?
2. Is there any statistical difference and relation between their levels of self-efficacy and self- reported language proficiency and their beliefs of pedagogical strategies.?

2. Methodology

The present study is a case study that is a holistic, in-depth description and analysis of a phenomenon within its natural educational context and valuable in that it provides detailed information about the individual setting investigated and lends itself to a comparison with other case studies in an elaborated way.

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were the students of English Language Teaching Department of a state university in Ankara, Turkey. One hundred and twenty nine male and female sophomores participated in the study although questionnaires were delivered to 153 individuals (males (23) and females (130)) whose ages ranged from 18 to23.

2.2. Procedure: Data Collection, Instruments, and Coding

So as to allow a comparison with the other existing cases, following Eslami (2008), the present study examines pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy regarding their personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and of their English language proficiency levels in Turkish context. For data collection, a modified version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was used to assess perceived efficacy for classroom management, and instructional strategies. In addition, self-reported proficiency and pedagogical strategies scales used by Chacón (2005) were also used.

The participants completed a questionnaire with three questionnaires embedded into one instrument containing items for self-efficacy beliefs (12 items), self -reported language proficiency(12 items) and pedagogical strategies (10 items) on a five point Likert scale (very much (5)- not at all (1)). The first part asked the respondents to rate how effective they feel in motivating students, and making them understand the value of learning and enjoy the class. It also questioned about how they competent they perceive themselves in managing foreign language classes and using appropriate instructional techniques while assessing, explaining and questioning in the classroom.

The second part of the instrument included items asking the respondents' perceptions about possessing acceptable level /near-native-like speaking skills (instructional use of English in the classroom), listening comprehension skills (comprehension of native speech, idioms, authentic language), reading comprehension skills (inferring meaning,

drawing conclusions, making use of contextual cues in the texts), and writing skills (formal writing, business letters, application forms, and essays).

The third part asked the respondents to indicate on a five point scale what possible pedagogical strategies they thought they would use in teaching English in the classroom (the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, memorization activities for vocabulary teaching, translation, group discussions, problem solving activities (speaking and listening activities based on audio tapes- watching films and videos, grammar explanations, the presentation of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom and real life situations) .

Data were collected before the students took a visa exam. All the students were told that were free to choose not to take part in the study if they wished to do so. The statistical analyses of the scores were analysed using SPSS 23.

3. Results

First, for the reliability of the questionnaires, Crohnbach alpha coefficient is calculated and found to be 0,66. Also, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test is run and it is seen that the data has a normal distribution. To see whether there is a significant difference among the means of the three variables of the group, a Paired Samples t-test is used. And a correlation test and "Bivariate Correlation Analysis" is also used for the correlations among the variables.

In terms of the mean scores of the variables, considering the upper level of attainment (means) is (60) for self-efficacy (SEFF.); self reported proficiency (PROF.) levels and (50) for pedogogical strategies (PEDSTR.) Roughly stating, it is possible to say that the participants have high level perceptions (Table 1.)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std Deviation
SEFF	129	19.00	60.00	48.8295	6.96321
PROF	129	33.00	60.00	49.4264	6.65767
PEDSTR	129	25.00	51.00	40.8760	5.46581

Valid N (listwise) SEFF – Self-Efficacy, PROF – Proficiency , PEDSTR- Pedogogical Strategies

When the means of the variables are compared with Paired Samples T-test it is seen that the scores of the variables are statistically different. The difference between the scores of Self-Efficacy and Pedagogical Stategies along with Language Proficiency and Pedagogical Stategies are statistically significant. (P < 0,01) whereas Self-Efficacy and Language Proficiency scores are not (Table 2).

Table 2. Paired Samples Test

Pairs	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.(2 tailed)
SEFF-PROF	-.59690	7.03176	-.964	.337
SEFF-PEDSTR	7.95349	6.94831	13,001	.000
PROF-PEDSTR	8.55039	6.99102	13.891	.000

SEFF – Self-Efficacy, PROF – Proficiency , PEDSTR- Pedagogical Strategies

To answer the second research question, with a "Bivariate Correlation Analysis used to see the correlation among the variables, it is seen that there is a positive correlation among the variables and this is statistically significant (p<0.01) (Table 3).

Table 3 Correlations

	SEFF	PROF	PEDSTR	
SEFF				
P.Cor.	1	.468**	.395**	
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	
PROF				
P. Cor.	.468**	1	.348 **	.
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	
PEDSTR				
P. Cor.	.395**	.348**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
SEFF – Self-Efficacy, PROF – Proficiency , PEDSTR- Pedagogical Strategies

4. Conclusion

As predictors of self-concept, pre-service English teachers' self efficacy perceptions, perceived proficiency levels and perceived use of pedagogical strategies were found high in our study. The differences between the variables were statistically significant ($p<0.01$). Regarding the correlation between the constructs of self concept, all the aspects were correlated ($p<0.01$). Specifically stating, it was found that pre-service language teachers had high level strength in their belief in their teaching ability, classroom management skills and instructional materials that compose their self efficacy perceptions. They perceived their language proficiency high. They also viewed themselves as being competent in making use of appropriate pedagogical strategies in language classrooms. This means that their professional self concept as the totality of their beliefs in academic tasks was found to be high and positive. These results showed that they have power to face the challenges and the adversities in their profession as they perceived themselves to do well in the future and can achieve the requirements and tasks of teaching profession.

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