



THAI PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

Teacher's qualification has raised concerns about the students' performance in English learning in Thailand. This study investigated Thai primary school English language teachers' self-efficacy, which is the belief about their ability to achieve desired goals. Questionnaires were randomly sent to 800 public primary schools under the Nakhonratchasima Primary Education Service Area Office. One English teacher from each school was asked to complete the questionnaire. The total number of 196 questionnaires was returned for analysis. The followed-up semi-structured interviews were conducted. The statistics used in the data analysis included descriptive analysis, analysis for means, correlational analysis, and comparative analysis. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze the general characteristics of the respondent concerning their field of study and years of teaching. The results showed variations in the levels of self-efficacy. The respondents reported their self-efficacy at the mean score of 3.40 ($SD=0.54$), which was at the moderate level. Significant differences occurred between the self-efficacy of English and non-English major teachers. A moderate level of self-efficacy was also perceived by all respondents in the Non-English major group (mean=3.21, $SD=0.49$). However, in the English major, only the Novice group viewed their efficacy at the moderate level (mean=3.48,

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$SD=0.67$), while the other two groups perceived their high level, with the mean score of 3.56 ($SD=0.43$) and 3.55 ($SD=0.41$), respectively. Certain patterns of teacher's response were identified from the analysis of the interview data. The researchers concluded that teachers' qualification influenced how teachers perceived their efficacy, which may affect their performance as a teacher of English.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, English teaching

INTRODUCTION

Although most Thai students have learned English for more than 12 years, their English proficiency is relatively low, either benchmarked regionally or internationally. Dhanasobhon (Online, 2006) and ONEC (2003, p. 75) reported that the problem was caused by poorly-trained teachers, poorly-motivated students, and rare opportunities for student exposure to English outside of class time to the list. Wiriyachitra (2002, p. 5, citing Biyaem, 1997) listed the following difficulties in English language teaching and learning in Thailand: teachers' heavy teaching loads, inadequately equipped classrooms and education technology, the university entrance examination system, teachers' insufficient English language skills, cultural knowledge, challenging interference from Thai language, lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives, unchallenging English lessons, being passive, learners, being too shy to speak English with classmates, being poorly-motivated and suffering from lack of responsibility for their own learning. Dueraman (2013, p. 176) cited that it was hard to find Thai students enjoy extra English reading activities out of their personal interests. Many studies outside Thailand have explored teachers' perceptions of their abilities in teaching English and found that the teachers' self-efficacy was positively correlated with self-reported English proficiency (Klassen, & Tze, 2014, p. 71; Takahashi, 2014, p. 34; Ghonsoolya, Khajavyb, & Mahjoobic, 2014, p. 596). Despite a number of studies on self-efficacy in different subject matters, little



research has been conducted to explore the perceived efficacy of non-native English speaking teachers in different ESL and EFL contexts (Eslami, 2008, p. 13). Little on this issue has been examined in the case of Thai English language teachers. This may play an important role in the failure of English language education in Thailand.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To study the levels of self-efficacy that may influence Thai primary school English language teachers' confidence in carrying out English teaching tasks in relation to their fields of study or qualifications and years of teaching experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-efficacy is the belief about one's ability to achieve desired goals. In his Social Learning Theory, Bandura (1997, p. 36) defined perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." In the same work, he proposed that teachers' judgments about their teaching competence influenced EFL teachers' practice in terms of efforts, goals, and challenges they set up for themselves and for their students. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy (1998, p. 233) defined teacher efficacy 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.

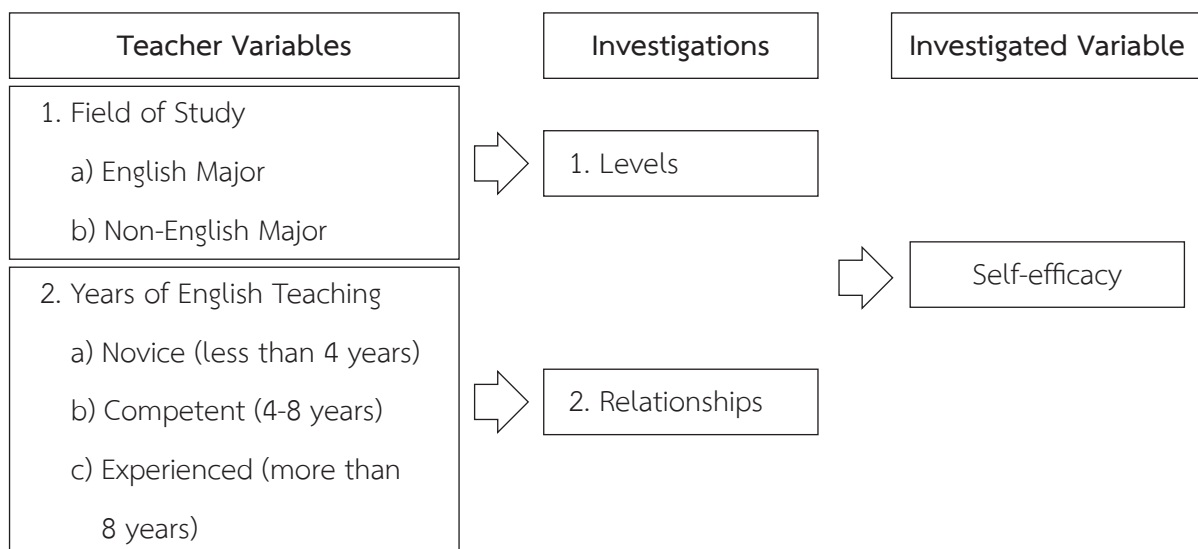
Chacón (2005, p. 258) explored self-efficacy beliefs among EFL teachers in selected schools in Venezuela and found that teachers' perceived efficacy was correlated with self-reported English proficiency; that is, the more proficient the participants judged themselves across the four skills, the higher their sense of efficacy. Examining Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy in terms of personal capabilities to



teach EFL and their perceived English language proficiency level, Eslami (2008, p. 14) also reported a similar correlation between the teachers' perceived efficacy and perceived proficiency. Such correlation has been confirmed by several more research studies (Klassen, & Tze, 2014, p. 72; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Mahjoobi, 2014, p. 596).

Teacher self-efficacy was defined as one's perceived competence to deal with all demands and challenges implied in teachers' professional life. Teachers' self-efficacy is related to job satisfaction (Klassen, & Chiu, 2010, p. 753), teaching experience (Oh, 2011, p. 236), supportive school climate (Meristo, & Eisenschmidt, 2014, p. 2), language proficiency and motivation to teach (Damon, 2007, p. 366), and anxiety (Kesen, & Aydın, 2014, p. 881).

RESEARCH FRAMWORK



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Samples of the Study

The samples included Thai school teachers of English in public primary schools under the Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Education Service Area Office. The total of 800 schools was randomly selected for this study,



where one teacher of English from each school was asked to answer the questionnaire. As the fields of study and years of English teaching were the main interests in this study, the selection of the schools was totally randomized, regardless of school size, location, and other related properties.

Data Collection Tools

Two data collection tools were used in this study: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: respondent's background information and teacher's perceived proficiency.

The information asked in the first part included the school's name, years of English teaching, and fields of study at different levels (undergraduate level-major and/or minor, master level, doctoral level, and other additional certification). Years of teaching were classified into three groups: "Novice" (less than 4 years), "Competent" (4-8 years), and "Experienced" (more than 8 years). This information on fields of study was used to classify teachers into English major and non-English major ones. Teachers who indicated their field of study as "English" in any study level, either as major or minor subjects were considered as English major. The rest were classified as non-English major.

The semi-interview was conducted after the respondents had answered the questionnaire. Twelve teachers were randomized for a semi-structured telephone interview. Two teachers were selected from each of the six groups of the participants: Non-English Major-Novice, Non-English Major-Competent, Non-English Major-Experienced, English Major-Novice, English Major-Competent, and English Major-Experienced. They were additionally asked about reasons for their responses to their self-efficacy in relation to their fields of study and years of teaching experience.

Data Analysis

The statistics used in the data analysis included descriptive analysis, analysis for means, correlational analysis, and comparative analysis. The analysis of qualitative data was performed with the response in the semi-structured interview. The analysis was to find patterns of reasons the



respondents provided to explain their responses about their self-efficacy in relation to their field of study and years of English teaching.

RESULTS

Number of Respondents

Of the 196 respondents, 119 (60.71 percent) were English majors and 77 (39.29 percent) were non-English majors. Based on their years of teaching, most of the respondents (42.35 percent) had less than 4 years of teaching, while 35.20 and 22.45 percent of them reported more than 8 years and 4-8 years of English teaching, respectively. See Table 1.

Table 1. Number of respondents

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
- Non-English Major	77	39.29
- English Major	119	60.71
Total	196	100.00
- Novice (less than 4 years)	83	42.35
- Competent (4-8 years)	44	22.45
- Experienced (more than 8 years)	69	35.20
Total	196	100.00

Levels of Self-efficacy

The respondents ($n=196$) reported their self-efficacy at the mean score of 3.40 ($SD=0.54$), which was at the moderate level. A moderate level of self-efficacy was also perceived by all 53 respondents in the Non-English major group (mean=3.21, $SD=0.49$). However, in the English major, only the Novice group viewed their efficacy at the moderate level (mean=3.48, $SD=0.67$), while the other two groups perceived their high level, with the mean score of 3.56 ($SD=0.43$) and 3.55 ($SD=0.41$), respectively. See Table 2.



Table 2. Levels of self-efficacy

Field of Study	Years of Teaching	<i>n</i>	Self-efficacy		
			Mean	<i>SD</i>	Level
Non English Major	Novice	30	3.16	0.43	moderate
	Competent	14	3.01	0.51	moderate
	Experienced	33	3.34	0.50	moderate
	Total	53	3.21	0.49	moderate
English Major	Novice	53	3.48	0.67	moderate
	Competent	30	3.56	0.43	high
	Experienced	36	3.55	0.41	high
	Total	119	3.52	0.54	high
Total	Novice	83	3.36	0.61	moderate
	Competent	44	3.39	0.52	moderate
	Experienced	69	3.45	0.47	moderate
	Total	196	3.40	0.54	moderate

Comparison of self-efficacy

Statistical comparison of self-efficacy revealed that, while there was no difference among teachers of different years of study, a significant difference at the .01 level was found between the groups of non-English major and English major teachers. The mean score of the latter group was .359 (out of 6) points higher than the former. See Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Overall Comparison of self-efficacy

Comparison	Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Fields of Study	Contrast	5.406	1	5.406	19.949**	.000
	Error	51.494	190	.271		
Years of Teaching	Contrast	.846	2	.423	1.561	.213
	Error	51.494	190	.271		

** $p < .01$



Table 4. Comparison of the pair of difference in self-efficacy

Field of Study		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
Major (I)	Major (J)				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
English	Non English	.359*	.080	.000	.201	.518

* $p < .05$

Interviews' Results

Most non-English major teachers reported that they did not have sufficient English proficiency and were not confident in teaching the subject. The most problematic skill for them was speaking. These teachers, especially the Novice group, found professional trainings and self-study essential. However, when these teachers became more experienced, their need for training was reduced. Due to their schools' lack of English-major teachers, these teachers were required to teach the subject. Among these teachers two types were found, determined and undetermined. The determined ones looked forward to professional trainings, were serious about self-study, and were concerned with students' achievement, while the undetermined ones were simply carefree, feeling that, without English proficiency, they were unable to do anything.

Unlike the Non-English group, the English-major teachers felt that they did not have any difficulty teaching the English subject. They were satisfied to teach English and preferred serious professional training. When asked what difficulty they had in their English classes, they said the problems were due to students' poor background, low motivation, and passive class participation.



DISCUSSION

The respondents reported their overall self-efficacy at the moderate level, as for the Non-English major group. However, in the English major, only the Novice group viewed their efficacy at the moderate level, while the other two groups perceived it at the high level. That most Non-English major teachers perceived their competence at the same level could be due to their low perceived proficiency and low motivation to teach, as reported in Damon (2007, p. 366). This could contribute to anxiety in working, confirming Kesen & Aydın's study (2014, p. 882). And that the Novice English-major teachers' perceived self-efficacy was lower than the other two groups suggested that the Novice teachers still lack experience in teaching, confirming the study of Klassen, & Chiu (2010, p. 754), Oh (2011, p. 240), and Aslrasouli, & Vahid (2014, p. 311).

CONCLUSION

Suggestions for English teachers

Little study has been conducted to explore the self-efficacy of non-native English speaking teachers in EFL contexts like in Thailand. Therefore, the present study investigated the levels of self-efficacy in relation to fields of study and years of teaching experience of Thai primary school English language teachers. The study indicated that Non-English major teachers suffered anxiety because they underestimated their real competence. The results showed that the more proficient the EFL teachers perceived themselves to be, the more efficacious they felt, and the more satisfied they felt toward their work. Therefore, it is suggested that non-English major teachers believe in their real competence in teaching.

Suggestions for future studies

More studies on the perception of teachers towards these factors should be conducted in more EFL contexts. One variable recommended to make the study of this kind more complete is the students' tested proficiency,



for it is the real product of the whole process. Students' learning contexts like their family, parents, and neighborhoods should be taken into consideration. The relationship between the content of professional training programs and the expectations of participants of their application in a real class is another topic worth examining.

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