

Perceived Self-Efficacy of Thai Secondary School English Teachers

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Abstract

Effectiveness of learning and teaching may be influenced by many factors from either students themselves or teachers. For teachers, one of the factors for their effective teaching may lie in their belief of their own ability to succeed in teaching, which can be referred to as self-efficacy. This survey study attempted to examine teachers' self-efficacy level among Thai secondary school teachers and whether their school setting affected this self-efficacy. The subjects were 30 English teachers who currently teaching at Thai secondary schools: 15 teachers are from Bangkok and the other 15 from other provinces. The findings indicated that globally the participating teachers have moderate level of self-efficacy (Mean=6.47). Further observation was made on the differences among the three sub-scales of self-efficacy. The result showed that teachers' self-efficacy in instructional strategies (Mean=6.64) was the highest followed by self-efficacy in classroom management (Mean=6.51) and in student engagement (Mean=6.46). Moreover, when comparing the level of self-efficacy of teachers from the two settings, it was found that the teachers in provincial areas display a higher sense of self-efficacy than those in the Bangkok area.

Keywords *teachers' sense of self-efficacy, secondary school English teachers, student engagement, instructional strategies, classroom management*

1. Introduction

Individuals have their own beliefs regarding how to achieve their life goals, and such beliefs affect their performance. This kind of belief is known as self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy is part of a broader perspective of social cognitive theory, and was brought to our attention by Albert Bandura (1982). In this notion, self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs about one's capability to succeed in performing a specific task. People usually possess different degrees of self-efficacy when performing various tasks. In general, it is believed that the greater degree of self-efficacy an individual has, the more motivated he/she will be in accomplishing a task. This sense of self-efficacy starts developing in early childhood and continues throughout a person's life. It is not fixed; it can be



enhanced or diminished over time. Bandura (1982) indicates that motivation would increase as perceptions of self-efficacy increased. In addition, self-efficacy can be increased by completing small tasks and gaining confidence in one's ability. However, high self-efficacy in accomplishing one task does not necessarily lead to high self-efficacy in other tasks.

In learning, self-efficacy is important for both students and teachers, as both parties need this confidence for success in their aims. Students need to have a certain degree of self-efficacy to learn successfully, while teachers also need it to ensure a good outcome of their instruction. According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), a teacher's efficacy belief may refer to the judgment of his/her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated. The concept of teacher self-efficacy is related to their ability to affect the learning outcomes of students, including those with low motivation and low ability to learn (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Thus, it can be seen that teachers' self-efficacy may play an important role in the learning outcomes of students. Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of self-efficacy of secondary school English teachers in Thailand, and to find out whether the setting of their school affects their level of self-efficacy. This research will compare the levels of sense of self-efficacy of teachers in Bangkok and provincial and settings. It is hoped to reveal how Thai teachers perceive their sense of self-efficacy in their teaching.

2. Literature review

2.1 Teachers' sense of self-efficacy

According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), one of the important characteristics of teachers in motivating student learning and increasing their academic performance is teachers' self-efficacy, or the confidence to succeed in their teaching. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) proposed that self-efficacy of teachers can be categorized into three dimensions, namely, student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management. The first dimension is self-efficacy in student engagement, which refers to how much teachers can motivate students in the classroom. It is believed that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be able to vary their techniques to motivate students in their learning more than teachers with low self-efficacy. The second dimension is self-efficacy in instructional strategies; this type of self-efficacy refers to how much one teacher can vary his/her instructional strategies and ways of dealing with students. Teachers who might lack the confidence to employ a variety of teaching strategies may have low self-efficacy in this aspect, while those who are confident in the success of their teaching might be able to employ more varied instructional strategies.

The last aspect of teacher self-efficacy as proposed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) is efficacy in classroom management. This refers to the confidence that a teacher has in managing the classroom, which includes dealing with disruptive students. Teachers with low self-efficacy might not have enough confidence in their ability to engage their students in the learning process. Furthermore, teachers with low self-efficacy might have problems in managing their classroom and, in effect, the effectiveness of teaching may not have been accomplished. In other words, teachers who have high self-efficacy are likely to be more successful in managing their classroom.

2.2 Teachers' self-efficacy and its measurement

As part of cognitive theory, it is not easy to measure the level of self-efficacy. However, it is not impossible and, for a survey study, one common instrument that has been widely used for this purpose is the questionnaire. Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed the 30-item Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) in order to identify factors affecting self-efficacy and they found two factors—one is personal teaching efficacy and the other is general teaching efficacy in teachers. This questionnaire has been used widely to measure teacher self-efficacy (e.g. Gorrel & Hwang, 1995; Lin & Gorrell, 1998). However, this questionnaire has also been criticized, especially by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (1998) who questioned its ability to measure self-efficacy. As a result, they proposed their own questionnaire to measure teacher self-efficacy.

Teacher efficacy in this questionnaire was defined as the teachers' belief in his or her own capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific task in particular teaching context (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). They developed the 'Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale' (TSES) and identified three factors of teachers' sense of efficacy (Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, and Efficacy in Classroom Management). Two versions of the questionnaire were known as short-form (12 items) and long form (24 items), and four or eight items corresponding to each of the factors. The questionnaire was validated to establish its validity and reliability and factor analysis was used to confirm the factors contributing to the level of sense efficacy among participants. The results statistically proved it as a valid and reliable instrument to measure the sense of efficacy level among teachers. Since then, this questionnaire has been widely used by teachers in different settings and cultures (e.g. Akbari & Moradkhani, 2010; Ozder, 2011; Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012). This study also utilizes this questionnaire.

2.3 Research on self-efficacy

This survey study aims to examine the level of efficacy and this section in particular reviews studies that focus on teachers' sense of self-efficacy especially those employing the same questionnaire used in this study.



Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) carried out a study to investigate the possible relationships between experience, academic degree and teacher self-efficacy of 447 EFL teachers in Iran. The results showed that teachers with three or more years of teaching experience had significantly higher levels of overall self-efficacy than their novice counterparts in all dimensions—student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. However, regarding their qualifications, teachers who had English-related academic degrees did not significantly have higher levels of self-efficacy, except in student engagement.

Ozder (2011) compared the self-efficacy of novice teachers in Turkey with their performance in the classroom and the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect the data. The results of the study showed that these novice teachers had only moderate levels of self-efficacy in their classroom performance. Moreover, this study also investigated the differences between the three dimensions of self-efficacy—student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management; the results revealed that self-efficacy in student engagement and classroom management were significantly different, while the levels of self-efficacy in instructional strategies and classroom management were not different. Novice teachers appeared to have stronger belief in their instructional strategies than in their classroom management and student engagement.

Moreover, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) studied the relationship between the self-efficacy of 89 EFL college teachers and their pedagogical success, using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) together with a questionnaire on the characteristics of successful EFL teachers. The results indicated a significant relationship between teachers' success and their self-efficacy. The study also revealed significant correlations between teachers' self-efficacy and teaching experience, as well as a correlation with their age.

In 2011, Yilmaz carried out a study about the relationship between the self-efficacy and the English proficiency of 54 Turkish EFL teachers. His findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their self-rated English proficiency. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' efficacy for instructional strategies was greater than their efficacy for management and engagement.

In addition, Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) conducted a study in Lahore, Pakistan. They looked at the three dimensions of self-efficacy, namely, student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management. Their aim was to find out whether there was a difference in these three scopes of self-efficacy among teachers in relation to their gender and age. The results of this study showed a significant difference between self-efficacy beliefs of males and females. In other words, gender may affect teachers' levels of self-efficacy.

As can be seen from the reviewed literature, several studies have examined the level of teachers' sense of self-efficacy as well as factors that may influence it. As for this study, the focus will be on examining the level of teachers' sense of self-efficacy among Thai secondary school English teachers and to see whether there is any difference in the level of self-efficacy between teachers in Bangkok and teachers in provincial settings.

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of this study were 30 Thai secondary school teachers of English from both government and private schools. 15 teachers were from Bangkok and 15 teachers were from the provincial area. The teachers were 10 males and 20 females with an average age of 44.27 years. The youngest was 24, the oldest was 59 and their teaching experiences ranged from 1 year to 38 years.

3.2 Questionnaire

The research instrument used in this study was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran, College of William and Mary, and Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ohio State University (2001). There were two forms of questionnaires: short form (12 items) and long form (24 items). The participants were asked to rate their capabilities, utilizing the following scale: 1 = Nothing, 3 = Very Little, 5 = Some Influence, 7 = Quite a Bit, 9 = A Great Deal. The TSES has been extensively utilized, and subjected to factor analysis procedures to assess construct validity (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The researcher chose the long form for this study which included 24 questions categorized into three subscales of self-efficacy, namely, efficacy in student engagement (8 items), efficacy in instructional strategies (8 items), and efficacy in classroom management (8 items). Table 1 shows the details of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the reliabilities for the three subscales were 0.91, 0.90 and 0.87, respectively. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was 0.84, considered highly reliable. Finally, the questionnaire was translated into Thai to avoid any misunderstanding when the Thai participants completed it.

Table 1 Items in teachers' self-efficacy subscales

Teachers' Self-Efficacy Subscales	Items
Self-efficacy in student engagement	1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22
Self-efficacy in instructional strategies	7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24
Self-efficacy in classroom management	3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21

3.3. Data analysis

Thirty participating teachers were given the TSES (long form). The teachers were also asked about their teaching experience and their educational qualification (Table 2).

Table 2 Teaching experience and educational qualification

Demographic information		School Setting	
		Provincial area	Bangkok area
Education	Bachelor's degree	8	11
	Master's degree	7	4
Teaching experience	Less than 15 years	3	12
	More than 15 years	12	3

After the participants had completed the questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean score for the global level of teacher self-efficacy and for each subscale based on the following criteria:

- 1-3 mean score is considered as low self-efficacy
- 4-6 mean score is considered as moderate self-efficacy
- 7-9 mean score is considered as high self-efficacy

Additionally, a T-test was used to find any differences between the level of self-efficacy of teachers from Bangkok and teachers from provincial settings.

4. Results

4.1 Global teachers' self-Efficacy of secondary school English teachers

The research question examined the secondary school English teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy globally and in each self-efficacy subscale: *student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management*.

Table 3 Mean scores and standard deviations for the participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy

Items	Questions	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	6.50	1.14	Moderate
2	How much can you do to help your students think critically?	5.77	1.31	Moderate
3	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	6.17	1.53	Moderate
4	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	6.07	0.94	Moderate
5	To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	6.13	0.94	Moderate
6	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	6.67	1.24	Moderate
7	How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	6.93	1.08	Moderate
8	How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	6.70	1.44	Moderate
9	How much can you do to help your students value learning?	7.00	1.08	High
10	How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	6.63	1.13	Moderate
11	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	6.53	1.31	Moderate
12	How much can you do to foster student creativity?	6.50	1.53	Moderate
13	How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	6.73	1.23	Moderate
14	How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	6.77	0.86	Moderate
15	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	6.30	1.24	Moderate
16	How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	6.67	1.37	Moderate
17	How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	6.23	1.43	Moderate
18	How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	6.80	1.58	Moderate



19	How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	6.47	1.25	Moderate
20	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	6.77	1.07	Moderate
21	How well can you respond to defiant students?	6.87	1.01	Moderate
22	How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	6.43	1.28	Moderate
23	How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	6.73	1.26	Moderate
24	How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	6.53	1.38	Moderate

As seen in Table 3, the mean scores indicated that English secondary school teachers rated themselves moderately efficacious teachers. The highest mean score is item 9 (7.00), which belongs to the subscale of *student engagement* and addresses to what extent teachers can make students value their learning. This item is the only item considered to be at the high level of self-efficacy. The second-highest mean score is item 7 (6.93), which belongs to the subscale of *instructional strategies* and focuses on teachers' belief in their ability to answer difficult questions from students. The third-highest mean score is item 21 (6.87), which belongs to the subscale of *classroom management*. This question relates to how teachers deal with difficult students. The levels of self-efficacy for the last two items are considered to be at the moderate level. According to the data, it can be seen that the top three mean scores come from three different subscales.

As for the three lowest mean scores, the lowest mean score is item 2 (5.77), which is under the student engagement subscale. The responses to this question show the level of teachers' belief in helping their students to think critically. The second lowest mean score is item 4 (6.07), which is under the student engagement subscale and it deals with the level of teachers' belief in motivating students to learn. The third lowest mean score is item 5 (6.13), which relates to classroom management and focuses on how much teachers believe in their clear understanding of the expectation of students' behavior. Even though these are the three lowest mean scores, the results are still at the moderate level of self-efficacy.

Apart from the global self-efficacy, the three subscales of self-efficacy were also examined in order to detect any differences among the three subscales.

Table 4 Means and standard deviation of each self-efficacy subscale

Teacher Self-efficacy	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
Self-efficacy in student engagement	6.47	0.87	Moderate
Self-efficacy in instructional strategies	6.65	1.02	Moderate
Self-efficacy in classroom management	6.52	0.91	Moderate
Global Self-efficacy	6.54	0.88	Moderate

As shown in Table 4, the means of the three subscales indicated that English secondary school teachers rated themselves as more efficacious in their instructional strategies, which obtained the highest mean score ($M = 6.65$, $SD = 1.02$), followed by classroom management ($M = 6.52$, $SD = 0.91$), and student engagement ($M = 6.47$, $SD = 0.87$), but the differences were not significant. This, in turn, suggests that these teachers perceived themselves to be more capable in instructional strategies such as responding to difficult questions from the students (item 7) and providing an alternative explanation or example when students are confused (item 20) than their abilities to engage students and manage the classroom.

4.2 Comparison of self-efficacy of English teachers in Bangkok and in provincial areas

In addition to the level of self-efficacy, the differences in teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy in relation to their school settings were examined by using an independent sample t-test.

Table 5 Comparison of self-efficacy of English teachers in Bangkok and provincial areas

	Bangkok area		Provincial area		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Efficacy	6.4453	1.04279	6.6393	.71616	28	-.594	.557

A t-test was carried out to compare the mean scores of sense of self-efficacy of teachers in Bangkok and those in provincial areas, and the result did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the three groups, ($t(24.80) = -.594$, $p = .557$). Also, the results show that teachers in Bangkok ($M = 6.445$) reported less self-efficacy than teachers from provincial areas ($M = 6.639$), but again the difference is not statistically significant. This may suggest that wherever the teachers are teaching, the setting of their school will not affect their self-efficacy.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study aims to examine the level of self-efficacy among Thai English teachers at secondary schools and whether their school setting affects their self-efficacy level or not. The first finding shows that the participating teachers in this study reported to have a sense of self-efficacy at a moderate level and it was found that the top three items reported by the participants come from the three different subscales. This may suggest that these three types of self-efficacy (*efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management*) are equally important for teachers as each type of self-efficacy deals with a different aspect of classroom practice. And as noted in the analysis, the questions were categorized into three types of self-efficacy. This categorization allowed us to obtain a better understanding of this sense of efficacy and the finding showed that the participants rated themselves as more efficacious in instructional strategies than in classroom management and student engagement. These results were compatible with those of previous research (Chacon, 2005; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008; Ozder, 2011; Yilmaz, 2011) carried out in Venezuela, Iran and Turkey. They showed that teachers of English as a foreign language had been found to be more oriented towards the use of instructional strategies in studies.

Moreover, in relation to school setting, the result shows that teachers in provincial areas have a higher global level of self-efficacy than teachers from the Bangkok area, but the difference is not significant. Therefore, from the data obtained, it can be said that school settings, i.e. provincial areas or the Bangkok area, do not affect English teachers' sense of self-efficacy. It is speculated that it is irrelevant where the teachers are teaching; it does not seem to affect their sense of self-efficacy. Explanations for the lack of significance could be tied to the finding that the location of the school may not be as important as how the school is administered and what kind of syllabus system is used in that school or other factors. However, the result found in this study is not consistent with that of Page et al. (2014), whose study utilized the same questionnaire and focused on teachers at elementary schools in three settings (urban, sub-urban and rural schools) in the Southeast US. Their result showed that teachers at the urban elementary school setting scored significantly lower on the TSES than teachers from the other two settings, therefore suggesting that school setting does affect the teacher's self-efficacy.

To sum up, the present study examined the level of self-efficacy of Thai EFL teachers at secondary schools, and the result shows that their self-efficacy is at a moderate level. As teachers' sense of self-efficacy is linked to student achievement, measures to increase Thai secondary school English teachers' sense of self-efficacy should be considered in order to increase the sense of self-efficacy from moderate to high. As teacher efficacy improves, so does student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). That is, a high level of self-efficacy held by teachers is influential in students'

achievement. Furthermore, this study found no relationship between self-efficacy and school settings. Therefore, it might not be the case as in where the school is located, but other variables should be considered in order to examine the sources of self-efficacy of teachers in Thailand. Further studies should look at personal and environmental factors in explaining teacher efficacy. Finally, a variety of data collection methods such as an interview or other research tools may be employed in order to seek a more insightful explanation of teachers' sense of self-efficacy and its effects.

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