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The relationship between tertiary level EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their willingness to use communicative activities in speaking

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Abstract

This study aims at finding the possible relationship between academic self-efficacy beliefs of tertiary level EFL teachers and their willingness to use communicative activities in speaking classrooms. To do so, the data for the study were collected through two independent questionnaires; the first one was Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran and Anita Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The second one was COLTAS, an attitude scale with 36 statements developed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of CLT which was adopted from Eveyik (1999). The samples, 40 voluntary instructors (32 female and 8 male) from Giresun University and University of Turkish Aeronautical Association. The results suggest that there is statistically a positive correlation between self-efficacy beliefs of tertiary level EFL teachers and their willingness to use communicative activities. However there was not a significant relationship between them. The findings revealed that although they did not have an effect on each other, the teachers in this study had high levels of self-efficacy and great willingness to use communicative activities in their speaking classes.

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1. Introduction

The theoretical foundations of self-efficacy date back to Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) and he defines this term as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). According to Dembo & Gibson (1985) "teachers' self-efficacy can be termed as their beliefs about how they can affect the learning of their students." (p. 173). Considering the high and low efficacy teachers, many research studies (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Simbula, Guglielmi, & Schaufeli, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Betoret, 2006; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003) show that teachers with strong self-efficacy are more committed to their students and teaching. They organize their practices, try to renew and improve their methods when needed and do not ignore the different needs of their learners. The ones with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, are often stressed about their jobs and have many difficulties while teaching. They do not prefer using challenging methods or classroom practices a lot, such as communicative activities or group work which affect the dynamics of their classes and the learning of the students.

Using communicative activities and group work studies in language classes, especially in the speaking classes, are essential because the interaction is always two sided. In speaking classes teacher motivation and efficacy are as important as student motivation and participation since it will be the teachers who facilitate the activities and observe the process. In some cases, intrinsic motivation of the teachers is more effective than instruction on students' motivation (Lim et al., 2008). Thus, teachers' perception about themselves and their beliefs about their capabilities, namely their senses of efficacy, are crucial when they are managing communicative activities and group works.

The New Oxford Dictionary of English (1998, p 371) defines 'communicative' as, "willing, eager, or able to talk or impart information." For Morrow (1981), communicative activities have three salient features: (1) some type of information gap, (2) a degree of choice and (3) the existence of feedback (p 61). Communicative activities create a student-centred classroom as they require student participation and the resulting work at the end of the class come from the students. In this situation, teachers should set positive interdependence and handle the collaboration within the groups. This will be provided by the teachers' abilities of leadership and effectiveness of transferring knowledge (Frykedal & Chiriac, 2012). When teachers act as the arranger of group work frames, provide cooperation and support the outcomes and processes, they help increasing willingness for group work (Chiriac & Granström, 2012). Then again, teachers themselves need to have the incentive to conduct a successful work with the students. Factors like quality of educational setting and student prejudice towards the language and reluctance may affect teachers' anticipation and motivation (Eveyik-Aydin, 2003).

In this study we will focus on tertiary level EFL teacher's self-efficacy and explore how it influences their use of communicative activities in speaking classes. The present study aims at addressing the following questions:

1. What is the self-efficacy level of tertiary level EFL teachers?
2. Are tertiary level EFL teachers willing to employ communicative activities for speaking classes?
3. Is there any direct relation between tertiary level EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their willingness to use communicative activities in their classrooms?

2. Literature review

Language teaching has been subject to many changes throughout the history of EFL education. According to Richards (2006), one can group the teaching practices in the last 50 years into three phases as "traditional approaches (up to the late 1960s), classic communicative language teaching (1970s to 1990s), and current communicative language teaching (late 1990s to the present)" (p. 6). In the traditional approaches grammatical competences receives the full attention as we can understand from the direct instruction of grammar structures, repetition drills and the desire for the memorization. The awareness of the inadequacy of these approaches paved way to evolution of a "fluency-first" pedagogy (Brumfit 1984) in which learners' grammar needs are determined after their performance on fluency activities.

2.1. Communicative language teaching

Foreign language teaching instruction has seen a dramatic shift in terms of ultimate aim, from the grammatical-competency towards communicative-competency in recent decades in many countries around the world. Today, most of the EFL teachers and curriculum developers mention “communicative competence” in their practices, but what is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) actually and what do we mean by communicative competence? Instead of a single sentence Brown (2007) offered four interwoven characteristics as a definition of CLT. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

2.2. What is self-efficacy in teaching?

The term self-efficacy is described by Bandura (1977, 1997) as a behaviour change to realize expected goals (Henson et al., 2001), and one’s belief or capability to achieve the aims (Ormrod, 2006). When self-efficacy is looked into from the teachers’ perspective, it can be described as teachers’ beliefs to pursue and accomplish educational goals (Avanzi et al., 2003) or “teacher’s individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specific situation” (Dellinger et al., 2008, p.752). As teachers are not sole factors in the educational process, as mentioned, outer or school related factors can affect teacher self-efficacy. According to Dellinger et al. (2008), teacher efficacy can also be related with how much the teachers affect student performance, achievement, and motivation (Henson et. al, 2001). Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between factors involving in teaching and self-efficacy of teachers.

While practicing teaching, attitudes towards the profession and beliefs about oneself becomes an important element aside from school related factors like students, administration, materials, setting etc. Beliefs can be initially affected by the degree that a teacher is enthusiastic about teaching and considers the profession as a way for self-improvement. Such inner factors determine how one starts the profession and carries it out effectively throughout the years. This continuous effectiveness not only influences taking the initiative in teaching activities, but it is also influenced by personal or school related factors. This individual effectiveness of teachers is addressed as teachers’ self- efficacy under the scope of this study. How teachers consider their self-efficacy and how beliefs and teaching process interact with self-efficacy were examined.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study was conducted using a quantitative research approach whereby a teacher self-efficacy questionnaire and an attitude scale to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach were used to gather data about tertiary level EFL teachers’, at University of Turkish Aeronautical Association (UTAA) and Giresun University, self-efficacy and their preferences of implementing communicative activities in their speaking classes.

3.2. Participants

The study was carried out in December 2014 in Foreign Language Departments at Giresun University and University of Turkish Aeronautical Association (UTAA). The sample consists of 40 voluntary participants who completed two independent five point- Likert scale, Teacher Beliefs (TSES) and COLTAS respectively. One of the universities that the research was conducted is a Turkish-medium state governed university, Giresun University and the other one is an English-medium private university. Demographic data revealed that there were 32 Turkish females (80%) and 8 (20%) males within the age range of 22-36 (mean age: 26, 3). Their experience of EFL

teaching, not necessarily at universities, varied from 3 months to 13 years. Unfortunately, there were three samples who did not state any information about themselves. Therefore, we excluded them during the computation of sex, mean age and experience.

3.3. Instrument

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran and Anita Woolfolk Hoy (2001) is adapted for the purposes of the study. The questionnaire consists of 23 items which tests teacher efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices, and efficacy in classroom management. It is a five point Likert scale questionnaire containing 23 statements providing the subject with 5 possible answers from "not at all" to "a great deal". 7 of these questions measure efficacy in student engagement (Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14,), 8 of the them measure efficacy in instructional strategies (Items 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23) and 8 of the rest measure efficacy in classroom management (Items 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21). Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale. Cronbach's alpha in the original study was $\alpha = .94$, while Cronbach's alpha reliability was $\alpha = .833$ after reverse-coding the "unfavourable" statements in the present study.

The other measurement employed in the study was COLTAS, a five-point Likert type attitude scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with 36 statements developed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of CLT (Eveyik, 1999). Although there are other scales investigating attitudes towards CLT (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996), COLTAS was preferred which is designed to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT and which can provide better understanding as a data collection instrument in Turkish EFL context. Of all questionnaire 10 items measure group/pair work (Items 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 19, 24, 26, 34, 36), 8 of the items measure place of grammar in the classroom setting (Items 11, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28, 29, 33), 4 of the items measure student and teacher role (Items 8, 18, 23, 31) while 9 of the remaining measure peer or teacher corrections (Items 3, 5, 10, 20, 21, 25, 30, 35) and the rest 7 items measure instruction method (Items 1, 4, 9, 12, 27, 32). Unfortunately, internal consistency was not stated by the original study. However, Cronbach's alpha reliability was found $\alpha = .862$ after reverse-coding the "unfavourable" statements in the present study.

3.4. Procedure

A pack consisting of two different five point- Likert scale questionnaires were given to 40 voluntary participants from two different universities. They were asked to respond a total number of 59 statements in five days to enable them provide the best answer according to them in this considerably long time without a time limitation. The questionnaire also included demographic questions such as age and gender.

4. Results

This study sought to examine tertiary level EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy and their willingness to employ communicative activities for speaking classes. Also the relationship between these two variables was tested, and in this section descriptive statistics of the results will be presented.

As in Table 1, the results of the descriptive analysis looking at the mean score of tertiary level EFL teachers' self-efficacy showed that these participants had a quite high level of self-efficacy ($\bar{x} = 3.88$; 77.6%).

Table 1. Mean scores of tertiary level EFL teachers' self-efficacy

	Number of Participants
Valid	40
Invalid	0
Sum	40

Average	3.88
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The analysis for the tertiary level EFL teachers' willingness to employ communicative activities for speaking classes (Table 2) also revealed very similar results ($\bar{x} = 3.89$; 77.8%) which means that the participants are quite willing to use communicative activities in the classes while focusing on speaking skill.

Table 2. Mean scores of tertiary level EFL teachers' willingness to employ communicative activities for speaking classes

Number of Participants	
Valid	40
Invalid	0
Sum	40
Average	3.89

Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was also used to investigate the relationship between the mean scores of teacher self-efficacy and their willingness to use communicative activities in speaking classes. Table 3 reveals the results of the correlation test on this relationship.

Table 3. Correlations between teacher self-efficacy and willingness to use communicative activities

		mean_self_efficacy	mean_coltas
mean_self_efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.30
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.06
	N	40	40
mean_coltas	Pearson Correlation	.30	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.06	
	N	40	40

As shown in Table 3, there was a positive correlation between the two variables $r = .30$, and each tests has shown high values that indicate the teachers have a high level of self-efficacy and willingness to use communicative activities. However these two variables did not have an effect on each other ($p > .05$). So, the correlations were positive but insignificant at, $p = .06$ level (2-tailed).

Table 4. The mean scores of the domains in the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale

Item domains	Teacher efficacy in student engagement	Efficacy in instructional practices	Efficacy in classroom management
Mean score	3.76	3.93	3.94

Table 4 illustrates the mean scores of the item domains in the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy questionnaire. While teachers' efficacy in student engagement is $\bar{x} = 3.76$ which is less than the mean score of the scale, their efficacy in instructional practices and in classroom management are nearly the same ($\bar{x} = 3.93$, $\bar{x} = 3.94$ respectively).

Table 5. The mean scores of the domains in the COLTAS Scale

Item domains	Group/pair work	Grammar in the classroom setting	Student and teacher role	Peer or teacher corrections	Instruction method
Mean score	4.07	3.91	4.22	3.63	3.70

In table 5, the mean scores of the domains in the COLTAS scale are presented. It shows quite high scores for teachers' willingness to use pair/group work ($\bar{x} = 4.07$). It also presents high score for grammar use ($\bar{x} = 3.91$) and student and teacher role ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) which are all above the mean of the scale as a whole ($\bar{x} = 3.89$). However, teachers have lower mean scores in peer and teacher corrections ($\bar{x} = 3.63$) and instruction method ($\bar{x} = 3.70$).

5. Discussion

This current study set out with the aim of assessing self-efficacy level and communicative activity using willingness of tertiary level EFL teachers'. In this section, the findings above were discussed to find answers to the research questions and it followed the order of the research questions formulated before.

According to this research, the tertiary level EFL teachers had a high level of self-efficacy, which means that they highly believed in their capabilities to achieve the aim of teaching (Ormrod, 2006). As Bandura (1997) claims, a strong self-efficacy will result in an increasing performance and efforts, thus an increasing performance brings out a more robust self-efficacy levels. Caprara et al. (2006) also assert that higher teacher self-efficacy shows increasing desire to use new teaching methods, planning, enthusiasm and dedication to teaching. Regarding the statements of these researchers and also considering the high self-efficacy levels of the participants in this current research, it is possible to say that the teachers in this study have increased levels of performance and efforts to teach, high levels of desire and enthusiasm to achieve their goals, and great dedication to their jobs.

This study also revealed a high level of willingness to employ communicative activities in speaking classes by tertiary level EFL teachers. The results show that the participants mostly believed in the effectiveness of communicative activities to teach speaking and preferred using them in their classes quite often. As Hui (1997) states "without the required background, training and positive attitude, it is difficult for a teacher to teach a class communicatively" (p. 38-47). Based on Hui's (1997) words and considering that implementing communicative activities in classes is not an easy task, it is possible to deduce that the teachers who participated in this study felt themselves quite competent and had positive attitudes towards communicative classes.

When the researchers of this study computed the relationship between the teacher self-efficacy and their willingness to use communicative activities in speaking classes, a positive correlation appeared, but it is statistically insignificant. It can be concluded that these two variables are independent from each other and the positive correlation between them is just coincidental, as the results showed high values in variables of each test with insignificant relationship between two and no effect on each other.

6. Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to examine the self-efficacy levels, communicative activity using willingness of tertiary level EFL teachers', and the relationship between these two variables. The findings revealed that the teachers in question in this study had high levels of self-efficacy and great willingness to use communicative activities in their speaking classes; however, although there was a positive correlation between these two variables, there was not a significant relationship between them, which means that they did not have an effect on each other.

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