

Akdeniz Language Studies Conference 2012

## The interface between EFL teachers' self-efficacy concerning critical reading comprehension and some select variables

Hülya Küçüköğlü\*

*Hacettepe University, Ankara, 06532, Turkey*

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### Abstract

In the recent decades individual differences in learning has become important in EFL/ESL classes. Generally, the main concern in EFL/ESL classes is to analyze the students. It is for this reason that most of the studies conducted are about the students. However, in the learning process the prerequisite for the learning process is the teacher/instructor. The individual differences of the instructors play an important role in order to have success in EFL/ESL classes. These individual differences affect the self efficacy levels of the instructors. This study aims to study one of these individual differences: self-efficacy. To narrow down the focus of investigation, this study aimed at exploring the self efficacy level of the EFL instructors in regard to reading and its relation to gender, teaching experience and department of graduation. A group of 50 instructors of English participated in the present study. The Data for the instructors' self-efficacy were collected through self-efficacy questionnaire on reading. The gender, year of experience, BA graduation department and university are the other variables observed in this study. The results of statistical analyses indicated that there was no difference between the groups in terms of variables.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of ALSC 2012

*Keywords:* Foreign language learning, self-efficacy, reading proficiency, critical reading

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### 1. Introduction

Teachers are the most important part of the education system as they are the determinants of a qualified teaching environment. The role of the teacher in today's world is to carry the duties such as providing learning, class management, assessment, leading, being a member of a family, etc. Because of these duties, a teacher has to lead a class well, present the context affectively, provide learning, assess objectively, be a consultant, follow the ethic rules of his job and be reliable (Saracaloglu, 2006). The

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\* Hülya Küçüköğlü. Tel.: +90-312-297-80-91.  
*E-mail address:* [hulyaku@hacettepe.edu.tr](mailto:hulyaku@hacettepe.edu.tr).

teacher of the 21st century has to answer the questions of today and tomorrow. He cannot remain a lecturer only. The teacher in today's world has to be a good organiser of the teaching and learning process, a good administrator, a good observer and has to be a qualified guide. Today, being a teacher requires more and more qualifications than yesterday (Gökçe, 2000, p.270). From this point, we can say that teaching as an occupation needs more qualifications and efficacy today. Teachers' ability of carrying the efficacies and qualifications of teaching is strongly connected, not only with having a good education, but also teachers' internal belief of self-efficacy (Yılmaz, et al. 2004).

## **2. Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a key concept in social learning theory (Bandura, 1997) and described as the self-decision of an individual in organising actions in order to be successful in a certain field (Zimmerman 1995, p.137). It is important to be self-efficacious for a teacher in order to increase his performance in his professional life. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy refers to a personal judgement of one's capability to organize and implement behaviours in specific situations that contains unpredictable or stressful elements. Self-efficacy can affect the choice of activities, afford, expenditure and persistence when a difficulty is faced. Bernhardt (1997) defines the concept of "self-efficacy" as learners' beliefs about their abilities to accomplish a task. One of the most important concepts about self-efficacy is the teacher self-efficacy concept. There are important studies conducted on this field. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001, p.783) describe the teacher's self-efficacy concept as the decision of the teacher about being able to teach every student including low motivated and difficult students. Self-efficacy is described as the teacher's ability to affect students' performances and their beliefs about fulfilling their duties about educating a learner. Fulfilling the requirements of teaching not only requires a good education, but also needs a strong belief in oneself about being successful.

## **3. Critical Reading**

One of the most important skills in ELT classrooms is the reading skill. Being a good reader is one of the key elements to success not only in academic areas, but also in our social lives.

According to Walker (1996) reading is an active process; not a product like history, in which readers shift between sources of information; what they know and what the text says. Manzo and Manzo (1993, p.5) define reading as "the act of simultaneously reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines." Critical reading refers to questioning and assessing what we read. As we cannot evaluate something we do not understand, it is for this reason that understanding what we read is the key point for critical evaluation. The reader then try to find out the strengths and weaknesses in the reading text. In the last decades the reading skill is no longer considered as a passive activity. The reader is expected to interact with the text; try to apprehend his/her own meaning out of what s/he reads. Using the prior knowledge is another part of the reading process. While there is a growing body of research devoted to learners' beliefs about language learning in general, comparatively few studies have looked at beliefs of ELT instructors about critical reading. The focus of the present study is instructors' beliefs on critical

reading. The aim of the present study is to shed light on their beliefs. It is for this reason that the present research began with three main questions:

-Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their gender and their self efficacy in critical reading?

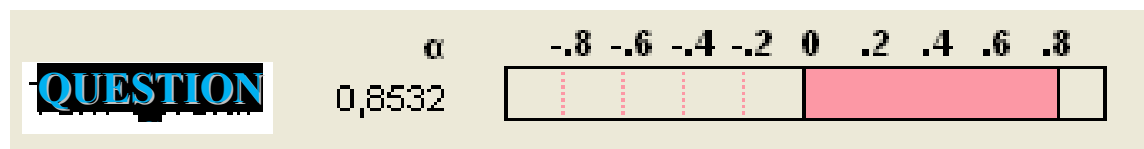
-Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their experience and their self efficacy in critical reading?

-Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their BA degrees and their self efficacy in critical reading?

#### 4. Method

In the current study a self-efficacy questionnaire designed by Küçüköğlü (2008) was used in order to collect data. Before the administration of the instrument, some demographical questions, including Gender, Experience, Department of graduation were added. The questionnaire consisted of 25 Likert-scale items. The instructors were asked to read the statements and choose one of the given options: (1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) no idea (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree.

The Cronbach alpha of this questionnaire was calculated as 0.85. This level is considered to be high enough to consider the questionnaire as “reliable”.



#### 5. Participants

Gender of the participants were taken as the first variable of the study. A total of 50 instructors, female (N=44) and male (N=6), enrolled in this study. As there is a high level of difference in the number of male and female participants, the researcher regarded the difference as a limitation of the study. The second independent variable was the teachers' year of experience. There were three categories in this part of the study as: “1 to 5 years”, “6 to 10 years”, and “11 and above”. The last independent variable was the department of graduation. The categories were designed as: “ELT/ FLE”, “English Language and Literature” and “others”. In order to get a reliable result, the instructors were asked to answer the questionnaire sincerely.

#### 6. Data Analysis and Discussion

In analyzing the data, some statistical procedures were carried out in this study: (1) Descriptive statistics including Cronbach alphas, means and standard deviations computed to summarize the instructors' responses to the self-efficacy questionnaire on critical reading questionnaire. (2) Independent sample T-Tests were conducted to find out the difference between males and females and the difference between the ELT graduates and graduates of other departments such as English Language and Literature. (3) One-way ANOVA was conducted to find out difference in terms of experience.

##### 6.1 Data analysis

Research Question 1: Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their gender?

In this study there were 44 females and 6 males. The mean score for female participants was 1.96 whereas for males this number was 1.67. Since the significance level is more than alpha level, it can be stated that statistical difference between females and males cannot be stated. ( $P_{\text{calculated}} = .325 > P = .05$ ,  $t_{\text{calculated}} = -1.005$ )

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their experience?

In terms of experience, 14 instructors have an experience of 0-5 years, 6 instructors have an experience of 6-10 years and 30 of them have an experience of 11 and more years. The mean score for the 1st group was 1.96. The mean score for the 2nd group was 1.66. The mean score for the 3rd group was 1.98. Since the significance level is more than alpha level, it can be stated that there is no statistical difference among these three groups. ( $P_{\text{calculated}} = .754 > P = .05$ ,  $f_{\text{calculated}} = .400$ )

Research Question 3: Is there any significant difference between foreign language teachers in regard to their BA degrees?

In terms of their department, 22 instructors are graduates of ELT departments and 28 instructors are graduates of other departments. The mean score for the ELT graduates was 1.84. The mean score for the other department graduates was 1.97. Since the significance level is more than alpha level, it can be stated that there is no statistical difference within these two groups. ( $P_{\text{calculated}} = .613 > P = .05$ ,  $t_{\text{calculated}} = -.589$ )

## 6.2 Discussion

This study investigated the self-efficacy beliefs of ELT instructors according to some variables such as gender, teaching experience, and BA graduation. The results of the study shows that self-efficacy attitudes and beliefs did not differ in terms of these variables. However there are some studies conducted by other researchers on other teachers/instructors other than ELT and the results differ from each other.

Ekici (2006) investigated the vocational high school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs according to some variables such as gender, teaching experience, and branches. The results of his study indicated that vocational high school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were above the medium level. The self-efficacy beliefs of the teachers changed related to their gender and branches, also female teachers and culture lesson teachers had a significantly high level of self-efficacy beliefs. Another finding was that self-efficacy beliefs of the teachers did not change related to their teaching experience.

Önen and Öztuna (2005) investigated the self-efficacy of teachers in primary schools related to their teaching experience. According to the results, science and maths teachers are more self-efficant than other branches. The study also indicated that the self-efficacy level of the teachers was higher related to their teaching experience.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), investigated the sources supporting the teachers' perception of self-efficacy. Low-level relationships were observed between teachers' teaching experience and their perception of self-efficacy. Although their study indicates correlation, the difference among the defined groups in terms of experience was studied and no statistical difference was obtained in our study.

Akbas and Çelikkaleli (2006) investigated whether the self-efficacy of primary school teachers differed related to gender and graduation from university. According to their results, pre-service teachers' self-

efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations towards science teaching did not differ in respect to gender. Kahyaoglu and Yangın (2007) investigated pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs according to their gender, department, education, teaching experience, and high school. In the study, the results showed that science pre-service teachers felt more confident than the pre-service teachers in primary school and maths teaching departments.

## Conclusion

Although self efficacy is a fundamental issue in a successful learning environment for both the teachers'/instructors' and the students' side, not many researches were conducted on teachers/instructors. The results of the study show that the self-efficacy level of the ELT instructors does not correlate with their gender, years of experience in teaching and the departments they graduated, however the study should be extended in terms of the participants and the variables. Also the number of difference among the male and female participants should be brought closer to each other in the further studies.

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