



University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Faculty of Humanities

Department of English Language and Literature

On the Relationship Between Iranian EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs, Locus of Control Orientations, and Teaching Styles

M.A. Thesis

Submitted to the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Supervisor:

Dr. F. Heidari

Advisor:

Dr. E. Nourmohammadi

By:

Hossein Nowrouzi

September, 2012

IN THE NAME OF GOD

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We hereby approve that this thesis by Hossein Nowrouzi entitled:

On the Relationship Between Iranian EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs, Locus of Control Orientations, and Teaching Styles

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

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دبیران یکی از عناصر مؤثر برای موفقیت هر نظام آموزشی هستند. در این تحقیق، جهت شناخت بهتر دبیران، تعدادی از عامل‌های روانشناختی و شخصیتی آنها مورد توجه قرار گرفته است. در محیط‌های آموزش زبان، نظریه پردازان شناختی-اجتماعی بر این باورند که خودکارایی^۱، منبع کنترل^۲، که به استنباط افراد از دلایل اصلی و شالوده ای رخداد‌های زندگیشان اطلاق میشود، و سبک های تدریس^۳ دبیران، تاثیر بسیار شگرفی بر موفقیت آموزشی آنها دارد. بنابراین، هدف این تحقیق اینست تا رابطه ی بین باورهای خودکارایی، منبع کنترل و سبک های تدریس دبیران را در محیط آموزشی ایران که زبان انگلیسی در آن به عنوان زبان بیگانه تلقی می گردد، مورد بررسی قرار دهد. برای این منظور، صد و دو دبیر زبان انگلیسی از دبیرستان های مختلف شهرهای مشهد و زاهدان در این تحقیق شرکت کردند. مجموعه داده های مطالعه حاضر از طریق سه پرسشنامه جمع آوری گردید. پرسشنامه اول جهت تعیین باورهای خودکارایی دبیران، پرسشنامه دوم برای یافتن منبع کنترل آنها و آخرین پرسشنامه به منظور شناخت سبک تدریس غالب در آنها بکار گرفته شد. تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها، رابطه ی معناداری را بین خودکارایی دبیران و منبع کنترل آنها نشان داد. همچنین یافته های این تحقیق آشکار ساخت که خودکارایی دبیران بطور معناداری با سبک های تدریس غالب آنها ارتباط دارد. سرانجام، همبستگی معناداری بین منبع کنترل دبیران و سبک های تدریس غالب آنها پیدا شد. یافته های تحقیق حاضر بخصوص برای اساتید دبیران کاربرد دارد. آنها بهتر است تا باورهای خودکارایی دبیران پیش از خدمت را با بازخورد صحیح و مستمر افزایش دهند.

¹Self-efficacy

²Locus of control

³Teaching styles

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are one of the influential elements for the success of any educational system. To know them better, some of their psychological and personality factors have been the focus of attention in this study. In language teaching contexts, social-cognitive theorists believe that teachers' self-efficacy, locus of control (LOC) – individuals' perceptions about the underlying main causes of life events – and teaching styles have crucial impact on teachers' pedagogical success. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, LOC, and teaching styles in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context of Iran. For this purpose, 102 EFL teachers from different high schools in Mashhad and Zahedan took part in the study. Multiple sets of data for this study came from three questionnaires. The first questionnaire was run to determine the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, the second one to find their LOC and the last one to identify their dominant teaching styles. Analysis of the data showed a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their LOC. Also, the findings revealed that teachers' self-efficacy is significantly related to their dominant teaching styles. Finally, a significant correlation between teachers' LOC and their dominant teaching styles was found. The findings of the present study have implications especially for teacher educators. They should enhance pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs by providing them with proper and continuous feedback.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
LOC	Locus of Control
OSTES	Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TLC	Teacher Locus of Control
TSES	Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale
TSI	Teaching Styles Inventory
TT	Teacher Trainee

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the new educational climate, knowing teachers and their characteristics become dominant and necessary for better teacher education and pedagogical success.

Saha and Dworkin (2009) consider teachers and their teaching behaviors as the central elements for the success of any educational system. Nowadays, teachers are not looked upon as passive figures and only performers of prescribed methods, but are considered as active and decision-makers with different personal characteristics and psychological factors. Most scholars believe that teachers' psychological factors are the key elements affecting their teaching and learning (e.g. Coburn, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1991; Runhaar, 2008; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Veen, Slegers, & van de Ven, 2005, cited in Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011).

Research on foreign-language teacher preparation and development has grown towards complexity and sophistication during the last two decades (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011). Knowing teachers' personal and psychological factors is one of the complex areas of teacher preparation and development research.

As teachers are heavily involved in various teaching and learning processes, understanding their personal characteristics is important.

Sense of self-efficacy, locus of control (LOC) and teaching styles are among those personality factors which have great influence on teachers' orientations towards the educational process. Each of these factors has been the subject of much research and investigations in education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Teacher self-efficacy is one of the important teacher characteristics which has many implications for pedagogical settings. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) stated that teacher self-efficacy or teachers' belief about their capabilities to influence students' engagement, performance and learning has been characterized as a simple idea with significant implications for language teaching. They maintained that a strong sense of efficacy is related to teachers' positive behavior and enhances students' achievement. Teachers experiencing high levels of efficacy tend to be more open to new ideas, invest greater effort in teaching, are less critical of students who make mistakes, and provide assistance to low-achieving students (ibid).

In a similar vein, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) concluded that teacher self-efficacy is related to some behavioral aspects of teachers. First, teachers with high self-efficacy tend to have high expectations for their students. They are likely to set more demanding goals for their students as students have made a success. Second, efficacious teachers are more skillful at classroom management. They exhibit greater levels of planning and organization, adopt activity-based teaching approach and promote learner autonomy. They are less critical of students when they make errors. Third, Teachers with high

efficacy show greater professional commitment. They are passionate for teaching when facing teaching difficulties and demonstrate strong persistence. Fourth, teachers with high teacher efficacy show positive attitudes toward lower-ability students.

As pointed out by the above-mentioned researchers and as it will also be reviewed in the next chapter, many research studies in educational settings suggest that promoting teacher self-efficacy may lead to pedagogical success. As a consequence, knowing teacher self-efficacy and finding its relation with some other teacher characteristics can be fruitful in English language teaching. In an Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) context, no research has studied self-efficacy of teachers in relation to their LOC and teaching styles.

One of the most important factors to take into consideration when working towards improving academic and pedagogical achievement is the sense of control that teachers believe they have over their performance. The concept of LOC was first introduced by Rotter (1954) in explanation of the differences between individuals in how they make attributions about their success or failure. People range from internal to external LOC. Rotter (1966) maintained that individuals with an internal LOC are more likely to be resistant to outside influence, to attain higher academic achievement, and to be more active cognitively. According to LOC theory, teachers with internal LOC are capable of teaching difficult or unmotivated students and make great achievement in their teaching, while teachers with external LOC are less confident in their teaching ability and believe that the environment has more influence on student learning than their teaching ability (ibid).

Most of the Iranian teachers blame students, their parents, management systems, or shortages of educational facilities, for the lack of students' achievement. Teachers who believe they have control over their own teaching situations will behave differently from those who expect that pedagogical success depends on chance and the action of more powerful others like the principals of the schools. Therefore, teachers need to be internally controlled and accept the responsibility of their teaching behaviors in the education system of Iran.

Teaching styles can be considered as enduring personal qualities and behaviors that determine how teachers conduct their classes (Grasha, 1996). Nowadays, there is much emphasis on applying various teaching styles to meet the educational goals. Kulinna and Cothran (2003) believed that the increasing importance of teachers' mastery of different teaching styles is related to a number of developments within education. First, the increasing awareness of the constructivist nature of learning suggests traditional teacher-centered styles may not maximize student learning. A second factor supporting teachers' use of various teaching styles is the increasing diversity of students, and teachers' better understanding of how to meet students' wide variety of learning needs. A third development promoting the use of various teaching styles is the current standards needed to be met for increasing student performance.

Based on what is observed in Iranian high schools, English language teaching is mostly inclined towards direct way of instruction with less reflectivity towards student-centered teaching styles (Kassaiian & Ayatollahi, 2010). There is a need to put this observation to the test and provide some useful information regarding the dominant teaching styles of Iranian EFL teachers.

As teachers' self-efficacy, LOC and teaching styles seem to be related concepts, they were chosen as variables worth investigating in the current study. According to Thoonen et al. (2011), there is some research evidence that psychological factors such as teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, LOC orientations, motivation and autonomy affect teachers' learning and improve their teaching. In another study, Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, and Beatty (2010) contended that a teacher with low efficacy believes that the LOC is well beyond him or her and there is little he or she can do to enhance student learning. Moreover, Kennedy (1991) stated that differences in attitudes and teaching styles do not arise out of vacuum and may be shaped by the degree to which an individual sees himself as in control of his own life with the ability to make decisions that can be effective.

This study seeks to investigate three teachers' personality factors: self-efficacy, LOC, teaching styles, and the relationship between them in pairs. According to the available related literature, no similar research has ever been conducted in an EFL context of Iran.

To partially fill this gap, the present study has three research objectives. The first objective is to investigate the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their LOC. The second aim is to examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles. The third objective is to investigate the relationship between teachers' LOC and their dominant teaching styles.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Nowadays, there is a rich body of research which shows that teachers have the most crucial effect on students' achievement and success (e.g. Saha & Dworkin, 2009; Akbari, Kiany, Imani Naeeni, & Karimi Allvar, 2008). Since teachers play a main role in pedagogical success, there is an urgent need to know them and their personality factors.

Many researchers believe that self-efficacy and LOC constructs have not been studied thoroughly in English as a second language (ESL) and EFL contexts. For example, Murshidi, Konting, Elias, and Fooi (2006) stated that self-efficacy construct had been studied extensively for over two decades, but it had not been explored and examined in a comprehensive way in most countries outside the US. Spector, Sanchez, Siu, Salgado, and Ma (2004; cited in Crothers et al., 2011) believed that most of the researches regarding the LOC theory have been conducted in the western nations and the theory has been criticized for its western bias.

Rose and Medway (1981; cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) stated that teacher self-efficacy is likely to increase if teachers believe that the students' achievement and behavior can be influenced by them (i.e. having internal LOC). Accordingly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) contended that teacher self-efficacy has also been assumed to decrease if teachers believe that factors external to teaching are more important to the students' learning than the influence that a teacher may have. If teachers' self-efficacy and their LOC have such a great effect on each other, finding their relationship in an Iranian EFL context will be rewarding and deserves sufficient consideration.

The results of the present study can greatly contribute to English teacher training programs. For example, the findings can be informative regarding what kinds of teaching styles are most common in high schools and how better to prepare pre-service teachers to exceed the current practice. Traditional teacher training programs usually focus on pedagogical and technical skills. While both of these skills are necessary in preparing the teacher for the classroom, they are not sufficient (Jieying, 2011). Nowadays, it seems essential to deal with personal characteristics of teachers in teacher training programs as well.

The outcomes of this study may be useful for different people such as language policy makers, material developers (especially those who write English teacher training materials), school administrators, teacher educators, English language teachers (both in-service and pre-service teachers), and students.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- Q₁.** Is there any significant relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their locus of control?
- Q₂.** Is there any significant relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their dominant teaching styles?
- Q₃.** Is there any significant relationship between teachers' locus of control and their dominant teaching styles?