The Predictor Roles of Age, Self-efficacy, and Teaching Experience on EFL Teachers' Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

Speaking is one of those stress-prone areas in learning and teaching a foreign language, and speaking anxiety is influenced by a host of factors. This study explored the predictor roles of age, self-efficacy, and teaching experience of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher on their speaking anxiety. Furthermore, it examined the relationship between teachers' gender and their level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English. The participants of the research consisted of 109 male and female Iranian teachers teaching in different language institutes and public schools in three provinces of Iran. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Bandura (1997) and the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale developed by Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) were used in this research as the data collection instruments. The data were analyzed by SPSS software (Version 24) using regression and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that only self-efficacy was a predictor of speaking anxiety. Moreover, the participants' level of self-efficacy and speaking anxiety did not change relying on their gender**.**

Keywords: Age, Self-efficacy, Teaching Experience, Teachers' Speaking Anxiety

Introduction

The most necessary skill for a teacher for surviving in classroom environment is speaking (Frykedal & Chiriac, 2014). Establishing oneself as a knowledgeable and competent teacher and sharing one's ideas and achievements can only be noticed by mastering the speaking skill. Teachers can only share their knowledge and ideas with their students in the classroom by the speaking skill. In terms of being a successful teacher, not only their knowledge, but also their communication skills are essential.

Moreover, it seems that dealing with communicative activities has always been one of the major challenges which nonnative teachers of English confront and mastering speaking, which is a productive skill, has always been one of the most difficult aspects of teaching and learning English for the learners and teachers. In spite of all the efforts and spending years in learning and teaching English, some foreign language teachers have great difficulties in speaking. Some very talented people enter the teaching profession, but they think they are not able to do the job. They may think they cannot speak English well and they may feel anxious to speak English in the classroom without preparation. Only talent is not enough for carrying out a task. Beliefs in oneself in doing the job is an important concept that can affect their performance. According to Demir, Yurtsever, and Çimenli (2015), teachers with low self-efficacy have difficulties while communication and teaching.

Self-efficacy, a term mostly unknown to many nonnative English speakers and teachers and a well-known term in psychology (Mercer, Ryan, & Williams, 2012), has proven to be considerably more important. The notion of self-efficacy was first introduced by Bandura (1984). He is the originator of social cognitive theory (SCT) which is a basic idea of teachers' self-efficacy.

Bandura's (1986, 2001) SCT is a theory of human behavior in the field of psychology. According to Bandura (1997), SCT states that human behavior is shaped and controlled by personal cognition in a social environment. Based on SCT, individuals learn through observation or reinforcement (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is an important construct of SCT. As Bandura (1997) explains, the outcomes people predict depend mostly on their judgments of how satisfactory they will be able to perform in certain situations. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a person's anticipation of their ability to carry out a particular task in a specific context. Self-efficacy is believed to play a key role in the learning process by helping or hindering a learner's progress (Bandura, 1984).

Various definitions of teachers' self-efficacy have been offered. Teachers' self-efficacy as Dembo and Gibson (1985) define it, can be termed as teachers' beliefs about how they can influence the learning of their students. As Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, and Ellett (2008) define it, it is teacher's individual beliefs in their abilities to accomplish particular teaching tasks at a required level of quality in a given situation.

Lots of investigators have focused on the significant growth in teacher self-efficacy especially for language teachers across the world. Many researches have been carried out in this field. One of them was the research by Moslemi and Habibi (2019). They explored

the relationship among Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity, self-efficacy, and critical thinking skills in the process of teaching. The findings of this study revealed that there was a positive relationship between the EFL teachers' professional identity, their self-efficacy, and their critical thinking skills. Also the findings demonstrated that their professional identity could predict their self-efficacy and their critical thinking skills.

In another study, Khalili Sabet, Dehghannezhad, and Tahriri (2018) conducted a research to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy, their personality, and students' motivation. Results of this study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their students' motivation. Shohani, Azizifar, Gowhary, and Jamalinesari (2015), on the other hand, investigated the relationship between novice and experienced teachers' self-efficacy for personal teaching and external influences. They concluded that novice and experienced teachers did not differ in their efficacy levels for personal teaching and external influences.

In another study, Veisi, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) studied the relationship between self-efficacy of Iranian EFL teachers and their gender. Results of this study showed that female teachers had higher self-efficacy than male teachers. In one study, Karabiyik and Korumaz (2014) probed the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy perceptions and job satisfaction level. According to the results, there was a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy perception and job satisfaction level of teachers.

Saeidi and Kalantarypour (2011) conducted a research to investigate whether how teachers believe in their capabilities can have a crucial effect in their job success and their students' achievement. They found that teachers' self-efficacy had an effect on both students' and teachers' motivation and performance and improved students' achievement and low self-efficacy caused poor teaching .

Many different researchers (e.g., Bozkirli, 2019; Chiu, Chang, Chen, Cheng, Li, & Lo, 2010; Karatas, Alci, Bademcioglu, & Ergin, 2016; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999) have highlighted anxiety in the field of education. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, feelings and behaviors in connection with classroom language learning resulting from the exclusivity of the language learning process. In addition, research studies have also emphasized the impact of speaking anxiety on the fields of language achievement (Mede & Karaırmak, 2017). One of the concerns that anxious foreign language learners have is speaking in the language classrooms (Demir, Yurtsever, & Çimenli, 2015).

Language teachers may also have deficiencies in speaking even after years of education and teaching. Anxiety is one of the common problems and psychological barriers hindering them from an impressive speaking (Addison, Clay, Xie, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2003). Kuru (2018) did a research to analyze classroom teaching candidates' speaking self-efficacy in terms of different variables. It was concluded that the upper grade level teacher candidates were more self-efficient in the speaking skill. Regarding the gender, the results showed that there was a significant difference in the speaking self-efficacy of the male teacher candidates in terms of the speech process subdimensions .

Speaking anxiety in language learning in relation to teacher self-efficacy is one of the less researched subject areas. Although speaking is the most anxiety-provoking element in EFL contexts (Marzec-Stawrarska, 2015), there are only a limited number of studies carried out on this issue. Research on the theories of teacher self-efficacy and speaking anxiety is considered to be significant. Although different investigators have conducted some studies on these theories, very limited resources have been found on the area of teacher self-efficacy and speaking anxiety; that is why this study explores whether there is any relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their speaking anxiety.

The current study aimed to scrutinize whether teachers' age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience might predict their speaking anxiety. It also explored whether there is any difference between teachers' gender and their level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English.

Methods

In this study, 109 male and female Iranian EFL teachers working at different institutes and schools in provinces of Tehran, Gilan, and Ardabil were the participants. The participants were selected through convenience sampling. They consisted of 73 female respondents and 28 male respondents. Eight respondents did not mention their gender. They were between 18 to 57 years of age. Their experience of teaching English ranged from one to 29 years.

The following Instruments were included in this study:

Teacher self-efficacy scale. Bandura (1997) constructed a 30-item questionnaire for measuring teacher efficacy in his work. It consisted of seven subscales which included efficacy to influence decision making (2 items), efficacy to influence school resources (1 item), instructional self-efficacy (9 items), disciplinary self-efficacy (3items), efficacy to enlist parental involvement (3 items), efficacy to enlist community involvement (4 items), and efficacy to create a positive school climate (8 items). Each of these items was assessed on a nine-point Likert scale anchored at *nothing*, *very little*, *some influence*, *quite a bit*, and *a great deal*.

This scale provided a multipart picture of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs with a simple and general measure to best assess teacher efficacy. Higher scores described higher self-efficacy in this scale. Based on background information about the Iranian educational context, this questionnaire was localized. More detailed information about the reliability and validity of this instrument has not been found. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine its reliability. The result showed that it is a highly reliable measure to assess teachers' level of self-efficacy with Cronbach's Alpha of .93. Moreover, the reliability for the seven subscales of this instrument was calculated. Table 1 demonstrated the reliability of each subscale.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics of the Seven Subscales of Bandura's (1997) Teacher Self-efficacy Scale

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha
Efficacy to influence decision making	.74
Instructional self-efficacy	.85
Disciplinary self-efficacy	.74
Efficacy to enlist parental involvement	.80
Efficacy to enlist community involvement	.87
Efficacy to create a positive school/institute climate	.91

As shown in Table 1, the reliability of the seven subscales of Bandura's Teacher Self-efficacy Scale was calculated, but one of these subscales, which was efficacy to influence school/institute resources, had only one item; therefore, its reliability could not be calculated.

Public speaking anxiety scale. In order to measure the teachers' speaking anxiety level, the instrument developed by Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) was used to measure cognitive, behavioral, and physiological components of speech anxiety. It consisted of 17 items measured on a five-point Likert scale anchored at *not at all*, *slightly*, *moderately*, *very*, and *extremely*. It included items with negative and positive attitude towards speaking.

In order to calculate the reliability of this instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The reliability of this questionnaire was .72. Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) calculated internal consistency for the three components of this measure: The cognitive subscale (items 1–8) had Cronbach's Alpha of .881, the behavioral subscale (items 9, 12, 15, and 17) had Cronbach's Alpha of .747, and the physiological subscale (items 10, 11,13, 14, and 16) had Cronbach's Alpha of .867. They found that these three components had high internal consistency.

In their study, Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) measured the validity of this instrument. They indicated that this scale had high concurrent validity (r = .835–.845), good convergent validity (r = .350–.511), and good discriminant validity (r = .136–.180). They suggested that it is a highly reliable and valid questionnaire to assess speaking anxiety.

Data Collection Procedures. The process of distributing and retrieving the questionnaires of this study took almost three months. A pack consisting of two different questionnaires was administered to 109 voluntary Iranian EFL teachers working at different teaching contexts in three provinces of Iran without time limitation.

This study was a kind of descriptive study in which there was no treatment. As Hatch and Farhady (1982), explained, "Sinse there is no causal relationship between the two variables, the distinction between independent and dependent variables is not well defined. It is arbitrary to call one or the other the independent variable" (p. 27). Gender, age, and years of teaching experience were taken as moderator variables.

Data were coded and entered into SPSS program version 24 in order to analyze the responses. In order to answer the first reaearch question, which was whether teachers'

age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience predict their speaking anxiety, regression was run. To examine whether teachers' level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English differs with regard to gender which was the second research question, one-way ANOVA was run.

Results

In this section, quantitative findings based on the research questions of the study are discussed. For the first research question, which was whether teachers' age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience could predict their speaking anxiety, regression was used for analysis. Descriptive statistics of the results obtained from regression of variables are summarized in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Based on Correlation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	106	30.66	9.003
Teaching Experience	106	7.46	5.810
Self-efficacy	109	169.1193	33.50697
Speaking Anxiety	109	42.6330	8.29509
Valid N (listwise)	106		

As shown in Table 2, since three participants did not mention their age and teaching experience, they were excluded from this analysis. Thus, the number of participants were 106 in order to analyze these two variables. The results of the descriptive analysis were shown in Table 2. In order to examine whether the above-mentioned variables could predict speaking anxiety, Table 3 presented the regression of the variables.

Table 3. Analysis of Regression of Variables for Examinig the Predictors of Speaking Anxiety[a]

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Regression	659.882	3	219.961	3.356	.30	.09	.063	.022[b]
Residual	6685.023	102	65.539					
Total	7344.906	105						

[a]. Dependant Variable: Speaking anxiety

[b]. Predictors: (Constant), self-efficacy, teaching experience, age

The findings of regression analysis of the data for examining the predictors of speaking anxiety were shown in Table 3. The results obtained from standardized or unstandardized regression coefficients and t-statistic of the variables of age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Unstandardized Coefficients, Standardized Coefficients, and t-statistic of the Variables in Regression for Examinig the Predictors of Speaking Anxiety[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Constant	44.386		6.964	.001
Age	.271	.292	1.200	.233
Teaching Experience	-.167	-.116	-.477	.635
Self-efficacy	-.052	-.212	-2.235	.028

[a]. Dependent Variable: Speaking anxiety

The results of Table 4 indicated that among the three variables of age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience, only self-efficacy could significantly predict speaking anxiety. Age was not significant (B = .271). Teaching experience was also not significant (B = -.167). Only self-efficacy was significant (B = -.052) and its coefficient was negative which showed that the greater the self-efficacy of teachers, the lower their speaking anxiety.

In order to answer the second research question, which was whether there was any gender differences between the level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English in EFL teachers, a one-way ANOVA was run. Since eight participants did not mention their gender, they were excluded from this analysis. Therefore, the number of participants were 101 in order to answer this research question. Descriptive statistics based on gender are presented in Table 5 to summarize the data.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics Based on Gender*

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Self-efficacy	Male	167.5	33.35	28
	Female	170.07	34.52	73
	Total	169.36	34.05	101
Speaking Anxiety	Male	44.21	7.50	28
	Female	41.88	8.57	73
	Total	42.52	8.32	101

As it was seen on Table 5, the mean and standard deviation of teachers' self-efficacy perception and speaking anxiety level were presented. Table 6 aimed at calculating whether there was homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. Covariance matrices for males and females were calculated.

Table 6. Box's M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices Regarding Gender[a]

Box's M	1.705
F	.552
df1	3
df2	47290.252
Sig.	.647

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across qroups.

[a]. Design: Intercept + gender

The results of Table 6 indicated that since the variance-covariance matrices were equal and the null hypothesis assumption was met, they were not significantly different. Since Box's M test was nonsignificant, there was homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. So, the analysis of variance test could be used. As presented in Table 7, in order to examine any significant difference between EFL teachers'self-efficacy and their speaking anxiety regarding their gender, a one-way ANOVA was run.

Table 7. Tests of Between-subjects Effects, One-way ANOVA Results between Self-efficacy and Speaking Anxiety Regarding Gender

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Self-efficacy	133.511[a]	1	133.511	.114	.736
	Speaking Anxiety	110.583[b]	1	110.583	1.607	.208
Intercept	Self-efficacy	2306127.570	1	2306127.570	1970.817	.001
	Speaking Anxiety	149994.385	1	149994.385	2179.701	.001
Gender	Self-efficacy	133.511	1	133.511	.114	.736
	Speaking Anxiety	110.583	1	110.583	1.607	.208
Error	Self-efficacy	115843.658	99	1170.138		
	Speaking Anxiety	6812.605	99	68.814		
Total	Self-efficacy	3012819	101			
	Speaking Anxiety	189567	101			
Corrected Total	Self-efficacy	115977.168	100			
	Speaking Anxiety	6923.188	100			

[a]. R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = -.009)

[b]. R Squared = .016 (Adjusted R Squared = .006)

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table 7 illustrated that there was no significant difference at the .001 level between male and female EFL teachers regarding their level of self-efficacy and speaking anxiety (F1 = .114, p = .736; F2 = 1.607, p = .208).

Discussion

This study aimed at answering two research questions. The aim of the first question of this research was to find whether EFL teachers' age, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience could predict their speaking anxiety. To find answer to this research question, an examination was carried out and the items in the questionnaire were examined. The results of regression analysis proved that EFL teachers' self-efficacy was a predictor of their speaking anxiety. Thus, there can be no doubt that teachers' sense of efficacy is as valuable as teaching skills in speaking in language teaching classrooms. Teachers need to be highly efficacious to control the problems they face in the communicative process. Furthermore, they can overcome public speaking anxiety by perceiving themselves highly efficacious in the teaching process. It is vitally important that they control their anxiety by gradually facing it. Therefore, according to the findings of this study, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs had a massive impact on their preformance and success. The second question of the study aimed to probe the relationship between male and female English teachers' self-efficacy and speaking anxiety. The results of ANOVA across both gender indicated that there was not any difference between male and female EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy and their attitudes towards their speaking anxiety.

Conclusion

The present study was an attempt to explore the effects of some moderator variables such as age, gender, and years of teaching experience of those teachers on their self-efficacy and speaking anxiety. Then, the findings of the current study discovered only self-efficacy as a predictor of EFL teachers' speaking anxiety. These results are in line with the findings of Mede and Karaırmak (2017) and Leeming (2017) which revealed that by increasing self-efficacy, speaking anxiety decreased. Besides a perfectly reasonable proficiency in the foreign language, self-efficacy is a prerequisite for being very good at speaking a foreign language.

Results from the mean comparison showed that gender did not moderate the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their speaking anxiety such that there was not any gender differences in their level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English. In other words, teachers' self-efficacy had a significant relationship with their speaking ability not only for female teachers but also for males. This is in contrast with the findings of the study by Veisi, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) which revealed that female teachers' self-efficacy scores was more than those of male teachers. This finding is also inconsistent with the findings of the study by Kuru (2018) which revealed that there was a significant difference in the speaking self-efficacy between males and females.

The current study did not investigate the difference between teachers' educational background and their level of self-efficacy and anxiety in speaking English. Therefore, for gathering more detailed information, future research can be conducted measuring diverse educational contexts wherein teachers have been graduated. Recommendations for future research can also include investigating the effects of grade level of students

on the speaking anxiety and self-efficacy of EFL teachers. Thus, further research can consider the feedback that teachers receive from their students which may be a factor that affects the level of self-efficacy and speaking anxiety of them. One more suggestion for future research is that it can be replicated in another context to consider whether the same information will be gained.

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