



Teacher Self-efficacy Research in English as Foreign Language Contexts: A Systematic Review

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Teacher self-efficacy beliefs (TSE) are recognised as a key component of successful learning and teaching. However, this construct seems to be under-investigated in the field of language teaching. This systematic review aims to examine the state of English as a foreign language (EFL) TSE research published from 2002 to 2017. Twenty seven studies were included and reviewed in terms of (i) contexts, (ii) participants, (iii) focus, (iv) methodology, and (v) main findings. Results show that a quantitative approach was dominant among the reviewed studies, the majority of which took practicing teachers as their participants. Most of the studies were carried out in Middle Eastern countries, and there was a paucity of TSE research in other EFL contexts. TSE research in the area mainly focused on the influence of different factors on TSE, and correlations between TSE and teacher behaviours and emotion. However, there was a lack of evidence for the impact of EFL teacher self-efficacy on learner outcomes. The review also shows the dearth of TSE scales or research that examines EFL specific teaching tasks. Finally, the review provides some outline of directions for future EFL teacher self-efficacy research.

Keywords: teacher self-efficacy, TSE, English as a foreign language, EFL, systematic review

Introduction

In mainstream education, much has been written about the concept of teacher self-efficacy, which refers to teachers' judgements about their ability to perform certain teaching tasks in a specific teaching context. It has been widely acknowledged that teacher self-efficacy is one of the most important constructs in teachers' belief systems that influences the failure and success of different educational aspects. While there were some previous reviews analysing the key issues of teacher efficacy research (e.g., Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), those reviews, however, presented teacher efficacy research in general educational settings rather than highlighting specificity—the crucial aspect of this construct in a certain domain or context, for example, in English as foreign language (EFL) teaching contexts.

The literature has recently seen an unprecedented surge in published research into different cognitive aspects of English teachers in EFL contexts due to the widespread popularity of this language. Notwithstanding these developments and the importance of teacher self-efficacy beliefs as a key construct in teachers' belief system, no identified reviewing attempt has specifically targeted at exploring the present status of teacher efficacy research in EFL contexts. The systematic review project reported here addresses this research gap by providing a descriptive picture and current issues with TSE research in the

area. The review also outlines directions for future relevant research. The researcher will first present the background, the purposes and methods of this systematic review.

Background

Self-efficacy, an essential construct in the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1997), is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment” (p. 3). Albert Bandura (1986, 1997) claimed that individuals have the power to exercise some control over their living and working environments, although their behaviours may be influenced by environmental factors. Efficacy beliefs have been reported as an important predictor of how much effort individuals make and how well they persevere when coping with obstacles, and how effectively people can regulate their motivation, choice and achievement (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014). Bandura (1997) postulated that individuals evaluate their self-efficacy by interpreting the information from four primary sources: mastery experience (their success or failure in performing a specific task), vicarious experience (their observation of others’ performance), social persuasion (positive or negative feedback from others), and psychological and affective states (their affective states such as stress, anxiety, and excitement when performing tasks). Among those sources, mastery experience is suggested as the most powerful one that influences the formation of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2016).

Given the significant role of self-efficacy, these beliefs have been intensively investigated in various fields, particularly in educational settings (Schunk et al., 2014). Researchers have accumulated substantial evidence highlighting the influence of efficacy beliefs, especially the critical role of teacher self-efficacy on the teaching and learning process (Bandura, 1997; Morris et al., 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy is defined as “the teacher’s beliefs in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). In their literature review, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) promoted teacher self-efficacy as an influential factor that may determine failure or success in all aspects of education. For example, teachers with high efficacy beliefs seem to make more effort and demonstrate better planning and organizing skills (Pajares, 1992). Research suggests a positive association between these beliefs with teacher job satisfaction (Moè, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010), their teaching commitments (Coladarci, 1992), and their enthusiasm and willingness to support students (Allinder, 1994; Teresa & Kimberley, 2012). The findings of several studies have also yielded evidence about the linkages between teacher efficacy beliefs with students’ motivation (Lazarides, Buchholz, & Rubach, 2018; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), learners’ satisfaction (Pan, 2014), and learner’s achievements (Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, & Rintamaa, 2013; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006).

TSE is defined as domain, task, and context specific rather than a general construct of self-confidence (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The implication of this view is the need for domain-specific research that investigates teachers’ context-specific judgments about their specific teaching behaviors (Klassen et al., 2011). TSE has been intensively researched in different subject areas, for example, in maths and science teaching, and several decades ago the research field was already about to “stand on the verge of maturity” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 202). However, this is not the case for the English as a foreign language field. Klassen et al. (2011) claimed that research on TSE in second/foreign language teaching contexts is still underrepresented within the self-efficacy research literature. The need for TSE research in the EFL area is not only because of the significant role of these beliefs to failure or success of education, but also because of the need to investigate TSE in the EFL field as a unique setting (Chiang, 2008; Faez & Karas, 2017). Faez and Karas (2017) argued that the uniqueness of the EFL field is reflected in the role of English language as both the content and the means of instruction. In EFL contexts, using English in classrooms is valuable and sometimes the only opportunities for

learners to gain exposure to their target language (Yashima, 2002). As a result, EFL teachers carry “the dual burden of creating activities for students in which both the content and the language to deliver the content constitute the core of the lesson” (Chiang, 2008, p. 1274).

An initial search (June, 2017) in the literature did not identify any previous systematic reviews that specifically deal with the construct of teacher self-efficacy in EFL contexts, except for a review by Faez and Karas (2017) that only focused on the linkage between English teachers’ self-efficacy and their English language competence. Therefore, conducting a systematic review would be appropriate, to show a more comprehensive picture of TSE research in this field. Following a systematic review by Lawson, Çakmak, Gündüz, and Busher (2015), this review examines the studies on EFL teachers’ sense of efficacy in the last 15 years to answer the following questions:

1. Where were the studies conducted?
2. Who were the main participants of the studies?
3. What were the aims of these studies?
4. What methodology and methods were used?
5. What were the main findings?
6. What are the directions for future EFL teacher self-efficacy research?

Methods

Systematic review is a research method itself through rigorous examination of relevant studies according to explicit criteria to answer specific questions (Torgerson, 2003). However, in education field, this term is used loosely (Bearman et al., 2012). This review is guided by different versions of systematic review, and the design has been constructed loosely around the method outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). This systematic literature review involves the following steps:

1. Defining the parameters, questions and choosing key words, inclusion & exclusion criteria, and databases
2. Carrying out the literature search
3. Screening the references
4. Assessing the remaining studies against inclusion and exclusion criteria
5. Assessing the quality
6. Extracting the data into a summary table of information
7. Synthesising the studies to answer the research questions
8. Writing up the report

The purpose of this review is to examine the state of existing research on TSE in EFL contexts and identify possible gaps for future research. This purpose helped to define the above questions and the review protocol, which was submitted for ethics approval from an Australian university in April 2017.

The key search terms used were “teacher self-efficacy”, or “efficacy”, or “TSE”, and “English as a foreign language”, or “English teaching”, or “EFL”. The reviewed studies were identified through popular electronic databases, namely, the Web of Science; Science Direct; Scopus; ERIC; Advance Google Scholar, and an Australian university library site. By June 2017, the literature search had identified 429 citations whose titles and abstracts then were screened against the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria:

- research that focused on teacher self-efficacy beliefs
- research carried out in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context

- research that focused on EFL non-native teachers’ beliefs
- research reported in English peer reviewed academic journals whose full text can be accessed online
- academic publications from 2002 to 2017

Exclusion criteria:

- studies before 2002
- studies with English native teacher participants
- studies with focus on EFL learners’ self-efficacy only

This initial screening identified 101 citations, which were further refined and duplicate references were removed. There were 49 articles remaining for full-document examination against the following criteria of quality appraisal:

- the internal methodological coherence of studies based upon the study itself
- the journal or the source where the reports were published
- the level of English-language-teaching specificity of the studies

This process left 27 studies in 31 reports to be included in the in-depth review. The excluded articles are mainly from less qualified sources, for example, non-anonymous peer review procedia or questionable journals where the authors need to pay for publishing their work (Renandya, 2014). The information of those reports was extracted into a summary table with the following headings: (1) Citation, (2) Contexts, (3) Participants, (4) Research questions, (5) Methods, (6) Findings, and (7) Notes. In the in-depth review, the collected information was synthesised to answer the research questions.

Findings

National Contexts of the Reviewed Studies

Figure 1 shows information about the origins of the studies included in the review. The interesting finding is the dominance of research in Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Iran, Turkey, and Oman), with more than 80% studies included in the review (n= 22). There exists a lack of variety in EFL contexts in which TSE has been investigated. A surprising finding of this review is that there is no identified study in Africa and mainland China, the largest EFL context.

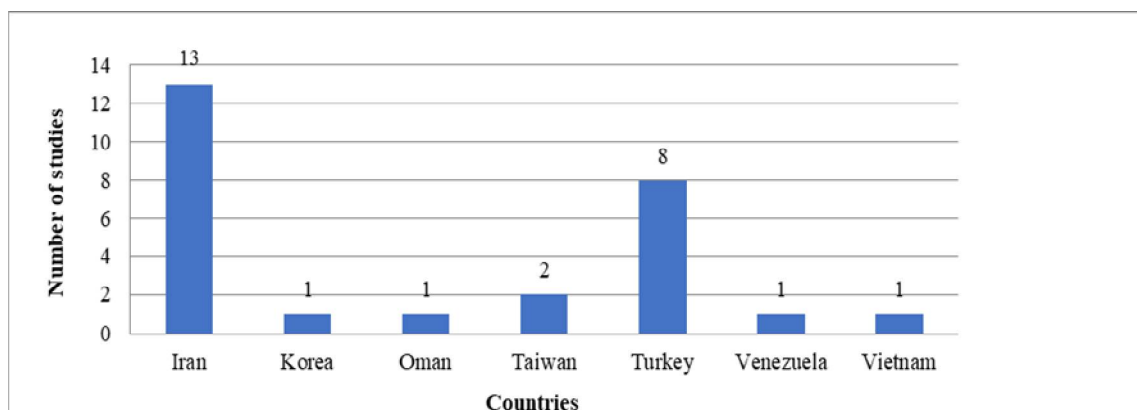


Figure 1. Origins of EFL TSE studies conducted in 2002-2017 (N=27).

The Participants in the Reviewed Studies

Figure 2 presents the distribution of participants in TSE research among EFL contexts. The results from the current study show that the majority of reviewed studies focused on practicing teachers rather than on student teachers. In total, 18 out of 27 studies (67%) focus on practicing teachers (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Phan & Locke, 2015; Wyatt, 2010, 2013), while only nine studies investigate prospective teachers' efficacy beliefs (e.g., Atay, 2007; Liaw, 2009).

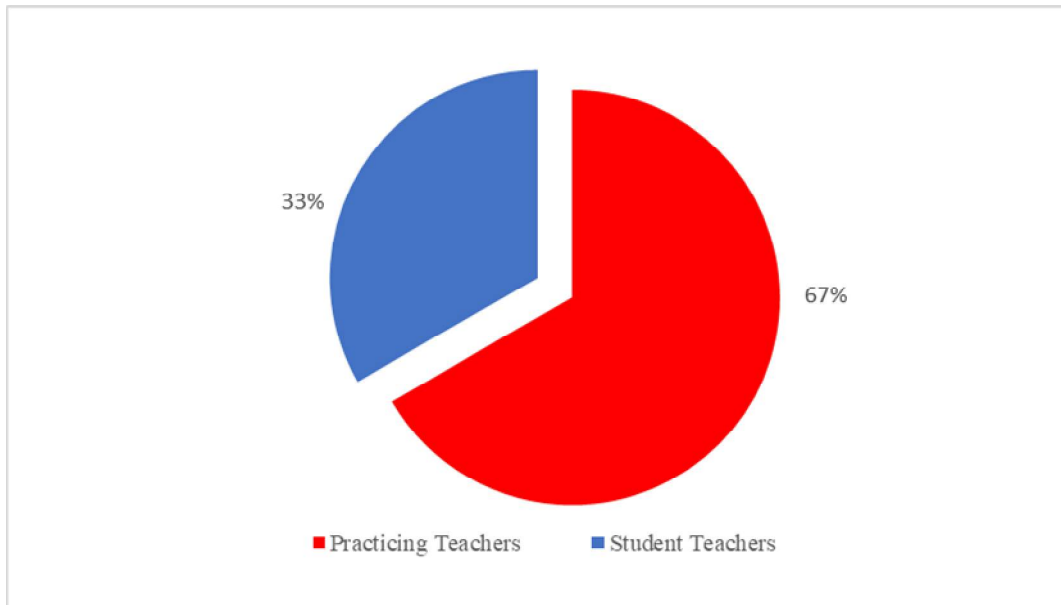


Figure 2. Distribution of participants in EFL TSE studies conducted in 2002-2017 (N=27).

Main Aims of the Reviewed Studies

This section of the study aims to provide a general view of the main themes emerging from the reviewed studies. There were five themes which reflected the primary focus of TSE research in the field. Those are the relationships between TSE and other teacher behaviour and belief variables, the development of TSE beliefs over time, sources of TSE information, the influence of contextual factors on TSE beliefs, and the relationships between TSE beliefs and learner outcomes (Table 1). Those themes are relative and not absolute because of their slight overlap, for example, between the development of TSE beliefs, sources of TSE information and the effects of contextual factors on TSE beliefs.

TABLE 1
Main Themes and Outcomes of TSE Research Conducted in the EFL Field from 2002 to 2017

Themes	Sub-themes	Remarkable outcomes	Examples
Links between TSE and other teacher variables	TSE & teachers' self-reported English language proficiency	Positive correlation between teacher efficacy beliefs and their self-reported English proficiency (r values range from .2 to .4).	Chacón (2005); Choi and Lee (2016); Eslami and Fatahi (2008)
	TSE & Emotional Intelligence	TSE correlated positively with EQ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> r=.526, p<.05 r=.5, p<.01 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moafian and Ghanizadeh (2009) Rastegar and Memarpour (2009)
	TSE & English instructional practice	Inconsistent results were found for a correlation between TSE and their instructional practice.	Chacón (2005); Karimi et al. (2016)
	TSE & teachers' reflective practice	TSE correlated positively with reflective teaching practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> r=.27, p<.01 r=.38, p<.01 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Babaei and Abednia (2016) Moradkhani et al. (2017)
	TSE & teacher burnout	Dimensions of teacher burnout correlated negatively with subscales of TSE at p<.01: e.g., depersonalization is negatively correlated with instructional strategies (-.53); and with efficacy in student engagement (-.51) and efficacy in classroom management (-.50). Emotional exhaustion correlated negatively with efficacy in classroom management (-.45), efficacy in instructional strategies (-.49) and efficacy in student engagement (-.49).	Khani and Mirzaee (2015);
	TSE & teachers' self-regulation	Positive correlation between self-regulation and sense of self-efficacy (r=.75, p<.05).	Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013)
	TSE & Democratic values	Positive correlations between TSE beliefs and teachers' democratic values (r=.228, p<.01).	Zehir Topkaya and Yavuz (2011)
	Under interventions (in experimental/ quasi-experimental studies)		
Change in TSE over time	Among in-service teachers		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-service professional development (PD) program on TSE Participation in professional learning communities (PLC) on in-service TSE 	PD enhanced teacher self-efficacy beliefs (mean difference between treatment group and control group: 17.1, (p<.05) at post-test) with effects that were stable over time (with similar results at delayed post-test). PLC brought about improvement in not only pedagogical self-efficacy but also perceived language proficiency among both novice and experienced teachers.	Karimi (2011) Zonoubi et al. (2017)

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Themes	Sub-themes	Remarkable outcomes	Examples
	Among pre-service teachers		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided practice and group discussions • Peer coaching 	There were significant changes in prospective teachers' level of teaching confidence (pre- & post-test mean difference was 21.77, $p < .05$). Peer coaching played a crucial role in improving student teachers' efficacy beliefs; significant TSE mean difference between experimental group and control group = 4.18 ($p < .01$).	Chiang (2008) Goker (2006)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research project 	A significant increase in participant's teaching confidence in three subscales of student engagement ($t(59) = 9.02$, $p < .001$), instructional strategies ($t(59) = 9.25$, $p < .001$), and classroom management ($t(59) = 11.10$, $p < .001$).	Cabaroglu (2014)
	No interventions		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through practicum 	Pre-service teacher efficacy beliefs were significantly influenced by the practicum as their first experience with classroom reality. Through the practicum, the sub-constructs of efficacy beliefs were developed unevenly.	Atay (2007); Gülru Yüksel (2014)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through in-service training programs 	Different patterns of growth in TSE were uncovered. The TSE growth benefited greatly by various psychological and cognitive factors such as teachers' growth in practical knowledge, English proficiency, their research engagement (through a constructivist training program), and their healthy self-doubts and reflective qualities. Flexibility in both materials, curriculum and school organization helped to provide space for TSE to grow.	Wyatt (2010, 2013)
Sources of TSE and the influence of contextual factors		The findings confirm Bandura's hypothesis for four sources of information that contribute to formation of self-efficacy beliefs, especially the role of mastery experiences. However, the power of those sources can vary in different contexts and cultures. For example, under the influence of Vietnamese contextual and cultural factors, social persuasion (rather than mastery experience as widespread beliefs) appeared to be the most influential source of efficacy information (Phan & Locke, 2015).	Atay (2007); Gülru Yüksel (2014); Phan and Locke (2015, 2016); Phan (2016)
Relationships between TSE beliefs and learner outcomes		Positive but insignificant correlation between TSE and learner satisfaction	Rashidi and Moghadam (2014)

The majority of the reviewed study (more than 50%) focused on exploring the relationships between TSE and other EFL teacher variables such as teachers' English language proficiency (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Choi & Lee, 2016); Emotional Intelligence (e.g., Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009); instructional practice (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Karimi, Abdullahi, & Khaled Haghighi, 2016); teachers' reflective practice (e.g., Babaei & Abednia, 2016; Moradkhani, Raygan, & Moein, 2017); teacher burnout (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015); and teachers' self-regulation (Ghonsooly & Ghanizadeh, 2013).

Another important focus of the research in the field was to investigate how efficacy beliefs change over time in longitudinal studies. Among these studies, there was a group of research studies exploring how EFL teacher efficacy beliefs were affected by certain interventions, such as in-service professional development programs (Karimi, 2011; Ortaçtepe & Akyel, 2015); participation in professional learning communities among in-service teachers (Zonoubi, Eslami Rasekh, & Tavakoli, 2017); guided practice and group discussions among pre-service teachers (Liaw, 2009); peer coaching among student teachers (Goker, 2006); and action research projects among pre-service teachers (Cabaroğlu, 2014). The other group of studies aimed to describe the development of teacher efficacy beliefs under no intervention, for example, through a three-year in-service program (Wyatt, 2010, 2013); or through a practicum (e.g., Atay, 2007; Gülru Yüksel, 2014).

The third focus of the research in the field was to identify sources of information that contribute to the formation of efficacy beliefs (e.g., Gülru Yüksel, 2014; Phan & Locke, 2015). The fourth major aim of the studies in the field was to investigate the influence of contextual factors on teacher efficacy beliefs, for example, the influence of locally cultural values on self-efficacy beliefs of a group of Vietnamese EFL teachers (Phan & Locke, 2016); or the influence of teaching environment on teachers' efficacy beliefs (Atay, 2007; Phan, 2016). The fifth research theme in the field was the relationship between TSE beliefs and learner outcomes. However, there is one identified study in this category exploring the correlations between TSE beliefs and learner satisfaction (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014).

Research Methods Used in the Reviewed Studies

Table 2 provides an overview of the methods used in the reviewed studies. Researchers in the field used a wide range of research approaches and diverse data collection tools, especially in the qualitative studies. Fifty percent of the studies employed quantitative approaches (n=14), with 39% using mixed methods approaches (n= 11) and 11% employing exclusively qualitative approaches (n=3). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) noted the overwhelming neglect of qualitative TSE research in their review. Similarly, a more recent review of TSE showed a lack of qualitative research (only 8.7%) (Klassen et al., 2011).

TABLE 2

Methods in TSE Research Conducted in EFL Settings in 2002-2017

Research approach	Data collection instruments	Examples
Quantitative (n=14)	Survey	Zehir Topkaya and Yavuz (2011); Babaei and Abednia (2016); Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013)
Qualitative (n=3)	Focus group, semi-structured personal interviews, non-participation observation, personal journals,	Phan (2016); Phan and Locke (2015, 2016)
	Personal interviews, reflective journals, discussion	Zonoubi et al. (2017)
	Non-participant observation, field notes, semi-structured personal interview, participants' practically oriented assignments and feedback from lecturers	Wyatt (2010, 2013)
Mixed methods (n=11)	Survey + focus group	Atay (2007)
	Survey + personal interviews	Liaw (2009); Chacon (2005)
	Survey + video recording + peer discussion	Goker (2006)
	Survey + reflective diary + open-ended questionnaire	Cabaroğlu (2014); Gülru Yüksel (2014)

The result of the current studies shows an increase in the proportion of qualitative and mixed methods, although quantitative studies are still dominant. Interestingly, there was a close correlation between the aims of the studies and the research approaches. For example, 79% of quantitative studies ($n=11$) were cross-sectional survey studies that focused on investigating correlations between TSE and other teacher variables. Nearly three quarters of the mixed methods studies ($n=7$) aimed to explore how teacher efficacy beliefs change over time in longitudinal research. In these mixed methods studies, the quantitative components mainly focused on measuring the level of pedagogical confidence among teacher participants at different time points, for example, before and after a year-long practicum (Atay, 2007; Cabaroglu, 2014), and the qualitative components focused on explaining possible changes in participants' efficacy beliefs. Another noticeable methodological feature of the reviewed studies was a heavy reliance on the Ohio Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Over three quarters (72%) of quantitative components in quantitative and mixed methods studies employed this scale with little or no adaptation to measure English teacher self-efficacy.

Main Outcomes of the Reviewed Studies

This section presents a general overview of the main outcomes of the reviewed studies, which are categorised according to the research themes (see Table 1).

The first theme reflects the association between EFL teacher self-efficacy beliefs and other teacher variables. For example, Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013) reported a very strong correlation between EFL teachers' pedagogical confidence and their self-regulation ($r=.75$). Accordingly, the more English teachers equip themselves with self-regulatory skills, the more confidence they gain about their teaching capabilities. Self-efficacy beliefs were also reported as an important factor that alleviated Iranian EFL teacher burnout (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). In the Venezuelan context, Chacón (2005) found a positive correlation between teachers' self-reported language proficiency and their perceived efficacy. The result was confirmed in Iran (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008) and South Korea (Choi & Lee, 2016), although these correlations were low or moderate (ranging from .2 to .4). Choi and Lee (2016) noted that efficacy beliefs and English proficiency are "interdependent, magnifying each other's impact on the teaching behavior" (p. 49). These studies emphasize the importance of preparing EFL teachers, who need to be competent in both linguistic and pedagogical capabilities.

Recognizing the importance of teacher efficacy beliefs, EFL teacher educators have turned their attention toward developing different interventions to enhance the pedagogical confidence of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers through different professional development activities. For example, in Turkey, research demonstrated significant gains of teaching efficacy among EFL student teachers who were involved in action research projects (Cabaroglu, 2014) or peer coaching activities (Goker, 2006) through their training programs.

The accumulated evidence in the field has not simply confirmed the role of teacher self-efficacy beliefs but challenged the common assumption that a lower level of efficacy is always problematic. For example, in a multiple-case study in a Middle Eastern context, Wyatt (2010, 2013) showed that English teachers may have a low level of confidence in certain aspects of their practice in the implementation of EFL teaching reforms (e.g., teaching English to young learners). However, those efficacy doubts or uncertainty (Wheatley, 2002) were actually highly beneficial when they encouraged those teachers to reflect on their current practice, learn new practical knowledge, and improve their teaching. Those are the core elements of continuing professional self-development (Borg, 2006). In this process, positive teacher efficacy results from rather than leading to improvement in teaching performance. The evidence for the benefits of efficacy doubts has challenged a simplistic but popular assumption that more positive teacher self-beliefs lead to better performance and success in spiralling cycles and vice versa (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Those outcomes have also suggested the re-conceptualisation of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and how these beliefs might grow with the central role of reflection and learning (Wyatt, 2014, 2016).

For sources of self-efficacy, the results of the reviewed research in EFL contexts are consistent with those in the general education field (e.g., Morris et al., 2016) and Bandura's (1997) hypothesis of four sources of efficacy, including mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion; and physiological and affective states. Mastery experience continued to be reported as the most influential source of information that contributed to the formation of teacher efficacy beliefs (Atay, 2007; Gülru Yüksel, 2014). However, under the influence of locally contextual and cultural factors, social persuasion appears to be a more powerful source of efficacy information among Vietnamese EFL teachers in a qualitative study by Phan and Locke (2015).

Discussion and Implications for Future TSE Research in the EFL Field

This systematic review has provided a descriptive picture of TSE research conducted in EFL contexts. The results of the review are consistent with the assertion that TSE plays an important role in educational settings (Schunk et al., 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Based on the aforementioned findings, the issues and directions for future research in the field will be discussed.

Most of TSE research in the field was conducted in Middle Eastern countries. There is a critical need for EFL teacher self-efficacy beliefs being investigated in a wider variety of different national and cultural settings. This need results from the diversity of EFL contexts, where 90% world population live (<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>). This considerable variation across different cultural and national settings may lead to different functioning and effects of teacher self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2002; Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). TSE research in a wider variety of locales will test Bandura's theory in more diverse contexts and enhance our understanding of how cultural variations may influence EFL teacher self-efficacy (see Phan & Locke (2015, 2016) for interesting discussions on the influence of Vietnamese cultural values on the efficacy beliefs of participating teachers).

For participants, the results of this review support those of Klassen et al. (2010), who reported the dominance of TSE research among practicing teachers. In their review, pre-service teachers were the target of only over one-quarter of the studies investigating efficacy beliefs (64 out of 218 studies). Bandura (1997) postulated that efficacy belief is most malleable early in learning stages, and that once established, it appears to be somewhat resistant to change. As a result, it is important to learn how efficacy beliefs are formed and sustained before they become stable and incorporated into the belief system. This idea also suggests that it is easier to affect TSE beliefs when they are in the formative process, for example, in teacher preparation programs, rather than when teachers become experienced in the classroom. It is essential to conduct more research on pre-service or novice teacher self-efficacy, because evidence from recent research shows that low efficacy beliefs among prospective teachers may lead to their career pessimism (McLennan, McIlveen, & Perera, 2017), even their decision to leave their careers (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016).

Bandura's theory and his initial hypotheses are useful as a theoretical framework to investigate EFL teachers' pedagogical confidence. Nevertheless, researchers in the field have appeared to focus on confirming Bandura's hypotheses rather than questioning and challenging them. For example, in their qualitative study where data analysis was claimed to be an inductive coding process, Phan and Locke (2015) employed Bandura's four self-efficacy sources as prescribed themes. Their result suggested those four sources only. Similar results were also reported by Gülru Yüksel (2014), whose data coding process had been guided by an a priori frame of those sources. In addition, empirical studies sometimes show evidence that is inconsistent with Bandura's hypotheses of self-efficacy beliefs. For example, he hypothesizes that four sources of information contribute to the formation of teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) reported that there were only weak effects of those sources on the efficacy beliefs of teachers participating in their study. There is a need for future research in the field using more inductive, open data analysis (i.e., the open coding process

suggested by Creswell (1998)) to identify other potential sources of information contributing to teacher efficacy beliefs. For example, in mainstream education, Wang, Tan, Li, Tan, and Lim (2016) found an impact of teachers' knowledge about learners or rapport with students on teacher self-efficacy.

For research methods, researchers in the field have responded to the call for more diverse methodological approaches to explore teacher efficacy beliefs in earlier TSE reviews in general educational settings (Klassen et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), with a considerable number of studies adopting mixed methods and longitudinal designs (e.g., Atay, 2007; Cabaroglu, 2014). However, quantitative research with cross-sectional surveys continues to dominate the field. Discussing the limitations of a quantitative approach, for example, the potential inaccuracy of survey items in measuring efficacy beliefs, Wyatt (2014) argued that TSE researchers need to adopt more contextually-specific, qualitative and mixed-methods approach for triangulation and more valuable insights. Another methodological issue in the field was the over-reliance on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, or TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), with little or no adaptation. It should be noted that TSES is a domain-general rather a domain specific scale (Morris et al., 2016). This scale measures TSE through three factors of student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. As a result, it may not capture the domain- and task-specific nature of TSE in EFL settings, for example, teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach grammar implicitly or to provide corrective feedback (Faez & Karas, 2017). This finding shows a critical need for EFL-specific scales (e.g., the ELT Context-Specific Teacher Efficacy Instrument developed by Akbari and Tavassoli (2014)) that can measure EFL teachers' judgements about their ability to perform different English teaching tasks. This argument also suggests the need for more EFL-specific research (not just a measuring instrument) that examines teacher confidence relevant to different EFL teaching tasks, for example, EFL speaking and writing teaching. This review identified only one study (Karimi et al., 2016) with a specific focus on TSE beliefs in teaching reading.

In their research aims, most studies in the field investigated correlation of TSE with other EFL teacher variables such as English proficiency, emotional intelligence, or instructional strategies. However, there was a paucity of evidence for a connection between EFL teacher self-efficacy and English learners' motivation or their achievements, as the significance of TSE for this is assumed in mainstream education. Only one study in an Iranian context by Rashidi and Moghadam (2014) reported a positive but insignificant correlation between TSE beliefs and learners' satisfaction. Additional research to support the connection between EFL teacher self-efficacy and learner outcomes is needed.

On the one hand, researchers in the field need to continue collecting evidence about the linkages between EFL teacher efficacy beliefs, their teaching performance, and learner outcomes. On the other hand, more research focus needs to be placed on the development of teacher efficacy beliefs, especially that of prospective and novice teachers or practicing teachers in the implementation of EFL teaching reforms, where they are given new teaching tasks (e.g., Wyatt, 2010, 2013). With this direction, research in the field will not only be more beneficial to EFL teachers' professional development but also provide evidence to refine and reconceptualise TSE beliefs (Wheatley, 2002, 2005)

Conclusion

The contribution of this systematic review is that it has provided the first descriptive picture of TSE research in the EFL teaching field. The reviewed studies have highlighted teacher self-efficacy as an important construct that influences EFL teachers' practice and emotions. However, there is a conspicuous absence of evidence about the association between this construct with learner outcomes. The community also needs more research that examines language teachers' task-specific beliefs at their early stages of formation. Finally, this paper argues for more diversity in TSE research in terms of methodology and contexts.

It should be acknowledged that several limitations might influence the results of this systematic review. Firstly, the study is not exhaustive, as the potential citations were peer-reviewed articles identified in

some databases, although those are most influential in the field. Moreover, relevant research may have been missed because of the limited choice of search terms. However, a thorough search for all TSE research in EFL contexts would be beyond the author's resources, and the author is confident that the included articles can represent the current state of TSE research in EFL settings. Future reviewers with more resources can expand their databases and their choice of research works (e.g., including unpublished theses, non-English publications) to provide a more complete picture of TSE research in the field.

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