**EFL Classroom Practices in Relation to Teachers’ Perceptions about Self-Efficacy, Teaching Experience, and Native Language**

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**Abstract**

In Israel, literacy in English as a foreign language (EFL) is necessary for entering and succeeding in higher education and business, and for gaining access to social opportunities (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). However, many middle school students lack adequate EFL literacy skills, which may indicate a gap between how EFL literacy is being taught in elementary school classrooms and EFL literacy instruction theory. Teachers’ self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing, their number of years of teaching experience, and/or their native language may influence teachers’ selection of the components of EFL literacy instruction. This study examines these components as they are perceived by teachers in relation to the variables of self-efficacy, teaching experience, and native language. The participants were 167 EFL elementary school teachers. Each participant completed and submitted an anonymous online questionnaire regarding EFL teaching in elementary school. Findings showed that teachers seem to have high self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading, in contrast to previous research (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Furthermore, the relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy and their instructional approach was found to be weak. Results showed that years of teaching experience and the teacher’s native language did not influence their selection of EFL literacy instructional components or their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading. The results also showed that all groups of teachers demonstrated limited knowledge of theory related to literacy instruction, which leads us to conclude that providing this theoretical knowledge to EFL elementary school teachers with English and other language backgrounds and with varying years of experience may lead to more effective literacy instruction.

 **Keywords:** English as a foreign language (EFL), teacher perceptions, self-efficacy, teaching experience, native language, theory-based literacy instruction

**Introduction**

Schools in Israel emphasize the acquisition of literacy in English as a foreign language (EFL) because it is a requirement for entry into higher education and is crucial for international communication, business, and travel (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). Children are expected to acquire some EFL reading ability by the end of the sixth grade. However, the literacy level achieved by many students does not enable them to improve their English skills through independent reading by the time they finish elementary school. This may be the result of a gap between EFL literacy theory and practice. Inadequate literacy instruction in elementary school may be due to, among other reasons, a lack of awareness of the theory-based teaching components required for effective literacy instruction (Moats, 2014), specifically a low sense of teachers’ self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading to all children, including those experiencing reading difficulties (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Borg, 2003; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). In addition, studies have shown that years of teaching experience (Gatbonton, 2008; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013) and teachers’ native language (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002) may influence EFL teachers’ selection of literacy instruction components.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy in EFL**

The self-efficacy of EFL teachers was examined as part of a larger study that also examined teachers’ perceptions, teacher-trainers’ views, and curricula as reflected in textbooks (Fuchs, 2017). In this context, self-efficacy is defined as a belief on the part of the teacher about his or her capability to succeed in teaching (Mills & Allen, 2007; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). These beliefs influence the teacher’s classroom practices, which may influence student achievement (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Teachers’ beliefs impact both perception and judgment of what occurs in the classroom. Moreover, during teacher training, teachers’ beliefs determine how they understand and transform new information into classroom practices. Thus, examining and understanding teachers’ self-efficacy can improve teacher training programs (Johnson, 1994).

EFL teachers’ self-efficacy has been found to impact their classroom practices regarding teaching grammar, reading, and writing (Borg, 2003). Many of these teachers have strong theoretical beliefs, leading them to adopt and stick to a specific methodological approach in their teaching, regardless of current trends (Borg, 2003), and these beliefs determine teachers’ self-efficacy. By providing alternative theoretical beliefs, changes in literacy instruction practices in the classroom may occur.

When teachers perceive themselves to be teaching successfully, it strengthens their self-efficacy. On the other hand, unsuccessful teaching experiences weaken a teacher’s self-efficacy (Mills & Allen, 2007; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Research has shown that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to incorporate new approaches in their teaching than those with low self-efficacy (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). In addition, teachers’ sense of self-efficacy guides their perceptions of children’s linguistic knowledge in literacy development and may influence the instructional components they choose to teach (Mills & Allen, 2007; Mills, 2011).

Teachers’ subject knowledge is likely to have a significant influence on their self-efficacy in EFL teaching and has been shown to be a key factor in effective teaching. Efficient first language (L1) literacy instruction is performed by teachers who possess specific and accurate knowledge about language and literacy acquisition. These teachers are able to use this knowledge in their classroom practices (Piasta, Conner, Fishman, & Morrison, 2009). EFL teachers with low self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction, who may lack this language knowledge, have been shown to seek out programs that would offer them accurate, explicit knowledge about language and literacy acquisition. This new knowledge may allow them to change their beliefs about their ability to teach reading, thus raising their self-efficacy (Kahn-Horwitz, 2015).

In this study, we examined Israeli EFL teachers’ reports of self-efficacy with regard to teaching reading to all students, including those with reading difficulties. We found that a teacher’s selection of teaching components for literacy instruction is correlated with the teacher’s level of self-efficacy.

**Novice versus Experienced EFL Teachers**

Teaching experience is a factor that should be examined when considering the extent to which teachers engage in theory-based literacy instruction. A teacher is considered to be a novice for at least the first four to five years of teaching, after which they will be considered to be experienced (Gatbonton, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Tsui, 2009). Novice teachers of English as a second language were found to possess many of the skills in some areas of pedagogical knowledge thatexperienced teachers had. This could indicate that these skills can be acquired within a short period of teaching time (Gatbonton, 2008). However, when it came to applying the skills, novice teachers were shown to lack knowledge compared to more experienced teachers, particularly with regard to teaching vocabulary, where the experienced teachers demonstrated knowledge of theory-based teaching strategies that the novice teachers did not possess (Gatbonton, 2008).

Novice EFL teachers continue to base their teaching on what is familiar to them from their pre-service training, even when they think they should change their instructional practices. Many pre-service EFL teachers base their main beliefs on what they saw more experienced teachers doing in the classroom (Johnson, 1994). These novice teachers lack exposure to alternative instructional options, leaving them feeling that they have no choice but to continue with their current way of teaching, even if they believe it to be inadequate. Moreover, research has found that novice EFL teachers have lower levels of self-efficacy than experienced teachers with regard to content and pedagogical knowledge (Mills, 2011). That said, other studies have shown that this knowledge can develop over time (Swanson, 2013).

A study that examined both pre-service and in-service L1 teachers showed that the latter had a more positive attitude towards explicit literacy instruction than the former, although both lacked knowledge in the areas of phonological awareness and phonics (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001). When asked about teaching reading to children with reading difficulties, both in-service and pre-service teachers reported feeling only partially prepared. Bos, et al. (2001) found that teachers who were more knowledgeable about language structure felt more prepared to teach reading, regardless of the number of years of teaching experience. In sum, providing teachers with knowledge may increase their sense of self-efficacy, thus increasing their willingness to try innovative instruction methods and new strategies in their literacy instruction. The present study examines whether L1 theories in the area of teaching experience apply to EFL instruction in Israel and whether they influence teachers’ choices of components and strategies used in their literacy instruction.

**Native versus Non-Native English Speaking EFL Teachers**

As in many countries where English is not the first language, most EFL teachers in Israel are non-native English speakers (Joshi, Washburn & Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). EFL teachers’ linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge may influence their perceptions of their own self-efficacy (Mills & Allen, 2007). Swanson (2013) suggests that there is a relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy and their status as native or non-native speakers of the foreign language that they are teaching, demonstrating a direct connection between foreign language teachers' self-efficacy and their own language proficiency.

Native English speakers are those for whom English is the first language they spoke as children. Teachers are considered non-native English speakers if they learned English later on in life. They can never be native English speakers, by definition (Cook, 1999). The term “multicompetence” refers to all of the language knowledge possessed by a teacher who knows more than one language (Cook, 1999). Multicompetence suggests that it is inappropriate to compare the level of a person’s second language to that of a native speaker, because the minds of people who speak more than one language work differently from those with monolingual minds (Cook, 1999). Thus, non-native EFL teachers think differently about the languages they speak than native speaking EFL teachers. Non-native EFL teachers are able to share their own language learning experiences with students and may be more sensitive to their students’ difficulties, and students may find it easier to identify with them than with a native English-speaking teacher (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002). Non-native EFL teachers tend to seek teaching sources that will improve their own proficiency and are more thorough in their lesson planning than native English-speaking teachers, since they are more inclined to feel that they need to improve their own proficiency (Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

However, non-native EFL teachers were shown to rely primarily on textbooks, whereas native teachers are more willing to include a wider range of materials outside of textbooks in their teaching (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). In addition, native English-speaking teachers serve as fluent role models for their students because they possess rich cultural knowledge that non-native teachers lacked (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). On the other hand, native English-speaking adults have been found to possess very little knowledge about language structure and linguistic concepts. This knowledge is crucial for teaching reading. Often, native readers read and write automatically without possessing the awareness of how words and sentences are organized (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Teacher-training programs must provide this knowledge (Brady & Moats, 1997). This is likely to apply to native English-speaking EFL teachers in Israel, as it does for English L1 teachers, indicating that, in order for them to become efficient teachers of reading, they need to acquire knowledge through systematic and extensive language training, similar to non-native English-speaking EFL teachers.

Spelling is another key topic that may be related to whether teachers are native or non-native English speakers. Non-native English-speaking EFL teachers in Israel reported that, although they have good spelling skills in their first language, their English spelling skills are weak. This may be the result of poor spelling instruction they themselves received in their own English studies. The orthographic differences between English and Hebrew or Arabic may provide another reason for their weaker spelling in English (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). Non-native EFL teachers may not be able to adequately provide spelling instruction to students since they themselves struggle with spelling. This study examined differences between native and non-native English-speaking EFL teachers with regard to their literacy instruction practices.

**The Present Study and Research Questions**

In a review of twenty-seven studies conducted by Borg (2003) regarding English language teaching, only five studies focused specifically on reading, indicating a lack of research on EFL literacy. Moreover, the majority of these studies took place in English-speaking countries and therefore examined English as a second language as opposed to EFL. Studies in instruction theory for EFL literacy are few (August, & Shanahan, 2006; Ferguson & Donno, 2003) and additional research is needed (Joshi et al., 2016). A review of English language teaching and learning in Israel recommended that additional research on EFL literacy should be conducted (Aronin & Spolsky, 2010).

This study set out to examine the relationship of EFL literacy instruction in Israel with three factors: teachers’ sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing, their years of teaching experience, and their native language. This was part of a larger study that investigated trends in practice as viewed by both EFL teachers and literacy experts, as well as textbooks used in classrooms and their presentation of theory-based instruction, in an attempt to better understand the gap between theory and practice (Fuchs, 2017).

EFL elementary school teachers filled in questionnaires regarding their views of the components included in their literacy instruction programs. They also indicated the frequency with which these components are included in their EFL literacy instruction. To investigate the connection between teachers’ choices in literacy instruction and their self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction, the questionnaire asked the teachers about their sense of self-efficacy. The questionnaire also gathered information on years of teaching experience and whether or not the teacher was an English native language speaker, in order to compare novice and experienced teachers as well as native and non-native English-speaking teachers with regard to their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy about their ability to teach reading.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent is there a connection between EFL teachers’ selection of components for their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading in English?

2. Are there differences between novice EFL teachers and experienced EFL teachers:

a) in their selection of components for their literacy instruction?

b) in their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading?

3. Are there differences between native English-speaking EFL teachers and non-native English-speaking EFL teachers:

a) in their selection of components for their literacy instruction?

b) in their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading?

**Research Hypotheses**

Piasta et al. (2009) found a connection between teachers’ literacy content knowledge and their actual teaching practices. Based on this, we hypothesized that teachers’ low self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading to all children, including those with reading difficulties, may be strongly related to the amount of knowledge these teachers possess about current literacy research.

Gatbonton (2008) found differences between experienced and novice teachers regarding knowledge and application of research-based strategies. She found that experienced teachers possessed more knowledge of research-based strategies than novice teachers. Based on these results, we expected to find differences between experienced and novice teachers, to the advantage of experienced teachers. In addition, Arva and Medgyes (2000) discussed their findings regarding the differences between native and non-native English-speaking teachers. They found that non-native English-speaking teachers are more thorough in lesson planning than native English-speaking teachers. However, they also found that native English-speaking EFL teachers are more willing to use a wider range of teaching materials in addition to textbooks, while non-native teachers mainly base their teaching on textbooks. Based on this, we hypothesized that we would find differences between native and non-native English-speaking teachers with regard to their choices in literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading in English.

**Method**

**Participants**

One hundred and sixty-seven EFL elementary school teachers in Israel participated in this study. Out of these, 155 were female, 126 were non-native English speakers, and 110 had at least six years of teaching experience. The other 50 were considered novice EFL teachers as they had up to five years of teaching experience.

**Measures**

We developed and employed an anonymous, online questionnaire according to guidelines for the construction of questionnaires in second language research (Dornyei, 2003). The questionnaire was developed with input from top EFL researchers, scholars, and policymakers in the English inspectorate of the Ministry of Education in Israel, which led to improvements and revisions. For a full description of the questionnaire, see Fuchs, Kahn-Horwitz, & Katzir (2019). The reliability of the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha value of .96. The internal consistency of the respective self-efficacy statements that the teachers rated yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha value of .69 (see Appendix).

**Procedure**

The anonymous, online questionnaire, which included a short introduction explaining the study followed by questions asking teachers to report their practices, was e-mailed to elementary school principals in Israel. The principals were asked to forward the questionnaire link to EFL teachers in their school.

**Results**

This study was part of a larger study examining EFL teachers’ perceptions of theory and their reported practices in EFL literacy instruction (Fuchs et al., 2019) as well as teacher-trainer perceptions of EFL teachers’ practices and EFL textbook content (Fuchs, 2017). The current study reports the connection between EFL teachers’ choices of components for their literacy programs and their sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading. Second, we examined differences between novice and experienced EFL teachers regarding their selection of components for their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading. Finally, we examined differences between native English-speaking EFL teachers and non-native English speaking EFL teachers regarding their selection of components for their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading.

In Israel, EFL studies begin at different grade levels in different elementary schools. Most of the participants in this study teach in schools that begin EFL instruction in third grade (41.9%). This was followed by participants in schools that begin EFL instruction in second grade (23.4%) or first grade (22.2%). Only nine percent of teachers teach in schools that begin EFL instruction in fourth grade. As a result of this variation, the questionnaire was worded according to the year of EFL instruction (first year of EFL, second year of EFL, etc.) rather than grade. Teachers answered questions only for the grades they were currently teaching and considered the grade at which their school begins EFL studies as the first year of EFL when answering the questions.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for all measures. Pearson correlations were calculated between the variables. ANOVA repeated measures were used to examine the differences within each group and between the groups. Cronbach’s Alpha values were calculated to determine which questions could be clustered across topics.

**Teachers’ Self-Reported Self-Efficacy**

Teachers’ self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction was examined. Teachers rated their views on statements concerning their self-efficacy about teaching reading, on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Overall, their mean self-efficacy rating for teaching reading was 4.44, *SD* = .87.

**Teachers’ Self-Efficacy and their Instructional Approach**

In response to the first research question, significant correlations between the literacy instruction components and teachers’ sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading were examined. Pearson’s confirmatory factor analysis was used to cluster the questions in each topic. These results were analyzed according to the year of EFL instruction. Significant correlations were found between self-efficacy and the following components: phonemic awareness in the third year of EFL instruction (*r* = .24; *p* < .01), phonics in the third year of EFL instruction (*r* = .22; *p* < .05), reading fluency in the fourth year of EFL instruction (*r* = .19; *p* < .05), vocabulary in the third (*r* = .23; *p* < .05) and fifth years of EFL instruction (*r* = .22; *p* < .05), reading comprehension in the fifth year of EFL instruction (*r* = .33; *p* < .01), and writing and spelling in the fourth year of EFL instruction (*r* = .26; *p* < .01).

**Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers and their Instructional Approaches**

The second question examined the relationship between novice (one to five years) and experienced (six years and over) EFL teachers and their selection of EFL literacy instruction components. Significant correlations were found between the number of years of teaching experience and how often grammar was included in the fourth year of EFL instruction as well as how often listening activities were included in their lessons in the fifth year of instruction (see Table 1). No significant correlations were found between teaching experience and any of the other EFL literacy components.

Table 1.

*Years of teaching experience and selection of literacy instruction components.
Means and standard deviations (in parentheses)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables (maximum possible score) | Novice (n=50) | Experienced (n=110) | t |
| Grammar (fourth year): How often do you usually teach grammar in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 3.86(1) | 3.35(1.45) | 2.11\* |
| Listening (fifth year): How often do you usually include listening activities in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 3.75(1.22) | 3.16(1.19) | 2.41\* |

\**p* < .05

**Self-Efficacy of Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers**

With respect to the second research question, no significant correlation was found between teachers’ self-efficacy and their number of years of teaching experience (Novice = 1-5 years / Experienced = 6 or more years).

**Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and their Instructional Approach**

With regard to the third research question, significant differences were found between native English-speaking EFL teachers and non-native English-speaking EFL teachers in their selection of components for their literacy instruction (see Table 2).

Table 2.

*Native and non-native English speakers and their selection of literacy instruction components.
Means and standard deviations (in parentheses)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables (maximum possible score) | Native English Speaker | Non-Native English Speaker | t |
| N | 20 | 76 |  |
| Reading fluency (fifth year): How often do you (combined fluency activity questions)? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 3.04(1.07) | 3.68(1.09) | -2.35\* |
| N | 28 | 88 |  |
| Vocabulary (fourth year): How many new vocabulary items do you teach in lessons? none / less than 4 / 4-5 / 6-7 / 8-10/ more than 10 (6) | 4.07(1.05) | 4.51(.92) | -2.12\* |
| N | 19 | 76 |  |
| Vocabulary (fifth year): How many new vocabulary items do you teach in lessons? none / less than 4 / 4-5 / 6-7 / 8-10/ more than 10 (6) | 4.11(1.1) | 4.72(.93) | -2.49\* |
| N | 19 | 74 |  |
| Vocabulary (fifth year): How many times do you review the vocabulary items? none / less than 4 / 4-5 / 6-7 / 8-10/ more than 10 (6) | 3.00(1.37) | 3.68(1.2) | -2.13\* |
| N | 30 | 84 |  |
| Listening (fourth year): How often do you usually include listening activities in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 2.90(1.16) | 3.57(1.29) | -2.51\* |
| N | 21 | 69 |  |
| Listening (fifth year): How often do you usually include listening activities in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 2.86(1.15) | 3.51(1.22) | -2.16\* |
| N | 20 | 71 |  |
| Writing (fifth year): How often do you usually include beginning writing activities in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 1.95(1.64) | 3.15(1.96) | -2.78\*\* |
| N | 28 | 64 |  |
| Spelling (first year): How often do you usually include dictations to assess spelling in your lessons? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 1.39(.83) | 1.92(1.12) | -2.25\* |
| N | 21 | 70 |  |
| Digital literacy (fifth year): How often do you usually have pupils do independent computer activities? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6) | 1.95(.74) | 2.60(1.09) | -2.54\* |

\**p* < .05

*Note:* Teachers were asked to respond only regarding years that they teach; therefore, different numbers are reported for each year.

**Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and Self-Efficacy**

With regard to the third research question, no significant correlation was found between teachers’ self-efficacy and their being native or non-native English speakers.

**Discussion**

This study examined the gap between research-based EFL literacy instruction and reported practices within EFL classrooms with regard to teachers’ reported self-efficacy concerning reading instruction as well as teachers’ experience and native language. This study was part of a larger study that found a gap between theory and teachers’ practices as implemented in literacy instruction (Fuchs et al., 2019). With regard to self-efficacy concerning EFL literacy instruction, in contrast to previous research (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013), we did not find a correlation between teachers’ self-efficacy concerning reading instruction and their self-reported teaching approach. The aforementioned gap between theory and teachers’ practices implemented in self-reported literacy instruction was found for both teachers with low self-efficacy and those with high self-efficacy. It was particularly related to basic skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. It was also partially found in the context of teaching grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and speaking. However, very few or no correlations were found between teaching experience or native language of teachers and instructional approach. As with our results regarding self-efficacy, these findings differ from previous studies (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Gatbonton, 2008) and suggest that all groups of EFL elementary school teachers, regardless of their teaching experience or their native language, may lack the theoretical knowledge that underlies literacy teaching and learning.

These findings show that EFL teachers’ reported classroom practices are disconnected from research (Joshi et al., 2016; Kahn-Horwitz, 2015). As a result, a new model for disseminating this knowledge should be considered, through pre-service and in-service teacher training, for all elementary school EFL teachers. All of these groups—teachers with high or low self-efficacy regarding teaching reading, teachers who are novices and those who are experienced, and both native and non-native English-speaking teachers—can benefit when provided with up-to-date information about the theory emerging from research. Improving teachers’ knowledge about theory may lead to more efficient literacy instruction in classrooms and higher levels of achievement for elementary school students.

**Teachers' Self-Reported Self-Efficacy**

Following previous studies that have shown a connection between teacher self-efficacy and classroom practices (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013), this study examined EFL teachers’ self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction. Statements addressing teachers’ self-efficacy regarding teaching reading were presented to EFL teachers who were asked to rate their views of them. These statements related to the adequacy of pre-service teacher training concerning methods for teaching reading in elementary school as well as availability of professional in-service courses related to teaching beginning reading. Other statements examined teachers’ confidence levels in teaching reading to weak pupils and in providing appropriate material for children at different reading levels.

Previous teaching experiences have been shown to influence teachers’ self-efficacy, strengthening it if the experience was successful (Mills & Allen, 2007; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Teachers’ points of view may be influenced by their perceptions of their own knowledge about literacy instruction, which has been shown in previous studies to be a crucial factor in effective teaching (Piasta et al., 2009). Although the findings of the present study show that teachers possess only partial knowledge about literacy instruction, they may identify themselves as knowledgeable because they are unaware of the knowledge that they lack, which may make them feel confident to teach reading even though they may not be fully prepared to do so (Stark et al., 2016).

 Previous research has shown that teachers’ own learning experiences influence their beliefs about teaching and their instructional choices (Borg 2003). Literacy instruction methods that were successful for them when they were students may be used by teachers who, as a result, perceive themselves to be effective teachers, despite their lack of knowledge of some of the essential basic literacy components.

**Relationship between Self-efficacy and Instructional Approach**

Previous research has shown that self-efficacy influences instructional approach (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). This study examined the connection between teachers’ self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and the components that teachers choose in their EFL literacy instruction. The results showed few significant correlations between teachers’ self-efficacy and their selection of instructional components. Correlations were not found at all in the first two years of literacy instruction, and the few correlations that were found were in the upper three years of instruction, and then only in some of the components. These results may indicate that teachers’ belief in their ability to teach EFL may not be strongly connected to their instructional approach, contrary to claims by some researchers that teachers with high self-efficacy use new approaches in their teaching (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Some support for the theory that self-efficacy impacts perception of classroom practices (Johnson, 1994) may be found in these few correlations, but they seem to be too limited to clearly establish this.

**Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers and their Instructional Approaches**

This study also examined the correlation between teaching experience and the selection of literacy instruction components. The results show essentially no significant differences between novice and experienced teachers with regard to their instructional choices. Gatbonton (2008) has shown that experienced teachers possess more knowledge about research-based strategies than novice teachers, and that this knowledge influences their selection of literacy instruction components. The present study does not support this claim. In previous studies, novice EFL teachers’ beliefs about teaching literacy were found to be similar to those of experienced teachers that they had observed (Johnson, 1994), and so their selection of instructional components may be similar as well. Given the results of a study that showed that both pre-service and in-service L1 teachers lack knowledge of phonological awareness and phonics, teaching experience may not be a factor in instruction choices. Both groups of teachers reported that they did not feel fully prepared to teach reading, particularly to students with reading difficulties (Bos et al., 2001). Both novice and experienced teachers may lack theory-based knowledge that is crucial for effective literacy instruction (Joshi, et al., 2016; Kahn-Horwitz, 2016) as shown in the present study, which leads to similar choices of components for literacy instruction, and therefore both groups may need to acquire additional knowledge.

**Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and their Instructional Approaches**

This study also examined correlations between EFL teachers’ native language and their selection of literacy instruction components. Some differences were found in reading fluency, vocabulary, listening, and digital literacy in the fourth and fifth years, but not for any other components or years. Non-native English-speaking teachers reported engaging in activities related to these topics more often than native English-speaking teachers. This may, to some extent, support research showing that non-native English-speaking teachers feel they need to improve their own proficiency, and thus that they tend to be more attentive in their lesson planning than native English-speaking teachers (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). However, the limited findings in the present study may not adequately imply a strong link between teachers’ native language and their instructional approach.

An interesting finding emerged with regard to the spelling component. During only the first year of instruction, non-native English-speaking teachers engaged in spelling activities more frequently than native English-speaking teachers. This may indicate an effort on the part of the non-native English-speaking teachers to allocate more time to teaching spelling at the early stages of literacy instruction as a result of their own personal challenges with spelling (Kahn-Horwitz, 2015). On the other hand, they may choose to reduce the amount of time allotted for spelling activities in subsequent years so as not to have to deal with this personally challenging topic. Meanwhile, native English-speaking teachers may not allot sufficient time to teaching spelling because they may not be aware of the challenges that EFL students face with English spelling, as they themselves have not experienced it (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). As previously mentioned, research has shown that native English-speaking adults have very little of knowledge about the structure of the English language and related linguistic concepts, and therefore this knowledge must be provided in teacher training programs (Brady & Moats, 1997; Moats, 2014).

**Self-efficacy as a Factor of Experience and Native Language**

This study examined the connection between teaching experience and EFL teachers’ self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading. No significant correlations between teachers' self-efficacy and years of teaching experience were found. This finding supports previous research that investigated the factors that determine teachers’ self-efficacy regarding teaching reading. Teaching experience was not found to be a major factor in determining high self-efficacy, unlike broad knowledge of English language structure, which was found to be a crucial factor determining higher sense of self-efficacy (Bos et al., 2001). The current study indicates that both novice and experienced teachers perceive themselves as having broad language knowledge (Stark et al., 2016), which contributes to their high sense of self-efficacy. This result contrasts with research claiming that it is experienced teachers who have higher self-efficacy regarding their content knowledge of the language, not the novice teachers (Mills, 2011).

EFL teachers’ native language was also examined in relation to self-efficacy. Previous research has shown a relationship between these variables (Mills & Allen, 2007; Swanson, 2013), but this study showed no significant correlation between them. This may indicate support for Cook’s (1999) multicompetence theory, which claims that comparing the level of a person’s second language to that of a native speaker is irrelevant. This study seems to indicate that teachers who are non-native English speakers may possess equal self-efficacy to native English-speaking teachers because of their greater sensitivity to the difficulties that their students face (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002).

**Conclusions**

This study, which examines EFL literacy instruction in Israel, explores the connection between research-based theoretical knowledge and reported practices occurring in classrooms in relation to the following variables: teachers’ self-efficacy, teaching experience, and native language. Although teachers may be unaware of the theory-based knowledge they lack, they were shown to have high self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading (Stark et al., 2016), and little correlation was found between self-efficacy and instructional approach. Both novice and experienced teachers have been shown to possess limited theory-based knowledge (Joshi et al., 2016; Kahn-Horwitz, 2016), and both groups reported teaching similar literacy instruction components. Moreover, this study’s findings did not support the hypothesis, based on previous research, that differences would be found between the knowledge and practices of native and non-native English-speaking teachers (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006). All types of teachers—those with high or low self-efficacy regarding teaching reading, those who are experienced or novice, and those who are native or non-native speakers—may benefit from in-service professional development courses that provide knowledge about theory-based EFL literacy instructional components. This knowledge may lead to improvement of literacy instruction in classrooms and, as a result, to student achievement.

Finally, the present study illustrates one major insight, which is that content knowledge seems to be the key to effective literacy instruction. The need for intensive acquisition of basic English language constructs (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016) seems to be the common thread for all types of teachers, regardless of their level of self-efficacy, years of teaching experience, or native language. Professional development training for EFL teachers should be theory-based and should include broad knowledge of the language, and all types of teachers should be provided with effective literacy instruction tools (Moats, 2014).

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**Appendix**

**Teachers' Questionnaire**

On a scale of 1-6, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 6 represents "strongly agree", please choose the number which best reflects your feeling:

1. I feel that I received adequate pre-service training on how to teach reading in elementary school.

2. There are professional in-service courses available which deal with teaching beginning reading.

3. I feel confident to teach weaker pupils reading.

4. In my English classes, I provide alternative material or tasks for children at different levels of reading acquisition.

5. In my lessons, strong readers are provided with challenging and motivating reading activities.