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

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**Abstract**

Acquisition of literacy in English as a foreign language (EFL) in Israel is a main factor for entering and succeeding in higher education and for business and social opportunities (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). However, many middle school students lack adequate literacy skills, possibly indicating 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, number of years of teaching experience and/or teachers’ native language may influence teachers’ choices of EFL literacy instruction components. The aim of this study was to examine the components of EFL literacy instruction as perceived by teachers with relation to the variables: self-efficacy, teaching experience and native language. Participants were 167 EFL elementary school teachers. Each participant filled in and submitted an anonymous online questionnaire regarding reported 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 also showed that years of teaching experience and native language of teachers did not influence teachers’ choices of EFL literacy instructional components or their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading. All groups of teachers seemed to show similar limited knowledge of theory related to literacy instruction concluding that giving theoretical knowledge to EFL elementary school teachers from 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, theoretically based literacy instruction

**Introduction**

Acquiring literacy in English as a foreign language (EFL) is extremely important in the Israeli schools as 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 EFL reading by the end of the sixth grade. Many students do not reach an appropriate enough level of literacy to enable them to acquire further English through independent reading by the conclusion of their elementary school years. This may be caused by 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 theoretically based teaching components needed 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, years of teaching experience (Gatbonton, 2008; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013) as well as native language of teachers (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002), may influence EFL teachers’ choices of literacy instruction components.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy in EFL**

Self-efficacy of EFL teachers was examined, as part of a larger study, which also included teacher’s perceptions, teacher trainers’ views and curriculums as reflected in textbooks (Fuchs, 2017). What a teacher believes about his or her capability to succeed in teaching is that teacher’s self-efficacy (Mills & Allen, 2007; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). This self-efficacy, namely these beliefs, influence the teacher’s classroom practices which may influence students' achievements (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Teachers’ beliefs impact both perception and judgement 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 was found to impact their classroom practices regarding teaching grammar, reading and writing (Borg, 2003). Many of these teachers have solid theoretical beliefs, leading them to a specific methodological approach, which they use in their teaching, and have used since they first started teaching, unaffected by 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 experience successful teaching in the classroom, they strengthen their self-efficacy. On the other hand, unsuccessful 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 use new approaches in their teaching than those with low self-efficacy (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). In addition, teachers' sense of self-efficacy guides 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 an issue that is likely to have a powerful impact on teacher’s self-efficacy in EFL teaching and has been shown to be a key factor in effective teaching. Efficient first language (L1) literacy instruction is executed 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 programs that would offer them accurate, explicit knowledge about language and literacy acquisition. This new knowledge could change their beliefs about their ability to teach reading, thus raising their self-efficacy (Kahn-Horwitz, 2015).

This study examined Israeli EFL teachers’ reports of self-efficacy with regard to teaching reading to all students, including those with reading difficulties. Teachers’ choices regarding the teaching components they included in their literacy instruction was correlated with their self-efficacy.

**Novice versus Experienced EFL Teachers**

Teaching experience is a factor that should be examined when considering the extent to which teachers promote theoretically based literacy instruction. A teacher is considered novice for at least the first four to five years of teaching, afterwards advancing 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 a short period of teaching time may be sufficient in order to acquire these skills (Gatbonton, 2008). However, when it came to applying the skills, novice teachers were shown to be lacking knowledge. This was found in the area of teaching vocabulary, where the experienced teachers showed knowledge of theoretically based teaching strategies which 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 may believe that a change is needed in 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 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 though they believed it to be inadequate. Furthermore, the sense of self-efficacy of novice EFL teachers has been found to be weaker than that of experienced teachers, regarding content and pedagogical knowledge (Mills, 2011). However, this knowledge has been shown to grow with time (Swanson, 2013).

In-service L1 teachers showed a more positive attitude towards explicit literacy instruction than pre-service teachers, in a study that examined both groups, 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 that were more knowledgeable of the language structure felt more prepared to teach reading, regardless of the number of years of teaching experience. Providing teachers with knowledge may increase their sense of self-efficacy, thus increasing their willingness to try innovative instruction and new strategies in their literacy instruction. This study examined if L1 theories in the area of teaching experience applies to EFL instruction in Israel and if it influences teachers' choices of components and strategies used in their literacy instruction.

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

Most EFL teachers in Israel are non-native English speakers, similar to other countries where English is not the first language, (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 being native or non-native speakers of the foreign language that they are teaching, after showing a direct connection between foreign language teachers' self-efficacy and their own language proficiency.

Only teachers who learned English as their L1 when they were children, and this is the first language that they spoke, are defined as native English speakers. Teachers that are considered non-native English speakers are those who 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 that a teacher who knows more than one language possesses (Cook, 1999). Multicompetence suggests that it is inappropriate to compare the level of a person's second language to that of a native speaker since the minds of people who speak more than one language works differently from those with monolingual minds (Cook, 1999). Thus, non-native English speaking EFL teachers think in a different way than native speaking EFL teachers about the languages that they speak. Non-native English speaking EFL teachers are able to share their own language learning experiences with students, may be more sensitive to their students’ difficulties and it may be easier for their students to identify with them than with a native English speaking teacher (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002). Non-native teachers tend to seek teaching sources that will improve their proficiency and are more thorough in their lesson planning than native teachers, since they are more inclined to feel that they need to improve their own proficiency (Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

However, non-native English speaking EFL teachers were shown to mainly rely on textbooks as opposed to native teachers, who were found to be more willing to include a wider range of materials outside of textbooks in their teaching (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). In addition, native teachers were shown as fluent role models for their students, possessing 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 EFL native English speaking teachers in Israel, as it does for English L1 teachers, indicating that, in order for them to become efficient reading teachers, they need to acquire knowledge through systematic and extensive language training, similar to non-native English speaking EFL teachers.

Spelling is another central topic that may be related to teachers being 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, they are weak in their spelling skills in English. This may have been caused by poor spelling instruction that they themselves received in their own English studies. Another reason for their weaker spelling in English may be due to the orthographic differences between English and Hebrew or Arabic (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). Non-native English speaking EFL teachers may not be able to adequately provide spelling instruction to students, since they themselves struggle with spelling. This study examined differences between EFL native and non-native English speaking 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, examining English as a second language as opposed to EFL contexts. EFL literacy instruction theory studies are few (August, & Shanahan, 2006; Ferguson & Donno, 2003) and additional research is needed (Joshi et al., 2016). In a review of English language teaching and learning in Israel, conducting additional research on EFL literacy was recommended (Aronin & Spolsky, 2010).

This study set out to examine the connection between EFL literacy instruction in Israel and 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 connection to theoretically based instruction, in an attempt to better understand the gap between theory and practice (Fuchs, 2017).

EFL elementary school teachers filled in questionnaires stating their views regarding the components that their literacy instruction programs include. In addition, they noted the frequency that these components are included in their EFL literacy instruction. To investigate the connection between choices of teachers in their literacy instruction and self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction, teachers' sense of self-efficacy was included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire also gathered information about years of teaching experience and whether or not they were English native language speakers, 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 regarding their ability to teach reading.

**Research questions**

1. To what extent is there a connection between EFL teachers' choices of components to include in their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading?

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

a) in their choices of components to include in 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 choices of components to include in 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 significantly related to the amount of knowledge of current literacy research that these teachers possess.

Gatbonton (2008) found differences between experienced and novice teachers regarding knowledge and application of research based strategies. She found that experienced teachers were shown to possess 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 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.

**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**

According to guidelines for the construction of questionnaires in second language research (Dornyei, 2003) an anonymous, online questionnaire was developed. Throughout the development of the questionnaire, consultations took place with top EFL researchers, scholars, and policy makers in the English inspectorate of the Ministry of Education in Israel, leading 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 Alpha value of .96. The internal consistency of the respective self-efficacy statements that the teachers rated yielded an Alpha Cronbach value of .69 (see Appendix).

**Procedure**

The anonymous, online questionnaire, which included a short introduction explaining the study followed by questions asking teachers for a report of 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’ perception 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 included in their literacy programs and their sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading. Second, we examined differences between novice EFL teachers and experienced EFL teachers regarding their choices of components for their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading. Finally, this study examined differences between native English speaking EFL teachers and non-native English speaking EFL teachers regarding their choices of components to be included in their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading.

 In Israel there are differences between elementary schools with regards to the grade that EFL studies commence. Most of the participants in this study teach in schools that begin EFL instruction in third grade (41.9%). This was followed by participants who teach in schools that commence EFL instruction in second grade (23.4%), first grade (22.2%), and finally only nine per cent 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.). Teachers answered questions only for the grades that they were currently teaching and considered the grade that 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 Alpha were done 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 about statements dealing with their self-efficacy regarding 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 answer 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 year of EFL instruction (*r* = .23; *p* < .05) and in the fifth year 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 Approach**

The second question examined the connection between novice (one to five years) and experienced (six years and over) EFL teachers and their choices of EFL literacy instruction components. Significant correlations were found between the number of years of teaching experience and how often they teach grammar in the fourth year of EFL instruction as well as how often they include listening activities 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 choices 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**

In addition, with relation to the second research question, no significant correlation was found between teachers' self-efficacy and the number of years of teaching experience that they have (Novice = 1-5 years / Experienced = 6 and over years).

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

In answer to the third research question, significant differences were found between native English speaking EFL teachers and non-native English speaking EFL teachers in their choices of components that they included in their literacy instruction (see table 2).

Table 2.

*Native and non-native English speakers and choices 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 thus different numbers are reported for each year.

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

In addition, with relation 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 relation to teachers’ reported self-efficacy regarding teaching reading 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 implemented in literacy instruction (Fuchs et al., 2019). As for examination of self-efficacy with relation to EFL literacy instruction, in contrast to previous research (Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013), a correlation was not found between teachers’ self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and their self-reported teaching approach. The aforementioned gap between theory and teachers’ practices implemented in their self-reported literacy instruction was found for both groups of teachers, teachers with low self-efficacy and with high self-efficacy. It was mainly found for skills at the foundation level: phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling. It was also partially found for grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and speaking. Furthermore, very few or no correlations were found between teaching experience or native language of teachers and instructional approach. Similar to self-efficacy, these findings are opposed to 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 theoretically based 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). A new model of dissemination of knowledge should be considered, through teacher pre-service and in-service training, for all elementary school EFL teachers. Teachers with high or low self-efficacy regarding teaching reading, novice or experienced teachers, native and non-native English speaking teachers; all of these groups could benefit when provided with updated theory emerging from research. Increasing knowledge of teachers may lead to more efficient literacy instruction in classrooms and higher achievements of 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 self-efficacy of EFL teachers regarding literacy instruction. Statements dealing with teachers’ self-efficacy regarding teaching reading were presented to EFL teachers who were asked to rate their views of them. These statements included relating to adequacy of pre-service teacher training on how to teach reading in elementary school as well as availability of professional in-service courses which deal with teaching beginning reading. Other statements examined teachers’ feeling of confidence to teach reading to weak pupils, and provision of 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 formed due to their perceptions of their own knowledge about literacy instruction, which was 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 literacy instruction knowledge, they may identify themselves as knowledgeable, being unaware of the knowledge that they lack, thus feeling confident to teach reading although they may not be fully prepared to do so (Stark et al., 2016).

 Previous research has shown that teachers’ own experiences as learners in school influences their beliefs about teaching and their instructional choices (Borg 2003). Literacy instruction methods, that they themselves as learners experienced to be successful, may be being used by teachers who, as a result, perceive themselves as effective teachers, despite their lack of knowledge regarding 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 components that teachers choose in their EFL literacy instruction. Findings showed few significant correlations between teachers' self-efficacy and their choices of literacy 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 in only some of the components. These results may indicate that teachers' sense of ability to teach EFL literacy may not be strongly connected to their instructional approach, contrary to what some researchers claim, 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, however they seem to be too few to clearly establish this.

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

Correlation between teaching experience and choices of literacy instruction components was also examined in this study. Findings show essentially no significant differences between novice and experienced teachers with relation to their instruction choices. Gatbonton (2008) has shown that experienced teachers possess more knowledge of research-based strategies than novice teachers, influencing their choices of literacy instruction components. The present study does not show support for 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), thus their instruction components choices may be similar as well. Based on a study that showed lack of knowledge of phonological awareness and phonics for both pre-service and in-service L1 teachers, 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 theoretically based knowledge that is crucial for effective literacy instruction (Joshi, et al., 2016; Kahn-Horwitz, 2016) as shown in the present study, resulting in similar choices of components for literacy instruction, and both may need to acquire additional knowledge.

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

Correlations between native language of EFL teachers and their choices of literacy instruction components was examined in this study. Few differences were found, mainly for the following components: 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 doing activities more often than native English speaking teachers in these few cases. This may, to some extent, support research showing that non-native English speaking teachers feel that they need to improve their own proficiency, thus tend to be more attentive in their lesson planning than native English speaking teachers (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). However, the few findings found in the present study may not be adequate to imply a strong connection between teachers’ native language and their instructional approach.

An interesting finding emerged with regards to the spelling component, for the first year only, in which non-native English speakers engaged in activities more frequently than native English speaking teachers. This may show an effort of the non-native teachers, at the beginning stages of literacy instruction, to allocate more time to teaching spelling, as a result of their own personal challenges that they may have with spelling (Kahn-Horwitz, 2015). In the following years, they may choose to reduce the amount of time allotted for spelling activities, so as not to have to deal with this personally difficult topic. Native English speaking teachers may not allot sufficient time to teaching spelling since they may not be aware of the challenges that EFL students face with English spelling, as they themselves have not experienced this (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). In addition, regarding knowledge about the English language structure and linguistic concepts, research has shown that native English speaking adults have very little of this knowledge and it must be acquired 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 self-efficacy of EFL teachers, 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 factors determining teachers' self-efficacy regarding teaching reading. Teaching experience was not found to be a major factor in determining high self-efficacy. This is in contrast to teachers having broad knowledge of English language structure, which was found to be a crucial factor determining higher sense of self-efficacy (Bos, et al., 2001). In the current study, it seems that both novice and experienced teachers perceive themselves as having broad language knowledge (Stark et al., 2016) contributing to their high sense of self-efficacy. This contrasts with research which claims that teachers who have higher self-efficacy regarding their content knowledge of the language are the experienced, not the novice teachers (Mills, 2011).

The native language of EFL teachers was also a factor examined in correlation with self-efficacy. Previous research has shown a relationship between these variables (Mills & Allen, 2007; Swanson, 2013), however no significant correlation between the two were shown in the findings of the present study. This may support Cook’s (1999) multicompetence theory, claiming that it is irrelevant to compare the level of a person's second language to that of a native speaker. The findings of this study seem to indicate that teachers who are non-native English speakers may possess equal self-efficacy to that of native English speaking teachers, because of their higher sensitivity to the difficulties that their students face (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002).

**Conclusions**

This study was conducted to examine EFL literacy instruction in Israel, exploring the connection between research based theoretical knowledge and reported practices that occur in classrooms, with relation to teacher variables: self-efficacy, teaching experience and native language, providing a practical viewpoint. Although teachers may be unaware of theoretically based knowledge that they may 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. Limited theoretically based knowledge has also been shown to be possessed by both novice and experienced teachers (Joshi, et al., 2016; Kahn-Horwitz, 2016), and both groups reported teaching similar literacy instruction components. Also, this study’s hypothesis, based on previous research, that differences would be found between native and non-native English speaking teachers regarding their knowledge and practices (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006), was not supported. All types of teachers, those with high or low self-efficacy regarding teaching reading, those that are experienced or novice and those that are native or non-native speakers, may benefit from participating in-service professional development courses, to obtain knowledge of theory based EFL literacy instructional components. This knowledge may lead to improvement of literacy instruction in classrooms and as a result, student achievements.

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 regarding all types of teachers, regardless of their level of self-efficacy, years of teaching experience or native language. EFL teacher professional development training should be theoretically based, including broad knowledge of the language. 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.