

8-2011

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### Recommended Citation

Zehir Topkaya, E., & Yavuz, A. (2011). Democratic Values and Teacher Self-Efficacy Perceptions: A Case of Pre-Service English Language Teachers in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(8). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n8.1>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol36/iss8/3>

## Democratic Values and Teacher Self-Efficacy Perceptions: A Case of Pre-Service English Language Teachers in Turkey

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*Abstract: This study investigated democratic values of pre-service English language teachers in relation to their teacher self-efficacy perceptions in a Turkish context. It also examined the possible relationships between gender, grade and democratic values and self-efficacy perceptions. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 294 pre-service teachers. Findings show that they had a high level of democratic values while senior students reported the highest rate of democratic values. Results did not show a significant difference between democratic values and gender. Participants also reported a moderately high level of self-efficacy. Lastly, correlation was found between their democratic values and self-efficacy perceptions.*

### Introduction

Schools are places where democratic ideals such as equality, freedom, justice are instilled in individuals. In this challenging endeavour teachers have a key role to play no matter what their subject area is, for they determine what will be taught and how it will be taught regarding democracy education. In this context, before studying how teachers undertake this responsibility and make room for democratic practices in their classrooms, it would be wise to research what democratic values and attitudes teachers themselves have since they certainly have an impact on teachers' decisions and practices. On the other hand, another powerful cognitive construct, i.e. self-efficacy beliefs, also affects these decisions and practices. According to Bandura (1989: 1175) among the mechanisms of personal behaviour 'none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives', that is they determine human motivation, affect, and action. For teachers, similarly, having a high perception of self-efficacy plays a major role in how they approach goals, undertake tasks and brave challenges .

There have been several studies examining the self efficacy perceptions of both in and pre-service teachers in relation to several factors related to classroom life, instructional strategies employed, student motivation and achievement (see for example Ashton and Webb, 1986; Guskey and Passaro, 1994; Swars, 2005; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008; Caprara et al, 2006; Tella, 2008). However, the likely relationship between democratic values and self efficacy perceptions of pre-service teachers has not been investigated much so far (see Shechtman, 2002; Almog and Shechtman, 2007). Seeing this gap in the literature, thus, this study looks into the relationship between democratic values of pre-service English language teachers related to educational life and their teaching self-efficacy perceptions in a Turkish context and tries to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the democratic values of pre-service English language teachers related to educational life?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the democratic values of the pre-service teachers and their gender, the grade level and their plans after graduation?

3. What are the teacher efficacy perceptions of pre-service English language teachers?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the teacher efficacy perceptions of the pre-service teachers and their gender, the grade level and their plans after graduation?
5. Is there a correlation between pre-service English language teachers' democratic values and their teaching efficacy perceptions?

Before elaborating on the research, however, firstly a brief literature review is presented below regarding the main concepts of the study: democracy and education, teacher sense of efficacy, and English language teacher education in Turkey.

## Democracy and Education

Democracy may be a familiar word to most, but it is still a misunderstood and misused concept. In the dictionary, democracy is defined as 'a system of government in which citizens participate in the decisions of government either by voting directly or by electing representatives to make decisions' ([www.nyise.org/homsy/ushistory/glossary.htm](http://www.nyise.org/homsy/ushistory/glossary.htm)). It is rather regarded as a 'way of life' interrelated with the perceptions and assumptions, common experiences of individuals and it is about living together (Dewey, 1916). So, it can be stated that democracy is not a static concept but a dynamic, active and changing process.

Education is a vital component of any society, but especially of a democracy. The aim of democratic education is to produce independent, questioning, analytical and critical citizens through teaching the principles and practices of democracy, encouraging them to challenge conventional thinking with careful reading and research findings. Kincal and Ilık (2003) refer to lifelong learning, the active participation of stake holders of education (students, parents and other related people) in the schooling process, controlling and monitoring the change and improvement within the process of education, localization of education as the components of democratic education (see also Kepenekçi, 2003). Establishing democracy mostly depends on the understanding, skills and attitudes of people which would be the primary responsibility of education. Education is not the only source for establishing a democratic culture; family, media and other institutions contribute to this process as well. However, schools have the essential role in this process as they maintain structured and formal educational programmes (Do anay, 1997).

Surely, the most important component of the formal educational programmes is the teacher. Therefore, teachers need to have not only an understanding of democratic society, values, behaviour and attitudes but also need to practice this knowledge and understanding in the classroom otherwise pure information about democracy would not work out in the long term (Ravits, 1991). However, the practices of teachers are determined by their perceptions, experiences, attitudes and values about democracy. Therefore, before we shift our gaze at what teachers are doing in the classroom actively, it is a must that we focus upon their existing attitudes and values. Sheckman (2002) defines values as 'desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives. These life principles represent an individual's unique interpretation of the right way to behave' (p. 363). In Sheckman (2002) values are referred to as the '*main cognitive weapon*' to foster self respect which would give opportunity to individuals to adapt and perform more effectively and cope with reality more effectively. Values can also be defined as mental and emotional judgments representing attitudes and interests in the abstract manner (see Selvi, 2006). In the educational context, 'valuing is concerned with the worth or value a student (a teacher) attaches to a particular object, phenomenon or behaviours' which then would be values about democracy and democratic culture (p. 1171). Kincal and Ilık (2003) identify the democratic values as justice, equality, freedom, respect for life, collaboration, self efficacy, honesty, tolerance,

sensitivity, searching for effectiveness, responsibility, respect for differences, security, improvement and perfection. Similarly, Özpolat (2010) identifies human and student centred education, civil rights, skill teaching, self development, value education, and respecting social rules as the basic components of democratic education. He also argues that the focus needs to be on democratic education rather than democracy education and therefore teachers need to not only believe in these values and components but also practice them in their classrooms.

Regarding understanding perceptions, values and practices of teachers and teacher educators a great number of studies have been carried out in the international arena. Turkey is no exception to that movement. Aydo an and Kukul (2003) compared the democratic behaviour of teachers who work in primary and secondary education and lecturers who work at universities. Research findings revealed that teachers and lecturers do not practice democratic behaviour in some situations and democratic behaviour does not have a significant connection with gender. Primary teachers engage in democratic practice in many areas. Secondary school teachers are democratic only in two areas: 'guidance in free thinking' and 'fostering critical thinking regarding opposing ideas'. Professors practice less democratic behaviour in comparison with assistant and associate professors. Kepenekçi (2003) discussed the relationship between democratic values and democratic education. They suggest that democratic values need to be a part of family and school for democratic education.

The relationship between democracy and different disciplines is also discussed in the Turkish context. Sava (2003a) investigated the relationship between maths education and democracy. This relationship is given through certain conditions such as student-teacher relationship, approaches to error correction and student participation. Sarı (2004), on the other hand, studied democratic understanding of life sciences and primary teachers. The democratic understanding of these teachers was analysed and data revealed that 88% of teachers adopted a militarist understanding rather than a liberal one. No significant difference was found regarding variables such as service year, department, gender and university graduation. However, Gömleksiz and Kan (2008) found a significant difference among pre-service teachers' democratic attitudes concerning the departments, gender and educational and income levels of their parents in favour of female students, social science departments such as philosophy and history, and parents with higher education such as high school and university graduates. On the other hand, no significant difference was found between the income levels of parents of the students. Üstün and Demirba (2003) studied the relationship between discipline in the classroom, democratic discipline and understanding of discipline through secondary teachers' interview data. The data revealed that democratic discipline brings about rational, transparent and observable regulations. Teachers who are engaged in such discipline seemed to be more successful concerning the mutual trust and positive environment in the classroom.

Research and debates about democracy and democratic culture within the educational arena in Turkey are generally focused on understanding, accommodating and evaluating teachers', teacher educators' and students' perceptions and practices about these issues. However, in the international arena, especially in Europe and the United States, democracy and related issues are generally related with cultural, political, socioeconomic, religious and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism. For example, Canetti-Nisim (2004) studied the nature of relations between religiosity, authoritarianism and democratic values. Findings revealed that religious training fosters authoritarianism and authoritarian tendencies foster religiosity. Marrie (2005) studied multicultural democratic education regarding the relationship between multicultural and critical point of view and democratic values. Multicultural democratic education is a combination of democratic and multicultural education regarding knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross-cultural interactions and in personal, social, and civic action which begins in the classroom. Smykalla (2009) suggests that gender and diversity training should be an integral part of mainstream schooling, which would lead to view diversity as a richness. Consequently, stereotypes and

social and cultural bias can be avoided. These papers focus on multicultural issues about democracy which incorporate socioeconomic, cultural and political diversity.

### **Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a social-psychological construct and refers to ‘people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances’ (Bandura, 1986: 391). These judgments, which are affected by a person’s previous successes and failures, messages that other people communicate, successes and failures of others and successes and failures of a group as a whole, are central and pervasive to human action since they have the power to determine people’s choices, goals, effort, and persistence (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1995; Ormrod, 2006).

In the field of education both students’ and teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions have attracted a lot of interest. In general, teacher efficacy values refer to ‘the extent to which teachers believe they can affect student learning’ (Dembo and Gibson, 1985: 173) or ‘the teacher’s belief 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: 222). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are confident of their ‘capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult and unmotivated’ (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001: 783).

A growing body of research shows that teachers’ sense of efficacy is connected to their commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), their attitudes towards using innovative instructional strategies (Swars, 2005; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008), students’ academic achievement (Ashton and Webb, 1986; Caprara et al, 2006; Tella, 2008), and motivation (Guskey and Passaro, 1994). In addition, it has also been found to be related to teachers’ behaviour in the classroom, their attitudes to teaching, stress and burn-out and their willingness to implement innovation (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Similarly, the literature shows that teacher effectiveness is supported by democratic values and beliefs of teachers (see Shechtman, 2002).

Several studies have been conducted in Turkey as well, many of which centre on pre-service teachers from different subject areas. In these studies the construct has been investigated in relation to some variables such as gender, grade differences, academic success, and problem solving skills (see for example Umay, 2001; Altunçekiç et al., 2005; Üredi and Üredi, 2006; Akbulut, 2006; Morgil, et al., 2004; Çapri and Çelikkaleli, 2008).

In the field of English language teaching, however, studies on self-efficacy perceptions are extremely scarce. To the knowledge of the researchers, there are three unpublished doctoral dissertations (Shim, 2001; Chacón, 2002; Lee, 2009), a master’s thesis (Ortaçtepe, 2006) and a few journal articles (see for example Chacón, 2005; Lee, 2009; Yavuz, 2007; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). In his study, Chacón (2005) worked with 100 Venezuelan middle school English language teachers and found that teachers’ perceived efficacy was correlated with self-reported English proficiency. Similarly, Eslami and Fatahi (2008) also found that Iranian English language teachers’ perceived efficacy and English proficiency were positively correlated. Shim (2001 cited in Lee, 2009) studied Korean public and middle school English teachers’ efficacy perceptions and their relationships with other factors and unlike Chacón (2005) and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) reported no significant relationship between teachers’ sense of efficacy and their language skills. These rather conflicting findings seem to point to a need for more research in this field. Yavuz (2007), on the other hand, investigated English instructors working at public and private universities in Istanbul, Turkey and found that some socio-demographic predictors such as gender, average number of learners in classes, teachers’ efforts for professional development predicted

variations in their sense of efficacy. Ortaçtepe (2006) also worked with in-service English teachers and reported high correlations between the dimensions of self-efficacy and overall self-efficacy and also found that the training programme on communicative language teaching enhanced the efficacy perceptions of the English teachers in her study.

When the literature on pre-service English language teachers' efficacy perceptions is searched, it is seen that there are even fewer studies. For instance, Çakır (2005) conducted a study on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers who enrolled in a regular and a distance-education programme at 8 state universities in Turkey and reported no significant differences between gender and self-efficacy perceptions of the participants. In another study, Göker (2006) investigated the effects of a peer coaching training programme on a number of instructional skills and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in Northern Cyprus and found that the training programme could be used as a means to develop self-efficacy.

As could be seen in this literature review, both democratic values and self-efficacy perceptions of pre and in-service teachers of different subject areas have been investigated much but more separately. The scarcity of research focused on in- and pre-service English teachers regarding these two areas, thus, highlights a need to pay more attention to them.

### **Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education in Turkey**

At this point it could be wise to learn more about teacher education in Turkey, for it may contribute to our understanding of how English language teachers are trained and whether instilling democratic values and developing high self-efficacy perceptions in pre-service teachers are immediate goals in English language teacher education programmes.

In Turkey, teachers are trained in education faculties at universities where they obtain a bachelor's degree. Students, after completing their secondary school education, take a nation-wide Student Selection Examination (OSS). They also take a Foreign Language Examination (YDS), which is administered approximately one week after the first exam, to attend the higher education programmes in foreign language teaching or literature. The admission to university, however, is very competitive since the demand for higher education far exceeds the places available. The number of applicants in 2010 was 1 587 410 while only 374 068 students were placed in undergraduate programs. 28 244 students took the English Foreign Language Examination and only 3825 places were available for those who wished to enrol in English Language Teaching Departments ([www.osym.gov.tr](http://www.osym.gov.tr)).

In Turkey there are 139 (94 public and 45 private) universities and 72 of them (56 public, 7 private) have education faculties ([www.yok.gov.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr)). However, of these 72 faculties only 38 of them have English Language Teaching Departments. Yet, these faculties are not the only providers of language teachers. Those students enrolling in Faculties of Science and Letters, English Language and Literature Departments, American Culture and Literature Departments, Linguistics Departments and Translation and Interpreting Departments could also be licensed to teach English after completing a certificate programme offered by some education faculties.

Teacher education programmes are prepared by the Higher Education Council (YOK) in Turkey. The major aim of this centralisation is to assure that pre-service teachers acquire the same set of teacher skills and knowledge. During their education, pre-service English language teachers receive content and pedagogical knowledge mostly in theory in the first two years of their study. Academic Reading/Writing, Second Language Acquisition, Linguistics I and II, Research Skills, English Literature I and II, Approaches to English Language Teaching I and II are some of the courses of the first four terms that heavily draw upon the theoretical aspects of the profession. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year is almost totally allocated to pedagogical content knowledge where students receive knowledge about and practice of how to teach English. Teaching Language Skills I and II, Teaching English to Young Learners I

and II, Literature and Language Teaching I and II are those courses that foster competencies related to the teaching of the language (see [www.yok.gov.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr) for English Language Teacher Education Programme). At this stage in all the courses stated above pre-service teachers are usually engaged in microteaching, with a peer group acting as learners. The real field experience begins in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, in which the school experience course in the fall term and teaching practicum in the spring enable pre-service teachers to work on and polish their skills of teaching and enhance their knowledge about all the components of their profession while they are backed up with on-campus tutorials and preparation. In conclusion, it could be inferred that in Turkey the language teacher education programme directly helps pre-service teachers build a stronger sense of teacher efficacy perceptions.

On the other hand, it is seen that instilling democratic values in pre-service teachers or giving them the opportunity to practice these values in the classrooms are not explicitly stated on the agenda of teacher education programmes. The top-down teacher education programmes with insufficient elective courses, traditional assessment techniques that limit student choice, creativity and active involvement in learning; large classes where lectures are used as the main medium of instruction that leads to teacher-centred approach by restricting student teachers' observing demonstrations of learner-centred practices such as cooperative, collaborative teaching/learning experiences, student-led discussions, concept mapping seem to hinder the development of democratic values of pre-service teachers (Yılmaz, 2008). Consequently, it could be stated that this development is largely left to the personal beliefs and practices of teacher educators who are, to some extent, free to design their course content and choose the ways they deliver it.

## Method

In this study, quantitative paradigm was assumed since quantitative inquiry is based on testing and measuring a theory through statistical procedures (Creswell, 1994). He also argues that *"the quantitative researcher views reality as 'objective', 'out there' independent of the researcher. Something can be measured objectively by using a questionnaire or an instrument"* (p. 4). Besides, quantitative research, as Brannen argues in Brannen (1992), is carried out to discover how many and what kinds of people in the general have a particular characteristic in the sample population. Thus, the methodological design of this study, having the aim of studying the relationship between democratic values of pre-service teachers and their sense of self efficacy in relation to several other variables, was considered to reflect the principles of quantitative methodology.

### Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department at the end of the spring semestire in the 2007-2008 academic year. A total of 294 (66 (22.4 %) 1<sup>st</sup>, 53 (18 %) 2<sup>nd</sup>, 80 (27.2 %) 3<sup>rd</sup> and 95 (32.3 %) 4<sup>th</sup> grade) randomly selected pre-service teachers agreed to become a part of the study voluntarily and 100 % response rate was maintained. Of all the participants, 242 were female and 52 were male. It should be noted that age level of the participants was not included in this study since in Turkey the grade levels reflect the age levels of students as well. That is, it is a very rare occurrence in Turkey to find career switchers or drop outs due to socio-economic reasons as well as a very challenging centralised university entrance exam which limits the chances of those who wish to pursue a different career at later ages. For this reason, age was not included as a factor to be studied in this particular study.

The participants were also asked to report whether they would like to work as teachers after graduation or not. To this question, 244 (82.7 %) participants said *yes* while 48 (16 %) said *maybe* and 2 (0.7 %) said *no*.

### Instruments

All participants in this study completed anonymous surveys including a Teacher Trainees' Democratic Values Scale (TTDVS), the Turkish version of the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TTSES) as well as those questions asked to gather personal information.

#### Teacher Trainees' Democratic Values Scale

To investigate pre-service English teacher democratic values related to educational life, the Teacher Trainees' Democratic Values Scale designed by Selvi in 2006 was used. The calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.87 for the whole scale, which includes 24 items grouped into three subscales. The first of them has nine items and is called Rights of Education, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84, while the second subscale characterizes Solidarity, including nine items and with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85. Lastly, the third one is referred to as Freedom and contains six items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.69 (Selvi, 2006). The TTDVS is a likert type scale with the choices ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

#### Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

The Turkish Version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, which was originally developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy in 2001, was used to measure pre-service English teachers' sense of efficacy. The likert type scale was adapted to the Turkish context by Çapa, Çakiro lu and Sarıkaya in 2005. It is composed of 24 items with three subscales: efficacy for instructional strategies (8 items), efficacy for classroom management (8 items) and efficacy for student engagement (8 items). The reliability for the whole scale is 0.93. The coefficient alpha values for the Turkish pre-service teachers are 0.86 for instructional strategies, 0.84 for classroom management and 0.82 for student engagement (Çapa, Çakiro lu, Sarıkaya, 2005).

The original and the adapted instrument have a 9-point continuum with anchors from 1=Nothing to 9= A Great Deal. However, for the purposes of this particular study the anchors were reduced to 5 and redefined as 1= Not efficient, 2= Very little efficient, 3= A little efficient, 4= Quite efficient and 5= Very efficient. The reliability analysis which was carried



out after the data collection indicated that the scale with these anchors is also reliable (Alpha=0.92).

## Findings

The findings of this research study are discussed under each research question below.

### Democratic values of pre-service English language teachers related to educational life

To find out the democratic values of the pre-service English language teachers, descriptive statistics were undertaken and it was found out that the participants feature a high level of democratic values with an overall mean of 4.28 out of 5. Afterwards, the mean values for each subscale were also computed (see Table 1).

Dimensions of democratic values	Mean	SD
<i>Rights of education</i>	4.76	.32
<i>Solidarity</i>	4.46	.40
<i>Freedom</i>	3.31	.45

**Table 1: Pre-service English language teachers' democratic values (N=294)**

As seen in the table, the participants set a high priority on Rights of Education (Mean=4.76, SD= .32). In this dimension, the pre-service English teachers considered “*informing students about exam results*” (item 15) the most important (Mean=4.86, SD=.40), followed by item 10 “*the ways of developing individual potentials should be taught to students*” (Mean=4.81, SD=.43) and item 9 “*Access to knowledge should be taught to students*” (Mean=4.80, SD=.42). As for the second dimension, Solidarity, similarly the participants scored high (Mean=4.46, SD=.40), indicating that they value support and maintaining good relations both among students and between teacher and students. Items 16 “*Students should not be compared with other students regarding their characteristics*” (Mean= 4.79, SD= .52) and 21 “*Teachers should cooperate with students in problem solving*” (Mean= 4.69, SD= .53) received high ratings. Of all three dimensions, Freedom is the one in which pre-service English teachers reacted restrictively towards students' ranges of personal freedom. The mean values for item 2, for example, “*Students should determine their own projects and assignments*” (Mean= 3.60, SD= 1.09) and item 7 “*Each student should decide where he or she sits in the classroom*” (Mean= 2.35, SD=1.22) can be taken as indicators of their tentative approach to freedom of students in the classroom. Certainly, since most of these pre-service teachers have no or very little experience in classrooms as teachers, their judgments may solely depend on what they themselves observed and experienced in schools as learners. As mentioned in section 4, teacher education programmes as well as primary and secondary school education in Turkey do not give much space to learner-centred approaches. Therefore, this result may not be regarded as unexpected.

**Relationship between the democratic values of the pre-service teachers and their gender, grade level and plans after graduation**

One of the purposes of this particular study is to look into the likely relationships between the democratic values of pre-service English teachers and those variables of gender, grade level and their plans after graduation.

Firstly, in order to analyse the gender factor in the democratic values of student teachers, an independent samples t-test was carried out. The table below presents the findings (Table 2).

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
<i>Female</i>	242	4.30	.28			
<i>Male</i>	52	4.23	.27	1.569	292	.118

**Table 2: Democratic values in relation to gender differences**

Although the female pre-service teachers' democratic values are slightly higher than that of the males (Mean=4.30 and 4.23 respectively), the p value ( $t_{(292)} = 1.569, p > .05$ ) suggests that there is not a significant relationship between the two variables.

To investigate the likely relationship between the next independent variable, that is grade level, and democratic values, firstly the mean scores for the democratic values of pre-service teachers in different grades were calculated (Table 3).

Grade Level	N	Mean	SD
<i>1<sup>st</sup> grade</i>	66	4.28	.33
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> grade</i>	53	4.26	.25
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> grade</i>	80	4.23	.29
<i>4<sup>th</sup> grade</i>	95	4.34	.24

**Table 3: Democratic values of different grade levels**

All grade levels featured a high level of democratic values, among which the 4<sup>th</sup> grade student teachers displayed the highest level of democratic values (Mean= 4.34, SD= .24). As the table reveals, of all the groups the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students had a slightly lower level of democratic values (Mean= 4.23, SD=.29). However, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) did not reveal any significant differences between the democratic values of pre-service teachers at different grade levels ( $F_{(3-290)}=2.426, p > .05$ ).

As for the participants' plans after graduation, that is whether they wanted to work as a teacher or not, as expected those who reported willingness to work as teachers scored higher in the democratic values scale than those who were indecisive (Mean= 4.30, SD= .27 and Mean= 4.21, SD= .34 respectively) (see Table 4). Those who reported that they would not seek a job in education scored slightly higher than the other two groups (Mean= 4.31).

Work as a teacher	N	Mean	SD
<i>Yes</i>	244	4.30	.27
<i>Maybe</i>	48	4.21	.34
<i>No</i>	2	4.31	2.946E-02

**Table 4: Democratic values in relation to after graduation plans**

While the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) did not reveal a significant effect of plans for after-graduation on the democratic values of pre-service teachers ( $F_{(2-289)}=2.177, p > .05$ ), the result of an independent samples t-test analysis indicated a significant difference in that those pre-service teachers who plan to work as teachers had a stronger perception of democratic values than those who were indecisive ( $t_{(288)} = 2.078, p < .05$ ).

**Teacher efficacy perceptions of pre-service English language teachers**

The second dependent variable under investigation was self-efficacy perceptions and statistical analysis revealed that the pre-service English teachers possess a moderately high level of teacher self-efficacy perception (Mean= 3.80; SD= .49). When compared to the mean value of democratic values, it is seen that the pre-service teachers' sense of self efficacy is not as strong as their democratic values.

When the mean values for each item are considered, it is observed that the pre-service English language teachers rated themselves as more efficacious in item 5, which refers to their belief regarding making their expectations clear about student behaviour (Mean= 4.23, SD=.77). Items 1, 16 and 17 in the scale had the lowest means. These items are related to teachers' beliefs in their abilities to get through to the most difficult students (Mean= 3.39, SD=.75), establishing a classroom management system (Mean=3.49, SD=.81), and adjusting their teaching to the proper level for individual students (Mean=3.51, SD=.81).

For the three dimensions of teachers' sense of efficacy further analyses were carried out and the results indicate that pre-service teachers' efficacy perceptions in all three dimensions are close to one another (Table 5).

<b>Dimensions of self-efficacy perceptions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<i>Instructional strategies</i>	3.81	.55
<i>Classroom management</i>	3.80	.55
<i>Student engagement</i>	3.79	.53

**Table 5: Pre-service English language teachers' teacher self-efficacy perceptions**

However, within the same dimension, the participants reported differing degrees of confidence. For example, in instructional strategies while they rated themselves highly efficacious in assessing what learners have learnt (Mean=4.01, SD=.78), they had lower efficacy perceptions about their abilities to adjust their teaching to the level of their learners (Mean= 3.51) and respond to difficult questions from learners (Mean=3.69). Similarly, for classroom management, pre-service teachers reported a strong sense of efficacy regarding making their expectations clear about student behaviour and establishing routines to keep activities running smoothly (Mean= 4.33, SD= .77 and Mean= 3.94, SD= .69 respectively). Yet, they believed less in their capabilities to establish classroom management systems for different groups of students and to respond to defiant students (Mean= 3.49, SD= .81 and Mean= 3.52, SD =.72 respectively).

**Relationship between the teacher efficacy perceptions of the pre-service teachers and their gender, grade level and plans after graduation**

The male participants had a higher level of efficacy perceptions in general than the females (Mean= 3.84 and Mean= 3.79 respectively). However, the independent samples t-test analysis revealed no significant difference between gender and self-efficacy perceptions of the participants ( $t_{(292)} = -.662, p > .05$ ). Similarly, no statistical difference was found between the three dimensions of the scale and gender ( $p > .05$ ) in the ANOVA analysis although it should be noted that the male pre-service teachers reported a higher sense of efficacy in classroom management (Mean=3.92) and instructional strategies (Mean=3.88) while in student engagement the female participants believed that they could influence student action more (Mean=3.81).

As for different grade levels, the same procedures were repeated (see Table 6). The means for four grade levels indicate that the 4<sup>th</sup> graders feel themselves as more efficacious when compared to other grade levels (Mean= 3.93). While the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade pre-service English teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy is almost the same, of all the grade levels the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers have a lower perception of efficacy (Mean= 3.65).

Grade Level	N	Mean	SD
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	66	3.79	.52
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	53	3.79	.40
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	80	3.65	.49
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	95	3.93	.46

Table 6: Efficacy perceptions and grade levels

The one-way ANOVA analysis carried out to see whether this difference is statistically significant or not also supported the finding that the self-efficacy perceptions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade learners differ from one another significantly ( $F_{(3,290)}=5.114, p<.05$ ) in that 4<sup>th</sup> graders feel significantly more efficacious than the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (see Table 7).

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teacher efficacy perceptions	Between Groups	3.470	3	1.157	5.114	.002
	Within Groups	65.600	290	.226		
	Total	23.026	293			

Table 7: Efficacy perceptions and grade levels relation

The analyses for the last dependent variable, plans for after graduation, revealed that those whose career plans include teaching English scored much higher than those who did not want to work as teachers (Mean= 3.80 for *Yes* and Mean=3.58 for *No*) (see Table 8).

Work as a teacher	N	Mean	SD
Yes	244	3.80	.46
Maybe	48	3.81	.60
No	2	3.58	

Table 8: Efficacy perceptions in relation to after graduation plans

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), however, did not reveal a significant effect of plans for after-graduation on the efficacy perceptions of the pre-service teachers ( $F_{(2,289)}=.226, p>.05$ ). However, when the limited number of pre-service teachers giving negative answers is considered, this result may not be so dependable and further research should be carried out to see whether or not plans for having different careers other than teaching create a difference in pre-service teachers' efficacy perceptions.

### Correlation between the pre-service English language teachers' democratic values and their teaching efficacy perceptions

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to investigate the relationship between the democratic values of pre-service English teachers and their sense of efficacy (Table 9).

		Democratic Values
Teacher	r	.228
Efficacy	p	.000*

Beliefs	N	294
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\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 9: Correlation between democratic values and efficacy perceptions of pre-service English teachers**

A low positive correlation was found between the democratic values of pre-service English teachers and their efficacy perceptions ( $r=.228$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

## Discussion and Implications

This study examined pre-service English language teachers' perceptions of democratic values and their sense of efficacy. Not only did it investigate these two powerful psychological constructs in detail, but also looked into possible relations between these variables and gender, grade and career plans. One of the most interesting phases of this study was its consideration of the question as to whether democratic values of pre-service teachers and their perceptions of teacher self-efficacy are related to one another.

The findings of the study revealed that the pre-service English teachers in this cohort hold strong democratic values. Regarding the independent variables of gender, class and future career plans, the study found no statistically significant difference between them and the democratic values of the participants. Gender was not a significantly important factor concerning the democratic values which might highlight the universal nature of democracy and related issues. Rights of Education received the highest score above the dimensions of Solidarity (2<sup>nd</sup> most important) and Freedom (the lowest priority). This might suggest that student teachers are more concerned with student rights rather than individual rights as they were still students themselves.

Although the grades of students did not display a significant difference, 4<sup>th</sup> year students had the highest scores regarding democratic values. This would support the positive correlation between student competency (academic and professional) and understanding of democracy, as the 4<sup>th</sup> year students could naturally find themselves more confident in teaching skills due to their pedagogical courses such as School Experience and Teaching Practice. These courses at education faculties in Turkey take place in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, which might be the reason for the higher scores of the 4<sup>th</sup> year students regarding democratic values. They might have questioned their teaching competencies and skills as they could see the difference between theory and practice in the school practice, which gives 4<sup>th</sup> year students an opportunity to practice their skills and competencies such as planning, organisation and classroom management in schools. Therefore, 4<sup>th</sup> year students probably have clearer ideas about the procedures and practices at the schools than the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students. This awareness might have resulted in them feeling more comfortable about setting educational and professional aims and goals regarding democratic values.

In accordance with this idea, students who were willing to work as teachers scored higher in the democratic values scale than those who were indecisive about the teaching profession. This would be related to self-confidence and self-awareness about teaching and related issues. As expected, the findings above reveal that the democratic values of pre-service English teachers and their efficacy perceptions have a positive correlation and they feed each other. This finding supports previous research about teacher competency indicating that teachers feeling more competent had also more positive attitudes towards student error correction and classroom management which can be considered as the reflection of democratic values in practice (Ashton and Webb, 1986; Emmer and Hickman, 1991).

Teachers as change agents play a crucial role in instilling democratic values in their learners not only by being good models but also by explicitly fostering these values in them. One clear implication of this study is, therefore, that teacher education programmes need to

explicitly state in their agendas the knowledge and skills pre-service teachers need to possess in relation to democratic values related to educational life. In terms of practicing these values, Sava (2003b) states that teachers need to acquire democratic pedagogy and need to be careful about student interests, experiences and prior knowledge. They also need to be tolerant while correcting mistakes, patient and understanding. Drawing on this argument, establishing a positive and democratic atmosphere, taking into account student ideas and needs and solving problems smoothly affect students' perceptions and behaviour regarding democracy (Marri, 2005). Cam also (2000) states that democracy is also a mode of associated living and communicated experience. Democratic methods, such as consultation, persuasion, negotiation, cooperation, acquisition of culture and education are applied when accumulating experience.

Intercultural communication, effective and intensive pedagogic courses and teaching practice processes, critical pedagogy and thinking and problem solving skills which foster questioning teaching skills and competencies all need to be an integral part of any teacher education curriculum (Sultana, 1995).

Vari (1991) suggests that use of individual and group work, encouraging research and problem solving techniques, and designing activities according to the students' interests and problems are necessary principles of forming a democratic environment in the classroom and hence assisting in the formation of socially desirable democratic characteristics in learners, since a democratic person is tolerant and respectful towards different opinions, listens to others and questions perceptions and practices, collaborates and shares with others and s/he has multiple points of view with critical lens (see also Gözütok, 1995; Karakütük, 2001). Similarly, Ye il (2004) emphasises the importance of use of simulations, discussions, role play and use of art such as painting, dramatisation, dancing and music for a democratic classroom environment. Consequently, the teacher's knowledge, theories, democratic values and attitudes and actual practice prepare a context and agenda for a democratic society. Surely, explicit purpose and intention about understanding and practicing democracy need to be given in order to make democratic theories, values and actions articulated and visible. This would then lead to creating a common language and culture about these issues for improvement and change.

As for self-efficacy perceptions, the participants in this study rated their self-efficacy in teaching at a moderate level. This finding is consistent with those from different studies. For instance, in Göker's study (2006) pre-service English teachers also rated their sense of efficacy as moderate. Similar results were found in studies on pre-service Mathematics, Science and Primary School teachers' self-efficacy perceptions in Turkey (see Altunçekiç et al., 2005; Umay, 2001; Üredi and Üredi, 2006). There is evidence to support the view that teachers' sense of teacher efficacy is highest during pre-service years (Hebert et al., 1998) usually resulting from an unrealistic assessment of their teaching skills and what constitutes teaching. The moderate ratings of self-efficacy perceptions in this group of pre-service teachers, especially at 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels, may therefore have stemmed from the opportunities given to them in microteaching sessions and the field practicum, where they experienced the difficulties of teaching and received specific feedback on their performance. Therefore, it could be inferred that well-designed and controlled professional development supported in simulated environments and real classrooms may prevent pre-service teachers from shaping unrealistically high levels of teacher efficacy perceptions. As Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998: 235) point out 'actual experiences...in a variety of contexts with increasing levels of complexity and challenge' help build a positive and realistic sense of teacher efficacy. This is important in that, as known, failure undermines self-efficacy perceptions. In other words, if pre-service teachers with unrealistically high efficacy perceptions face the challenges of real teaching and fail, they may suffer from inadequacy and discouragement, which, by extension, may have a negative impact on the quality of instruction and learning outcomes since these variables have been found to be closely

correlated with one another in several studies (see for example Ashton and Webb, 1986; Caprara et al., 2006; Tella, 2008; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008).

With regard to gender and teacher efficacy perceptions, this study did not find a significant relationship between the two variables. While this finding is in line with those of different studies (Çakır, 2005; Akba and Çelikkaleli, 2006; Akbulut, 2006), it also contradicts the findings of some others (Morgil et al., 2004; Çapri and Çelikkaleli, 2008). Although gender does play a major role in many things people do, these contradicting results suggest that in relation to efficacy perceptions what we should start to focus on may not be gender but rather the type and quality of instruction in teacher education and the models that pre-service teachers observe. As Bandura (1995) states, one of the sources of self-efficacy perceptions are the messages that other people communicate and the successes and failure of others. Thus, when pre-service teachers are given the opportunities to meet successful role models as teacher educators and subject teachers, gender differences may lessen or even disappear. This idea certainly calls for more research.

As for grade differences, in this study 4<sup>th</sup> graders reported themselves to be more efficacious than the others. This finding is congruent with the results of Spector's study (1990) where the 4<sup>th</sup> graders reported the highest sense of efficacy. Several studies also indicate that there is usually a linear increase in efficacy perceptions of pre-service teachers during the course of their education (Soodak and Podell, 1993; Woolfolk and Hoy, 1990; Sia, 1992 in Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). Surprisingly, though, in this particular study, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders rated themselves as less efficacious than the others. This case might be explained in terms of the goals of teacher education for different grades in Turkey. As mentioned earlier in the text, pre-service teachers largely receive content and pedagogical knowledge which heavily and theoretically emphasize the background information about language teaching in the first two years of their study, while it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade where they basically learn how to teach the language and are engaged in several microteaching experiences, usually feeling frustrated by the realization of how complex teaching is. Therefore, the findings for this population might reflect the fact that pre-service teachers' first formal attempts to teach the language, i.e. their own personal experiences, might challenge their perceptions of self-efficacy, thus leading to lower perceptions of self-efficacy for the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.

This study also provides evidence that there is a low but a positive correlation between pre-service teachers' democratic values and efficacy perceptions. Previous research supports the view that teacher democratic beliefs are related to teacher effectiveness and teacher efficacy in various settings (Shechtman, 2002; Almog and Shechtman, 2007). Similarly, Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) reported that efficacious pre-service teachers are more likely to have a progressive orientation in that they display more humanistic tendencies and exercise less control over their students. The current study with this particular finding seems to support the relationship between these two powerful constructs. Certainly there is a need to look into this relationship more closely and this calls for further research with different participants in different departments and subject areas.

Finally, a number of limitations need to be considered here. First, the data of this study were collected at a particular English language teaching department in Turkey with the participation of a limited number of pre-service teachers. Such being the case, the sample does not cover the whole group of pre-service English language teachers of Turkey and is not nationally representative. To better profile the case for pre-service teachers in relation to the research questions raised in this study, more studies need to be carried out. Longitudinal studies can be replicated which would give the opportunity to compare the relationship between democratic values and self-efficacy perceptions of pre-service teachers in the first and fourth (the final) year of their training programme and after graduation when they are appointed as teachers. Besides, other variables such as different departments at Education Faculties (e.g. primary, geography and physics), or educational and income levels of students' parents can also be integrated into the study in order to see the effects of different disciplines,

and personal and social components of democratic education and its relationship with teacher self-efficacy. Qualitative components such as self-reports, teaching journals, and interviews can also be a part of such a study in order to understand initial ideas and definitions of pre-service students about democratic education, self-efficacy and their experiences at schools during the teaching practicum.

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