EFL Literacy Teaching in Relation to Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Experience and Native Language

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Abstract: English as a foreign language (EFL) literacy is necessary for the career success of non-English speaking students. Many students lack adequate EFL literacy skills which may indicate a gap between EFL literacy instruction theory and practice. Teachers' self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing, years of teaching experience, and/or native language may influence their selection of components for EFL literacy instruction. This study examines these components as they are perceived by teachers. One hundred and sixty-seven Israeli EFL elementary school teachers completed online questionnaires. Findings showed a weak correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their instructional approach. Teaching experience and teachers' native language did not influence their selection of EFL literacy instructional components or their sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing. Providing theoretical knowledge in teacher education to all types of EFL teachers may lead to more effective literacy instruction.

Introduction

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

regards to their teaching of reading and spelling and their ability to address individual differences in the EFL class, their years of teaching experience and their native language are the focus of the current study.

Teacher Self-Efficacy in EFL

The self-efficacy of EFL teachers was examined as part of a larger study that also examined teachers' perceptions, teacher-trainers' views, and curricula as reflected in textbooks (Fuchs, 2017). In this context, self-efficacy is defined as a belief on the part of teachers about their capability to succeed in teaching (Mills, 2011; Mills & Allen, 2007; Swanson, 2013). These beliefs influence the teacher's classroom practices, which may influence student achievement (Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Mills, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Teachers' beliefs impact both perception and judgment of what occurs in the classroom. Moreover, during teacher training, teachers' beliefs determine how they understand and transform new information into classroom practices. Thus, examining teachers' self-efficacy can improve teacher training programs (Johnson, 1994). Karimi (2011) showed that professional development programs, in the areas of content knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management, enhanced EFL teachers' self-efficacy in teaching. Teaching strategies that a teacher believes to be effective are closely related to the knowledge and skills that that teacher possesses. Thus, quality professional development programs should be available for EFL teachers, aimed specifically at increasing teachers' knowledge which in turn raises the teachers' self-efficacy.

EFL teachers' self-efficacy has been found to impact their classroom practices regarding teaching grammar, reading, and writing (Borg, 2003). Many of these teachers had strong theoretical beliefs, leading them to adopt a specific methodological approach that they have used since they started teaching, regardless of current research-based trends. Teachers' self-efficacy is usually based upon their preferred methodological approach and the theory in which this methodological approach is embedded (Borg, 2003). Chen and Yeung (2015) identified proficiency in the language of instruction and professional learning as influential factors for foreign language teachers' self-efficacy. By providing alternative theoretically and research-based practices, changes in literacy instruction practices in the classroom may occur.

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

EFL teachers' subject knowledge is likely to have a significant influence on their self-efficacy and has been shown to be a key factor in effective teaching. Efficient first language (L1) literacy instruction is performed by teachers who possess accurate knowledge about language and literacy acquisition. These teachers are able to use this knowledge in their classroom practices (Piasta et al., 2009). However, elementary school L1 teachers were shown to possess limited knowledge of the basic English language constructs and were found to overestimate their literacy related knowledge (Stark et al., 2016). Teachers who are unaware of the knowledge that they lack may have high self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing even though they may be less equipped to teach reading, especially to weaker students. EFL teachers with low

self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction, who may lack this language knowledge, have demonstrated enthusiasm for programs that would offer them accurate, explicit knowledge about language and literacy acquisition. This new knowledge led to them changing their beliefs about their ability to teach reading and writing, thus raising their self-efficacy (Kahn-Horwitz, 2015).

In this study, we examined Israeli EFL teachers' reports of self-efficacy with regard to teaching reading and writing to all students, including those with difficulties. We examined the correlation between selection of teaching components for literacy instruction and level of self-efficacy.

Novice versus Experienced EFL Teachers

Teaching experience may impact the extent to which teachers engage in theory-based literacy instruction. Teachers are considered to be novice for at least the first four to five years of teaching, after which they will be considered to be experienced (Gatbonton, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Tsui, 2009). Novice teachers of English as a second language were found to demonstrate skills reflecting some pedagogical knowledge that experienced teachers had. This could indicate that these skills can be acquired within a short period of teaching time (Gatbonton, 2008). However, while applying the skills, novice teachers were shown to lack knowledge compared to more experienced teachers, particularly with regard to teaching vocabulary, where experienced teachers demonstrated knowledge of theory-based teaching strategies that 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 think they should change their instructional practices. Many pre-service EFL teachers base their beliefs on what they saw experienced teachers doing in the classroom (Johnson, 1994). These novice teachers lack exposure to alternative instructional options, leaving them feeling that they have no choice but to continue with their current way of teaching, even if they believe it to be inadequate. Moreover, research has found that novice EFL teachers have lower levels of self-efficacy than experienced teachers with regard to content and pedagogical knowledge (Mills, 2011). That said, other studies have shown that this knowledge can develop over time (Swanson, 2013).

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

Native versus Non-Native English Speaking EFL Teachers

As in other countries where English is not the first language, most Israeli EFL teachers are non-native English speakers (NNESTs) (Joshi et al., 2016). EFL teachers' linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge may influence their perceptions of their own self-efficacy (Mills & Allen, 2007). Swanson (2013) suggests that there is a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their status as native or non-native speakers of the foreign language that they are teaching. Calafato (2019) showed, in a review of studies done from 2009 to 2018 with NNESTs, that these teachers have unique affordances and use these to implement multilingual classroom practices that improve students' language awareness and promote language learning. These teachers serve as linguistic models for students, the fact that they themselves are successful multilingual learners inspires their students. However, due to teacher education programs that follow a monolingual approach to language, NNESTs continue to doubt their abilities as multilingual teachers and aim for a native speaker identity which does not accurately reflect the language learning process for multilinguals.

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

In a qualitative study, in which all participants were NNESTs (Leonard, 2018), all tended to position themselves negatively against perceptions of ideal native speaker proficiencies within their professional networks that they feel undermine their own linguistic skills. Some NNESTs believe their students expect to see NESTs as teachers and some experienced situations in which they had been challenged by NEST networks, causing them to doubt their legitimacy as teachers. In some countries NESTs are preferred, based on the bias that learning a language from a native speaker is more effective and viewed as more prestigious. However, there are many types of NESTs and their linguistic proficiency depends on how they interact with language. Preference of NEST teachers is prejudiced since teaching skills and knowledge are linked to experience and education (Leonard, 2018).

NNESTs were shown to rely primarily on textbooks, whereas NESTs are more willing to include a wider range of materials in their teaching (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). In addition, NESTs serve as fluent role models for their students because they possess rich cultural knowledge that NNESTs may lack (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). On the other hand, native English-speaking adults have been found to possess very little knowledge about orthographic related language structure and linguistic concepts. This knowledge is crucial for teaching reading and writing. 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 NESTS in Israel, as it does for English L1 teachers, indicating that, for them to become efficient teachers of reading and writing, they need to acquire knowledge through systematic language training, similar to NNESTs.

Another influential factor is spelling proficiency. NNESTS in Israel reported that, although they have good spelling skills in their first language, their English spelling skills are relatively weak. This may be the result of insufficient spelling instruction they received during their schooling. The orthographic differences between English and Hebrew or Arabic may provide another reason for their weaker spelling in English (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016). NNESTS may not be able to adequately provide spelling instruction to students since they themselves struggle with spelling, thus spelling proficiency development should also be provided in teacher-training programs.

English is not the property of the native speaker; it is an international language and is owned by whoever uses it. Thus, both NESTS and NNESTS should focus on the needs of their students, equipping themselves with pedagogical expertise and contextual knowledge of the teaching circumstances, the former educating themselves about the culture of the students learning the English language and the latter about the English language culture (Md. Jahangir Alam, 2019).

The Present Study

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

EFL elementary school teachers completed questionnaires regarding their views of the components included in their literacy instruction programs and indicated the frequency with which these components are incorporated in their instruction. This was done to determine their literacy instructional approach. Examination of topics and components relating to L1 literacy instruction has been conducted over the years, in the United States, since 1997, by means of a survey called "What's Hot" (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2012). This survey is published annually with the aim of providing a systematic review of current practice in English L1 literacy instruction, as a resource for educators (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998). Inspired by the "What's Hot" English L1 survey (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998), in this study we attempted to determine the literacy instructional approach of EFL teachers in Israel based on instructional components similar to those examined in the "What's Hot" surveys and explore if these stem from theory-based models of literacy instruction. The initial components were taken from "What's Hot" surveys (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998; Cassidy et al., 2010; Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2012). Next some components that were not relevant for EFL literacy instruction were taken out and additional components were added that pertain specifically to EFL.

Research Questions

1.   Is there a connection between EFL teachers' selection of components for their literacy instruction and their sense of self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing in English?
2.   Are there differences between novice and experienced EFL teachers:
     a)   in their selection of components for literacy instruction?
     b)   in their self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing?
     3.   Are there differences between NESTs and NNESTs:
     a)   in their selection of components for literacy instruction?
     b)   in their self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing?

Research Hypotheses

Piasta et al. (2009) found a connection between teachers' orthographic related literacy content knowledge, which influences classroom practices, and their self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing. Based on this, we hypothesized that EFL teachers' self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing to all children, including those with difficulties, may be strongly related to their selection of components for literacy instruction which may not be theory-based.

Gatbonton (2008) found differences between experienced and novice teachers regarding knowledge and application of research-based strategies. She found that experienced teachers possessed more knowledge of research-based strategies than novice teachers. Based on these results, we expected to find differences between experienced and novice teachers, to the advantage of experienced teachers and a relationship between teacher experience and self-efficacy.

Arva and Medgyes (2000) discussed their findings regarding the differences between NESTs and NNESTs. They found that NNESTs are more thorough in lesson planning than NESTs. However, they also found that NESTs use a wider range of teaching materials in addition to textbooks, while NNESTs mainly base their teaching on textbooks. On the other hand, NESTS have been found to possess very little knowledge about orthographic related language structure which is crucial for teaching reading and writing (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Calafato (2019) claims that NNESTs doubt their abilities as multilingual teachers, setting their goal for a native speaker identity, and according to Leonard (2018) NNESTs view themselves negatively in comparison to ideal native speaker proficiencies. Based on this, we hypothesized that we would find differences between native and non-native English-speaking teachers in their self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing in English as well as in their choices in literacy instruction.

Method
Participants

One hundred and sixty-seven EFL elementary school teachers in Israel participated in this study. Out of these, 155 were female, 126 were non-native English speakers, and 110 had at least

six years of teaching experience. The other 50 were considered novice EFL teachers as they had up to five years of teaching experience.

Measures

We developed an online questionnaire using guidelines for compiling questionnaires in second language research (Dornyei, 2003). The questionnaires were structured as three sections (Blaz, 2006; Carreker & Birsh, 2005; Ediger, 2014; Grabe, 2009; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), 2006; Ur, 2012): Section 1: The five pillars of literacy (content and materials); Section 2: EFL specific literacy areas including grammar, speaking, listening, writing, spelling and digital literacy (content and materials); Section 3: Self-efficacy, assessment, students' individual differences, provision of reading books and professional development. Teachers rated their quantity of teaching during a typical year on a six-point scale including the following options: not at all, less than once a week, once a week, twice a week, three times a week, every lesson.

To investigate the connection between teachers' choices and their self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction, teachers rated their self-efficacy. They rated their self-efficacy on a scale of one to six where one represented strongly disagree and six represented strongly agree. They responded on this scale to five statements relating to their beliefs with regards to the adequacy of their pre-service and in-service professional reading instruction training, as well as their ability to cater to individual differences of EFL learners.

Teachers provided information on years of teaching experience and their native language. This enabled comparing novice and experienced teachers as well as NESTs and NNESTs with regard to their literacy instruction and their self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing. The reliability of the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of .96. The internal consistency of the respective self-efficacy statements that the teachers rated yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of .69.

Procedure

Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Chief Scientist's Office in Israel as well as the Ethics Committee of the University of Haifa, Israel. The anonymous questionnaire was e-mailed to elementary school principals in Israel. The principals were asked to forward the questionnaire to EFL teachers in their school.

Results

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

reading and writing. Finally, we examined differences between NESTs and NNESTs regarding their selection of components for their literacy instruction and their self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing.

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

Means and standard deviations were calculated for all measures. Pearson correlations were calculated between the variables. ANOVA repeated measures were used to examine the differences within each group and between the groups. Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated.

Teachers' Self-Reported Self-Efficacy

Teachers' self-efficacy regarding literacy instruction was examined. They rated their views on statements concerning their self-efficacy about teaching reading and writing, on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). These statements referred to adequacy of pre-service teacher training concerning methods for teaching reading and writing and to availability of professional in-service courses providing knowledge about literacy instruction. Additional statements related to the level of confidence that teachers feel when teaching reading and writing to weak pupils and in offering children at different reading levels material that is appropriate for them. Overall, their mean self-efficacy rating for teaching reading and writing was 4.44, $SD = .87$ on a scale of one to six.

Teachers' Self-Efficacy and their Instructional Approach

In response to the first research question, we examined correlations between teacher reported implementation of literacy instruction components and their self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing. 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 but low correlations were found between self-efficacy and the following components: phonemic awareness in the third year of EFL instruction ($r = .24$; $p < .01$), phonics in the third year of EFL instruction ($r = .22$; $p < .05$), reading fluency in the fourth year of EFL instruction ($r = .19$; $p < .05$), vocabulary in the third ($r = .23$; $p < .05$) and fifth years of EFL instruction ($r = .22$; $p < .05$), reading comprehension in the fifth year of EFL instruction ($r = .33$; $p < .01$), and writing and spelling in the fourth year of EFL instruction ($r = .26$; $p < .01$).

Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers and their Instructional Approaches

The second question examined the relationship between novice (one to five years) and experienced (six years and over) EFL teachers and their selection of EFL literacy instruction

components. Significant correlations were found between the number of years of teaching experience and how often grammar was included in the fourth year of EFL instruction as well as how often listening activities were included in their lessons in the fifth year of instruction (see Table 1). No significant correlations were found between teaching experience and any of the other EFL literacy components.

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*

*$p < .05$

Table 1: Teaching Experience and Selection of Literacy Instruction Components. Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses)

Self-Efficacy of Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers

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

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

With regard to the third research question, few significant differences were found between NESTs and NNESTs in their selection of components for their literacy instruction (see Table 2). In all the cases where differences were found, the NNESTs reported greater use of theory-based literacy components than the NESTs.

Variables (maximum possible score)	Native English Speaker	Non-Native English Speaker	t
N	20	76	
Reading fluency (fifth year): How often do you (combined fluency activity questions)? not at all / less than once a week / once a week / twice a week / three times a week / every lesson (6)	3.04(1.07)	3.68(1.09)	-2.35*
N	28	88	
Vocabulary (fourth year): How many new vocabulary items do you teach in lessons? none / less than 4 / 4-5 / 6-7 / 8-10/ more than 10 (6)	4.07(1.05)	4.51(.92)	-2.12*
N	19	76	

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

*$p < .05$

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

Table 2: Native and Non-native English Speakers and their Selection of Literacy Instruction Components. Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses)

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

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

Discussion

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

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

EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Instructional Approach

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

Previous teaching experiences have been shown to influence teachers' self-efficacy, strengthening it if the experience was successful (Mills, 2011; Mills & Allen, 2007; Swanson, 2013). Teachers' points of view may be influenced by their perceptions of their own knowledge about literacy instruction, which has been shown in previous studies to be a crucial factor in effective teaching (Piasta et al., 2009). The findings of the present study show that teachers selected literacy instruction components that may indicate only partial knowledge of theory-based literacy instruction. This may lead them to perceive themselves as knowledgeable,

unaware of the knowledge that they lack, thus feeling confident to teach reading (Stark et al., 2016).

Previous research has shown that teachers' learning experiences during their school years influence their beliefs about teaching (Borg, 2003). Literacy instruction methods that were successful for them when they were students may be subsequently used by these teachers. As a result, they perceive themselves to be effective teachers, despite their lack of knowledge of some of the essential basic orthographic related literacy components.

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

Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers and their Instructional Approaches

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

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

This study also examined correlations between EFL teachers' native language and their selection of literacy instruction components. Some differences were found in reading fluency, vocabulary, listening, and digital literacy in the fourth and fifth years, but not for any other

components or years. NNESTS reported engaging in activities related to these topics more often than NESTs. This may, to some extent, support research showing that NNESTs feel they need to improve their own proficiency (Calafato, 2019; Leonard, 2018), and thus that they tend to be more attentive in their lesson planning than NESTs (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). However, the limited findings in the present study may not imply a strong link between teachers' native language and their instructional approach and it seems that for teachers to be effective, NESTS may need to be provided with knowledge about the culture of the students learning the English language and NNESTS about the English language culture (Md. Jahangir Alam, 2019).

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

Self-Efficacy as a Factor of Experience and Native Language

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

EFL teachers' native language was also examined in relation to self-efficacy. Previous research has shown a relationship between these variables (Calafato, 2019; Leonard, 2018; Mills & Allen, 2007; Swanson, 2013), but this study showed no significant correlation between them. This may indicate support for Cook's (1999) multicompetence theory, which claims that comparing the level of a person's second language to that of a native speaker is irrelevant. This study seems to indicate that NNESTS may possess equal self-efficacy to NESTs because of their greater sensitivity to the difficulties that their students face (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2002).

Conclusions

This study, which examines EFL literacy instruction in Israel, explores the connection between research-based theoretical knowledge and reported practices occurring in classrooms in relation to the following variables: teachers' self-efficacy, teaching experience, and native language. Although teachers may be unaware of the theory-based knowledge they lack, they were shown to have high self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach reading and writing (Stark et al., 2016), and little correlation was found between self-efficacy and instructional approach. Both novice and experienced teachers have been shown to possess limited theory-based knowledge (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016; Joshi et al., 2016), and both groups reported teaching similar literacy instruction components. Moreover, this study's findings only partially supported the hypothesis, based on previous research, that differences would be found between practices of NESTs and NNESTs (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Choong, 2006). All types of teachers—those with high or low self-efficacy regarding teaching reading and writing, those who are experienced or novice, and those who are native or non-native speakers—may benefit from in-service professional development courses that provide knowledge about theory-based EFL literacy instructional components. This knowledge may lead to improvement of literacy instruction in classrooms and, as a result, to student achievement.

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

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the contribution of this study, it has limitations. One limitation was that the number of teacher participants was fewer than expected, due to technical difficulties in directly contacting the teachers. In addition, a shorter questionnaire, or perhaps one created in the respondents' L1 (Hebrew or Arabic), may have encouraged more teachers to participate. Future research that may prove insightful could more deeply investigate the quality of each of the EFL literacy components since the present study focused on quantity more than quality of instruction. In addition, mixed method research investigating the participants' experiences would provide fuller and richer answers to the questions being examined. Finally, it is recommended to investigate these research questions internationally in order to understand if these results are country specific or not.

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