

# NIỀM TIN VÀO NĂNG LỰC BẢN THÂN CỦA GIÁO VIÊN MỚI VÀO NGHỀ TRONG VIỆC GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH

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Niềm tin của giáo viên vào năng lực của bản thân (*teacher self-efficacy*) có tác động lớn tới quá trình dạy-học, hiệu quả giảng dạy, thành tựu và thời gian gắn bó với nghề của giáo viên. Tuy nhiên, chưa có nhiều nghiên cứu tại Việt Nam về niềm tin của giáo viên vào năng lực của bản thân, đặc biệt của nhóm giáo viên mới vào nghề. Vì những lý do trên, nhóm tác giả đã tiến hành một nghiên cứu nhằm tìm hiểu quan điểm của giáo viên có thâm niên dưới 05 năm về các yếu tố tác động tới niềm tin của giáo viên vào năng lực của bản thân. Nghiên cứu được thiết kế theo phương pháp tích hợp định lượng và định tính, sử dụng phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc và bảng câu hỏi khảo sát để thu thập dữ liệu. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra 06 yếu tố chính hình thành nên niềm tin của giáo viên vào năng lực bản thân: (1) kinh nghiệm giảng dạy trực tiếp; (2) tác động từ phía học viên; (3) kiến thức của giáo viên về ngôn ngữ và phương pháp giảng dạy; (4) kinh nghiệm giảng dạy gián tiếp; (5) phản hồi từ các đối tượng khác; (6) thể chất và tâm trạng của giáo viên. Trong 06 yếu tố nêu trên, kiến thức về ngôn ngữ và phương pháp giảng dạy được coi là yếu tố có ảnh hưởng sâu sắc nhất.

**Từ khóa:** niềm tin vào năng lực bản thân, giáo viên tiếng Anh, giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam.

*Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capacity to influence students and assist them to achieve desired learning outcomes. Previous studies have indicated the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and their teaching performance, attainments, and commitment to the career. Nevertheless, not much investigation has been conducted in the context of Vietnam to develop a more profound understanding of teacher self-efficacy, especially that of novice teachers with limited teaching experience and a possible lack of certainty to pursue the teaching career, hence the need for thorough inquiries. To fill the gap in the existing literature, this research study was carried out to investigate the perceptions of self-efficacy of Vietnamese novice EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers. By employing mixed methods with exploratory sequential design, involving semi-structured interviews followed by questionnaires, this study aims to offer sound grasp of the perceived sources of self-efficacy and the extent to which those sources influence novice EFL teachers in different teaching contexts in Hanoi, Vietnam. The findings revealed six primary sources of teacher self-efficacy: (1) past teaching experiences; (2) impacts from students; (3) teacher's knowledge of content, language and pedagogy; (4) vicarious experiences; (5) feedback from stakeholders; (6) physiological and emotional states. Furthermore, the knowledge of content, language and pedagogy was the most impactful source, followed by other sources namely students' behaviors, academic progress and teacher-student rapport.*

**Keywords:** teacher self-efficacy, novice EFL teachers, teaching EFL in Vietnam.

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# VIETNAMESE NOVICE EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY

## 1. Introduction

The importance of a teacher's early professional years has been demonstrated in numerous past studies. Initial teaching experiences can not only influence teachers' likelihood of committing to the profession but also shape their current teaching philosophy as well as attitude, and navigate their future improvement (Sözen, 2018). Existing literature also regarded the level of teacher self-efficacy - the notions of their ability to execute required behaviors to help students meet the desired learning outcomes – as a significant contributor to the decision on staying in or giving up teaching (Klassen & Tze, 2014). This leads to the necessity of conducting in-depth studies on the efficacy beliefs of inexperienced teachers. To answer the call for further investigation, the present research was conducted to explore the sources of information contributing to the construction of Vietnamese EFL teachers' self-efficacy with a particular focus on novice teachers in their first five years of teaching. It is anticipated that the research findings would provide a more profound understanding of the beliefs in personal capacity of novice EFL teachers in various teaching contexts in Hanoi, Vietnam and thereby could enable enhancement in their confidence and pedagogy while also extending their tenure in the field.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Novice teachers and the impacts of self-efficacy

The term “novice teachers” is commonly used in various prior studies to refer to teachers with no or moderate teaching experience (Sözen, 2018). Researchers may characterize novice teachers as those who have fewer than two years or five years of working in the teaching profession (Sözen, 2018). In the current research, novice EFL teachers are regarded as teachers with no more than five years of full-time teaching English as a foreign language.

Teachers were suggested to be highly susceptible to a variety of obstacles and aversive experiences in the initial stage of teaching career and had higher probability of giving up teaching within the first few years (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Sözen, 2018). Meanwhile, perception of efficacy is a contributory factor in determining the persistence and the amount of effort expended on pursuing teaching profession. *Teacher self-efficacy* is based on Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and is defined as teachers' own beliefs about the capabilities to influence learners' academic outcomes and to attain the desired educational objectives (Bandura, 1997). Teacher self-efficacy has been revealed to have considerable impacts on teachers' dedication, success and job satisfaction (Türkoglu et al., 2017), as well as teachers' persistence and commitment to the teaching profession (Tschannen-Morana & Hoy, 2007). In addition, students' academic achievements and teachers' teaching performance were also strongly

influenced by teacher self-efficacy (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Lower self-efficacy would result in weakening the beliefs in teachers' ability to plan, organize and conduct activities required to attain given educational objectives (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). On balance, the findings of existing literature signify the need for a thorough investigation into the sources that influence novice teachers' self-efficacy, which could considerably facilitate professional growth.

## ***2.2. Sources of teacher self-efficacy***

According to Bandura (1986, 1997), there are four major sources of teacher self-efficacy including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Mastery experiences are considered the most influential source of teacher self-efficacy, which refers to both enactive mastery experiences and cognitive mastery of content and pedagogical skills. Gained from past teaching experiences, the former can be strengthened by successes and weakened by failures. Mastery experiences in the form of past instructional experiences were believed to be the most powerful source by many researchers (Morris & Usher, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). The latter is teachers' self-perceptions of their teaching competence and knowledge about the language, teaching content and pedagogy, which is distinct from the former since it refers to the understanding of knowledge rather than practical experiences (Palmer, 2006). Palmer (2006) also added that this was the primary source of teacher self-

efficacy. The second source, vicarious experiences, denotes what is learned from observing other teachers' lessons or hearing, seeing, or reading about others' experiences (Bandura, 1986, 1997). It was noted that teachers could feel more efficacious by watching proficient models demonstrate and complete a task or activity, especially unfamiliar ones (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Meanwhile, verbal persuasion concerns the negative or positive verbal comments on teaching performance and career prospects from other people namely administrators, coworkers, family and the community (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Verbal persuasion was regarded as a facilitator of self-change that resulted in a higher sense of efficacy, despite its limitation in creating a long-lasting boost of confidence (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Regarding physiological and emotional states, it is believed that teachers' perceptions of capacity or incapacity to perform a particular task might be influenced by their nervousness or excitement (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Although the impacts of this source of efficacy is often dimmed, affective states could bring about an increase or decrease in teachers' sense of competence, especially when it is in combination with other sources (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Wyatt, 2013). Specifically, teachers' sense of accomplishment after a successful lesson may boost their perceived efficacy. However, teachers' anxiety tends to be disregarded due to their great concentration on explaining the lessons to students (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Besides the four sources, students' academic

improvement and achievements were also found to significantly contribute to the formation of teachers' efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In other words, teachers' sense of efficacy would be considerably heightened or lowered by observing, respectively, students' performance enhancement or repeated failures as a result of teaching effort. Guo et al. (2011) shared the same viewpoint, stating that teacher self-efficacy was boosted substantially when they noticed students' active engagement in classroom activities and students' satisfactory learning outcomes. A number of previous studies (e.g., Holzberger et al., 2014; Caprara et al., 2006) also found a link between students' opinions on their teachers' instructions, students' accomplishments and teacher self-efficacy.

The findings of Wang et al.'s (2017) qualitative inquiry into the topic in the context of Singapore confirmed the validity of the four sources of teacher self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1986, 1997). However, the authors also acknowledged their insufficiency and added other non-psychological sources of efficacy, such as teachers' understanding of students, relationships with students, and former job experiences. Wyatt (2013) presented evidence from interview and observation data that demonstrated a link between the participant teacher's growing practical understanding of classroom management strategies and the development of her self-efficacy. The researchers also reported that the participant gained more practical

knowledge about teaching and more positive perceptions of self-efficacy as a result of the reflective processes stimulated through modelling and action research in the teacher education course. Phan and Locke's (2015) qualitative research on the similar topic in the context of Vietnam confirmed the influences of the four aforementioned sources on EFL teachers' self-efficacy. Nonetheless, the findings suggested that among the four sources, social persuasion was more prominent compared to mastery experiences, which was in contrast to the prevalent view. In another study on culture and Vietnamese teachers' self-efficacy, the authors concluded similar findings and explained that in collective cultures, the impact of members in family and workplace on building efficacy was more significant than that of the reflection on past performance (Phan & Locke, 2016). Additionally, vicarious experiences, physiological and emotional states, and enactive mastery experiences served as supplementary contributors to the perceptions of self-efficacy (Phan & Locke, 2015). Though the reviewed studies offered fruitful results in this field of research, limited attention has been devoted to the case of novice teachers who have modest teaching experience.

Regarding novice teachers' self-efficacy, Wolters and Daugherty's (2007) quantitative study indicated a considerably lower level of self-efficacy among beginning teachers in comparison with that of experts and experienced teachers, especially in terms of instructional practices and classroom management.



Research in China by Cheung (2008) yielded similar findings which revealed that a longer teaching career was a strong predictor of greater teacher self-efficacy. Karimvand (2011), on reviewing existing literature about teacher self-efficacy and experience, noted that novice teachers reported high perceived efficacy of professional and pedagogical mastery. Moreover, while mastery experience is generally deemed a dominant source of self-efficacy, in the case of novice teachers, other sources such as verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences and physiological arousal would make a more substantial contribution to the formation of self-efficacy due to the teachers' lack of professional experiences and actual teaching accomplishments with students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The authors also added that novice teachers relied heavily on the support of colleagues, parents and the community, as well as other contextual factors and the availability of resources to build up their confidence in teaching. On the whole, the reviewed literature with quantitative research methodology has attempted to answer the call for inquiries into novice teachers' sources of self-efficacy. Nevertheless, the conventional quantitative approaches might be insufficient to provide a holistic and profound understanding of the sources of teacher self-efficacy and the level of influence of each source, and should be triangulated with other qualitative sources of data for optimum results. Besides, in the context of Vietnam, the impacts of Vietnamese cultural and contextual factors on teachers' interpretation of efficacy

should not be neglected (Phan & Locke, 2015); however, "no studies have investigated sources of teachers' self-efficacy in the Vietnamese context" (p. 73). This points to the necessity of conducting a triangulated research study on novice EFL teachers' self-efficacy in the context of Vietnam.

In general, despite the fact that there has been a number of studies on sources of teacher self-efficacy in general, and novice teachers' in particular, little investigation employed method triangulation has been conducted to enquire into EFL novice teachers' self-efficacy in the context of Vietnam. Thus, to fill the gaps in the existing literature and acquire a more thorough understanding of the sources of self-efficacy among Vietnamese novice EFL teachers, this research endeavours to use mixed methods to seek the answers to the following research questions:

- What are Vietnamese novice EFL teachers' perceptions of sources of self-efficacy?
- What are Vietnamese novice EFL teachers' perceptions of the levels of influence of the sources?

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Context and participants***

The research was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam. It involved 40 EFL novice teachers having no more than five years of teaching experience. The teachers had experienced various teaching contexts, including private English classrooms, kindergarten, primary schools, etc. Their

students' ages ranged from four to 22 years old. In addition, the students' English proficiency levels varied from elementary to upper-intermediate.

### ***3.2. Research method and design***

This study employed mixed methods, which enabled the researchers to get a more thorough grasp of the multifaceted research problem and bridged the gaps in each single approach. The study utilized exploratory sequential design, involving semi-structured interviews succeeded by an online questionnaire. The qualitative data was first gathered to explore the potential sources of novice teachers' self-efficacy, then the quantitative data was collected to obtain further understanding of the level of influence of each source. The chosen research design and methodology were believed to offer experiential data and allow the researchers to inquire into the participants' perceptions and determine measures genuinely grounded in the data.

The research instruments of this study include semi-structure interviews and online questionnaires. It is assumed that teachers' sources of efficacy are influenced by the teaching contexts, the beliefs of teaching competency and interpersonal interactions, which are considered private, sensitive and inappropriate to be publicly shared in Vietnamese culture (Phan & Locke, 2016). Thus, to make the participants feel comfortable while stating their opinions, and to allow them to voice their experiences without being constrained by others' viewpoints and past research findings, individual semi-

structured interviews were employed. The interview guide containing 10 content questions was generated based on the researchers' consultation with prior studies. The interview questions were adapted from the interview questions in Wang et al.'s (2017) qualitative research, focusing on examining the sources of teacher self-efficacy. Concerning the questionnaire, the question items were organized into two sections. The first section adopted a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "Not at all" to (5) "Extremely significant". Option (3) "Moderate" represented the middle point between the two extremes. The first section including 10 items obtained from the qualitative data asked participants to evaluate the level of influence of each source of self-efficacy, while the second section explored the most influential sources of self-efficacy from the perspectives of the participating teachers.

### ***3.3. Procedure***

Since the study adopted mixed methods with exploratory sequential design, the data collection and analysis proceeded in two stages: stage 1 and stage 2, respectively examining qualitative and quantitative data. The first step of stage 1 was determining the interview questions. After thorough review of the existing literature on the topic, 10 open-ended questions focusing on the participants' perceptions of factors that were deemed to affect teacher self-efficacy were encompassed in an interview guide. The draft of the interview guide was then sent out for expert and peer review. The interview was then prepared for piloting

after adjustments were made. The aim of the pilot phase was to assess the relevance and practicality of the questions. The interview guide underwent the final process of revision before the actual interviews were conducted. The language used during the interviews was decided by the participants, which was mainly English owing to their considerable language proficiency. All the interviews were recorded under the participants' verbal agreement. Subsequently, the audio recordings were transcribed, translated where needed and sent to participants for confirmation or emendation if necessary. The final version of each transcription was treated using thematic analysis. The participant teachers' perceived sources of efficacy were clarified, then a questionnaire employing a 5-point Likert scale was constructed based on the identified sources of self-efficacy. The questionnaire required the participants to rate the sources in the order of influence.

For optimal recruitment of participants, the questionnaire was delivered online using Google Forms (Google LLC, 2023). The participants were asked to return their answers immediately after finishing the survey. The succeeding stage was collecting responses and analyzing data. The quantitative data was then descriptively treated using IBM SPSS software (Version 26.0).

### ***3.4. Data collection, management and analysis***

To investigate Vietnamese novice EFL teachers' perceived sources of self-efficacy, semi-structured interviews were first conducted, involving 10 participants who voluntarily arranged their time for the interviews. Among these participants, there were nine female and only one male teachers. The detailed demographic information about the interviewees was outlined in Table 1. Pseudonyms was used to ensure the data confidentiality.

**Table 1.** Interviewees' demographics

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Years of teaching</b>	<b>Students' age</b>	<b>Students' level</b>	<b>Qualifications in TESOL</b>
MMT	5	18-22	B2 – C1	Master's
FMT1	5	4-12	A1 – B1	Master's
FBT2	1	4-12	A1 – B1	Bachelor's
FBT3	3	18-22	A1 – B1	Bachelor's
FBT4	3	13-17	B2 – C1	Bachelor's
FBT5	2	13-17	A1 – B1	Bachelor's
FBT6	3	4-12	A1 – B1	Bachelor's
FMT7	4	4-12	A1 – B1	Master's
FMT8	5	18-22	B2 – C1	Master's
FMT9	5	18-22	B2 – C1	Master's

Answers from the participants were recorded, transcribed, translated where needed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers carefully examined the interview transcriptions, coded and categorised information into specific themes. The prescribed themes were semi-inductive with Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (1986, 1997). In addition, a number of emerged sources such as students' academic attainments and active engagement, teachers' general understanding of students, and teacher-student rapport (Guo et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2017) were also identified.

The questionnaire was developed based on the qualitative data collected from the interviews in the initial stage. As described in section 3.3, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire delivered to the 40 participants was then processed and descriptively analyzed using IBM SPSS software (Version 26.0).

### 3.5. Ethical considerations

At the initial stage, detailed information about the research and its purposes were provided to the participants. Participants were not under any obligation to continue against their will and were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without the need to provide any reasons or excuses. Throughout the data collection process, interviews were conducted under the consent of the participants. The participants' responses and personal information were treated with strict confidentiality while being analysed and reported. Data pseudonymization that replaced identifying information with

pseudonyms was also used in accordance with the participants' wishes.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Perceived sources of self-efficacy

The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews determined the six following sources of self-efficacy perceived by the participant teachers: (1) past teaching experiences; (2) impacts from students; (3) knowledge of content, language and pedagogy; (4) vicarious experiences; (5) feedback from other people; (6) physiological and emotional states. These sources were categorized into themes. An overview of each theme and its available subthemes is provided in this section along with direct quotes from the interviewees.

#### 4.1.1. Past teaching experiences

The findings suggested that past teaching experiences had a considerable impact on teacher self-efficacy. One participant even concluded that "*the way that I am teaching now is really like a collective evolution of my past experiences in teaching*" (MMT). Most of the interviewees stated that successful past teaching experiences significantly increased their level of confidence and served as an indication of "*being on track*". In other words, the success of their lessons in the past showed that their teaching approaches and strategies, as well as their lesson plans, could produce desirable results and could be reused in the future when they taught similar lessons or worked with similar target students. Additionally, past successful lessons indicated their capability to deliver the content effectively

and gave them a sense of confidence, comfort and familiarity.

On the other hand, unsuccessful experiences could make the teachers feel dishearted. Self-doubt and anxiety were other feelings aroused after delivering unproductive lessons. However, the interviewed teachers mainly viewed unsuccessful classes as references for improvements and moderations that allowed them to enhance their teaching practices to suit their target students and fulfil the lesson objectives. Specifically, participants shared the opinion that they could learn a lot from their mistakes or what they had not done right in the past, which enabled them to make changes and adaptations and become more efficient. An interviewee stated that she felt more confident the second-time teaching, regardless of the success level of past experiences, as she knew what to expect or what could go wrong and she could improve or prepare beforehand to achieve the best results. This finding, to a certain extent, disagrees with Bandura's theory indicating that failures in past teaching experiences could diminish teacher self-efficacy (1997). In fact, despite the initial discouraging feelings evoked by unwanted teaching outcomes, most of the participants held a positive view towards past incidents and believed that those experiences facilitated their advancement in teaching methods and classroom management.

These findings suggest that past teaching experiences are one important source of self-efficacy. This conclusion is in line with previous research (e.g., Cheung,

2008; Morris & Usher, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009) that also recognized the contribution of teaching experiences in building teachers' confidence.

#### 4.1.2. Impacts from students

Impacts from students included three subthemes: students' behaviours and reactions, students' learning outcomes and the rapport between teachers and students. Eight out of 10 interviewees responded that their students were a highly influential factor affecting their confidence as teachers. One participant said when her students exhibited misbehaviours, such as being inattentive, talking with each other or doing other things, she felt less confident, assuming that *"the lesson was not interesting enough to attract their attention and it was my fault for that"* (FMT9). She also added that if the students could not reach the lesson objectives, she would feel disappointed and lose confidence in herself. One interviewee even brought forward the intention of giving up her teaching career when she noticed her students' inactiveness and cavalier learning attitudes during lessons. Another participant shared that if students failed to achieve their academic goals, she would have a sense of guilt as *"I am partly responsible for their failure"* (FMT1). Sadness, confusion and discomfort were other recorded feelings among participants when students misbehaved.

On the other hand, observing students' academic improvement and positive engagement in learning could give rise to



the teachers' sense of gratification and fulfillment, which significantly helped teachers regain their efficacy as well as their commitment to the teaching profession. The correlation between students' behaviors, learning results and teacher self-efficacy was also supported by a number of past studies (e.g., Caprara et al., 2006; Guo et al., 2011; Holzberger et al., 2014).

In addition, teacher-student rapport was an emerging source of teacher self-efficacy. For one interviewee, a good teacher-student rapport led to a profound understanding of students' learning styles, personalities, and levels, which not only made students become more open to the teacher, but also enabled the teacher to design more effective lessons directly addressing students' needs, thereby increased teacher self-efficacy. The finding of teachers' understanding of students and teacher-student relationships being sources of teacher self-efficacy was also discovered by Wang et al. (2017).

Holding a different perspective, one participant (MMT) stated that students' impacts are trivial to his self-efficacy. He believed that students' lack of attention during lessons was the cause of their failure to fulfil academic goals, and therefore students' misbehaviours and undesirable learning results had no impact on the formation of his confidence as a teacher. Another teacher (FBT6) also downplayed the role of students' misbehaviors in building efficacy as her students were young children who often failed to obey unquestioningly. Instead, she reported that

the parents' recognition for her teaching could tremendously raise her sense of efficacy. Cheung (2008) also found teachers' perceptions of respect from parents an additional factor influencing teacher self-efficacy.

#### *4.1.3. Knowledge of content, language and pedagogy*

All 10 interviewees responded that thorough preparation for the materials before teaching was indispensable and important for the consolidation of their confidence when delivering the lessons, which indicated the fundamental role of the knowledge of content as a source of teacher self-efficacy.

*"I would feel more confident, probably extremely confident, because I know the lesson like the back of my hand. I know what to do. I know what comes next. I know how much time I should spend on a task. I know how I should prepare the students before a big task."*  
– MMT

*"I feel very confident when implementing the lesson. I feel like everything will be under my control, and I believe that my lesson will be successful."* – FMT7

Teachers' language proficiency, together with linguistic skills and knowledge, also strengthened teachers' sense of efficacy. One teacher said that her knowledge of the language was a significant source of confidence since she could *"answer literally everything they [students] can ask"* (FMT9). Chacón's (2005) research presented similar findings,

indicating that the greater EFL teachers' proficiency in the English language was, the more powerful reinforcement their efficacy received. In terms of pedagogical knowledge, the majority of interviewees expressed that broadening their understanding of the language teaching theories and practices made them "*grow professionally*" and became "*better aware of different teaching methods and techniques to use in the classroom*". The gained grasp of pedagogy considerably increased teacher self-efficacy as one participating teacher expressed "*I know what I should do for the students, for myself, and what I should improve more on how I should tackle some problems during class time and maybe how I should arrange the sequence of activities in a lesson so that it would be more beneficial for the students*" (FBT4). Another reckoned (FMT8) that she felt more qualified to be a competent EFL teacher after attending the MA TESOL course. She explained that since she was then able to understand the fundamentals of her teaching methodologies, she was very confident about the effectiveness of the tasks in her lessons. One teacher (FBT3) shared that lacking professional knowledge related to EFL teaching would affect her confidence as a teacher, hence the need to involve in in-depth study of language acquisition, language teaching methodologies, and linguistics. This is consistent with the findings from Palmer's (2006) and Wyatt's (2013) studies, indicating that the skills and knowledge learned during the teacher education course greatly contributed to the enhancement of self-efficacy.

Nonetheless, one participant (FMT9) viewed pedagogical knowledge as an insignificant source of efficacy. Specifically, she was more "*theoretically confident*" but the theories did not actually "*change my [her] teaching practices at all*". From this teacher's perspective, the pedagogical theories learned during her MA TESOL course made minor contribution to her efficacy. Instead, she relied more on her understanding of the teaching materials and the students' needs to conduct lessons which were suitable for them.

#### 4.1.4. Vicarious experiences

Experience from observing, hearing or reading about other teachers' lessons was reported to make certain contribution to self-efficacy. When being asked, one interviewee answered that she did not make as many observations as she had wished, just a few times during the master's course and in her workplace, and she claimed to "*not learn much from them*" and "*not find successful models to learn from*" (FMT9). However, vicarious experiences could still slightly increase her confidence in a way that she knew she could do better than the observed teachers. This finding is in line with Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) which argued that vicarious experiences played an unimportant role in self-efficacy formation. Other interviewees shared dissimilar opinions, vocalizing that they felt admired and honored to observe other teachers' lessons, especially successful ones as they had learned a tremendous amount from those lessons, which contributed to the improvement of their

teaching practices. One teacher added that she considered senior teachers as good examples and would “*try to be like them if their teaching methods suit me [her] and to attend and observe other teachers teaching different student’s levels as much as possible*” (FMT7). Another believed that attending experienced teachers’ lessons could offer them opportunities to adopt effective teaching approaches, classroom management strategies and methods to motivate the students. This demonstrated the role of vicarious experiences as a source of teacher self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences shed light on certain tasks, which allowed novice teachers to have a more profound understanding of their given assignments, especially unfamiliar ones, therefore resulting in the enhancement of efficacy beliefs (Mills, 2011).

#### 4.1.5. Feedback from others

Feedback from other people in both written and spoken form was another major contribution to the participating teachers’ self-efficacy. The impact of comments from other people on teacher self-efficacy was also documented in the research of Phan and Locke (2015). In the present study, the feedback the participants received was mostly from their students, their teachers during the master’s course, and senior teachers at their workplace. Most of the participants said that their sense of self-efficacy was greatly sharpened under the impact of positive feedback.

...whenever I receive positive feedback from my students, I feel very happy, and I'm more confident with what I did in the class and I'm likely to do the same for my next lessons. (FBT5)

I would feel extremely satisfied, happy, and it is kind of like a motivation for me to keep moving forward with what I'm doing good in class and that's what makes me feel like, um, this is the right occupation, the right career for me. (FMT8)

Nevertheless, the findings were fairly inconsistent concerning the influence of negative or critical feedback. Most of the participants received negative comments on their lessons and teaching practices with an open mind and perceived them as opportunities for self-improvement. Still, their confidence was slightly affected as “*the fact that she [the head teacher] didn't see the effectiveness of my lesson is also a signal, a sign for my ineffective lesson*”. However, one participant added that she still believed she had properly delivered the lesson, thus stating that the impact was present yet insignificant. Another teacher (MMT) expressed that the undesirable feedback did not have much influence on him and was just “*small obstacles that I [he] can overcome to be able to become a better teacher*”.

These findings were dissimilar to those of Phan and Locke’s (2016) research on culture and Vietnamese teachers’ self-efficacy, which concluded that due to the collective nature of Vietnamese culture, the impact of verbal persuasion on building efficacy was considerably significant.

#### 4.1.6. *Physiological and emotional states*

Physiological and emotional states seemed not to have a very substantial effect on self-efficacy among the participant teachers of the current study. Eight out of 10 interviewed participants asserted that they could maintain the quality of their lessons regardless of their personal problems and unstable emotions. Besides, these interviewees added that they tended to immerse themselves in teaching, thus they were oblivious of what happened outside the classroom.

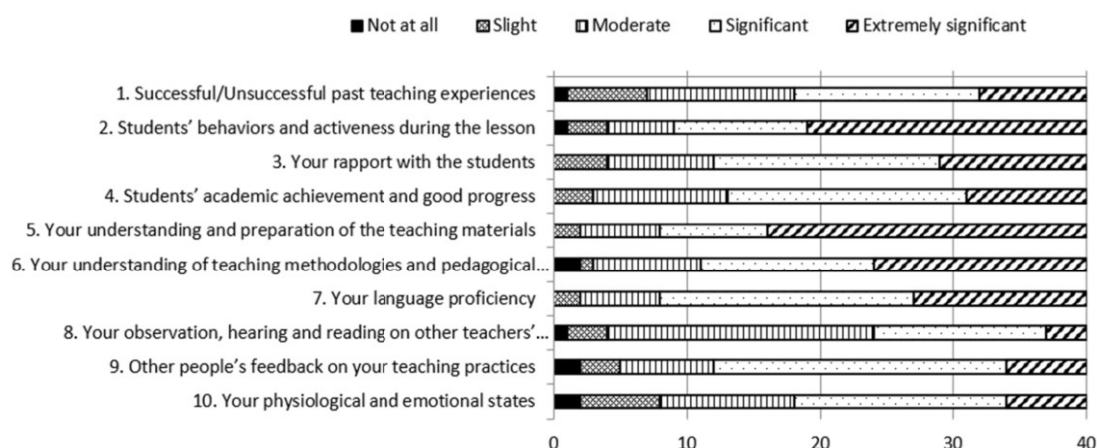
Holding a different viewpoint, one participant shared that she once experienced a time when she was too stressed and “*accidentally took it out on my [her] students when they misbehaved in the class*” (FBT6). She understood that she had decided on the inappropriate classroom management strategy, which adversely influenced her sense of efficacy. Another added that when she was under stress or emotionally unstable, she could unintentionally vent her negative feelings to the students. This gave her a sense of guilt about her behaviors, making her feel inadequate to be a teacher.

On the other hand, it was also revealed from the data that good physiological and

affective states could boost the teachers’ enjoyment and engagement in the lesson, thereby giving rise to not only a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom but also the teachers’ confidence and contentment with the lessons. One interviewee (FBT4) shared that “*When I am in good physical and emotional health, I often perform at my best. I have more energy, focus, and enthusiasm to engage with students and deliver effective lessons*” (FBT4). This is similar to the findings of Mills (2011) which showed that positive states and feelings, such as excitement, could build up self-efficacy. A number of prior studies (e.g., Morris & Usher, 2011; Wyatt, 2013) pointed out that though physiological and emotional states did not seem to significantly affect teacher self-efficacy, this factor still played its role especially when it was in concert with other sources of self-efficacy.

#### 4.2. *Perceived influence levels of each source of self-efficacy*

Table 2 and Figure 1 illustrate the opinions of 40 participants on the influence levels of the 10 factors that were found to have certain impacts on the participants’ sense of efficacy. As presented in section 4.1, these 10 factors were classified into themes and subthemes in the first stage of data collection.



**Figure 1.** Vietnamese EFL novice teachers' perceived levels of influence of the sources of self-efficacy

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics on the levels of influence of self-efficacy sources

Factors	Mean	Sd
1. Successful/Unsuccessful past teaching experiences	3.55	1.060
2. Students' behaviors and activeness during the lesson	4.175	1.083
3. Your rapport with the students	3.875	0.938
4. Students' progress and academic achievement	3.825	0.873
5. Your understanding and preparation of the teaching materials	4.35	0.921
6. Your understanding of teaching methodologies and pedagogical skills	4.0	1.086
7. Your language proficiency	4.075	0.828
8. Your observation, hearing and reading on other teachers' successful lessons	3.35	0.833
9. Feedback from others on your teaching practices	3.675	0.997
10. Your physiological and emotional states	3.45	1.084

The first factor *Past teaching experiences* was suggested to either increase or decrease teachers' level of confidence (Cheung, 2008; Karimvand, 2011). As indicated in Table 2, most of the participants experienced a moderate impact from past teaching experiences ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). Compared to other factors, this factor was not as prominent as initially expected. This finding dissented

from the prevalent view about the pre-eminent and substantial impact of teaching history on teacher self-efficacy, which was confirmed in a large portion of existing literature (e.g., Morris & Usher, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Nonetheless, this finding is in line with conclusions drawn from Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) and Phan and Locke's (2015) research which also recorded



teachers' greater reliance on other sources of efficacy than past experiences.

Past research (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Palmer, 2006) has not looked at impacts from students as a significant factor determining teachers' perceived efficacy. However, in the current research, this source appeared much more salient since all participants had experienced certain levels of its influence. The majority of the participants reported a high level of impact from students' engagement in class and teacher-student relationships on their self-efficacy. The influence of *students' behaviors and activeness during the lesson* was believed to be significant and extremely significant by nearly four fifths of the participants. Specifically, the result suggested that this factor was perceived as the second most important contributor to self-efficacy ( $M = 4.175$ ,  $SD = 1.083$ ). On average, there were around 70-80% of the respondents acknowledging the importance of student-teacher rapport and students' in-class engagement and academic achievements in the construction of self-efficacy. This finding is consistent with the results yielded from the interviews and the findings of several past studies (e.g., Guo et al., 2011; Holzberger et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017).

Mastery of teaching content, linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills was perceived to be a significant source of teacher self-efficacy. Eighty percent of the participants expressed that, compared to other factors, their understanding of the teaching materials, along with thorough preparation before class contributed the

most tremendously to their sense of efficacy ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.921$ ). The knowledge of teaching methodologies and pedagogical skills also played a considerably important role in the formation of self-efficacy ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.086$ ). The findings are in accordance with Karimvand's (2011), which noted that novice teachers' high perceived efficacy was resulted from their professional and pedagogical mastery. Regarding *language proficiency*, or teachers' mastery of the English language, though was not delved into depth during the interview stage, played an undeniable role in shaping teachers' perceived efficacy ( $M = 4.075$ ,  $SD = 0.828$ ). This is in consensus with Chacón's (2005) conclusion on the effects of language proficiency on teacher self-efficacy.

In terms of *vicarious experiences*, the data demonstrated that observing, hearing or reading about other teachers' successful lessons had a moderate effect on the participants' self-efficacy. In fact, this source of efficacy was deemed to be the least influential among the 10 factors ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 0.833$ ). This finding did not match up against the results obtained from the interviews as the interviewees shared that they did not have many opportunities to observe competent teachers, hence the limited impact on their efficacy. Similarly, several researchers (e.g. Capa & Hoy, 2005; Morris & Usher, 2011; Poulou, 2007) also found that novice teachers' efficacy did not rely on the amount of vicarious experiences they had.

On the other hand, *feedback on teaching performance from other people* (e.g., colleagues, seniors, managers, etc.) apparently exhibited a stronger influence on self-efficacy than vicarious experiences. The considerable impact of social persuasion on teacher self-efficacy was also supported in Capa and Hoy's (2005) research which found a positive correlation between peers and supervisors' constructive feedback and self-efficacy. Meanwhile, impact from *physiological and emotional states* was reckoned to be less powerful than social persuasion ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.084$ ).

Among the three aforementioned sources (i.e., *comments from others*, *vicarious experiences*, and *affective states*), *comments from others* ( $M = 3.675$ ,  $SD = 0.997$ ) was recognized as the most influential factor. This finding conformed to Phan and Lockc's (2015, 2016) which highlighted the significance of other people's feedback or social persuasion, as well as the supplementary role of other sources (e.g., vicarious experiences and physiological and affective states) in the development of teacher self-efficacy.

To summarize, the most influential source of teacher self-efficacy perceived by 40 Vietnamese novice EFL teachers was *the knowledge of the teaching materials*, followed by the *students' classroom behaviors* and *teachers' language proficiency*. The profound impacts of these sources were also confirmed in the studies of Chacón (2005), Guo et al., (2011), Morris and Usher (2011), and Palmer (2006). The least significant contributor to

efficacy was *vicarious experiences*. This finding showed congruence with that of Capa and Hoy's (2005) and Poulou's (2007) research, which referred to vicarious experiences as a low potential source of efficacy.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations for future studies

In conclusion, there were six major sources of self-efficacy perceived by Vietnamese novice EFL teachers: *past teaching experiences*; *impacts from students*; *knowledge of content, language and pedagogy*; *vicarious experiences*; *feedback from other people*; and *physiological and emotional states*. Among these sources, teachers' mastery of content, language and pedagogy is the most influential source of efficacy as it enlightens teachers about material development and teaching methods, giving them a head start on their professional growth. Accordingly, the finding emphasizes the necessity to support novice EFL teachers for the improvement of their linguistic and pedagogical competence. The second most dominant source of teacher self-efficacy is students' impacts, particularly students' activeness in class, teacher-student rapport, and students' academic attainments. Feedback from others, or social persuasion, had a quite considerable effect. Other sources including past teaching experiences, vicarious experiences and physiological and emotional states are supplementary contributors to the development of teacher self-efficacy.

A number of prior studies indicated that higher teacher self-efficacy was directly correlated with better teaching performances (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). It was also noted that novice teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy can predict their dedication and success in their teaching careers (Tschannen-Morana & Hoy, 2007; Türkoglu et al., 2017). Additionally, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy would pay greater attention to academic pursuits, invest time in researching effective teaching materials and strategies, and remain committed to their careers (Mills, 2011). For this reason, awareness and understanding of sources of self-efficacy is useful for not only teachers but also teacher trainers and school administrators (Sözen, 2018). Acknowledging the significant impact of self-efficacy on teachers' development, this research was conducted with the aim of contributing to the enrichment of theories and inquiries into novice EFL teachers' self-efficacy in the Vietnamese context. The project hopes to fulfil the intention of providing relevant information that teacher educators and school authorities can refer to when designing training programs and activities to assist novice teachers in enhancing their self-efficacy and teaching practices.

Nevertheless, the findings of the current study should be interpreted in light of some limitations. Conducted on a modest scale involving a limited number of participants, the research findings might not be generalized in other settings, thus can

hardly represent Vietnamese novice EFL teachers as a whole. Aside from the six perceived sources of self-efficacy, there are additional variables affecting teacher self-efficacy that the study might not uncover. Furthermore, since the study only employed descriptive statistics, insights into the concerted effects of various factors were not fully obtained.

It is suggested that future research departing from this study employ varied research designs and methodologies to obtain a richer and broader range of data on the topic. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to shed further light on the long-term effects of self-efficacy on teacher professional development.

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