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Exploring the Relationship between Classroom English Proficiency and Teacher Self-Efficacy Among Polytechnic EFL Teachers

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Abstract
This study aimed to examine the relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy among English as a Foreign Language teachers in Chinese polytechnics. Specifically, it sought to address to what extent classroom English proficiency affects teacher self-efficacy in Chinese polytechnic EFL teachers. It is significant as it highlights the crucial role of classroom English proficiency in shaping teacher self-efficacy, offering insights for targeted professional development programs. Data were self-reported by 254 polytechnic EFL teachers using two validated measurement scales. Both Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis yielded satisfactory results, affirming the factor structure and indicating a good model fit. Descriptive analyses showed that both classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy were at moderate levels. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy, with grammatical and lexical accuracy and range, as well as language of interaction, exhibiting stronger correlations with teacher self-efficacy compared to pronunciation, stress and intonation, and language of instruction. The multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that grammatical and lexical accuracy and range, together with language of interaction, have a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy. These findings underscore the importance of prioritizing strategic training in grammar lexical accuracy and range, and the language of interaction skills for EFL teachers with limited English proficiency. Enhancing these competencies is posited to contribute to the development and sustained enhancement of self-efficacy among EFL teachers in Chinese polytechnics.

Keywords: Classroom English proficiency, English as a foreign language, grammar and lexical accuracy and range, language interaction skills, teacher self-efficacy

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Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative requires Chinese to have qualified English proficiency since English, as a lingua franca (Luczaj et al., 2022; Seidlhofer, 2013), greatly facilitates interpersonal communication and contributes positively to the framework of global governance (Gao, 2020). The English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021 edition) further highlights that EFL teachers should be equipped to provide effective English instruction and engage in educational research (The Ministry of Education, 2021). For non-native English teachers, English proficiency serves as a foundational component of their teaching confidence and efficacy (Karas & Faez, 2021; Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Murdoch, 1994). Despite this emphasis, recent data from the EF English Proficiency Index (2023), which ranks 113 countries and regions by English skills, places China the 82 nd with low proficiency (Education First, 2023). This result underscores the need for substantial improvement in English proficiency to meet the standards for high-quality English instruction. Enhancing teachers' English proficiency is essential for improving teaching effectiveness (Aisyah, 2022; Richards, 2017) and fostering greater self-efficacy in their teaching roles (Choi & Lee, 2016; Karas & Faez, 2021; Xu et al., 2022; Yilmaz, 2011), especially as they face the unique challenges of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the classroom (Freeman, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015). According to Bandura(1997), self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully organize and perform the necessary actions to achieve a particular goal. Bandura (2001) further elaborated that self-efficacy has a profound impact on how teachers approach their work, including the types of goals they set and the level of dedication they commit to achieving these goals. Extending Bandura's work, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy ((1998) described teacher self-efficacy as a teacher's belief in their ability to plan, coordinate, and implement a range of teaching strategies within a specific classroom setting. Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to have greater confidence in their instructional strategies (Poulou et al., 2019) and teacher quality (Na & Isa, 2024).

Over the past twenty years, numerous studies have investigated the connection between teachers' language proficiency and self-efficacy (Choi & Lee, 2016; Karas & Faez, 2021; Wang & Sun, 2020; Yilmaz, 2011). English proficiency is commonly acknowledged as a key factor influencing teacher self-efficacy, especially for non-native English instructors (Choi & Lee, 2016; Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Nakata, 2010). A sufficient level of proficiency in English is crucial for EFL teachers, as it allows them to provide richer and more effective language input to students (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). More specifically, classroom English proficiency enables teachers to concentrate on language skills that are directly relevant to the tasks at hand, which in turn boosts both teaching effectiveness and student involvement (Freeman, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015). Since there is ongoing debate over whether general English proficiency or classroom English proficiency is of more significance for English teaching (Freeman et al., 2015; Wang, 2021), this study primarily aimed to explore the relationship with self-efficacy from the perspective of classroom English proficiency, helping to fill the research gap in this field, particularly in the context of China's growing focus on higher vocational English education. By supporting EFL teacher development, this study contributes to China's educational goals under the Belt and Road Initiative, aiding talent cultivation for global collaboration. Based on the backgrounds and the objectives, the following research questions need to be answered:

RQ1: What are the levels of classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between classroom English proficiency, grammatical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, the language of interaction, the language of

instruction, and teacher self-efficacy?

RQ3: What are the effects of classroom English proficiency, grammatical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, the language of interaction and the language of instruction on teacher self-efficacy?

Literature Review

Classroom English Proficiency

Global efforts to improve the quality of instructed English language learning have heightened the demands on teachers to achieve higher proficiency in the target language (Argudo Serrano et al., 2021; Faez et al., 2021; Masduki et al., 2022; Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Ellis (2005) highlighted that teachers with advanced target language proficiency are considered more effective at delivering abundant language input to students. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasises the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and indicates that Learning is most effective when activities are designed within this zone, allowing learners to engage in tasks just beyond their current capabilities but achievable with appropriate support (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In the context of second language acquisition, Ellis (2005) and Krashen (1985) suggested that effective language acquisition takes place when learners are provided with input that is just beyond their current language ability, often referred to as i+1, which they can still understand, in Vygotsky's terms, falling within their ZPD. In the case of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teachers are often the primary source of such input. Teachers with advanced target language proficiency are considered more effective at delivering abundant language input to students (Ellis, 2005), thus enhancing teaching effectiveness (Sadeghi et al., 2020). Teachers with advanced language skills can offer learners the right balance of challenge and support, ensuring that they are consistently exposed to language that encourages development without being overwhelming. Walsh (2002) emphasized that language use in the foreign language classroom is crucial, as it directly impacts learner participation and interaction, and teachers must be aware of the link between their language choices and pedagogic goals to maximize learning opportunities and promote effective communication. Thus, a teacher's English proficiency plays a central role in facilitating students' language acquisition and growth, as students expect their teachers to possess a satisfactory level of proficiency, which in turn enhances their communication abilities (Masduki et al., 2022).

However, the difficulty in researching teachers' target English proficiency stems from the way language proficiency as a construct is defined (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Classroom English proficiency and general English proficiency have been subjects of considerable debate in recent years, particularly interested in determining which of these two factors plays a more significant role in English language teaching (Freeman, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015; Macaro, 2020; Rouf & Mohamed, 2022; Thi Hong Nhung, 2018; Van Canh & Renandya, 2017; Wang, 2021). Macaro (2020) indicated that English teaching requires classroom language skills that extend beyond general language proficiency. Freeman (2017) conducted a study advocating for the importance of teachers' classroom English proficiency, highlighting that language instruction focusing solely on general language skills often does not address the specific professional needs of educators. This is because "English-for-Teaching" is a framework designed to focus on how teachers use English in the classroom setting. A conversation analysis was conducted to examine how teachers' use of the target language creates learning opportunities for L2 learners, indicating that while general language proficiency impacts classroom language use, classroom-specific proficiency is equally important in supporting student learning (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Thi

Hong Nhung found that teachers preferred classroom English training for its relevance to their teaching and recommended prioritizing it in contexts with a shortage of qualified teachers and high proficiency standards (Thi Hong Nhung, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the research on classroom English proficiency in greater depth, and this study will conduct an in-depth investigation with classroom English proficiency as one of the key variables. In the context of this study, classroom English proficiency refers to EFL teachers' ability to use English effectively for implementing specific classroom activities in polytechnic settings.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, a core construct in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977), refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1986). The level of self-efficacy significantly influences individuals' choices (Chunta & DuPaul, 2022; Kahraman et al., 2021), goal-setting, and their commitment to pursuing and achieving those goals (Bandura, 1997; Hoffmann & Plotkina, 2021).

In recent years, the study of self-efficacy has expanded across numerous disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and education, drawing attention from international scholars and researchers. In the educational context, research has addressed a wide array of participants, from students and instructors to educational policymakers (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010; Smith et al., 2023; Smith, 2022). Teacher efficacy, a subset of self-efficacy within educational research, refers to teachers' beliefs in their abilities to achieve desired student outcomes, such as engagement and learning (Bandura, 1986). Building on Rotter's Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966), early researchers from the Rand researchers conceptualized teacher efficacy as the degree to which teachers believe they can influence the results of their actions within the classroom. Guskey and Passaro (1994) further emphasized this, defining teacher efficacy as the conviction that educators can positively impact student learning, even when working with students who are challenging or unmotivated. In the context of this study, teacher self-efficacy refers to EFL teachers' confidence in effectively planning and implementing actions to achieve specific teaching objectives in polytechnic settings.

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) refined the concept by defining teacher efficacy as a teacher's belief in their capacity to organize and implement actions needed to accomplish specific teaching tasks in particular contexts. They developed a cyclical model of teacher efficacy that includes two interrelated components: (1) Analysis of Teaching Task (ATT): this refers to teachers' assessment of the instructional demands they anticipate within their teaching context. Teachers analyze the level of complexity and specific conditions needed to be effective in that environment (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). (2) Assessment of Personal Teaching Competence (APTC): teachers evaluate their skills, knowledge, and teaching strategies, acknowledging strengths and identifying areas for improvement. This self-assessment is influenced by personal attributes and perceived limitations. These two components interact to shape a teacher's overall self-efficacy, as they assess both task demands and personal competence to meet these demands. For this study, Tschannen-Moran et al.' model serves as the guiding theoretical framework, with a specific focus on classroom English proficiency as an element of personal teaching competence. Within this framework, classroom English proficiency is integral to teachers' perceptions of their competence in teaching English, especially in polytechnic educational settings where language instruction requirements are unique. By focusing on classroom English proficiency within the context of teacher efficacy, this study addresses a gap in the literature, providing insights that are particularly relevant to polytechnic English education in China.

Relationship Between Classroom English Proficiency and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Research on the relationship between English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy has been conducted in recent decades (Choi & Lee, 2016; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008; Karas & Faez, 2021; Thi Hong Nhung, 2018; Wang, 2021; Wang & Sun, 2020; Xu et al., 2022; Yilmaz, 2011). Most studies have considered general English proficiency as a key factor linked to teacher self-efficacy and have highlighted a certain relationship between the two (Choi & Lee, 2016; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008; Karas & Faez, 2021; Thi Hong Nhung, 2018; Wang & Sun, 2020; Xu et al., 2022; Yilmaz, 2011). Language proficiency and teacher self-efficacy are interdependent, with teachers who exceed the minimum threshold levels of both attributes showing positive associations with increased English use in the classroom (Thi Hong Nhung, 2018). However, these studies fail to offer useful insights for enhancing teacher self-efficacy in alignment with language of instruction and language of interaction (Wang, 2021). Freeman et al. advocated for a redefinition of teacher language proficiency, suggesting that it should not be viewed as general language proficiency, but rather as a specialized set of language skills necessary for lesson preparation and instruction (Freeman et al., 2015). A significant positive relationship was found between classroom English proficiency of teaching self-efficacy among English teachers (Wang, 2021). These findings implied that enhancing teachers' English proficiency may not only improve the quality of instruction but also bolster their confidence and perceived effectiveness in their teaching practices.

Despite extensive research on language proficiency and teacher self-efficacy, there is a significant gap in understanding the self-efficacy of EFL teachers in vocational education, particularly in relation to classroom English proficiency. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to address this gap, offering valuable insights into self-efficacy in this specific context.

Method

The Quantitative method was used in this research. Firstly, EFA and CFA were used to explore the factors and verify the construct validity. Secondly, descriptive analysis was employed to identify the level of classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy. Moreover, the Pearson correlation analysis was applied to reveal the relationship between classroom English proficiency, grammatical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, the language of interaction, the language of instruction and teacher self-efficacy. Finally, the multiple regression analysis was utilized to analyze the effects of classroom English proficiency, grammatical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, the language of interaction, and the language of instruction on teacher self-efficacy.

Respondents

Convenience sampling was employed to recruit respondents for this study. The respondents consisted of EFL teachers from Chinese polytechnic institutions. Following data cleaning procedures, a total of 254 valid responses were collected, yielding a final sample size of 254. To ensure the confidentiality, all data were securely stored and anonymized. The identities of respondents were not disclosed in any published materials. The detailed demographics of the respondents based on gender and teaching experience are listed in Table One:

Table 1. *Demographics of the respondents*

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	24	9
Female	230	91
Teaching Experience		
1-5 years	39	15.4
6-10 years	32	12.6
11-15 years	48	18.9
16-20 years	76	29.9
21 years and	59	23.2

Research Instruments

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) used was established by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Recent studies have confirmed that TSES is a reliable instrument for evaluating teaching self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) identified three dimensions of this scale: Efficacy for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The reported reliability coefficients for these three sub-scales are 0.91 for instructional strategies, 0.90 for classroom management, and 0.87 for student engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

The TSES scale is available in both a 24-item long form and a 12-item short form. This study used the modified short form of the scale, changing "children" to "students" and replacing two items from the long form. In classroom management, "How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?" was changed to "To what extent can you clarify your expectations about student behavior?". In student engagement, "How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?" became "How much can you do to foster student creativity?" Additionally, all items were rephrased as statements starting with "I can" for consistency with other scales (Wang, 2021). The validity of the instrument was assessed based on feedback from participants and three field test experts. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. EFL teachers in Polytechnic were asked to rate items according to how much they agreed or disagreed with them.

In the pilot study, the Cronbach's Alpha of TSES in this study was 0.79, indicating the scale has good internal consistency with good reliability. In addition, the factor structure of the TSES was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation. The KMO value obtained was 0.809. This analysis identified three dimensions that aligned with the TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), accounting for 53.28% of the variance in the model. The factor loadings were to range from 0.62 to 0.82. Furthermore, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to verify the construct validity (Kline, 2023) with the Amos 28 program. The model demonstrated a good fit by using the criteria of Fornell and Lacker (1981) with the data, as indicated by Chi-square ($\chi^2 = 76.54$, df = 51, p = 0.01) with CMIN/DF = 1.50, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.04, PCLOSE = 0.65). These indices, along with adequate NFI (0.89) and IFI (0.96) values, suggest that the hypothesized factor structure aligns well with the observed data, meeting commonly recommended thresholds for acceptable model fit. CFA results showed acceptable factor loadings (ranging from 0.48 to 0.79). The AVE values for each dimension were

below the recommended 0.5 threshold indicating limited convergent validity. However, the construct reliability (CR) values were above 0.70 for efficacy for classroom management and student engagement, 0.66 for efficacy for instructional strategies, suggesting a reasonable level of internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Lam, 2012). Discriminant validity was confirmed by HTMT ratios ranging from 0.28 to o.43 (below the 0.85 threshold). These results support the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement model.

The Classroom English Proficiency Scale

The Classroom English Proficiency Scale (CEPS) was established by Wang (2021) based on the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority & Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2001). There are 12 self-reported items with four dimensions namely grammatical and lexical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress and intonation, the language of interaction and the language of instruction with Cronbach's Alph 0.94 for internal consistency (Wang, 2021). A 5-point Likert scale was used in this study.

In the pilot study, the Cronbach's Alpha of CEPS in this study was 0.77, showing the scale has good internal consistency with reasonable reliability. The factor structure of the CEPS was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation. The KMO value obtained was 0.77. This analysis identified four dimensions that aligned with the CEPS, accounting for 60.9% of the variance in the model. The factor loadings were to range from 0.59 to 0.81. Moreover, the model of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrated a good fit with the data by using the criteria of Fornell and Lacker (Smith, 2022), as indicated by Chi-square ($\chi^2 = 81.91$, df = 48, p = 0.00) with a CMIN/DF = 1.71, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.05, PCLOSE = 0.38). These indices, along with adequate NFI (.88) and IFI (.95) values, suggest that the hypothesized factor structure aligns well with the observed data, meeting commonly recommended thresholds for acceptable model fit. CFA results showed acceptable factor loadings (ranging from 0.44 to 0.81). The AVE values for each dimension were below the recommended 0.5 threshold, indicating limited convergent validity. However, the construct reliability (CR) values were above 0.70 for grammatical and lexical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress and intonation, the language of interaction, 0.55 for the language of instruction, suggesting a reasonable level of internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Lam, 2012). Discriminant validity was confirmed by HTMT ratios ranging from 0.20 to o.38 (below the 0.85 threshold). These results support the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Research Procedure

To fulfill the aims of this study, the selected respondents were asked to complete an online survey questionnaire, which included a series of validated measures for the variables. The survey was designed using the widely used online platform "Wenjuanxing" by incorporating questionnaire items into the system. Afterwards, the survey links were distributed to EFL teachers from Chinese polytechnics. Prior to answering the questionnaire items, the respondents received instructions on how to complete the survey. They were also informed that their respondents would be utilized solely for research purposes and that the confidentiality of the collected data would be strictly maintained.

Results

Level of Classroom English Proficiency and Teacher Self-Efficacy of EFL Teachers

The descriptive statistics shown in Table One provide the means and standard deviations for each scale and subscale. The Skewness and Kurtosis of all the variables in this study fell within the range of range of (-2, +2), indicating that data were approximately normally distributed (Pallant, 2020). The data shows that EFL teachers reported high levels of self-efficacy (M = 3.83) and among self-efficacy dimensions, classroom management scored highest (M = 3.98), while classroom English proficiency (M = 3.94) and student engagement (M = 3.57) were slightly lower. EFL teachers reported high levels of classroom English proficiency (M = 3.94). The level of all four sub-dimensions (e.g., grammatical, pronunciation) had similar mean scores around 3.93-3.96, indicating consistently strong proficiency in classroom English use.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics for classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy*

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Teacher Self-Efficacy	3.83	.33	.02	.02
Efficacy for Instructional Strategies	3.94	.41	-.04	1.1
Efficacy for Classroom Management	3.98	.42	.15	.19
Efficacy for Student Engagement	3.57	.46	-.01	-.11
Classroom English Proficiency	3.94	.27	-.09	.73
Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range	3.93	.39	-.52	2.9
Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation	3.93	.40	-.05	1.3
Language of Interaction	3.96	.39	.01	1.25
Language of Instruction	3.93	.39	-.08	.96

N = 254, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

Relationship Between Classroom English Proficiency, Grammatical Accuracy and Range, Pronunciation, Stress, and Intonation, the Language of Interaction, the Language of Instruction, and Teacher Self-Efficacy

The correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between classroom English proficiency, grammatical accuracy and range, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, the language of interaction, the language of instruction and teacher self-efficacy. The Pearson correlation analysis in Table Two demonstrates a strong positive relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$). Within the four sub-scales of classroom English proficiency, grammatical and lexical accuracy and range ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), and language of interaction ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) showed stronger correlations with teacher self-efficacy compared to pronunciation, stress and intonation ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$) and language of instruction ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$). The results of the Pearson correlation test are as follows:

Table 2. *Pearson correlation test results of the relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy of EFL teachers.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher Self-Efficacy	1					
Classroom English Proficiency	.40**	1				
Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range	.35**	.68**	1			
Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation	.26**	.67**	.28**	1		
Language of Interaction	.33**	.74**	.27**	.37**	1	
Language of Instruction	.18**	.70**	.34**	.21**	.41**	1

The Effect of Classroom English Proficiency, Grammatical Accuracy and Range, Pronunciation, Stress, And Intonation, the Language of Interaction and the Language of Instruction on Teacher Self-Efficacy

The multiple regression analysis was employed, in which classroom English proficiency and its four components were used as predictors of teacher self-efficacy. Prior to doing the multiple regression, the linearity, homoscedasticity and normality tests were done through SPSS 27 program. The result of the scatter plot (Figure One) confirmed the fulfillment of the requirements of linearity and homoscedasticity. The result of the residual normal plot (Figure Two) shows that the data distribution was normal because it was bell-shaped. The regression normal P-P plot (Figure Three) illustrates that the data points were approximately aligned along a diagonal line from the bottom left to the top right. This alignment suggests that the data didn't deviate from a normal distribution and there was a positive correlation between independent variables and dependent variables (Pallant, 2020).

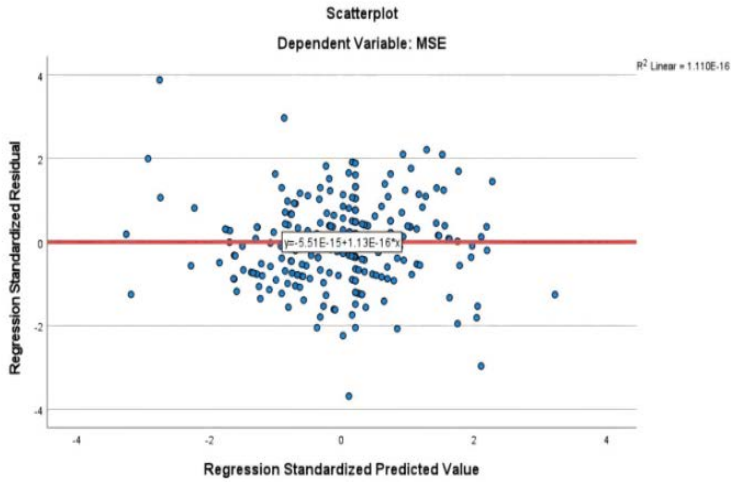


Figure 1. Residual Scatter plot

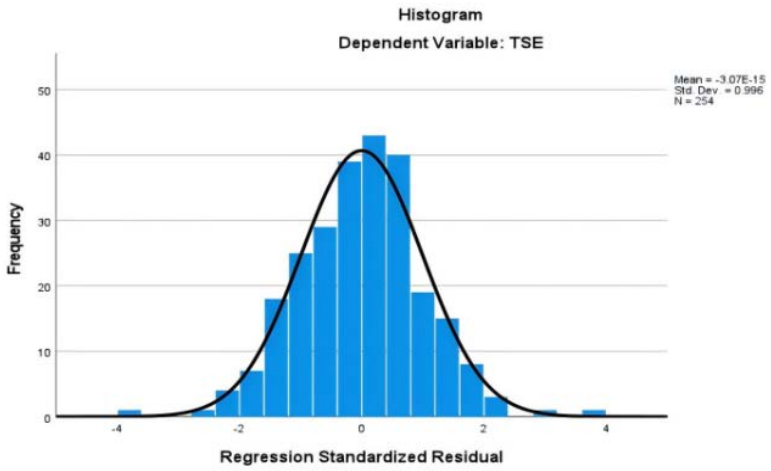


Figure 2. Regression standardized residual plot

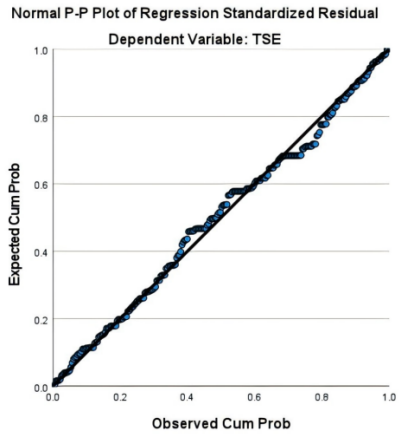


Figure 3. Regression normal P-P plot

Table Three presents an analysis exploring how classroom English proficiency and its four components predict teacher self-efficacy. The R^2-value [R^2= 0.19, F(4, 249) = 14.82, P < 0.001] indicated that 19% of the variance of teacher self-efficacy was explained by classroom English proficiency. The results show that grammatical and lexical accuracy and range (β= 0.273) and language of interaction (β= 0.229) had a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy. However, Pronunciation, Stress, and Intonation (β= 0.098) and Language of Instruction (β= -0.025) didn't have a significant effect. The VIF values for predictors were below 10, indicating no issues with multicollinearity, supporting the validity of the regression model (Hair et al., 2019). The result of the multiple regression analysis is as follows:

Table 3. *Multiple regression analysis for classroom English proficiency predicting teacher self-efficacy*

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p	VIF
	B	Std.error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.94	.27		7.2	.00	
Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and	.23	.05	.27	4.4	.00	1.2
Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation	.08	.05	.10	1.6	.12	1.2
Language of Interaction	.19	.06	.23	3.5	.00	1.3
Language of Instruction	-.02	.06	-.03	-.39	.70	1.3

N = 254, R^2 = 0.19, F(4, 249) = 14.82, p < 0.001

Discussion

The results showed that EFL teachers had high levels of both classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy, with classroom management scoring the highest among self-efficacy dimensions. The four sub-dimensions of classroom English proficiency also demonstrated consistently strong performance. Correlation analysis indicated a positive relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy. Among the sub-dimensions, grammatical and lexical accuracy and language of interaction had strong links to teacher self-efficacy compared to pronunciations, stress, intonation, and language instruction. Regression analysis confirmed that classroom English proficiency significantly influenced teacher self-efficacy, particularly grammatical and lexical accuracy and language of interaction. In contrast, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and language of instruction had no notable impact.

The descriptive data results of this study indicate that EFL teachers in this study perceived themselves as having high levels of self-efficacy, particularly in classroom management, with slightly lower self-assessed proficiency in instructional strategies and student engagement. The finding is quite consistent with the previous studies in the field of EFL teaching (Kaygısız et al., 2018; Safitri, 2021). The consistency across the four sub-dimensions of classroom language proficiency—grammatical and lexical accuracy, pronunciation, interaction, and instruction—suggested that teachers possessed a well-rounded ability to utilize English in various instructional contexts. This uniformity might indicate a comprehensive development of language skills tailored for classroom teaching, possibly a result of focused language training specific to instructional needs. These findings suggested that EFL teacher training should emphasize strategies for student engagement, as this area scored lowest in self-efficacy. Additionally, the consistent proficiency across all language sub-dimensions indicated that integrated language skill development is effective; thus, future professional development should maintain this comprehensive approach. Supporting teachers in both classroom language use and engagement strategies could enhance their overall instructional effectiveness (Aisyah, 2022; Freeman et al., 2015; Wang, 2021).

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy ($r = 0.40$), indicating that improved classroom English proficiency was linked to higher self-efficacy (Choi & Lee, 2016; Thi Hong Nhung, 2018; Wang, 2021). Among proficiency areas, grammatical and lexical accuracy and range and the language of interaction had the strongest associations with self-efficacy, suggesting these skills are key in supporting teacher self-efficacy. These detailed findings is not consistent with those of Wang (2021), which indicates that the correlations between the language of instruction and interaction with teaching self-efficacy were stronger than those between grammar and pronunciation.

The regression analysis indicates that classroom English proficiency accounted for a notable portion (19%) of the variance in teacher self-efficacy, with grammatical and lexical accuracy and language of interaction emerging as significant predictors. These findings suggest that teachers' abilities in these specific language areas were closely tied to their confidence and perceived effectiveness in the classroom. In contrast, pronunciation, stress, and intonation, along with the language of instruction, did not show a significant impact, possibly because these elements, while important, may be less central to self-efficacy in instructional contexts.

In recent years, classroom English proficiency and general English proficiency have been widely debated, with researchers focusing on which plays a greater role in EFL teaching (Aisyah, 2022; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008; Freeman, 2017; Thi Hong Nhung, 2018; Van Canh & Renandya, 2017; Wang, 2021; Yilmaz, 2011). In this study, grammatical and lexical accuracy, emerged as a significant predictor of teacher self-efficacy, underscoring the importance of these areas as part of a broader language proficiency. The findings of this study align with previous research (Aisyah, 2022; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008; Yilmaz, 2011) that emphasized the significance of teachers' general English proficiency in EFL teaching. Language of interaction was another important predictor of teacher self-efficacy. This result suggests that classroom language skills (such as language of interaction) play crucial roles in enhancing teaching effectiveness and self-confidence, consistent with the arguments of Freeman (2017), Thi Hong Nhung (2018), and Wang (2021). Therefore, teacher development programs should focus on strengthening both aspects of grammar, vocabulary and classroom interaction language rather than prioritizing one over the other. This approach would better support teachers in developing the comprehensive language skills needed to foster effective teaching and positive classroom dynamics.

Conclusion

This study highlights that EFL teachers generally perceive themselves as highly self-efficacious, particularly in classroom management. However, their self-efficacy in student engagement and instructional strategies was reported to be slightly lower. Additionally, classroom English proficiency emerged as a significant factor influencing teacher self-efficacy, with grammatical and lexical accuracy and range, as well as language of interaction, being the strongest predictors.

The positive relationship between classroom English proficiency and teacher self-efficacy suggests that teachers who demonstrate greater command of classroom English feel more confident in managing their teaching tasks effectively. In particular, a strong grasp of grammar, vocabulary, and interactive language skills appears to contribute significantly to teachers' ability to engage students and deliver lessons with clarity and confidence. Conversely, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and language of instruction were found to have a weaker influence on self-efficacy, indicating that while these skills remain important, they may not play as central a role in shaping teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities.

These findings underline the need for targeted professional development programs that prioritize the enhancement of grammar, vocabulary, and interactive communication skills among EFL teachers. Providing structured training and practice opportunities in these areas could foster greater self-efficacy, ultimately leading to improved teaching effectiveness. Moreover, policymakers and educational institutions should recognize the role of classroom English proficiency in shaping teachers' confidence and consider integrating specialized language training into teacher education programs.

Future research could further explore how different aspects of classroom English proficiency interact with teaching practices and student outcomes. Additionally, investigating the long-term impact of teacher training initiatives on self-efficacy could provide valuable insights into sustainable strategies for teacher development in EFL settings.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the data was based on self-reported measures, which could lead to biases like social desirability or inaccurate self-evaluation. Although the scales used were validated and yielded good model fit in both EFA and CFA, self-reported data might not fully capture actual classroom English proficiency or the multifaceted nature of teacher self-efficacy. Second, the study was conducted within a specific context—Chinese polytechnics—which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or regions with different cultural and educational practices. Additionally, while the study identifies significant predictors of self-efficacy, the cross-sectional design does not allow for causation to be inferred. Longitudinal studies would be needed to determine whether improvements in specific language skills lead to increased self-efficacy over time. Finally, the study did not account for potential mediating or moderating variables, such as teaching experience, training background, or institutional support, which may influence the relationship between language proficiency and teacher self-efficacy. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating observational data, exploring different educational contexts, and adopting longitudinal designs.

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