



Predictors of Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Teaching EFL: An Examination of "Nativeness" and Teachers' Training

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Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Educational Psychology,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Education

Received: 22 June 2021

Accepted: 20 August 2021

Published: 13 September 2021

Citation:

Gao Y, Gumah B, Kulbo NB, Addo PC,
Kulbo DB and Aziabah MA (2021)
Predictors of Teachers' Self-Efficacy in
Teaching EFL: An Examination of
"Nativeness" and Teachers' Training.
Front. Educ. 6:729271.
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2021.729271

The study aimed to establish the link between teacher training and "nativeness" on teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English as a second language. By applying a teacher's sense of efficacy scale, we measured the self-efficacy of a total of 281 foreign teachers in Chengdu, China. We adopted MANOVA and tested the influence of "nativeness" and teachers' training on teachers' self-efficacy. Our analysis shows that while being a native speaker does not necessarily influence a teacher's self-efficacy, trained teachers have higher self-efficacy than untrained teachers. Thus, the current study lends credence to the view that language proficiency should not be allied with being a language teacher. Instead, educational administrators and policymakers should focus on language teachers' professional development rather than emphasizing the native/non-native teachers' distinction.

Keywords: EFL teacher, teacher's self-efficacy, teaching English (as a foreign language), teacher training, nativeness perception

INTRODUCTION

English remains the first global language and a popular international language in China (Gil, 2011). As a result, understanding and speaking English is an added advantage to many Chinese in light of the new 'one belt and one road' policy, one of many policies that seek to extend China's global relationship with the rest of the world (Aoyama, 2016). However, connecting China to other countries will require the English language for communication since the Chinese language does not enjoy wide acceptance. For this reason, the study of English is a compulsory subject from the basic to the tertiary levels in China (Braine, 2012). There is, therefore, a significant burden on authorities to meet the demand for English teachers for academic and non-academic purposes. According to Zheng and Zhang (2014), in 2013 alone, there were about 300 million Chinese learning English in China, with only about 100,000 foreign English teachers. Similarly, there was a 298% growth in China's English education market between 2016 and 2017 alone, from ¥123.6 billion to ¥489.7 billion (Farrell, 2018). Generally, there is an imbalance between the demand for, and the supply of qualified professional English teachers, compelling schools to fill this gap with unqualified persons.

Two main channels exist for recruiting teachers to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in China: State-sponsored programs in TEFL and free training for Bachelor's or Master's holders of translation or English literature (Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). In the absence of qualified foreign

teachers, unqualified foreigners are used. In such situations, peoples' belief in their abilities and capabilities play a significant role in determining these teachers' output.

Self-efficacy plays a vital part in teaching because of its ability to either help or hinder performance for both professional and non-professional teachers arriving in a new environment (Bandura, 2010). In this study, a professional teacher refers to one, who, having gone through an organized and certified program or having satisfactorily completed a prescribed course of training at a higher education institution, or such other course or courses which educational stakeholders determine as satisfying requirements for classification as a teacher, is duly qualified to carry out the duties of a teacher/educator. In this paper, we use "professional teacher" and "trained teacher" interchangeably. As part of its culture of learning, the typical approach to TEFL in China has been a combination of the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods (Hu, 2002). This is mainly characterized by cross-linguistic comparisons and a detailed study of grammar by memorizing vocabulary and sentence structure. There is a direct contrast with communicative language teaching (CLT), primarily employed in English language teaching and learning. In this teaching method, meaning is primary, and the focus should be on teaching communicative functions, rather than only linguistic knowledge and the capacity to use structural patterns (Brown, 2001). The CLT approach is considered an alien methodology at variance with the traditional Chinese teaching method condensed into the '4 R's and 4 M's' (Brown, 2001, p. 100). The four Rs are reception, repetition, reproduction, and review. The four M's represent memorization, meticulousness, mastery, and mental activeness. In Hu (2005) view, the significant factors that pose a potential conflict in CLT's application in the Chinese culture of learning are the embodiment of different and opposing philosophies in teaching and learning. Therefore, teaching and learning in China are different from the West; hence, teachers need to grasp the country's teaching philosophy to succeed. Thus, foreign teachers' self-efficacy will play a vital role in successful teaching.

An emerging argument is that target language proficiency should not be associated with nativeness; rather, adequate preparedness through training should be one of the main criteria for assessing native and non-native teachers (Medgyes, 1992; Braine, 2010). Choi and Lee (2016) suggest that professional training and target language proficiency form the sources of teacher's self-confidence, which are vital requirements for second language teachers. They note that the preferred teacher has both traits, whereas teachers with insufficient levels are least preferred. These claims are supported by the existence of literature on language teacher's proficiency (Hoang and Wyatt, 2021), teachers' training (Shum et al., 2020), and self-efficacy.

While admitting there have been studies in the Chinese setting (Cheung, 2008) similar to the current endeavor, none of them combines the bundle of variables used in the current study. Given that an estimated 80% of language teachers are non-native English speakers (Braine, 2018), we follow Choi and Lee (2016) conclusion and test whether being trained and/or being a native speaker of the target language influences the three dimensions of self-efficacy. The study, therefore, presents a

two-fold dimension to understanding the effects of English language teachers' self-efficacy as far as China is concerned. Using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), the paper assesses these relationships to establish whether teachers' training and/or nativeness result in higher self-efficacy and better performance.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, by Bandura (2010, p. 1), "is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce chosen levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives." To Maddux (2002), self-efficacy is what individuals believe they can do with their abilities and skills under certain conditions. Teacher self-efficacy may be explained as teachers' personal beliefs in carrying out activities through adequate planning and organizing to attain set educational goals (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010). It is also about how teachers utilize their competence and professional discipline to influence students' behavior, knowledge, and values (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). It thus depicts what teachers can do in a particular situation, not what they have accomplished or why it was accomplished in the past (Goddard et al., 2004). The self-efficacy of teachers involves the choice of activities, effort, and persistence. People with minimal self-efficacy are unlikely to engage in challenging tasks. In contrast, individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy are more persistent and enduring even when they face difficulties.

The work by the Research and Development (RAND) corporation is the foundation of teachers' self-efficacy. It is the degree to which teachers believed in whether their ability to take charge of reinforcement was within their remit or the environment (Rotter, 1966). Student motivation and performance were presumed to be significant reinforcers for teaching behaviors. In the RAND researchers' view, the expectation is that high levels of teachers' self-efficacy could strongly influence students' motivation and achievement. A second view of the theory emerged as a result of the research of Bandura (1977a). In his view, teachers' self-efficacy is a cognitive process in which individuals build self-beliefs about their ability to accomplish a task within acceptable limits. This sense of self-belief controls the energy expended and the endurance and persistence required to face and overcome challenges. These two views of the theory form the underpinnings of teachers' self-efficacy but undoubtedly create gaps in the theory's clarity. Some of these issues border on whether teachers' self-efficacy is a one-size-fits-all or specific to certain conditions and whether the theory needs refinement to capture other vital assessment areas (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers' self-efficacy is also related to classroom organization, levels of persistence on a task, instructional strategies, questioning techniques, innovation, degree of risk-taking, management of students' on-task time, and teacher feedback to students (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). The TSES concentrates on classroom management, student engagement

activities, and instructional strategies as the three cardinal areas of teachers' self-efficacy.

Hoy and Weinstein (2015) describe classroom management as an overarching term comprising creating a productive, orderly learning environment to influence students' behavioral changes and guide them to accomplish their objectives. Recent studies and theoretical developments have resulted in a refinement of classroom management along two continuums: structure versus chaos; and autonomy support versus control (Jang et al., 2010). Furthermore, countless novice teachers believe that handling their classroom is a precondition to teaching content (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2016); nonetheless, studies have demonstrated that novice teachers have weaker classroom climates than experienced teachers. Gibson and Dembo (1984) suggest that classroom management strategies influence teachers' perceptions of their competence. Teachers with higher perceptions of self-efficacy tend to have better-planned classrooms, more organized, student-centered, accommodating, and amenable to new ideas (Anthony and Kritsonis, 2007) and highly effective in using classroom management skills (Lazarides et al., 2020). Teachers with less classroom management skills tend to have classrooms characterized by aggression (Shernoff and Kratochwill, 2007). Higher self-efficacy beliefs were more associated also with higher ratings of closeness and lower ratings of conflict with students across all grades (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Henson (2001) finds that more practical teachers, use the enhanced classroom management approach (seating, creating routines, instituting reward systems, using technology), while Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) report that a teacher's self-efficacy determines his/her inclination to work with students with difficulties instead of referring them to special education programs. Similarly, Landrum and Kauffman (2015), and Putri and Refnaldi (2020) consider the use of rewards and punishment as alternatives in managing classrooms. They intimate that teachers' main reason for adopting such an approach is to ensure their efficiency since it is an easy way of managing a student's misbehavior, giving teachers a feeling of control.

Bandura (2010) proposes four self-efficacy sources: mastery, vicarious experiences, physiological disposition, and social persuasion. According to Goddard et al. (2004), mastery experience is the most common and direct self-efficacy source. Behavior, personal and environmental factors influence self-efficacy (Bandura, 2010). Mastery experience continuously dominates as a strong force in nurturing teachers' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997a). Engaging students in classroom lessons is a measure of mastery experience. Therefore, there is a significant reinforcement of teachers' self-efficacy when observing students involved in in-class activities. When students have low interests or are not engaged, teachers' responsibilities increase (Ross et al., 1996), undermining their sense of efficacy.

Self-efficacy is specific to each situation and is applied differently among individuals. For example, teachers' self-efficacy in a classroom may vary according to the subject taught and the students' level. Individuals differ in how they nurture their self-efficacy and the intensity of such nurturing within their specialty area (Bandura, 2010). For example, a

teacher could have high self-efficacy in classroom management but low self-efficacy in student engagement activities. Therefore, the existence of a multi-purpose measure of perceived self-efficacy is a mirage. According to Bandura (1977b), the "one-size-fits-all" method usually has incomplete predictive and explanatory values because the items in an all-purpose test may have little or no bearing on the task. Moreover, generalized scales ordinarily neglect an individual's specific demands and situations to serve all needs, leading to ambiguity in measurement.

The predisposition of teachers, influenced by their initial preparation, physical and emotional condition, and external factors such as the background and demeanor of colleagues, contribute to the level of self-efficacy (Schnuck et al., 2014). In addition, teachers' qualities such as sex, grade, level taught, and experience also play a significant role in determining their self-efficacy (Berger et al., 2018). Generally, the ability to succeed raises teachers' self-efficacy, while failure decreases it.

In the literature, two major scopes of teachers' perceived efficacy (TES) are discussed: General Teaching Efficacy (GTE) and Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). PTE signifies a teacher's belief about their ability to change a students' performance, while GTE encompasses the teachers' beliefs about the influence of external factors and the teacher's ability to affect students' performance. Conceptual questions have been raised mostly about the GTE, which focuses more on teachers' ability to influence outcomes and is noted as a measure of locus of control (Rotter, 1966), a justification for its inaccurate measurement of self-efficacy (Faez and Karas, 2017). However, the development of what is currently known as the teacher's sense of efficacy scale (TSES) has improved the methodological concerns in the TES (Wyatt, 2014).

According to Wheatley (2002), doubt and uncertainty are sometimes beneficial to a person's self-efficacy. The foundation of Wheatley's challenge to Bandura (1997b) idea is that self-efficacy doubts are necessary for teachers' learning and improvement processes. For example, this uncertainty could emanate from a test on teachers' beliefs about their current tasks. To mitigate the impact of teacher's self-efficacy doubts, Wheatley (2002) proposes follow-up coaching.

Native and Non-native Language Speakers

The main criterion for describing a person as a native speaker considers the circumstances of acquisition; thus, a native speaker is perceived as someone who acquires a language at childhood (Davies, 2003). Native language represents "the language a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he or she is living" (Richard, 1985, p. 241). This means that it is possible to be a native speaker of two or more languages if acquired early in childhood.

Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, (2001) think that "nativeness" is a social construct rather than a linguistic category. The description of English speakers as "native" or "non-native" speakers hinges upon several social considerations, such as the notions of what and how a native speaker should look or sound like. To Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, p. 36), "the distinction between a native and

non-native speaker of English — long taken for granted in linguistics — is being increasingly called into question in World English research.”

Parental guidance affects language development for native speakers, as language learning begins through engagement with caregivers and parents. According to Gass et al. (2010), being exposed to a language through language input and instruction and socialization with, for instance, English-speaking peers helps develop the language. According to Kachru (1997), this category comprises speakers who usually set the standards for English-language proficiency, particularly those from countries where English is the native language for most people, such as the US and the UK. Following this, Kachru (1997) proposes three descriptions of English speakers around the world. Countries that recognize English as a native language are referred to as the Inner Circle (e.g., Canada, Britain, Australia, Ireland, North America). The Outer Circle treats English as a second language or an official language (e.g., India, Malaysia, Ghana, South Africa, Philippines). The Expanding Circle are the countries that accept English as a foreign language (e.g., China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia). Based on this classification, citizens of countries belonging to the outer and expanding circles are non-native speakers.

Non-native speakers either speak or learn English as a second language (e.g., Netherlands) or as a foreign language (e.g., China) (Kachru, 1997). A non-native speaker does not have the opportunity to develop through the initial processes of native speakers. It has been claimed that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) face problems in terms of a lack of confidence and students' biased attitude (Reis and Johnson, 2010), even though they are the majority of the English language teachers. Studies insist that foreign language teachers should hear, understand, speak, read, and write in the target language with a minimum proficiency level, either advanced or higher (Omaggio and Higgs, 1984). The command of a language is a mark of a good teacher. Teaching qualifications, exposure to native speakers, and living in an English-speaking country all affect teachers' knowledge of and self-image regarding the language; the higher the NNEST's proficiency in English, the more confident they become (Reves and Medgyes, 1994).

The goal of learning English varies in every country. For example, it is used primarily for communication in Venezuela, whereas it is for business communication in China. In Venezuela, upon graduation, EFL teachers are hired to teach in high schools without passing an exam or obtaining a certificate that shows their English competency (Chacón, 2005). Venezuela, also, places great emphasis on descriptive linguistics. Thus, the study of language at the sentence level overlooks the social nature of language as a means of communication and interaction (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). Generally, teachers in Venezuela may not acquire the communicative competence to perform in the four primary language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. Without this competency, teachers find themselves unable to use communicative language teaching (CLT) in their English classes (Li, 1998) as they do not consider themselves competent in English and tend to have a low sense of self-efficacy. In Hong Kong, it was realized that NNESTs were influential in

pedagogy but were found to be weak linguistically. On the other hand, NESTs had a perceived linguistic strength but had pedagogical weaknesses (Ma, 2012).

Inadequate language knowledge can influence the teacher's self-esteem and professional status and interfere with simple teaching procedures. Perceived language proficiency is of concern to NNESTs and impacts their professional self-esteem and confidence (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). CLT's implementation requires EFL teachers to be competent in the English language to teach it in Iran. EFL teachers are expected to use English with functional ability in communicating across language skills (Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). Research points to perceived language proficiency as an essential factor for NNEST since it impacts their professional confidence and self-esteem (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999).

In concluding this section, we adopt the words “native” and “non-native,” mostly from Kachru (1997). Native English speakers are considered mainly those who use English as their first and mother tongue and are recognized as such. On the other hand, non-native speakers have another language as their mother tongue or L1 and have studied English as a second or foreign language and sometimes adopt it as an official language. Based on the foregoing, we hypothesize that:

H1: Professionally trained teachers have higher self-efficacy than untrained teachers.

H2: Native English-speaking teachers have higher self-efficacy than non-native English teachers.

METHODS

Participants

The study population is foreigners in China, with the sample being foreign English language teachers in kindergartens and training schools living in Chengdu. Language Training Schools (popularly called training schools) in the Chinese context are designed for persons who are interested in out of formal school English language training. They train persons of all ages to speak, read and write in English. The participants have taught or teach English in public and private kindergartens and English language training schools. The recruitment of the study group was first through contacts with training schools and convenience sampling. Next, an online questionnaire was distributed to principals of training schools contacted as well as general and known teachers' social media platforms, with specific guidelines on the target groups. In all, two hundred and eighty-one (281) questionnaires were returned out of an expected number of 400, representing a response rate of 61.8%. The variables were measured using self-reported assessments.

The study adopted and modified the 12 item Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) proposed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), which is used not only for general teaching but also for language teaching (Chacón, 2005; Eslami and Fatahi, 2008; Swanson, 2012; Clark, 2016; Berger et al., 2018; Azari Noughabi and Amirian, 2021; Gumah et al., 2021). Although other self-efficacy scales exist specifically for language teachers, such as the Second/Foreign Language Teacher Efficacy Scale (S/FLTES) developed and used

by Swanson (Swanson, 2012; Url and Swanson, 2012), the S/FLTES is still new and needs further development and testing on a more extensive and diverse S/FL teaching population. The TSES was considered appropriate because of the aspects of teaching that it measures and its extensive use and validity. Bandura (2006) points out that self-efficacy scales should measure what they purport to measure and have both discriminative and predictive validity. Hence the reason for the modification. Statement such as *I am able to calm down a student who is noisy and disruptive in my English class* (classroom management), *I can motivate students who show low interest in learning English* (student engagement), and *I can use a variety of assessment strategies in my English class* (instructional strategies) constituted the measurement items. Respondents were thus mandated to indicate their level of agreement to each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The measurement of teacher training was executed through answers to a self-reported assessment such as *Have you gone through formal teacher training?*, which required a “yes” or “no” answer. Formal teacher training means being trained for not less than 1 year in instructional and methodological approaches to teaching based on a specific country’s accepted training curriculum. This does not necessarily mean being trained only to teach a language but could include other subjects while excluding online TESOL/TEFL training.

Similarly, “nativeness” was measured by answering “yes” or “no” to the question, *Is English the first language or the mother tongue (L1) of your country?* In response to this question, respondents were expected to indicate whether they were born and bred in a native English-speaking country and/or have English as a first language (L1). Again, this shows whether English is their native language or not based on the operational definition.

Reliability and Internal Consistency

In testing the reliability of the TSES, Cronbach’s alpha (α) values were used. **Table 1** provides an overview of the reliability level emerging from Cronbach’s alpha statistics. Each of the TSES dimensions (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement activities) showed high reliability and internal consistency based on an acceptable standard of $\alpha < 0.70$. An examination of the item-total statistics table indicates that none of the variables examined obtained values < 0.30 .

ANALYSIS

We used MANOVA to compare native English speakers with trained teachers on their self-efficacy levels in teaching English. MANOVA measures several dependent variables (DVs) in a

single experiment, with a better chance of discovering which factor is significant. It also protects against Type I errors that can occur in independent multiple ANOVAs and reveals differences that ANOVA tests cannot discover.

The descriptive statistics in **Table 2** show that more male respondents (62.6%) than females were engaged in teaching jobs in Chengdu-China. Among this group of respondents, the majority (63.4%) were within 25–34 years old, while respondents aged 55 years or more represented only 2%. There was a significant difference between trained and untrained teachers (57.6 and 42.4%, respectively). Trained teachers (162) have teaching experience ranging from less than 5 years (50.6%) to more than 20 years (3.7%). Individuals with TEFL training represented 76.9%, most being native English speakers (59.1%). Foreign teachers had been engaged from less than 6 months to over 5 years, with the majority having worked for between one and 5 years (40.9%).

In **Table 3**, we show the relation between the variables of interest in a correlation matrix. All other variables were significant except for nativeness and student engagement activities that did not show any statistical significance. Thus, the level of correlation does not pose any collinearity problem.

The descriptive statistics presented in **Table 4** contain the overall and group means, standard deviations, and the results for each independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV). The Table shows a higher mean score for trained teachers who are native speakers in classroom management (29.11) and a mean score of 29.46 in instructional strategies for teachers who are neither untrained nor native speakers.

A homogeneity test using Box’s M-test of equality of covariance matrices showed a p -value of 0.03, which means significant differences exist among the independent variables (IV) in the covariance matrices. This is against the assumption of MANOVA, but the sample size and the unequal values of each observation could explain the discrepancy. Since the assumption is violated, we used Pillai’s Trace for the multivariate test (Olson, 1976). This test is considered a powerful and robust statistic for general use, particularly for departures from assumptions such as assumption of homogeneity of variance. It is also a good choice when you have uneven cell sizes or small sample sizes (Pillai, 1955) We controlled for age, sex, and education to test the IVs’ effect on the DVs. **Table 5** shows the multivariate test results, indicating significant relations between trained teachers and the IV ($F = 5.17^{***}$, observed power = 95.9%), and the DV and the IV ($F = 1.45$, observed power = 51.2%). This shows that nativeness did not influence self-efficacy.

We noted that there was a positive relationship between trained teachers and instructional strategies ($F = 8.92$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.032$, power to detect the effect = 90.9%). Classroom management was also positively influenced by training ($F = 6.79$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.025$, power to detect the effect = 83%). There was a statistical significance in the relationship between trained teachers and student engagement activities ($F = 14.52$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.051$, power to detect the effect = 98.4%). Based on these findings, the combined effect, as shown in **table 5**, supports **H1**. The second IV (nativeness) did not produce any statistical significance in its

TABLE 1 | Reliability statistics.

TSES	No. of items	Alpha (α)	GFI	TLI	CFI
Instructional strategies	4	0.84	0.928	0.980	0.985
Classroom management	4	0.92	0.857	0.920	0.936
Student engagement activities	4	0.91	0.898	0.952	0.966

TABLE 2 | Background information of respondents.

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	176	62.6
	Female	105	37.4
Age (years)	Below 25	34	12.1
	25–34	178	63.4
	35–44	52	18.5
	45–54	13	4.6
	55 and above	4	1.4
Education	High school	6	2.1
	Diploma	13	4.6
	Bachelor	145	51.6
	Masters	114	40.6
Years on the Job	Below 6 months	63	22.4
	6–12 months	82	29.2
	Above 13 months but below 60 months	115	40.9
	60 months and above	21	7.5
Have you gone through formal teacher training?	PhD	3	1.1
	No	119	42.4
If yes, how many years of teaching experience do you have?	Yes	162	57.6
	Less than 5	82	50.6
Do you have a TEFL certificate	5–10	39	24.0
	10–15	19	11.7
	15–20	16	9.9
	More than 20	6	3.7
	No	65	23.1
Is English the first language or mother tongue (L1) of your country?	Yes	216	76.9
	No	115	40.9
	Yes	166	59.1

N = 281

TABLE 3 | Correlation between variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Trained teacher	1				
2 Native speaker	0.134**	1			
3 Instructional Strategies	0.199***	0.103*	1		
4 Classroom Management	0.188***	0.096*	0.576***	1	
5 Student Engagement	0.220***	0.033	0.648***	0.463***	1

Note: indicates significance at *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

TABLE 4 | Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Trained	Native	Mean	SD	Frequency
Instructional Strategies	No	Yes	28.27	3.602	87
		No	29.46	3.659	46
	Yes	Yes	29.97	3.808	77
		No	30.45	3.468	71
Classroom Management	No	Yes	26.41	5.290	87
		No	28.43	5.739	46
	Yes	Yes	29.11	4.822	77
		No	28.96	4.269	71
Student Engagement	No	Yes	26.95	4.488	87
		No	26.93	5.908	46
	Yes	Yes	28.60	4.132	77
		No	29.55	4.249	71

Note: *N* = 281.

TABLE 5 | Multivariate tests results.

Variable	Value	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed power
Trained	0.055	5.17	0.002	0.05	0.959
Native	0.016	1.45	0.227	0.01	0.512

Note: significance level at $p < 0.01$.

relationship with the three dimensions of self-efficacy. For this reason, we conclude that **H2** is not supported.

We used the tests of between-subject effects (**Table 6**) to confirm the hypotheses by checking the IV's individual effect on the DV.

DISCUSSION

Trained foreign teachers become the preferred candidates for employment opportunities because of their knowledge and experience. In other words, they have better teaching skills and understand both child psychology and teaching methodologies based on teacher training modules. A requirement in this section for issuing a work permit or a work visa for a teaching job is that the applicant should have a teaching certificate (Zheng and Zhang, 2014). From the analysis, trained teachers have higher self-efficacy levels than untrained teachers. This finding is consistent with prior studies that have

TABLE 6 | Tests of between-subjects effects.

Source	Dependent variable	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed power ^a
Corrected model	IS	40.66	3.07	0.01	0.06	0.95
	CM	64.92	2.57	0.02	0.05	0.91
	SE	95.71	4.66	0.00	0.09	0.99
Intercept	IS	4,839.41	365.75	0.00	0.57	1.00
	CM	4,920.50	195.06	0.00	0.42	1.00
	SE	3,375.89	164.40	0.00	0.37	1.00
Sex	IS	4.76	0.36	0.55	0.01	0.16
	CM	10.24	0.40	0.52	0.01	0.17
	SE	31.24	1.52	0.22	0.01	0.34
Age	IS	3.63	0.27	0.60	0.01	0.15
	CM	0.06	0.01	0.96	0.01	0.10
	SE	13.35	0.65	0.42	0.01	0.21
Education	IS	27.83	2.10	0.15	0.01	0.42
	CM	1.08	0.04	0.84	0.01	0.11
	SE	191.25	9.31	0.00	0.03	0.92
Trained	IS	118.08	8.92	0.00	0.03	0.91
	CM	171.36	6.79	0.01	0.02	0.83
	SE	298.22	14.52	0.00	0.05	0.98
Native	IS	24.70	1.86	0.17	0.01	0.39
	CM	50.72	2.01	0.16	0.01	0.41
	SE	0.14	0.01	0.93	0.01	0.10

Note: significance level at $p < 0.01$.

established that training and professional development influence teachers' self-efficacy (Kraut et al., 2016; Clark and Newberry, 2019). It also supports Bandura (1997a) assertion that mastery experience is the dominant source of self-efficacy, which can also be attained through training. Vicarious experience emanates from observation, which can be achieved among others by watching teaching videos online, identified as a source of preservice teachers' self-efficacy (Karsenti and Collin, 2011). A study by Drago-severson (2002) revealed seven main professional development models for training teachers. These are observation, study groups, mentoring, individual guidance, in-service training, improvement process, and action research/inquiry. These added training models could make the difference between trained and untrained teachers. Kraut et al. (2016) study confirm the foregoing claim by establishing a positive relationship between professional training, teachers' self-efficacy, and performance. Moreover, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, (2009) assert that follow-up coaching promotes mastery experience, influencing higher self-efficacy to implement new strategies. Therefore, it is no surprise that trained teachers have higher self-efficacy and thus an edge over untrained teachers.

Our study however shows no difference in the level of self-efficacy among native and non-native English teachers in the three TSES examined. In Korea, Choi and Lee (2016) found that teachers with minimum proficiency were highly unlikely to increase their English use in the classrooms even with high self-efficacy. Also, with low self-efficacy and high proficiency, English will not be taught to a desirable level. In TEFL, Chacón (2005), and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) confirm that teachers' self-efficacy varies based on tasks and teaching expectations and

teachers' self-assessment of their language proficiency. In this study, one reason for this trend is that NNESTs could utilize several language teaching methods. Medgye (2011) calls it learner models, while Ehrman et al. (1990) call it language learning strategies. This superiorizes NNEST over NEST in most cases. Also, as Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) revealed, although NNESTs face prejudice, resulting in them losing confidence in teaching, they could combine the various teaching methods within their reach to enhance their self-efficacy and performance. In the study by Reves and Medgyes (1994, p. 361), NNESTs showed "deeper insights into the English language" and seemed more qualified than NESTs. They showed more responsiveness towards their students and could predict the difficulties faced by their students. Discourse skills provides the means to teach English through English. This includes the ability to maintain communication in English (fluent, accurate and comprehensible) and more importantly, the extent to which the teacher can use English as a medium to teach English (Richards, 2017). Eslami and Fatahi (2008) study revealed a positive link between teachers' perceived level of language proficiency and sense of self-efficacy. Moreover, the higher the teacher's sense of self-efficacy the more they tend to employ communicative-based methods in their classes, and the proclivity to focus more on meaning rather than accuracy. This supports the argument that target language proficiency should not be associated with nativeness and that nativeness does not necessarily imply that teaching a language is the preserve of native speakers.

Evidence from various countries provide different findings on whether language proficiency levels affect teachers' self-efficacy in

teaching English. While others indicate NESTs' strength in linguistic abilities, NNESTs have strength in pedagogy. In the view of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a foreign language teacher should have adequate competence in the hearing, understanding, speaking, reading, and writing of the target language (Omaggio and Higgs, 1984), which are the considered strengths of a NEST. In support of our findings too, Medgye (1992) notes that school administrators in France and England do not use nativeness as a basis for recruiting teachers. The study has identified no difference in the self-efficacy of NEST and NNEST in the teacher efficacy areas examined among the population studied.

CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that professionally trained and untrained teachers will continue to teach English in China, as will native and non-native English speakers because of the severe shortage of language teachers. The present study indicates that professionally trained teachers have a significant advantage in TEFL in China, confirming the findings of other professional training and self-efficacy studies. This supports the view that specific personal characteristics can influence self-efficacy. In this case, professional training determines teachers' self-efficacy in TEFL among the study group.

These findings provide evidence to support the theoretical propositions by Pasternak and Bailey (2004) that being prepared pedagogically and linguistically is essential and should be the paramount consideration in comprehending the professional status, growth, and practices of English teachers. Though this conclusion seems obvious, human resource managers should support the development of these skills, through in-service training, online learning, seminars and workshops, to advance their professional growth and development. Indeed, EFL teachers perceive technology as a vital learning tool in the 21st century to enhance pedagogical competence (Siregar et al., 2020). These are effective for promoting mastery experience, translating into higher self-efficacy beliefs which are critical in enhanced performance in classroom management, instructional strategies and student engagement activities.

However, linguistic ability does not mean nativeness. Nativeness and linguistic ability should not be used interchangeably. The two teacher characteristics should be treated separately and not as interchangeable constructs as done in previous research (Swanson, 2012). Levis (2020) makes a similar distinction between intelligibility and nativeness in language teaching and how each principle addresses teaching goals. These unique features are distinct and have varied influences on individuals. Therefore, our findings demonstrate how each characteristic provides a theoretical understanding of the TEFL profession and is a field of study worth considering further.

We recommend that policymakers amend the rules for language schools that require obtaining work permits for foreign teachers before they can teach legitimately. By making the requirements flexible, authorities could monitor

and ensure that teachers who have work permits obtain the required training and certification within a specified period. The government could also identify and provide appropriate training on TEFL while making use of Chinese support staff. Even though studies have shown that schools and parents prefer foreign teachers to local Chinese teachers (see Rao and Yuan, 2016), it is important to restate Swanson (2012) conceptual distinction, namely; that nativeness should not be equated to linguistic ability. Schools and parents should therefore be encouraged to patronize Chinese-trained English teachers to fill existing teaching vacancies. We also recommend blending NEST with NNEST to provide a suitable situation and allow one group to make up for and plug the other's weaknesses (Selvi, 2011; Mannes and Katz, 2020). Despite the different attributes shown by both types of teachers, they complement each other. Students agree that collaborative teaching is better when addressing this dichotomous world of NESTs and NNESTs (Mhd Fauzi and Hashim, 2020). Finally, given that this study is situated in the Chinese cultural-context, and since culture plays a significant role in teachers' perceptions of themselves and their profession, we are constrained in widening the scope of application of the findings of our study. Additionally, the outbreak of Covid-19 limited the use of interviews and other qualitative research approaches in this study. We, therefore, recommend that future studies consider adopting a mixed-methods design in order to understand this phenomenon from another perspective. The insights from such an endeavor will be especially interesting to school administrators and policymakers.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BG: contributed to the design of the study, collected data, and carried out the analysis. The content of the article was also drafted and proofread by the author. NK: contributed to the design of the study, and supported in collecting data. The content of the article was also proofread by the author. PA: contributed to the design of the study, and took part in the data analysis DK; Supported data collect and proofread the final draft of the paper MA: Proofread and edited the final part of the paper.

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