IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS UTILIZATION OF ELT IN STUDENTS' FUTURE LIVES

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Abstract:

In countries in which there is no formal second language, and English is considered as a foreign language and has no place in people's everyday lives and communications, the utilization of the foreign language taught in schools as the second language is under question. This study has been conducted to indicate English teachers' attitude toward the utilization of teaching English as a foreign language in Iranian high schools as well as current language policies. In this study, 66 EFL teachers from Gotvand, Shushtar and Dezful, Iran, made up the sample of this study. To answer the questions of this study, a validated questionnaire was prepared and distributed among the samples. In this questionnaire, 20 statements formed a likert scale and the teachers had to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. This paper elaborates on the attitude of EFL teachers with different degrees regarding the utilization of ELT in students' future lives.

Keywords: Teachers' Attitudes, EFL Teacher, ELT, Students' Future Lives

Introduction

The English language has been spoken by more than 1.5 billion people as a native, second, or foreign language in local and international communities (Strevens, 1992). As this statement from 1992 highlights the importance and inclusiveness of English, it is mentionable that now about 2 billion people of the world's population speak English. That is almost 25% of the world's population who speak English (Rao, 2019). The English language has gone through the process of globalization. The globalization of English introduces the language into a global lingua franca and an international language (Xu, 2018). Accordingly, English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) practitioners have initiated a shift from teaching discrete aspects of language, such as grammar and pronunciation, to developing students' communicative competence in their instructional focus to meet interactional and intercultural goals (Khany & Nejad, 2017). Examining language teachers' attitudes towards English is necessary because the teachers play a key role in shaping learners' attitudes towards English (Farrell, 2017). Also research on teachers as important agents of change in the curriculum innovation helps to understand the language policy and the proposed GE-informed ELT innovation (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Language policy has been defined as a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices in order to achieve the planned language change in the societies, groups or systems (Ammon, 2002). It also helps improve problem-solving skills related to interactions with people with different cultural backgrounds. additionally, learning a foreign language leads to a better understanding of the culture, policies, laws, education and business environment of the foreign country (Mc Cullough et all., 1987). In today's global world and with the help of modern technology, English has become the most common and dominant language spoken and used both at the national and international (Alkhalil, 2015).

Teachers quality and beliefs are very important educational factors that can increase academic achievement and can improve teaching activities (Cave et al., 1997) as the behaviors and attitudes are not mutually exclusive entities (Ghasemi, 2022). Recent research has shown that teachers can influence, in a positive or negative manner, students' learning abilities and achievements (Roman, 2014). Many studies show that what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it is affected by motivation

(Pugh & Bergin, 2006) and motivated learners often try to understand classroom material in order to learn it meaningfully and also consider using it in their own lives (Ormrod, 2010). Teachers are aware of the necessity of the qualitative leap in the education system and the requirements to overcome the crisis in this space and as the result of this awareness, they usually have the right attitude for implementing the changes that the current curricular reform involves (Pešková, 2019).

The influence and the impression of the teachers on students' motivation, learning abilities and achievements have been well elaborated on in the related literature. Also the teacher's role in the educational system, curriculum design and reform and students' behaviors and lives inside and outside of the school have been discussed. Yet, the teacher's attitude toward the utilization and application of Teaching English as a foreign language in Iranian EFL students' future lives has never been discussed. Hence, in this study considers the viewpoint of Iranian EFL teachers toward the usefulness of ELT in students' future lives and whether the teachers' university degrees affect their attitudes toward this issue. With these regards, this study tries to answer the following questions:

Research Question No. 1: Do English teachers consider English as a foreign language useful in students' future lives?

Research Question No. 2: Is the attitude of M.A. and B.A. English teachers toward the utilization of English language in students' lives significantly different?

Based on these research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis No. 1: English teachers consider English as a foreign language useful in students' future lives**.**

Hypothesis No. 2: The attitude of M.A. and B.A. English teachers toward the utilization of English language in students' lives significantly different.

Literature Review

Language policies have been studied extensively in ELT in different contexts. Kirkgöz (2009) has studied globalization and English language policy in Turkey indicating that while there is much evidence pointing to the prominent role that English occupies in Turkish education system largely through the government's planned language policy, there also exist problems at the instructional level largely due to the way in

which English is propagated. Rashid, Abdulrahman and Yunos (2017) studied out the reforms in the policy of English language teaching in Malaysian education system and discussed the changing approaches in the curriculum and methodology of English language teaching. This paper also reviews the formal professional development programmes. The paper concludes that even though the changes in policies aimed to improve the quality of education, implementation was often made in haste, causing a loud public outcry from teachers. Takeshita and Honna (2005) have conducted research on policy plans and their implementations toward English language teaching in Japan. Their study deals with the importance of English for international communication within the country as well as abroad and describes the most recent attempts of Japan to improve English teaching and learning at all levels of the education system both for students and teachers as well as for the public in general. Pešková (2019) studied the most recent curriculum reform that brought substantial changes in the curriculum documents in the Czech Republic. The results show that the acceptance of reform increases among the teachers who use curriculum documents regularly and among the teachers with higher self-efficacy and teachers with curriculum-oriented approaches are more willing to accept the reform.

The ffectiveness of English language teaching is a great challenge EFL contexts (Mushtaq, 2020). Tristeza (2021) explored the attitude towards English language and suggested that humanistic approaches must be utilized for teachers to build positive relationships with students and accept that there are individual differences, deal with them in a professional way and try to creat a supportive and conducive classroom for learning. Also in order to eradicate competition among the students and lessen tension, and eventually, lower the anxiety levels, EFL teachers may make use of collaborative student-centered activities through paired or group work. Moreover, as per Kamaruddin (2019), in the field of language studies, extra-linguistic elements are taken into account as they provide the information in relation with attitudes, motivation, personality, and are proven in helping students in learning certain languages so educators must take the existence of extra-linguistic in language learning seriously. Altoeriqi (2020), studied teachers' perception of their own skills and how confident and skilled enough are they to teach in a utile way. The study uncovered that the teachers felt that they needed to develop more training courses and considered their own skills as factors enhancing the

teaching process. Mushtaq (2020) tried to explore teachers' perception of using appropriate teaching strategies to study the ffectiveness of ELT and suggested that teachers are supposed to be trained in using useful and effectives strategies and in-service training programs for teacher should be arranged, specifically focusing on ELT. Sabokrouh (2013) explored teachers' attitudes toward ELT and teachers' English language proficiency and indicated that teachers' level of proficiency and their attitude toward the ELT were significant predictors of teachers' English teaching-specific efficacy beliefs or confidence. With this regard Ghasemi (2022) investigated the factors, features and variables that affect EFL teachers' quality and developed and validated a scale of EFL teachers' quality for measuring teacher quality in an EFL context. Derakhshan and Torabi (2015) investigated EFL teachers' attitudes towards CLT by exploring teachers' reasons for their attitudes, and reporting the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs towards and their practice in the class and concluded that majority of teachers held positive attitudes toward principles of CLT and showed a little gap was seen in teachers' beliefs and their practices in the class. Yaghoubi and Rasouli (2015) in a studied the Iranian EFL students' social attributions towards English language learning and indicated that Iranian high school students ascribe their success in language learning to their own effort, interest, and good preparation for exams, and their failure to teacher's method, lack of having positive attitude to teachers, lack of teacher's praise and encouragement, lack of having appropriate learning environment, and not having enough teacher's help. In another work Wu (2013) argued that there are positive attitudes toward simulation activities, regardless of the learrners' English proficiency and suggests that teachers develop appropriate communicative-based activities to increase the learning efficiency of the students.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are a significant component in the development and success of inclusive education (Hassanein et al., 2021). There is a growing body of research on teachers' beliefs about English according to the global spread of English language (Khatib & Monfared, 2017; Cavalheiro, 2016; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019). For example, Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2019) studied the attitude of English teachers to WEs in relation to ELT. Interviewing 56 English teachers working in Australia, it became clear that, teachers' actual classroom practices did not reflect English as a pluricentric language despite their awareness of WEs. In a mixed-method study focusing on

attitudes towards English pronunciation (Khatib & Monfared, 2017) similar results were found. A survey of 352 English teachers followed by interviews with 60 participants showed that teachers were not in favor of different varieties of English and only preferred 'standard' American (AE) and/or British English (BE) in teaching practices. However, these studies were non comprehensible because of not fully exploring likely factors influencing teachers' language attitudes as examining these factors is crucial for understanding the feasibility of ELT curriculum because of the important role of attitudes in the innovation process (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The teachers' attitude to English in the context of higher education are related to dominant language ideologies which might impact incorporating GE and ELT in a multilingual setting (Zhunussova, 2021). There might be an interrelation between teachers' perceptions of emotional intelligence and the autonomy of the learners (Javaherbakhsh, 2018). He explored the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their perceptions of learner autonomy and found a significant correlation between them. Interpreted within a sociolinguistic context her findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how teachers' language attitudes are enacted in relation to their multilingualism in order to move forward discussions on the feasibility of GE-informed curriculum innovation. As the teachers' explicit beliefs influence students' learning and achievement (DeCuir-Gunby & Bindra, 2021), the optimistic expectations of teachers affected both the personality of students and their live public presentations (Malhotra et al., 2021). Hassanein et al. (2021) examines the change in preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. It was found that the teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education changed significantly. No significant differences between primary and secondary preservice teachers were found at the end of the course. The results illustrated that combining information-based instruction with structured fieldwork experiences can potentially change preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. Huerta et al. (2019) measured and analyzed PreK-12 teachers' attitudes toward ELs in the context of science education. The teachers of this study focused on integrating science and language to help all students succeed in the science classroom and bi/multilingual teachers had more positive attitudes towards ELs than monolingual English speaking teachers. Rao (2019) in his study which is based on the importance of teaching English in modern era introduces English language as a lingua franca and a global language which must not be

connivance. He states that about 2 billion people of the world's population speak English. It means that almost 25% of the world's population speaks English. Among them, 400 million people speak English as their first language whereas the others speak it as a second or foreign language. English is not only the most widely spoken language but also the most commonly studied foreign language in the world and this international spread has transformed English into a lingua franca (Burns, 2005).

Language policy of Education system of Iran was studied in different articles. The studies showed some bugs in language policy of Iranian education system. Sarvandi and Ekstam (2017) expressed that Iranian language policy is a traditional policy and it cannot solve foreign language learning problems. They also think that the contents used for teaching English as a foreign language in Iran are not effective enough and the taught subjects may not be usable for students.

Methodology

Participants

66 teachers of English as a foreign language were selected from Gotvand, Shushtar and Dezful as the sample of the whole population of this study. They were selected based on convenience non probability sampling because they were the most accessible English teachers for the study. We sent the questionnaire link to 100 public school teachers and 46 male and 20 female teachers who responded and completed the online form, made up our sample. 30 English teachers who attended into study had M.A degree and 36 of them had B.A degree. Regarding their teaching experience, 22 teachers had less than ten tears of teaching experience, 25 teachers had teaching experience between 11 to 20 years and 19 teachers had been teaching for more than 20 years.

Instrument

The questionnaire of teacher's attitudes toward teaching English as a foreign language in the first four grades in Jordan (Rasmieh, 2017) whose validity has already been verified was modified for the Iranian context and distributed through participants to evaluate the attitude of English language teachers as a foreign language toward utilization of teaching English as a foreign language at Iranian students' future lives. To fulfill this, we gave the questionnaire to a group of four TEFL university professors at Ilam

University to judge its validity and to give their comments and directions and to confirm its comprehensiveness, accuracy and appropriateness. Also for the reliability analysis of the items we used jamovi software and it was calculated with a satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha of .933 and McDonald's Omega of 0.944.

Procedure of Data Collection

The participants were supposed to fill out the questionnaire which has been designed to evaluate the English teachers' attitude toward utilization of teaching English as a foreign language at Iranian students' future lives. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point Liker scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5=strongly agree. Then gathered information were coded into SPSS and these results were achieved.

Data Analysis

The descriptive analysis of this study was carried out with SPSS version 23. Initially, Smirnov-Kolmogorov Test was conducted to indicate normality or abnormality of the collected data. Also to express the significance or non-significance of the mean difference, we used the significance level of t-test. Also in order to express the significance and non-significance of the difference between the mean of teachers' attitude toward the utilization of English language in student's lives among the teachers with B.A degree and teachers with M.A degree, two independent sample T test is used.

Results

As the first step Smirnov-Kolmogorov Test was conducted to indicate normality or abnormality of the collected data for continuing the analysis. In table 1 the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are shown.

Table 1

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

N	6 6
Mean	3. 6697
Std. Deviation	.7 4979
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.9 54
Significance level	.3 22

According to the Smirnov-Kolmogorov Test which guarantees the goodness of model fit for the acceptability of data, the significance level of this test is higher than .05 which indicates the data is normal. Therefore, next parametric tests are performed to analyze data.

Figure 1

Histogram diagram of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test
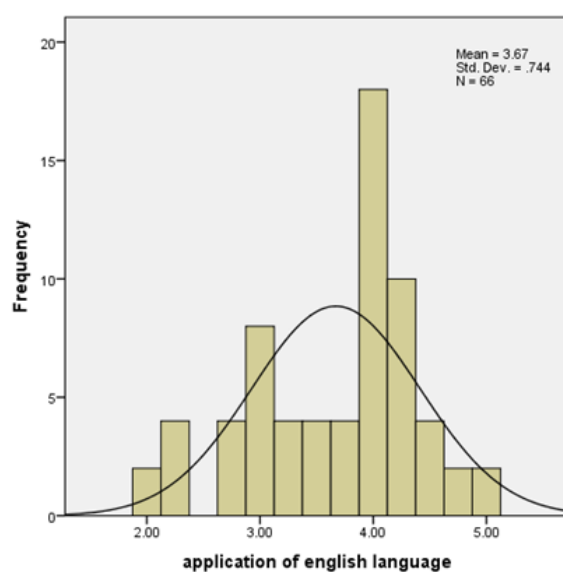
In figure 1 the scores of the parameters are shown on the X-axis and the frequency of each score is shown on the Y-axis. Considering the above histogram diagram, we see that the data accumulation in the central part (the bell part) is more than other parts. Therefore, this distribution is a normal distribution. This has been proven by the Smirnov-Kolmogorov Test.

Hypothesis No. 1: English teachers consider English as a foreign language useful in students' future lives.

H0: $\mu \leq 3$. $(0.05 \leq sig)$
H1: $\mu \geq 3$. $(0.05 > sig)$

The statistical characteristics including mean, mean, mode, standard deviation, variance and range of variations related to the variables are shown below. Since the questionnaire of this research have been distributed in 5 options (Likert scale), the mean reference is equal to 3. So if the mean score for each variable is higher than the mean, it means that the majority of people have chosen the "agree" or "strongly agree", and vice versa. According to the table below, the mean of the variable of English language utilization in student's lives (3.9 ± 0.74) is higher than mean level (3.0). This shows that the majority of respondents have given "agree" or "strongly agree" answers to the options. Therefore, to express the significance and non-significance of the difference between the mean of the desired variable and the reference value (3.0), the significance level of the one sample T- test is used.

Table 2

Statistical data related to the component of English language utilization

English Language Utilization	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Sum
	66	3.6697	3.9000	3.10[a]	.74400	.554	3.00	2.00	242.20

One sample T- test

According to the table below, we see that the upper and lower limits are on one side of zero. So there is a significant difference between the mean reference (3.0) and the English language utilization component. To express the significance or non-significance of this mean difference, we use the significance level of t-test. According to the one sample T-test, with the help of the following table, we see that at the error level of less than 5%, the significance level of the T-test (0.000) is less than .05 which indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean reference (3.0) and the English language utilization component (= 0.66 positive mean difference). Therefore, the assumption of H0, based on the non-significance of the difference between the mean of the component of English language utilization and the mean reference (3.0) is rejected. On the other hand, the assumption of H1 based on the significance of the difference between the mean of the component of English language utilization and the reference mean (3.0) is accepted. So, English teachers consider the utilization of English as a foreign language in students' lives to be above mean.

Table 3

One sample T-test for the English language utilization component

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
English language utilization	7.313	65	0.000	.6697	.0.4868	0.8526

Hypothesis no. 2: The attitude of M.A. and B.A. English teachers toward the utilization of English language in students' lives significantly different.

To examine the hypothesis, firstly H0 and H1 hypotheses are defined then the results are examined to determine which of these hypotheses are confirmed or rejected.

H0: $\mu_j = \mu_i$ (sig $\geq$ 0.05).

H1: $\mu_j \neq \mu_i$ (sig $<$ 0.05).

The table below shows the statistical characteristics of the variable of attitude of English teachers with M.A degree and attitude of English teachers with B.A degree toward English language utilization in students' lives. This table shows that the variable of English teachers' attitude toward the utilization of English language in student's lives among teachers with a B.A degree has a higher mean (0.54 ± 4) than teachers with M.A degree (0.77 ± 3.27). To express the significance and non-significance of this mean difference, the significance level of two independent samples T test is used.

Table 4

Descriptive characteristics of English teachers with bachelor and master of art degree

Group Statistics				
	Educational Level	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
English language utilization	*Bachelor of art*	*36*	*4.0028*	*0.54731*
	Master of art	*30*	*3.2700*	*0.77938*

Two independent samples T test

In order to express the significance and non-significance of the difference between the mean of teachers' attitude toward the utilization of English language in student's lives among the teachers with B.A degree and teachers with M.A degree, two independent sample T test is used according to the table below. According to the two independent samples T-test, with the help of the following table, it can be seen that at the error level of less than 5%, the significance level of the Levene's test is less than .05. Therefore, the condition of non-equality of variance is accepted. Due to the significance level of T-test at the error level of less than 5%, the mean of the English teachers' attitude variable toward the utilization of English language among teachers with M.A degree and teachers with B.A degree have a significant difference which is equals to 0.51. As a result, the mean difference between the two groups is significant, so, according to the

significance level of T test (0.00), this difference is a significant difference. So the H0 assumption of the research is rejected and the H1 assumption is accepted. Hence, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 5

Two independent samples T test.

		Levene's Test		t-test			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference
English language utilization	Equal variances not assumed	10.403	0.002	4.408	50.75	0.000	0.7327

Discussion and Conclusion

This research clarifies English teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of teaching English as a foreign language in Iranian high schools. In the contex of conduction of this study, Iran, there is no formal second language and English is considered as a foreign language and has no place in people's everyday lives and communications. Teachers' attitudes towards English are related to their attitudes to the language policies as well as to their views regarding the normativity of English in relation to ELT. As Galloway (2017) claims that attitudes towards English have their roots in society and are related to attitudes towards first language, the findings of this study suggest sociolinguistic links between attitudes toward English and official languages of the teaching context and teachers' language attitudes are "mobilized for particular purposes in specific contexts" (Gal, 2012: 29) which influence their linguistic and professional identity construction. As in the study by Gal (2012), the research here shows that for the partici-

pants, English has an instrumental value, while their first language usage is usually associated with home and intimacy. Finally, this research showed that English language teachers had positive attitudes toward the utilization of ELT in students' future lives and current language policies. They believed that the English language which is being taught in Iranian high schools can be useful and applicable in students' future lives. This finding is in line with the official EFL curriculum view of teachers and does not reflect the pluricentricity of English; therefor, this study addresses a need on research on compatibility of GE innovations with the ELT context. According to the results of this study teachers who had B.A degree had more positive attitudes than teachers who had M.A degree. So it can be concluded that teachers' education can influence their attitude toward language policies. It is also important to consider the study by Menard-Warwick (2008) which indicates that multilingual teachers of English make a productive use of their transnational experiences in search for adequate pedagogical resources that meets the learners' needs according to increasing globalization. Moreover, considering the role of the teachers in the educational system and curriculum design and reform on one hand, and the influence and the impression of the teachers on students' motivation, learning abilities and achievements and students' behaviors and lives inside and outside of the school on the other hand, the teachers who are unsatisfied or pessimistic about the current situation of ELT in Iran, or those who are neutral or less satisfied in one way or another, are supposed to make reforms and changes in the situation in order to progress in route of perfection.

Limitations and Further Research

One limitation of this study is its sample size. The study was conducted in three cities namely, Gotvand, Shushtar and Dezful, Iran. Therefore, the sample size may limit the generalizability of our results. Also the sample population of this study did not consist of any teachers with a Ph.D. degree. With regard to the difference in the attitudes of teachers with dfferent degrees it would be a valuable topic for future researchers to conduct a research consisting Ph.D. holder teachers and with a larger sample population.

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