WCES-2011

Relationship between perceived teacher's academic optimism and English achievement: Role of self-efficacy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perception of teacher academic optimism with academic achievement in English language course based on mediating role of English language self-efficacy. So 741 students (454 female & 287 male) were chosen through multiple cluster sampling (age mean: 16/57 ; SD: 0/73). They completed English language self-efficacy questionnaire (Melory & Batting, 2001) and perception of teacher academic optimism questionnaire (Hoy et al., 2008). English achievement was assessed through final grade of academic year. Data was analyzed through path analysis technique. Results indicated that out of two factors in perception of teacher academic optimism, just academic emphasis and teacher's trust in parents and students had a direct and positive effect on English language self-efficacy. Also perception of academic emphasis /trust and perception of teacher self-efficacy had an indirect positive effect on English language achievement through student self-efficacy. Goodness of fit indices showed suitable fitness of the model (CFI=0.98, GFI= 0.95, NFI= 0.97). Mediating role of student self-efficacy in relationship between factors of optimism and English language achievement was confirmed. © 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Perceived teacher's academic optimism; English achievement; English language; self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

Learning English as an international language and also as a means to get the most recent findings in the world of science is a necessity and seemingly inevitable. Accordingly, researchers have permanently sought to find the reasons just for students’ failure in English course. In contrast, we are trying to find some ways for students to embrace success using positive approaches. Academic optimism of schools is a collective construct that includes the cognitive, affective, and behavioral facets of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. Collective efficacy is the perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students. At the teacher’s level, as we will discuss in the current study, teacher’s academic optimism is a way of positive thinking which empowers not only the optimist teacher but also the student who is always watching his/her teacher as a model in English class. If teachers believe they have the ability of affecting student learning, teachers

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set higher expectations, exert greater effort, and become more resilient in the face of difficulties (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Not only the way the teacher behaves while he/she faces difficulties (which leads to students learning in English) can be modeled by students but also when student perceives his teacher as believer of his ability in learning English, he feels self-efficacy which causes academic efforts and perseverance in student, finally leading to academic achievement (Bandura, 1993). So in this study the focus is on students’ perception of teachers’ academic optimism. All over the world educators and teachers have examined various methods for making students understand English but most of the time they have been a failure.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that English is the key to success in many fields; therefore parents and educators attach much importance to it. English teachers and students exert a lot of efforts but unfortunately they can’t reach their real academic goals in English. So, students get disappointed with English and gradually they generalize it to other lessons which all in all lead to students’ academic failure. For this end, the current study is going to explore the relation of student perception about teacher’s academic optimism to his achievement and the role of student academic efficacy in this relation.

1.1 Teacher’s Academic optimism

Academic optimism at the teacher’s level is made up of teacher’s sense of efficacy, his trust in students and parents, and his emphasis on academic affairs (Hoy, Wayne Hoy & Kurz, 2008). It has been proved that teacher’s academic optimism affects on students’ academic achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). As Huang & Chang (1996) believe perception of the teacher’s support influenced self-efficacy, finally resulting in academic achievement. In this study, the items of questionnaire were changed to test students’ perception of their English teacher’s view about them. Also helpfulness of the teacher as a result of optimism leads to students’ better performance (Levpuscek and Zupancic, 2009). As far as students spend just one-third of schools hours to successful learning tasks, known as academic learning time (Woolfolk, 2010), and the hours they are engaged in learning task is positively related to their learning (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007), it is very important to engage them in learning task. Who can do this? Undoubtedly the teacher who believes his own self efficacy and his students’ as well, can afford this job in its best.

1.2. Self-efficacy

Levpuscek and Zupancic (2009) state academic self-efficacy is regarded as students’ beliefs about their ability to learn or perform specific tasks (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Teachers’ academic emphasis in the classroom and behaviors that promote development, improvement, and learning for understanding, uniquely and substantially contribute to students’ self-efficacy in the course (Levpuscek and Zupancic, 2009).

1.3. The current study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the relation of perceived teachers’ academic optimism and English achievement mediating academic self-efficacy. This study will bring teachers’ behavior role on students’ English achievement into light. Also the role of student self-efficacy will be discussed.

2. Method

The sample, data collection procedures, and measures used in this study are described below.
2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 741 high school students, grade 10 (287 male; 454 female; mean age = 16.57) who were selected with multiple cluster sampling from Shirvan, Iran.

2.2. Instruments

Total number of the items was 34. All the items of the questionnaires were changed to fit the English class. The structure of the instruments was examined using confirmatory factor analysis and reliabilities of the resulting scales were assessed with Cronbach's alpha.

Perceived teacher's academic optimism: This scale consisted of 24 items adopted from teacher’s academic optimism Scale (Tschannen- Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) which assessed perceived teacher’s academic optimism (a=0.89). Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the scale consists of two subscales named teacher's self-efficacy and trust/emphasis which explained 0.42 of variance. Reliability of the former subscale turned out to be 0.82 and the latter 0.90.

Self efficacy: This scale included 10 items taken from McLory & Butting Academic Self-efficacy Scale (2001), which assessed students’ beliefs about their abilities in English (a= 0.73). We utilized confirmatory factor analysis for determining construct validity of the scale.CFA indices (X2/df= 3.87, CFI=0.92, GFA=0.97, RMSEA=0.06) revealed Good fitness of the model. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (a=0.73) indicated sufficient reliability of the scale.

English achievement: The achievement indicator in this study is based on the grades of English final exam.

2. Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables are presented in Table 1. As shown, correlation of teacher’s efficacy with teacher’s trust & English emphasis is remarkable. It is the highest value observed in table 1. Also student’s English self-efficacy has a relatively high relation with teacher’s trust & English emphasis. Moreover student’s English self-efficacy has a positive relation with teacher’s trust & English emphasis.

Path analysis technique was conducted through AMOS18 (Arbuckle, 2009) for testing the fitness of the default path model. Model fit indices (X2/df = 3.87, df=1, GFA=0.97, CFI=0.93, RMSEA=0.06) indicated that the model has a good fitness to the data. The fitted model is presented in Figure1. Standardized direct, indirect and total effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables are also presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation among variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher’s Trust &amp; English emphasis</td>
<td>56.72</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher’s efficacy</td>
<td>49.32</td>
<td>12.09</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student’s English self-efficacy</td>
<td>44.65</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>0.05NS</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English achievement</td>
<td>15.09</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
<td>0.05NS</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**:p≤0.01, Ns= Nonsignificant
Table 2. Standardized direct, indirect and total effects of the path model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Student's English self-efficacy from:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Trust &amp; English emphasis</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s efficacy</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achievement from:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s self-efficacy</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Trust &amp; academic emphasis</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s efficacy</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**: p<0.01, *: p<0.05,

Figure 1. Fitted path model

As shown, perceived English teacher's trust & emphasis has significant direct effect on student's English self-efficacy but perceived English teacher's self-efficacy has no significant effect on student's English self-efficacy. As demonstrated, the two subscales of academic optimism are effective on English achievement exclusively through student's English self-efficacy. Finally, student's English self-efficacy has a significant effect on English achievement. Meanwhile in this study no significant difference was observed in any fields between genders. For this reason I didn't discuss on genders and I have discussed generally.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Table 1 shows that there is a high relation between teacher’s efficacy and teacher’s trust in students and parents. It is generally accepted that when a teacher feels efficacy in educational environment, he/she trusts students to facilitate their learning. The reason behind this is the fact that the more he facilitates student’s learning, the more he improves his own self-efficacy. Also there is a notable positive correlation between student’s self-efficacy and perceived teacher’s trust in students and parents as well as English teacher’s emphasis on English. In fact there is a transactional relation. Not only student’s self-efficacy leads to his teacher’s trust in him, but also English teacher’s trust make the student do his best to attract the teacher’s attention in one hand and satisfy his inner needs on the other. This is done mostly because of a humanistic atmosphere existing between these two sides of learning, that is teacher and learner. This is the effect of academic optimism on teacher level. On the other hand, student's self-efficacy make teacher pay more attention to student to actualize his talents. Taking a view from another perspective, teacher's trust in student makes him feel self-efficacy and exert a lot of effort which lead to ultimate success. This in turn leads to teacher's positive attitude toward student self-efficacy, trust in the student and his parents which causes perceived teacher's trust in student and his parents. Also English achievement has a significant positive relation with perceived teacher's trust in students and his parents. It is apparent that when student feels that the teacher believes in him and his ability unconditionally, and the people around him (like mother and father) as well, he comes to this
conclusion that his teacher is providing him for happiness through his success in academic achievement in general and for English in specific. English course is a difficult subject nonspeaking environments, so that the affective factors such as perception of teacher’s trust can be one of the most effective factors in learning such subjects.

Also English achievement has a significant positive relation with student English self-efficacy. The student who feels efficacy in English, has no stress and fear of studying English. He devotes a lot of his time to study. Internally he tries his best to get the best result in English Exam. He often seeks the best methods and techniques in reading English. Undoubtedly, he would have a wide study in studying various English texts, reading newspaper, magazines and watching films. So his English achievement will be crucial. Finally the findings in the current study show that there is no significant relation between English achievement and perceived teacher’s self-efficacy. Maybe the limited school English hours in Iran have a bad effect on teachers. Because of the shortage of time they can't manage class as they have learned to be in universities. For this, perhaps they can't transfer their real talents like speaking English in the class show it to students. We conclude that the students' perception English teachers' behavior were predictive of their achievement in English like the previous studies in math field (Levpuscek & Zupancic (2009), and the more they are optimist about their students, the more achievements they will experience not only in English but also in other lessons and in life in general.

References