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The Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceived Pedagogical Competence and Their Junior High School Students' Test Performance

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Abstract

As teachers' pedagogical competence plays an important role in English teaching and learning, this study seeks to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results. To do so, 30 English teachers (15 males and 15 females) were selected, and a self-report questionnaire containing 53 items was administered to them in order to assess their perceptions of pedagogical competence. Additionally, 744 junior high school students (379 males and 365 females) in the 9th grade were selected from different high schools in the Iranian city of Kazerun. The students' academic achievements were assessed with the standardized test scores retrieved from their school records in their final English exam. The results of Spearman's correlation coefficient indicated no significant correlation between Iranian EFL English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results. One implication of this study is that enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence alone may not be sufficient to improve students' academic achievement, suggesting the need for a more holistic approach that considers other factors such as student motivation, learning environment, and instructional materials.

Keywords: Academic achievement, EFL teachers, Pedagogical competences, Junior high school students.

I | INTRODUCTION



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A teacher's pedagogical competence is vital to the teaching-learning process, directly impacting students' language learning achievements (Safin et al., 2020). Pedagogical competence generally refers to the essential professional requirements necessary for educators to fulfill specific educational duties, including their educational and teaching credentials (Gess-Newsome et al., 2019). According to Rahman (2014), pedagogical competence is defined by a teacher's ability to manage the learning process, encompassing the planning, execution, and assessment of learners' outcomes. These skills are crucial for effective teaching and learning.

Pedagogical competence is a bridge between current and future challenges faced by EFL teachers, helping them guide students toward better learning outcomes (Abdel-Halim, 2008). However, Noora (2008) noted that teachers often have limited opportunities to express their views on what constitutes



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an effective teacher. Studying the characteristics of effective English language teachers from their perspective is valuable, as it serves as a needs analysis that can significantly enhance teaching quality.

Teachers with strong teaching abilities are considered skilled and pedagogically competent, while those lacking these skills are deemed unskilled (Muhammad Channa & Sahito, 2022). For teaching and learning to be effective, teachers must be highly skilled, with competencies linked to instructional methods, academic and instructional experience, professional development, student engagement, and assessment (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Professional competencies can be categorized into academic and pedagogical skills. Academic competence pertains to a teacher's subject matter knowledge, while pedagogical competence involves the ability to teach the subject effectively, following principles such as moving from known to unknown and from simple to complex (Murkatik et al., 2020). A teacher's effectiveness in the classroom is largely determined by his or her ability to plan and execute teaching practices.

Teacher pedagogical competence also refers to the combination of skills and personality traits that enable teachers to manage the educational process through effective teaching strategies and resource utilization (Safin et al., 2020). Language achievement, defined as learners' mastery of various aspects of the target language, reflects the knowledge and skills accumulated through classroom instruction (Deringöl, 2019). This includes understanding vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Payant & Kim (2019) distinguish between general and diagnostic language achievement, noting that the former allows teachers to evaluate their instructional effectiveness, while the latter aids syllabus designers in conducting needs analyses and assessing course efficacy.

There is growing recognition of the significant role teachers' self-perceived pedagogical competence plays in shaping students' educational outcomes. However, research in the context of Iranian junior high school EFL education is limited. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the correlation between Iranian junior high school EFL teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competence and their students' achievement test scores.

A review of the literature indicates that no previous research has examined the relationship between junior high school EFL teachers' pragmatic competence and their students' academic achievements in this specific context. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring how Iranian junior high school English language teachers perceive their pedagogical competence and whether this perception correlates with their students' achievement test scores. Understanding this relationship can provide insights into the factors influencing students' learning outcomes in Iranian junior high school English classrooms.

The findings of this study could be valuable for the education administration in Iran, which is responsible for ensuring the quality of education. It highlights the need to seriously consider English language teacher education to ensure high-quality teaching at the high school level. Assessing and developing teachers' competences should be a priority, as this can increase teachers' awareness of the need for continuous professional development. A national framework of teacher competences would provide guidelines for professional growth, enhance teaching quality, create a common language, and promote teachers' responsibility for their professional development.

The results of the study are also beneficial for English language teachers, offering insights into how their perceptions of pedagogical competence might impact their students' achievement test results. School administrators can use this information to design professional development programs focused on improving teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competence. Additionally, the findings can inform education policymakers in Iran about the importance of enhancing English language teachers' pedagogical competence.



For material developers, curriculum designers, researchers, and academics, the research findings provide valuable insights into the significance of teachers' perceptions of pedagogical competence in the context of Iranian junior high school English language classrooms. A significant positive relationship between these perceptions and students' test scores would underscore the importance of providing adequate support and professional development opportunities for teachers.

The theoretical framework for teachers' pedagogical competence is based on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), introduced by Shulman in 1986. PCK represents the integration of teachers' subject matter knowledge with their pedagogical knowledge, enabling them to deliver content effectively, tailored to students' abilities and interests. The key components of PCK include knowledge of content (deep understanding of the subject), pedagogy (effective teaching methods), and students (understanding their needs, abilities, and misconceptions) (Shulman, 1992).

The framework for students' achievement tests is based on Classical Test Theory (CTT), which involves measuring student performance based on observed scores. Its core concepts include the true score (the student's actual ability level), error score (the difference between observed and true scores), reliability (consistency of test results over time), and validity (the extent to which a test measures what it claims to measure) (Crocker & Algina, 1986).

Numerous studies have identified the characteristics of effective teachers (e.g., Borg, 2006; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2014; Tajeddin & Adeh, 2016). According to Bell (2005), these characteristics encompass various fundamental constructs, including subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, socio-affective skills, identity, class management, and discipline. Bell (ibid) conducted a study using a Likert-scale questionnaire to examine the attitudes and behaviors of 457 foreign language teachers of German, French, and Spanish. It was found that the respondents generally agreed with most items related to the characteristics of foreign language teachers, attitudes towards communicative theories of foreign language teaching, the importance of negotiation of meaning and small group work, as well as assessment practices.

Soodmand Afshar & Doosti (2014) investigated the characteristics of effective EFL teachers from both teachers' and students' perspectives. They found that both teachers and students emphasized certain pedagogical qualities, such as subject matter knowledge and the ability to impart knowledge, as well as interpersonal relationships and classroom management-related qualities, including involvement of all students and regular assessment of their learning processes. However, there were differences in the degree of significance attributed to these qualities between teachers and students. One limitation of their study is that they primarily focused on exploring the perceptions of teachers regarding the status quo of effective teaching, rather than examining the actual effectiveness of teachers. This approach may provide valuable insights into teachers' beliefs and attitudes but does not offer direct evidence of teaching effectiveness.

As noted by Aghajanzadeh Kiasi et al. (2016), effective pedagogical practices play a crucial role in enhancing students' achievement and bolstering teachers' confidence in their teaching abilities. They suggest that the gap in pedagogical practices may stem from a lack of pedagogical competence. Their study aimed to investigate high school English language teachers' perceptions of pedagogical competence, considering variables such as age, gender, fields of study, university degrees, and years of teaching experience. However, despite the difference in the study settings, their research did not explore the relationship between teachers' personal and professional backgrounds and their pedagogical competences. Therefore, the results of the study pertaining to this aspect are not available.

Several previous studies have focused on investigating English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers' pedagogical competence. Basri (2019) conducted research involving EFL students at the English Education Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The primary objective was to assess teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching English at SMA Negeri 5 Selayar. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing observation and interviews. The



teachers were indicated to have pedagogical competence both in preparation (pre-teaching) and during teaching, consistently striving to maximize student engagement for effective classroom learning.

Positive findings regarding teachers' pedagogical competence are also evident in the research conducted by [Ramlah \(2019\)](#), indicating sufficient pedagogical skills in terms of guiding, managing learning, understanding learners, planning, and evaluating learning outcomes. Additionally, recent research links pedagogical skill to technology mastery, with teachers integrating technology to enhance student learning effectively. This approach has been recognized as a pedagogical strategy, which surprisingly received positive feedback from students ([Siregar et al., 2020](#)). To enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, various activities are recommended, including engaging in discussions with colleagues, participating in teacher association forums, attending seminars and workshops, taking courses, conducting research, reading relevant sources, exploring online resources, and engaging in team teaching. Moreover, the methods for student learning improvement include reflection, providing and receiving feedback, discussions, expanding knowledge, research, and problem-solving ([Kurnia et al., 2017](#)).

Aghajanzadeh [Kiasi et al. \(2016\)](#) employed a mixed-method research approach to examine Iranian high school English language teachers' perceptions of pedagogical competence in two phases. Initially, a 53-item questionnaire on pedagogical competence was administered to 365 high school English teachers in Guilan Province, Iran. They were selected through probability sampling (stage cluster sampling) from a total of 415 teachers. The questionnaire took into account the teachers' age, gender, fields of study, university degrees, and years of teaching experience. In the second phase, to complement the questionnaire findings, semi-structured interviews based on seven constructs were conducted with 84 high school English teachers selected through stage cluster sampling from high schools in Guilan. The results of MANOVA and interview analyses revealed that teachers generally held positive perceptions of pedagogical competence, despite some differences in views based on demographic features such as age and experience. These findings have practical implications for teachers, schools, and educational administration.

The present study was carried out to answer the research question 'Is there a significant relationship between Iranian junior high school EFL teachers' perception of pedagogical competence and their students' achievement test scores?'

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iran is highly important due to English being a global lingua franca. In the Iranian educational system, English is introduced at the junior high school level, where students are expected to build a foundational understanding of the language. However, various challenges such as limited exposure to the language outside the classroom, traditional teaching methods, and socio-cultural resistance to foreign languages often impact the effectiveness of EFL education ([Ghorbani, 2009](#)).

1. Conceptualizing Pedagogical Competence in EFL Teaching

Pedagogical competence in EFL teaching encompasses a wide range of skills, including subject matter knowledge, effective instructional strategies, classroom management, and the ability to assess student learning outcomes ([Richards, 2011](#)). Teachers' self-perception of their pedagogical competence plays a critical role in how they approach teaching, interact with students, and adapt to the diverse needs of their learners.



2. Perceived Competence and Teaching Effectiveness

Teachers' perceptions of their own competence have been shown to influence their teaching practices. Self-efficacy theory suggests that teachers who believe in their teaching abilities are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies, create a positive classroom environment, and effectively engage students in the learning process (Bandura, 1997).

3. Impact of Teacher Competence on Student Outcomes

Research consistently shows a strong correlation between teacher quality and student performance, particularly in language learning contexts (Hattie, 2009). In EFL settings, competent teachers are better equipped to address the challenges of language acquisition, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, which directly impacts student performance on tests and assessments.

4. Studies in EFL Contexts

In various international contexts, studies have found that teachers with higher perceived competence tend to have students with better academic performance. For instance, a study conducted by Shishavan & Sadeghi (2009) in Iran revealed that students taught by teachers who rated themselves highly in pedagogical skills performed better in language proficiency exams. This suggests that teachers' confidence in their abilities may translate into more effective teaching practices, which, in turn, leads to improved student outcomes.

5. Factors Influencing Perceived Pedagogical Competence

Several factors contribute to teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competence, including years of experience, professional development opportunities, and support from school administrations. In the Iranian context, factors such as limited access to up-to-date teaching resources and professional development programs can negatively impact teachers' confidence in their pedagogical abilities (Zarei & Behnam, 2010).

6. Professional Development

Continuous professional development is crucial for maintaining and enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence. Studies have shown that Iranian EFL teachers who participate in regular training and workshops tend to report higher levels of self-perceived competence and exhibit more effective teaching practices (Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2012).

7. Student Performance in Iranian EFL Classrooms

Student performance in EFL classrooms is typically measured through standardized tests and classroom assessments, which evaluate students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. In the Iranian context, the emphasis on rote learning and memorization for test preparation often undermines the development of communicative competence (Pishghadam & Sabouri, 2011).

8. Relationship Between Teacher Competence and Student Performance

The link between teacher competence and student performance is well-documented. Research in Iran has highlighted that students' test performance is a reflection not only of their own abilities but also of the quality of instruction they receive. Teachers who perceive themselves as competent are more likely to use a variety of teaching methods that cater to different learning styles, thereby improving overall student performance (Karimi, 2011).



9. Challenges and Opportunities in The Iranian EFL Context

The Iranian educational system presents unique challenges that can impact both teachers' perceived competence and students' test performance. These include the centralized curriculum, lack of autonomy in instructional methods, and societal attitudes towards English learning. Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to improve EFL education through targeted professional development programs, curriculum reform, and the integration of technology in the classroom (Riazi & Razmjoo, 2006).

10. Gaps in The Literature

While there is a substantial body of research on the relationship between teacher competence and student performance, there is a need for more context-specific studies in Iran to explore this relationship in greater depth. Few studies have directly examined how Iranian EFL teachers' self-perceived competence influences their students' test performance, particularly at the junior high school level.

The relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' perceived pedagogical competence and their students' test performance is a complex interplay of various factors, including teacher self-efficacy, professional development, and a broader educational context. This literature review highlights the importance of teacher competence in shaping student outcomes and underscores the need for further research in this area to inform policy and practice in EFL education in Iran.

III. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' perceived pedagogical competence and their junior high school students' test performance. Specifically, it sought to examine how teachers' self-assessments of their instructional skills, classroom management, and assessment strategies were related to the academic achievements of their students. The study aimed to determine whether teachers' perceptions of their own competence had any significant impact on students' performance in academic tests, contributing to a better understanding of the factors influencing educational outcomes in the Iranian EFL context.

IV. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study was designed as a correlational piece of research aiming at investigating the relationship between Iranian junior high school EFL teachers' perception of pedagogical competence and their students' achievement tests. The teachers' perception of pedagogical competence is the independent variable, and the students' achievement in tests is the dependent variable.

2. Research Participants

The data collection procedure entailed the recruitment of 744 high school students. They were in the 9th grade and were selected from different high schools in the city of Kazerun, Iran. It should be noted that both genders (379 males and 365 females) were included in this research, and they ranged from 14 to 15 years of age. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling method. Accordingly, all the female and male high school students who were available were selected. The selected students had different social, cultural, economic, and family backgrounds. In addition, 30 Iranian junior high school



EFL teachers were selected as the second group of participants in this study, of whom 15 were male. Twelve of the teachers had a master's degree (MA) in English, and the rest had a bachelor's degree (BA) in English. It is worth mentioning that the selected students were the students of the selected teachers.

3. Research Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study. The first one was the Perception of Pedagogical Competence questionnaire (Appendix A), adapted from [Aghajanzadeh Kiasi et al., \(2016\)](#). This instrument covered diverse aspects including teaching strategies, content knowledge, classroom management, and assessment practices. The questionnaire had 53 Likert-type items with five options (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The responses provided by the participants for each questionnaire item were then given numerical numbers. As a result, if a participant checked the box for strongly agree, he or she would receive a score of 5. A numerical value of 4 was given for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. Cronbach's alpha ($r = .82$) was applied to evaluate the instrument's reliability. The second instrument which the researcher used to collect the data was the Final English Exam of the 9th grade high school in June 2024 (Appendix B). The reliability of this test was .83 based on the results of K-R-21. It should be noted that both instruments were validated by three English professors in applied linguistics.

4. Procedure and Analysis

To provide meaningful insights into the relationship between the pedagogical competence of Iranian junior high school EFL teachers and the academic achievement of their students, the research employed a correlational design. The data were collected from a sample of EFL teachers and students in Kazerun, Iran, utilizing a quantitative research approach through self-report questionnaires. The teachers filled out the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. Additionally, students' academic achievements were evaluated using standardized test scores retrieved from their school records in their final exam. The research procedure entailed obtaining ethical approval prior to commencing data collection. Collaborative efforts with selected schools were initiated, wherein the teachers were requested to anonymously complete the self-report questionnaires, ensuring confidentiality. Furthermore, students' academic records, inclusive of standardized test scores in the final exam, were obtained through collaboration with the school authorities, following the acquisition of informed consent. This comprehensive methodology aims to offer valuable insights into the interrelation between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' academic achievement in the specific context of Iranian junior high schools. When all data were gathered, they were analyzed carefully. The data were analyzed using Mann-Whitney U test and Spearman's correlation coefficient.

V. RESULTS

The results are presented in the following tables:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence.

	Sex	N		Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		Valid	Missing							
Teacher Grade	F	15	0	174.80	174.00	177	4.004	16.03	169	181
	M	15	0	178.47	178.00	177 ^a	4.897	23.98	170	186

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.



The descriptive statistics of both genders regarding their perception of pedagogical competence are presented in Table 1. The female teachers' mean score is 174.80, and their standard deviation is 4.00. Based on this table, the mean score and standard deviation for male teachers are 178.47 and 4.89, respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for students' academic achievement test results.

	Sex	N		Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		Valid	Missing							
Stu Grade	Female	365	0	12.75	13.00	14.00	2.792	7.797	6.75	19.00
	Male	379	0	13.10	13.00	14.00	2.968	8.812	7.00	19.25

Table 2 depicts the descriptive statistics of both male and female students' academic achievement test results. According to the results, the mean score of the female students is 12.75, and the mean score of the male students is 13.10. The standard deviation for the female students is 2.792, and that for the male students is 2.968. It seems that both genders had almost the same performance in their achievement test.

To begin the hypothesis analysis, the data were first examined to determine if it followed a normal distribution. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. Accordingly, the non-parametric statistics like Mann-Whitney U test were used to get the final results. The first research question of the study was 'Is there a significant relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results?' Given that the students' academic achievement test results did not follow a normal distribution, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used to examine the presence of a significant relationship between the English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results.

Table 3. Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Spearman's rho	Teacher's grade	Correlation coefficient	Student's grade
			.030
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.413
		N	744

The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.03, which is very small. Furthermore, since the significance level was greater than 0.05, the relationship between the two variables was not significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis was accepted, and the answer provided to the first research question was 'There is no significant relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results.'

VI. DISCUSSION

As it was mentioned before, the research question of the study was 'Is there a significant relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results?' Accordingly, a null hypothesis was proposed, namely 'There is not a significant relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results'. The gained results indicated that the correlation coefficient was 0.03, which is very small. Based on the results, there is no significant relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results; therefore, the first null hypothesis is accepted, and the answer provided is 'There is no significant



relationship between English teachers' perception of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results'.

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' perceived pedagogical competence and the test performance of their junior high school students. This relationship suggests that teachers who perceive themselves as more competent in pedagogical practices tend to have students who perform better in English language assessments. This supports the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of teacher self-efficacy and its impact on student outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Hattie, 2009). One possible explanation for this relationship is that teachers with higher self-perceived competence are more likely to employ effective teaching strategies, maintain better classroom management, and create an engaging learning environment. These teachers might also be more adept at diagnosing student needs and tailoring their instruction to meet those needs, which could lead to improved student performance.

The gained results are in contrast to the finding of Fauziyah et al. (2021) who confirmed the effect of pedagogy competence on the teacher's performance in inclusive schools. Also, the present study disconfirms the idea of Aghajanzadeh Kiasi et al. (2016) who noted that the effective pedagogical practice promotes the achievement of students and builds up confidence of the teachers in teaching, and the major cause for the gap in pedagogical practices may be attributed to the lack of pedagogical competence. Moreover, the results are in contrast to the results of Aghajanzadeh Kias (2020) that showed the positive effects of Iranian English teachers' practice of pedagogical competence on students' learning. Additionally, the results are in contrast to the argument of Darling-Hammond (2013) stating that teachers function well in their pedagogical practice in relation to the students, and their pedagogical practices play a critical role in students' achievements.

The outcomes are opposite to Basri (2019) research results that revealed teachers' pedagogical competence can maximize students' engagement toward an effective class. Furthermore, the results are in contrast with Muhammad Channa & Sahito (2022) whose findings indicated a more nuanced picture of the relationship between pedagogical competence and students' academic achievement. The findings of the current study are not in harmony with findings of the research done by Nehls et al., (2020) as their finding revealed that teachers with higher general pedagogical knowledge enjoyed a higher opportunity of adjusting to the pedagogical profile, and teachers who had undergone pedagogical competence training for teaching differed significantly in the cognitive activation level of their instruction from the teachers who did not receive the training on the pedagogical competence. Our results are in contrast to the studies done by Hill et al., (2005) and Voss et al., (2011) who indicated that teachers' pedagogical knowledge resulted in student learning and that high pedagogical knowledge generated a high quality of instruction.

The results align with the previous studies conducted in similar educational contexts, where teacher competence has been linked to student success. For instance, the research by Shishavan & Sadeghi (2009) in Iran found that the students taught by teachers who rated themselves highly in pedagogical competence performed better in language proficiency exams. Similarly, studies in other EFL contexts have shown that teacher quality is a critical determinant of student achievement (Richards, 2011). However, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by focusing specifically on the Iranian context at the junior high school level, where students are at a critical stage of language acquisition. The findings underscore the importance of teacher competence in this formative period, suggesting that efforts to enhance pedagogical skills among EFL teachers can have a substantial impact on student learning outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As it was observed in this study, some teachers just had less than five years of teaching experience; some of them required the researcher to translate the items into Persian because they could not understand them



clearly. Some female teachers did not pay much attention to the content of the questionnaire and just answered the items by putting a mark. Some teachers were not satisfied with their jobs and had financial problems, and they probably did not have much focus on teaching. To the researcher, one very important reason which influences the quality of any job is the dissatisfaction of teachers and financial problems being mostly objected to by Iranian teachers. Kazeem (as cited in [Kamoh et al., 2013](#)) believes that the payment of salaries and economic rewards are the key factors that influence teachers' attitudes toward teaching practice. Teachers tend to remain contented and reasonably motivated as long as adequate salaries are paid on time.

On the other hand, the new generation of students who have grown up in the "net era" has become increasingly dependent on technology. This dependence on technology, particularly the Internet and digital devices, has transformed the way students interact with the world around them, including their approach to learning. The constant presence of digital distractions, such as social media, video games, and other online contents, has led to shorter attention spans and a diminished capacity for sustained focus. This shift in attention and engagement often hampers students' ability to concentrate on their academic studies, particularly in subjects like English that require deep cognitive engagement and practice.

As a result, this technological dependency can significantly affect students' academic performance. When students are constantly distracted by online activities or technology-based entertainment, their ability to absorb and retain information in the classroom diminishes. They may struggle to engage with lesson content fully or find it challenging to complete homework or independent study without the allure of digital distractions. These issues can, in turn, hinder their academic achievement, particularly in standardized testing scenarios, where concentration and focus are crucial. This trend also explains, in part, why the study found no significant relationship between English teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competence and their students' academic achievement test results.

Teachers may perceive themselves as competent and capable in delivering effective lessons, but if students are not fully engaged or are distracted by technology, their academic performance may not reflect the quality of instruction. In such cases, even the best-trained teachers may find it difficult to produce measurable improvements in student outcomes. Therefore, the lack of a significant relationship between perceived pedagogical competence and academic achievement may be attributed, at least in part, to the challenge of overcoming the pervasive influence of technology on students' learning habits.

This observation brings several important implications for teachers, students, and syllabus designers. For teachers, it suggests the need to adapt their pedagogical approaches to better engage today's tech-savvy students. Incorporating technology into lessons in a meaningful way, such as using interactive apps, online resources, and digital platforms for learning, could help bridge the gap between students' interests and the curriculum. Moreover, teachers should strive to develop strategies to minimize distractions in the classroom, such as implementing "tech-free" periods or promoting mindfulness and focus through structured activities.

For students, it is essential to recognize the negative impact of excessive technology use on their learning and academic performance. Students should be encouraged to develop healthy digital habits, balancing their online activities with focused study time. This might involve creating dedicated study routines, setting clear goals for technology use, and taking breaks to avoid burnout. Fostering self-discipline and time management skills will be critical for students to maintain their academic focus amidst the lure of constant digital distractions.

Finally, syllabus designers and educational policymakers should take these challenges into account when creating curricula and lesson plans. Traditional teaching methods may no longer be as effective in a technology-driven environment, and, therefore, syllabi should integrate strategies for enhancing digital literacy and promoting effective learning habits. Additionally, curriculum designers may consider



incorporating lessons that emphasize the importance of focus, self-regulation, and time management skills, which are crucial in the age of constant technological distractions. By aligning the syllabus with the realities of the digital era, educators can better prepare students to succeed in both academic and personal growth.

In conclusion, the challenges posed by students' technological dependency are significant and cannot be ignored. While teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competence are important, the broader context in which students learn, shaped by the influence of technology, plays a crucial role in determining academic outcomes. Addressing these issues through teacher training, student support, and curriculum design is essential to improve educational effectiveness in the net era.

The research findings have several significant practical implications for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education in Iran, offering valuable insights for educational stakeholders at various levels. First, the findings emphasize the critical importance of ongoing professional development programs tailored to enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence. It is evident that continuous professional learning and growth play a pivotal role in improving teaching practices and overall educational quality. By offering teachers access to workshops, seminars, and courses focused on instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and modern assessment practices, educational authorities can equip teachers with the necessary tools to address the evolving demands of EFL instruction. Moreover, providing opportunities for teachers to engage in peer learning, networking, and exposure to international best practices can further contribute to the refinement of their teaching methods, directly impacting student outcomes.

Second, the study suggests that school administrations should take into account teachers' self-perceived competence when designing support systems and interventions. Teachers who perceive themselves as less competent may face challenges in effectively managing their classrooms and meeting students' needs. Recognizing this, it is crucial for school leaders to create a supportive environment where teachers feel encouraged to seek help and enhance their professional abilities. Targeted interventions such as mentoring, coaching, and peer observation programs can help teachers build their confidence and competence. By pairing less experienced or less confident teachers with mentors or experienced colleagues, schools can foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. These tailored support systems not only contribute to teachers' professional growth but also enhance their overall effectiveness in the classroom, ultimately leading to improved student learning outcomes.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of fostering a positive sense of self-efficacy among teachers. Teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to impact student learning significantly influence their teaching effectiveness. Educational policies and school cultures that emphasize teacher empowerment, collaboration, and professional development are crucial in nurturing higher levels of perceived competence. When teachers are provided with the autonomy to make instructional decisions, engage in collaborative efforts with colleagues, and participate in professional development opportunities, they are more likely to feel confident and capable in their roles. This heightened sense of self-efficacy not only improves teachers' performance but also creates a positive learning environment that enhances student motivation and achievement. Therefore, school administrations and educational policymakers should prioritize fostering a supportive, empowering culture for teachers, recognizing that empowered and confident educators are key drivers of student success.

While the study provides valuable insights, it also has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data for measuring teachers' perceived competence may introduce bias, as teachers might overestimate or underestimate their abilities. Future research could complement self-reported data with classroom observations or peer evaluations to provide a more comprehensive assessment of pedagogical competence.

Second, the study focused on a specific context, junior high school students in Iran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or age groups. Further research is needed to



explore whether similar relationships exist in different contexts, such as elementary or high school levels, or in other countries with varying educational systems.

Future research could explore the longitudinal effects of teachers' perceived competence on student performance over time. This would help determine whether the observed relationship is consistent across different stages of language learning and whether it leads to long-term academic success. Additionally, studies could investigate the specific components of pedagogical competence that have the most significant impact on student outcomes, allowing for more targeted professional development initiatives.

Another area for future exploration could involve examining the role of external factors, such as socio-economic status, parental involvement, and school resources, in moderating the relationship between teacher competence and student performance. Understanding these dynamics could provide a more nuanced understanding of how various elements interact to influence educational outcomes.

The study highlights the critical role that perceived pedagogical competence plays in shaping student performance in Iranian EFL classrooms. By focusing on junior high school students, the research underscores the importance of teacher self-efficacy in fostering positive learning outcomes during a crucial stage of language development. The findings suggest that enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills through professional development and supportive educational policies can lead to significant improvements in student achievement, ultimately contributing to the overall quality of EFL education in Iran.

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APENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire on English Language Teachers' Pedagogical Competence.

Items	5	4	3	2	1
1. I use lesson plans for effective language teaching.					
2. I maintain discipline and order in my classes.					
3. I believe native-like pronunciation is important in speaking English.					
4. I set clear expectations that hold students accountable for learning.					
5. I motivate students to learn English.					
6. I have a sense of humor in my English language classes.					
7. I understand the need to update my teaching knowledge.					
8. I teach students based on their language proficiency levels.					
9. I use English material resources that facilitate learning.					
10. I exchange my teaching experiences with my colleagues.					
11. I plan for students' independent study to bring variations to teaching English.					
12. I use various instructional techniques.					
13. I review the lesson before the end of class.					
14. I follow the principles of teaching English (e.g., concrete to abstract, simple to complex, known to unknown, etc.).					
15. I communicate with parents to improve students' language learning.					
16. I simplify complex language concepts/ points for my students.					
17. I attend workshops to improve my general language proficiency.					
18. I believe learning grammar and vocabulary is the only way to learn English.					
19. I implement continual measurements during the course.					
20. I respect the English language teaching profession.					
21. I use students' exam scores to improve my teaching.					
22. I believe learning English is learning vocabulary.					
23. I inform students of the performance objectives they will be expected to achieve.					
24. I test only the materials covered in class.					
25. I provide students with feedback.					
26. I keep records of the students' language performance to track their rate of learning.					
27. I assess language proficiency levels of students based on their learning performance in class.					
28. I recognize the importance of English in today's world.					
29. I encourage shy students to participate in carrying out language activities.					
30. I update my English language teaching skills by attending inservice courses.					
31. I use different teaching tools in my English language classes.					
32. I seek information for content knowledge via reading journal articles, book chapters, attending conferences.					
33. I adopt appropriate teaching methods.					
34. I prepare instructional materials for all sections of an English lesson.					



35. I am familiar with different English language activities.					
36. I have a good knowledge of subject matter.					
37. I use different sources (books, the internet, newspapers ...) to provide students with the needed materials.					
38. I pay attention to all students.					
39. I maintain a competitive atmosphere in my classes.					
40. I am interested to continue my career as an English language teacher.					
41. I believe going to a private English language institute is an important way to learn the English language.					
42. I provide students with activities relevant to the English lesson.					
43. I encourage students to raise questions in my language classes.					
44. I prepare necessary English language materials for students.					
45. I encourage teamwork to improve learning.					
46. I analyze the results of my various assessments to improve language instruction.					
47. I believe learning English is learning grammar rules.					
48. I allow students' participation in my English language classes.					
49. I am familiar with the appropriate use of English teaching materials.					
50. I believe passing university entrance exam is the goal of learning English in our high schools.					
51. I prepare audio-visual (CDs, DVDs ...) materials for teaching purposes.					
52. I am interested in students' learning achievement.					
53. I take a reflective stance toward English language teaching.					

Appendix B

Achievement Test.

(Reading & writing) بخش دوم : خوانداری - نوشتاری

با توجه به تصاویر، جملات صحیح را با ☒ و جملات غلط را با ☐ مشخص کنید.

1. They are getting on a bus. ☐

2. He is reading a funny story. ☐

3. He had a car crash. ☐

4. They are looking at the newsstand. ☐



گزینه صحیح را مشخص کنید.



1. We take out from an ATM every week.
a. gift b. money c. baggage d. account
2. A: Is Nature Day in ? B: Yes, it's on 13th of Farvardin.
a. winter b. fall c. summer d. spring
3. My classmates are great. They are clever and
a. helpful b. nervous c. selfish d. careless
4. A: Do you Information Technology? B: Yes, of course.
a. hit b. interview c. use d. attend

با توجه به تصاویر، جاهای خالی را با کلمات مناسب کامل کنید.

1. My brother has his leg in a /an
2. They are boarding the



با استفاده از لغات داده شده جاهای خالی را پر کنید. (یک لغت اضافی است)

receive - charity- attack - shifts - religious

1. She had a heart last winter.
2. Fitr Eid is an important holiday in our country.
3. Did you an email yesterday?
4. Firefighters go to work on

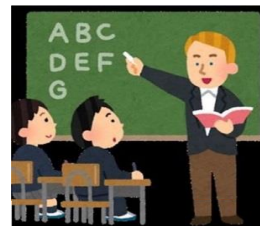
با توجه به تصاویر به سوالات پاسخ کامل دهید.

1. Where did they speak English?

.....

2. Was Zahra upset yesterday?

.....



کلمات در هم ریخته را مرتب کنید و جملات صحیح بسازید.

1. color / do / the eggs / when / the children / ? /

.....

2. on / is / the desk / there / a key / . /

.....

پاسخ صحیح را انتخاب کنید.

1. The door my father shop is open.
a. 's / 's b. 's / of c. of / 's d. of/ of
2. I have three uncles. I love
a. his b. him c. their d. them
3. They to work by taxi.
a. always go b. go always c. always goes d. goes always
4. What your brother update yesterday?
a. was b. did c. does d. is



در هر جمله، یک غلط گرامری وجود دارد. زیر آن خط بکشید و صحیح آن را مقابل شماره ها بنویسید.

1. My little sister fell down and hurt his knee.
2. Who download the book yesterday?
3. Miss Hashemi is pack for a trip now.
4. Does she washes the carpets for the New Year?

1.
2.
3.
4.

پاسخ سوالات ستون A را در عبارات ستون B پیدا کرده و حرف مربوط به آن را داخل پرانتز بنویسید. (یک پاسخ اضافی است)

- | <u>A</u> | <u>B</u> |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Why did he have an accident? (.....) | a. At 9 o'clock. |
| 2. What is your grandfather like? (.....) | b. That tall man. |
| 3. When was the break? (.....) | c. He's very kind. |
| 4. Who is checking the passports? (.....) | d. In the street. |
| | e. Because he drove fast. |

متن زیر را بخوانید و با توجه به متن، به موارد خواسته شده پاسخ دهید.

Last Monday Nasrin's parents invited her uncle and his family to dinner. Nasrin's mother cooked rice and chicken. She also baked a cake for dessert. Nasrin made some salad and cleaned the kitchen. Nasrin and her cousin set the table. They ate the cake after dinner. There was a comedy movie on TV. They watched it together. They had a good time that night.

الف) با توجه به متن، مقابل جمله درست ☒ و مقابل جمله نادرست ☐ بگذارید.

1. Nasrin's mother baked a cake for dessert. ☐
2. Nasrin didn't help her mother. ☐

ب) با توجه به متن، جاهای خالی را با کلمات مناسب پر کنید.

3. Nasrin and her cousin the table.
4. They watched a movie together.

ج) به سوال زیر، پاسخ کامل دهید.

5. What did they eat for dinner?