

Determining the Underlying Constructs of the English Language Teacher Prejudice Scale

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Abstract: This study was conducted to examine the construct validity of English Language Teacher prejudice scale (ELTPS) designed by Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, and Ghaviandam (2012). To this end, the questionnaire was distributed to 100 English language teachers in private language institutes in Mashhad. To substantiate the construct validity of the test; Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized. Two tests were employed to measure the factorability of the inter-correlation matrix: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results of the two tests demonstrated that the factor model was appropriate. The results of rotated component matrix indicated that there are five underlying factors of the test. Finally, statistical results were discussed and implications were provided in the context of English language teaching.

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1. Introduction

Granted the fact that prejudice as a blind judgment or opinion about a group (Kreidler, 1997) can play a detrimental and devastating impact on the healthy relationships among individuals, teacher prejudice seems to be of utmost importance in weakening effective relationships in class. Prejudice as the product of a defective cognitive process which is caused by an unhealthy semantic environment (Black, 1972) seems to change the behavior of teachers in a way that these biases can affect students' successes or failures (Kreidler, 1997). Presumably, as Ling-hui and Min-hua (2008) maintained teachers' biases can affect learners' process of development negatively, discouraging their enthusiasm to learn and restrict their development.

It seems that the root to teachers' biases could be traced back to teacher cognition and teachers' way of thinking. Apart from the fact that teachers' biases have not been given enough attention, studies of teacher cognition have begun to appear in the field of second language teaching in recent years. As suggested by Borg (2009), teacher cognition deals with what teachers know and think and how this has an impact on their behavior and their practice in the classroom.

In the realm of language learning and teaching, teacher cognition is considered to shape teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward language learning and teaching in a way that they become part of their practice in classroom (Karavas, 1996). English language teachers can hold different attitudes towards English varieties, accents, or the learners' mistakes, which can help or hinder the process of language learning in class. Delving into the nature of these attitudes and pinpointing English language teachers'

biases can help us to obviate the learning problems and facilitate language learning in class.

To the knowledge of the researchers, one study has been done by Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, and Ghaviandam (2012), in which they designed a test in the context of foreign language learning in Iran to measure English language teachers' prejudice. The English Language Teacher Prejudice Scale (ELTPS) was validated using Rasch analysis. It was found that the whole scale was unidimensional. To offer a more comprehensive understanding of this construct, we attempted to determine and extract the underlying factors of this scale.

2. Theoretical Background

Teachers may have different viewpoints and attitudes about language learning and issues related to it. Karavas (1996) indicated that teachers' attitudes and theories about teaching, though more often unconsciously held, influence their behavior in the classroom and affect the way students learn. He maintained that, "one of the causes of the discrepancy between prescribed theory and classroom practice may be teacher attitudes" (p.187). Marchant (1992) noted that teachers' experiences can also be influential in their attitudes towards their profession. These attitudes are mostly under the influence of teacher cognition.

Borg (2003) argued that teacher cognition is what teachers think, know, and believe, which can play an important role in the way teachers practice in the language teaching classroom. As put by Borg (1999), through investigating teacher cognition it is possible to find out more about the nature of teachers' instruction.

In fact, beliefs are regarded as an important psychological construct in teacher education. English

teachers usually have certain beliefs about how to teach English (Liao, 2007). Al-Magid (2006) indicated that beliefs are indispensable in shaping teachers' roles in their classrooms. Several studies (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Breen et al, 2001; Woods, 1996) have pointed out the importance of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices (cited in Mohamed, 2006). It can be stated that changes in teachers' beliefs would result in changes in their teaching practices.

There are different kinds of prejudices and biases that surround English language teachers. One of the most important English teachers' biases is towards perfectionism. Teachers' perfectionism can cause perfection in students, which will undoubtedly have deleterious effects on learners' performance and development (Pishghadam & Akhondpoor, 2011). This type of bias can impede students' risk-taking. In fact, learners will be afraid of taking the risk of being wrong. As Brown (2000) mentioned, risk-taking is very important in order to be a successful language learner while many teachers instead of encouraging risk-taking, encourage correctness in learners. Most of English teachers believe in the idea of being the best and perfect, they cannot tolerate any mistakes from students and as it is very common when students start speaking the teacher stops and corrects them immediately. The teachers' bias toward learners' mistakes on pronunciation and grammar can cause learners to refrain from taking risks (Pishghadam & Akhondpoor, 2011).

Moreover, becoming familiar with a new culture is an indispensable part of language learning and teaching. Since during learning English, learners and teachers frequently compare their home culture with western culture; this comparison can cultivate or lose their attachment to home culture. Pishghadam and Saboori (2011) concluded that English language teachers in Iran have positive attitudes towards the American culture. Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2009) also stated that teachers by encouraging learners to imitate English closely would make them become deculturated as they spend a lot of time imitating the language closely. Besides, as stated by Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011), English teachers play an important role in shaping EFL learners' viewpoint toward their home culture, the target culture, and language. In this regard, having a native-like accent is appreciated by the majority of the English teachers (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009). As Pishghadam and Navari (2009) put it, the majority of language teachers have a tendency towards western culture. By this bias on culture, teachers, by depreciating their own native culture try to make learners appreciate their favorite culture (Pishghadam, 2007). English language teachers still consider American and British English accents as

prestigious and like to imitate them (Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011).

To the best knowledge of the researchers, there have been very few studies to deal with the construct of prejudice in teachers, particularly English teachers. In fact, it seems that this construct is neglected in language teaching; however, teacher prejudice is of great importance and it is necessary to investigate and delve more into it, since it is believed that teachers' prejudice not only can affect the teachers' practice in the classroom, but also can greatly influence the way students learn the language.

In a study carried out by Pishghadam et al. (2012), ELTPS was designed in order to measure English teachers' prejudice. The authors validated the scale using Rasch measurement and the result showed that all items except one contributed toward the expected purpose of the scale. Since this scale is novel in English language teaching, it seems necessary to confirm its validity by more analysis. Therefore, the aim of this study is to substantiate the construct validity of ELTPS which has been developed by Pishghadam et al. (2012), by applying Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Participant

One hundred EFL teachers participated in this study, comprised of 67 females and 33 males between the ages of 21 and 58 ($M = 30.07$, $SD = 8.06$). All of the participants were English language teachers, with a range of between 1 and 40 years of teaching experience ($Mean = 7.47$). All of the participants were teaching in language institutes in Mashhad-Iran, and the majority of them were university students or university graduates who had majored in the various branches of English like English Teaching (39), English Literature (21), and English Translation (20). Some, however, were majoring in other university majors ($N=13$). The participants were students or holders of BA ($N=60$), students or holders of MA ($N=38$) and students or holders of PhD ($N= 2$) in their own majors.

3.2. Instrumentation

ELTPS has 28 items with the reliability of 0.74 which has been calculated with Cronbach alpha. Rasch analysis version 3.72 was utilized to validate ELTPS by using Rasch rating scale model (Andrich, 1978) as implemented in WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2009). The overall analysis showed that the whole scale was unidimensional and only one item misfitted and the middle category of 'No idea' was redundant.

3.3. Procedures

The researchers tried to revalidate ELTPS by determining its underlying constructs using EFA. To serve this purpose, the ELTPS was distributed among 100 English language teachers in several language

institutes in Mashhad. The questionnaire comprises 28 items. The items are scored according to the Likert-type scale of four points ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (4) “strongly agree”. Some of the items had to be reverse-scored so that higher scores show higher levels of prejudice.

Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was utilized to measure the internal consistency of the whole scale. Moreover, the reliability of each factor constructing the validated questionnaire was also examined by using Cronbach Alpha. EFA was used to validate the questionnaire. First, Principle Component Analysis (PCA) extracted the underlying factors by calculating the eigenvalues of the matrix greater than 1.0. Due to the subjectivity of the criterion for selecting absolute value, the researchers decided to interpret only factor loading with an absolute value 0.30. The Scree test was used in order to decide about the number of factors to retain for rotation. For conducting factor rotation, Varimax (orthogonal rotation) with Kaiser Criterion was used. The results were a rotated component matrix and a transformation matrix. The rotated component matrix demonstrated the variables loaded on each factor so that the researchers could come up with the new factors.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability of the ELTPS

The reliability of the whole items was estimated 0.78 using Cronbach Alpha. After factor rotation was examined, the number of items remained the same, which is 28. All of the five factors yielded good reliability estimates ranging from 0.53 to 0.82 (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability of Each Factor

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Factor 1	.534	9
Factor 2	.709	6
Factor 3	.826	4
Factor 4	.659	4
Factor 5	.685	5

4.2 Construct validity

Two tests were employed to measure the factorability of the inter-correlation matrix: Kaiser-

Meyer-Olkin test of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results obtained from the two tests revealed that the factor model was appropriate (Table 2).

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.701
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		938.468
	Df		378
	Sig.		.000

The construct validity of the ELTPS was examined through EFA. PCA extracted 9 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 which accounted for 52% of the variance.

The results obtained from the Scree test indicated that a five-factor solution might provide a more suitable grouping of the items in the questionnaire (Figure 1).

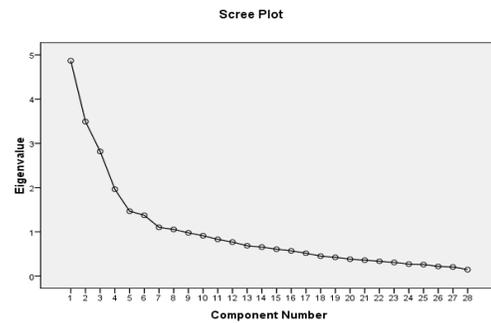


Figure 1 - The Scree Test for Identifying the Number of Factors

The researchers, then, inspected orthogonal rotation. The result of Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was a rotated component matrix. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3. The results indicated that the first factor consisted of 9 items. The second factor consisted of 6 items. Factor 3 consisted of 4 items. Factor 4 also consisted of 4 items and 5 items made up the fifth factor. The total number of items was 28.

Table 3. Rotated Components Obtained via Principal Component Analysis and their Loadings

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5
5= .54	6= .78	10= .74	3= .63	28= .69
26= .63	25= .77	23= .71	7= .61	4= .66
9= .57	22= .68	2= .67	16= .61	21= .64
20= .54	27= .60	18= .66	11= .45	8= .63
15= -.52	19= .59			17= .49
13= .50	14= .44			
24= .49				
1= .41				
12= .45				

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Finally, the researchers analyzed the items comprising each factor and named the five factors as *Bias towards perfectionism*, *Bias in favor of western culture*, *Bias against using L1*, *Bias against learners' participation*, and *Bias against learners' risk-taking behavior*.

Items representing each factor are displayed in Tables 4, and the validated questionnaire was given in Table 5 (see appendix).

Table 4. Five Factors of the Scale

# areas	Statements	N of items	Percentage
1. Bias towards perfectionism	1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 20, 24, 26	9	32
2. Bias in favor of western culture	6, 14, 19, 22, 25, 27	6	22
3. Bias against using L1	2, 10, 18, 23	4	14
4. Bias against learners' participation	3, 7, 11, 16	4	14
5. Bias against learners' risk-taking behavior	4, 8, 17, 21, 28	5	18
	Total	28	100

5. Discussion

This study sought to find out the reliability and validity of the ELTPS in EFL context of Iran. The results of this analysis were used to name each factor. The reasons for selection such names are elaborated here.

5.1. Bias towards perfectionism

The first factor is called *Bias towards perfectionism* which refers to the teachers' perfectionist tendencies towards language learners which comprises items 1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 20, 24, and 26. Items 5, 9, 13, 15, 20, and 24 measure teachers' perfectionist tendencies by gauging their reaction to mistakes or poor works of learners. For instance, item 12 tests teachers' perfectionism towards learners by measuring whether they consider maturity of learners as an important factor in their understanding of language or not.

5.2. Bias in favor of western culture

Bias for western culture is the label for the second factor which consists of 6 items. Items 6, 19, 22, and 25 measure teachers' orientation towards western culture. Specifically, items 6 and 19 ask about their practice in class and items 22 and 25 test their views about language teachers and students. On the other hand, items 27 and 14 measure the teachers' attachment to their home culture.

5.3. Bias against using L1

Factor 3 which is known as bias against using L1 in class comprises 4 items. Items 10, 18, and 23 measure teachers' tendency toward using the first language in class in order to avoid misunderstanding, and item 2 tests their strong bias in favor of using English as the only source of verbal communication in class.

5.4. Bias against learners' participation

The fourth factor which is labeled bias against learners' participation consists of 4 items. Items 3 and 16 measure whether teachers incline to provide favorable conditions for students' involvement in class and have no bias concerning the age and fluency of the students. Item 11 tests teachers' bias in favor of students with native-like accent for participation in class discussions and item 7 asks teachers' bias against less proficient students.

5.5. Bias against risk-taking behavior

The last factor of the questionnaire is referred to as bias against risk-taking behavior. Items 4, 8, 21, and 28 measure teachers' tolerance of learners' mistakes and errors while speaking in the class and whether they set the scene for the learners to speak without fear of being interrupted for their mistakes or errors. Hence, they measure teachers' bias against risk-taking behavior. Item 18 reveals teachers' inclination towards risk-taking behavior of learners in speaking ability.

The value of this study lies in substantiating the validity of ELTPS, since any good scale should exhibit a great amount of validity. If we validate a scale with different procedures then we can trust its results and findings. To this end, ELTPS was validated through EFA. It was also important to ascertain the validity of the scale, which is of great help to researchers interested in teacher education. It can also be a good measure for estimating the efficiency of an English language teacher. We have utilized EFA as an efficient tool for measuring the underlying factors of the instrument. The results have revealed that five factors represent the underlying structure of English language teachers' prejudice scale. These factors were labeled as: *Bias towards perfectionism*, *Bias in favor of western culture*, *Bias against using L1*, *Bias against learners' participation*, and *Bias against learners' risk-taking behavior*.

We hope that further research will come up with a thorough evaluation and significant improvement of this scale. Researchers should continue to carry out assessment of the psychometric properties of the instrument designed to measure language teachers' prejudice. Finally, researchers are recommended to examine objectively the relationship between ELTPS and other related variables such as: age, gender, years of experiences, or their academic degree. These variables seem to be related to teachers' level of prejudice. Finding any relationship between these variables and teachers' prejudice can shed new light on the role of these factors in teachers' success.

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Appendices

Table 5. The Underlying Factors of ELTPS

Factor 1. Bias towards perfectionism

I'm not very patient with students' excuses for poor work.
 I'll be demotivated when students don't maintain the standards I assign.
 If more proficient students keep silent in class discussions I don't insist them to speak.
 I can't tolerate students' mistakes on pronunciation even if it's comprehensible.
 I can't tolerate students' careless repetitive mistakes.
 My students should achieve excellence in everything I teach them.
 I will be disappointed if my students make mistakes.
 I think that young students have lower language proficiency.
 I'm intolerant of what non-fluent students talk about if they take too much time speaking.

Factor 2. Bias in favor of western culture

I believe Persian culture must be highlighted in English classes.
 I prefer to talk more about western culture rather than Persian culture in class.
 I prefer to give more examples from western cultures while teaching English.

I like my students to be familiar with western culture as much as possible.
 I believe language teachers and learners must be representative of the target language culture.
 I like my students to understand the differences between Iranian and western cultures.

Factor 3. Bias against using L1

Sometimes I give instructions in Persian.
 I prefer to explain some difficult points in Persian.
 I sometimes give or ask the meaning of new words in Persian.
 I think English teachers and students must always speak English in class.

Factor 4. Bias against learners' participation

I like to involve all learners in class discussions irrespective of their ages.
 I don't like to waste too much time on silent (weak) students.
 I prefer both fluent and non-fluent students to take part in class discussions equally.
 I prefer students with native-like accent participate more in discussions.

Factor 5. Bias against learners' risk-taking behavior

I think that pronunciation is not important if students can communicate.
 I don't pay attention to their grammar if students speak comprehensibly.
 I believe that students should learn to speak with no mistake.
 I like my students to be able to communicate, their accent is not important for me.
 If students speak comprehensibly, I ignore their mistakes.

Table 6. English Language Teacher Prejudice Scale (ELTPS)

No.	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	My students should achieve excellence in everything I teach them.	4	3	2	1
2	I think English teachers and students must always speak English in class.	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer both fluent and non-fluent students to take part in class discussions equally.	1	2	3	4
4	I do not pay attention to their grammar if students speak comprehensibly.	1	2	3	4
5	I am intolerant of what non-fluent students talk about if they take too much time speaking.	4	3	2	1
6	I prefer to give more examples from western cultures while teaching English.	4	3	2	1
7	I do not like to waste too much time on silent (weak) students.	4	3	2	1
8	If students speak comprehensibly, I ignore their mistakes.	1	2	3	4
9	I will be disappointed if my students make mistakes.	4	3	2	1
10	I prefer to explain some difficult points in Persian.	1	2	3	4
11	I prefer students with native-like accent participate more in discussions.	4	3	2	1
12	I think that young students have lower language proficiency.	4	3	2	1
13	I am not very patient with students' excuses for poor work.	4	3	2	1
14	I like my students to understand the differences between Iranian and western cultures.	1	2	3	4
15	If more proficient students keep silent in class discussions I do not insist them to speak.	1	2	3	4
16	I like to involve all learners in class discussions irrespective of their ages.	1	2	3	4
17	I believe that students should learn to speak with no mistake.	4	3	2	1
18	I sometimes give or ask the meaning of new words in Persian.	1	2	3	4
19	I prefer to talk more about western culture rather than Persian culture in class.	4	3	2	1
20	I cannot tolerate students' careless repetitive mistakes.	4	3	2	1
21	I think that pronunciation is not important if students can communicate.	1	2	3	4
22	I believe language teachers and learners must be representative of the target language culture.	4	3	2	1
23	Sometimes I give instructions in Persian.	1	2	3	4
24	I cannot tolerate students' mistakes on pronunciation even if it's comprehensible.	4		2	1
25	I like my students to be familiar with western culture as much as possible.	4	3	2	1
26	I'll be demotivated when students don't maintain the standards I assign.	4	3	2	1
27	I believe Persian culture must be highlighted in English classes.	1	2	3	4
28	I like my students to be able to communicate, their accent is not important for me.	1	2	3	4

* SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

1/30/2012