The Effect of Iranian English Teachers' Practice of Pedagogical Competence on Students' Learning

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Abstract

The article investigates the contribution of teachers' practice of pedagogical competence to the high school students' learning of English language in Rasht, Iran. Following a multi-method research in the quantitative research paradigm, first, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire of pedagogical competence was administered to 16 high school English teachers. Based on the teachers' responses and, according to Hofstee Compromise Method, 12 of 16 teachers with the minimum and maximum acceptable percentages were divided to two equal groups of high practicing (HP) and low-practicing (LP) teachers of pedagogical competence. Next, randomly selected from 150 students from the teachers' classes, 115 students were selected. Based on the homogeneity test, however, 67 students were selected for the experiment phase. Then, the students received the teachers' three-month instruction that covered three lessons of the book 'Vision' taught at the third grade of high school. A posttest was administered to the students after receiving instruction. The results revealed a significant difference between the students in HP and LP groups with regard to English language learning; the HP group reported a significant progression from pretest to posttest as a result of the teachers' practice of pedagogical competence. Some pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further studies are presented.

Keywords: Pedagogical Competence, English Teachers, High School, Students' Learning

1. Introduction

The assessment of pedagogical activities of teachers, as feedback on the quality of teaching, is an essential element in improving the process of teaching, as well as students' knowledge and the entire educational system as such. The problem of evaluating English language teachers' pedagogical competence (henceforth, ELTPC) is an urgent one nowadays, and that's why it is being broadly discussed and explored by different educational systems throughout the world. The core of learning lies in the ability of interaction and a fundamental teachers' understanding to students in order to facilitate the learners' potential and self-actualization. Pedagogical competence is the basis of teachers' preparation in their community and formative ethics (Dotger, 2015). The preparation of the pedagogical competence of in-service and pre-service teacher has not been conducted well (Berchini, 2017). Pedagogical competence that is optimally integrated with the role and functions, has become the best in instruction process and the quality of education (Christian & Abdei, 2015).

Teachers' contribution to the high effectiveness of student learning is quite evident, and the whole point of teaching a language is to convey language competence to the learners who aim, in an optimal condition, to become competent to the level specified by a certain educational system. Believing that teachers are the heart and soul of any education system, Mahmood, Ahmed, and Iqbal (2013) argue that the quality of that education system would be based on many factors the most crucial of which is the quality of teachers. The traditional view of the ELTPC is chiefly a problem of practice in the classroom whereby a teacher develops teaching situation to function and creates conditions for learning through knowledge, methods, actions, and communication ability. Altering the traditional concept of pedagogical competence that considers it as merely teaching skill or ability, Oldsjo (2010) asserts that this view is a very poorly constructed reasoning that it does not include a scientific attitude towards English language teaching and learning. Oldsjo further adds that pedagogical competence requires a teaching situation which a teacher develops to function

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through deep knowledge of the subject of teaching, methods, actions, and communication ability based on the attitude and belief a teacher owns.

In addition, Madhavaram and Laverie (2010) define pedagogical competence is "the ability of an individual to use a coordinated, synergistic combination of tangible resources and intangible resources" (p. 5) to achieve efficiency and/or effectiveness in pedagogy. Therefore, preparation of teachers referring to the development of pedagogical competence model emphasizes the concern of teachers and learners' relationship in cultural aspects and becomes an authentic and responsive maintenance action for the transformation of the students' behavior (Zygmunt, Cipollone, Tancock, Clausen, Clark, & Mucherah, 2018). Pedagogy evolves as tools and scientific methods that bridge the achievement gap and intrinsic quality as a result of social and economic inequality and improve the personal quality and learning achievement (Kirchgasler, 2018). Thus, the mastery and understanding of the situation and condition of the learners' environment is a commitment to design the challenge into learning management opportunity in the classroom (Carter, Richmond, & Floden, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, teachers' contribution to student learning is the whole point of language teaching, and their pedagogical competence contributes highly to the quality of learning and teaching (Christian & Abdei, 2015). Therefore, developing pedagogical competence of teachers ensures the quality of education resulting in the learners' mastery of language in language teaching and learning processes pursued by all educational institutions as one of their important instructional objectives if not the only one. In a nutshell, the study's significance is that it may bring to light the dominant situation of the English language teaching at Iranian high schools with respect to the accessibility of the structures for safeguarding and promoting the pedagogical competence of English language teachers.

Reviewing the related literature on teachers' pedagogical competence, the researcher found that although many educational studies (e.g., Ahlberg, 2008; Henard & Roseveare, 2012, for Portugal; Hussain, Sarwar, Khan, & Khan, 2010, for Pakistan; Ryegard, Apelgren, & Olsson, 2010, for Sweden; Tynan & Garbett, 2007, for New Zealand) have documented on the teachers' perceptions of teachers about the pedagogical competence, only a few have been on the impact of pedagogical competence on L2 learners learning. Besides, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no report based on which language teachers' practice of pedagogical competence can be evaluated in Iranian context. For example, Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2017) investigated the effective EFL teachers from both teachers and students' perspectives, found both teachers and students stressed teacher professional qualities (e.g., subject matter knowledge, ability to impart knowledge, etc.). Moreover, their research did not account for all the teachers' quality such as attitude, assessment ability, subject mastery, etc. In addition, most teachers lack the required knowledge base to practice teaching students professionally. The study done by Enever (2014) showed that in three out of four cases, there was evidence of teacher anxiety in relation to language competency, a concern that may well also relate to fear of losing control of the class. Novianti and Nurlaelawati, (2019) have investigated the development of pedagogical competence of university teachers with non-education background in Indonesia. Susanto, Rozali, and Agustina (2019) have also documented the development of pedagogical competency models for elementary school teachers with regard to reflective ability, emotional intelligence and instructional communication patterns of the teachers.

The studies conducted so far on the issue do not give an account of the degree of the impact of their specified components of pedagogical competence on learners' performance. Perceiving no quantitative investigation has been carried out on the qualitative nature of pedagogical competence, the researcher does believe that pedagogical competence can be quantified and an objectified account of pedagogical concept can be presented. Thus, much research is still needed to fully investigate the effect of teachers' practices of pedagogical competence on students' learning outcome.

Based on the problem stated above, the present research aims at exploring whether there is any statistically significant difference between high school English language teachers' pedagogical

competence and the learners' language learning at the high school level. The present research will also provide an account of the status of ELTPC among Iranian EFL teachers at high school level through measuring the teachers' practice of pedagogical competence and the effect it can have on the students' learning. Furthermore, investigating teachers' practice of pedagogical competent may reveal the challenges teachers may encounter becoming and remaining pedagogically competent. The resulted account displaying the impact of teachers' practice on learning may also lead to a sound decision that can be adopted by the ministry of education, educational institutions, and the language teachers in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes and attain enhanced mastery of learning among EFL learners.

Accordingly, the present study is an attempt to evaluate English language teachers' practice of pedagogical competence and explore whether the teachers' practice of pedagogical competence has any effect on the learners' language learning by proposing one main question:

Research Question One: Does English language teachers' practice of pedagogical competence produce any statistically significant English language learning for the Iranian high school students?

2. Review of Literature

Researchers and curriculum developers have long assumed that the characteristics, knowledge, and classroom practices of teachers have a direct relationship to student learning. In the literature, teaching quality and students' learning have also been mostly attributed to teachers' teaching practice and in-class performance, and there is a long history of discussion and debate around the connection between teachers' knowledge, practice, and student learning. According to OECD (2012), teachers' characteristics and cognitive processes can impact the pedagogical decisions made by teachers. It denotes that quality teaching hinges on the quality of the pedagogical practices applied by teachers.

Some studies have also focused on the relationship between pedagogical knowledge and student learning. For example, studies done by Hill, Rowan, and Ball (2005) and Voss, Kunter, and Baumert (2011) indicate that teachers' pedagogical knowledge results in student learning and that high pedagogical knowledge leads to a high quality of instruction. In another study, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) found that the most important factor in their success in teaching practice was the quality of the interpersonal relationships. They advocated developing these qualities as part of teacher preparation courses.

Some researchers investigated the establishment of programs for the development of teachers' pedagogical competence (Olatunji, 2013) and whether or not teachers have taken any formal pedagogical course or training and their opinions of the importance of such course (Aškerc & Kočar, 2015). Some other researchers chose to examine lecturers' pedagogical competence based on the assessment done by their students (Yilmaz & Tinmaz, 2016). A group of researchers also attempted to identify the need for pedagogical training for pre-service lecturers (O'Loughlin, Kearns, Laughlin, & Robinson, 2017).

Kuyini, Asiama, Kumar, and Alhassan (2016) explored that teachers in Ghana perceived teaching competencies as important to their teaching in inclusive classrooms. Using a quantitative research approach, 163 regular school teachers from two geographic regions of Ghana, the authors found that adapting instructional materials, behavior management, among others were important competencies. They also found that teachers identified the availability of teaching materials, supporting teachers, receiving more training on pedagogical competences are key support resources which will enhance their effectiveness in the classroom to support students' learning.

Furthermore, Swank and Houseknecht (2019) in their study applied the Delphi method to explore teaching competences. In a survey based study, they found four categories of teaching competences, namely knowledge, skills, professional behaviors, and dispositions. They believe teachers need counselor education and training to develop their competences in order to have effective teaching that yields students' learning of their courses.

In addition, Naz (2017) attempted to explore professional competences of teachers in public Secondary Schools in Pakistan based on national professional competences standards for teachers, to determine the relationship between teachers' professional competences and students' achievement at secondary schools, to differentiate between achievements of female and male students at secondary schools, detect the differences in professional competences of teachers influencing the achievement of students, and to offer the scales for the development of professional competencies in teachers. The result revealed that male and female teachers had the required professional competences. Also, male teachers' professional competency scores and female teachers' professional competence scores were significantly different. Furthermore, based on the results, there was difference between male students' achievements scores and female students' achievements scores. It was suggested that instructors may be prepared by professional norms.

In another research, Boset, Asmawi, and Abedalaziz (2017) intended to discover the degree of EFL teachers' competency and work interest and to examine the association between competency and work interest of EFL teachers at public secondary schools in Yemen. The results exposed that the general level of EFL teachers' competency was high. Additionally, the general level of their work interest was reasonable. Moreover, it was found that there was a statistically considerable, strong constructive association between EFL teachers' competency and their work interest. The results also showed that female EFL teachers had a higher level of competency than male EFL teachers. Eventually, outcomes specified that the higher the level of experience, the greater the levels of competency and work interest among the EFL teachers.

Also, Panggua, Wello, Jabu, and Macdonald (2017) in their study explored and explained the personal competences needed for EFL teachers for high school in Indonesia as the capability of a stable personality, noble, wise, and dignified in addition to being ideal learners. Nellitawati (2019) aimed at describing the status quo of the teacher's pedagogical competencies on vocational high school of Padang City, with 86 teacher participants, using the teacher's pedagogical competencies inventory. The results of the study revealed that the teacher's pedagogical competencies on vocational high school of Padang City was in a good category, and this needs to be maintained and should be improved further.

Emiliasari (2018), in an in-depth view of teachers' pedagogical competence through observations, notes, videotaping, and interviews, found that senior teachers with higher training had a better pedagogical competence in terms of classroom management, understanding the students' characteristics, curriculum development, lesson plan, and teachers' talk which resulted in their higher practice of pedagogical competence in the classrooms. On the other hand, junior teachers with no or less training had no reflective action in teaching and had less understanding of classroom action. The study suggested that in order to improve the quality of teaching, teachers' pedagogical competence is very important to be improved.

Nehls, König, and Kaiser (2020) tried to identify qualitatively different profiles of teachers' general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) as a central component of their competence through a mixed Rasch model to a sample of 462 mathematics and non-mathematics teachers who were tested using a short version of the TEDS-M test for GPK. The analysis revealed two profiles that were characterized by (quantitative) differences in their overall GPK level as well as (qualitative) differences in how well these groups did on specific items. A person-focused comparison of the profiles showed that teachers who had undergone training for teaching mathematics had a higher chance of belonging to the profile with strength on these and other adaptivity items. The results showed that the two groups differed significantly in their epistemological as well as teaching and learning beliefs. Moreover, they differed significantly in the cognitive activation level of their instruction.

In the context of ELT in Iran, Mousavi, Atai, and Babaii (2016) developed and validated a questionnaire to assess professional competence of adult-level Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector based on TESOL standards. Furthermore, Ghavidel Atashgahi and Aghajanzadeh Kiasi (2016) in their investigation of Iranian university English language instructors' technological

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pedagogical content knowledge in Guilan Azad and State Universities through a researcher-developed questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, they analyzed the four constructs of technology, pedagogy, content, and knowledge through a one-way ANOVA. The results generally revealed a difference among the instructors' use of the constructs regarding their age, gender, major, and field of study. However, it was found that the instructors' use of the four constructs was the same in some cases.

In a study done by Aghajanzadeh Kiasi, Maftoon, and Birjandi, (2017) on the Iranian high school English language teachers' perception of pedagogical competence through questionnaire and interview, the authors found that teachers with different demographic features generally enjoyed positive perceptions of pedagogical competence despite some opposing views they had on pedagogical competence regarding their age and experience.

The review of teacher evaluation studies in the Iranian ELT literature also reveals that Iranian scholars have mostly investigated the procedures of teacher evaluation in the private sector (e.g., Akbari & Yazdanmehr, 2011; Ostovar-Namaghi, 2013). Regarding Iranian language program evaluation policies in the public sector, Atai and Mazlum (2013) hold that English teachers in the public schools are evaluated the same way as other teachers, such as chemistry teachers are evaluated. Navidnia (2013) developed a model and suggested assessment procedures for Iranian EFL teachers in public schools. However, there has been scant attempt to set standards and develop an instrument for evaluating Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector.

Finally, Ilanlou & Zand (2011) studied the relationship between professional competencies of Iranian teachers and their perspectives about qualitative evaluation project. Findings showed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' professional competencies and their perspectives about qualitative evaluation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Participants selected from high schools in Rasht, Iran consisted of one group of teachers and one group of students. Twelve English language teachers, including five female and seven male teachers, with an average age of 36 were selected through convenience sampling from six high schools. Next, 67 students at the third grade in high school in the fields of humanities, mathematics, and natural science were randomly selected for the experiment phase from the teachers' classes.

3.2. Instruments and Procedure

3.2.1. Questionnaire of Pedagogical Competence

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire of pedagogical competence (Aghajanzadeh, Maftoon, & Birjandi, 2017) ranging 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (neutral), 4 (disagree), and 5 (strongly disagree) that had already been well-established through employing different statistical analysis including factor analysis was administered to the teachers. Based on the result of the questionnaire filled, the teachers were divided into two groups of high practicing (HP) and low-practicing (LP) teachers of pedagogical competence based on a standard setting used for the process of establishing the specified level or score based on which the teachers were classified into two categories. Therefore, according the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, 12 of 16 teachers with the minimum and maximum acceptable percentages were divided into two groups (six teacher in each) of HP and LP teachers. In choosing teachers and dividing them to HP and LP teachers based on their responses to the questionnaire items, Hofstee (1984) Compromise Method of standard setting was employed. It is considered to be a common method and is reported in standard setting guides. There is evidence that the Hofstee method produces appropriate, stable and reliable passing scores. Hofstee compromise methods allowed the researcher to use the criterion- (e.g., percentage of questions correct to pass) and norm-referenced ratings (e.g., percentage of teachers in each performance category) (Cizek & Bunch, 2007; Zieky, Perie, & Livingston, 2008). Accordingly, the Hofstee method provided ratings of the lowest acceptable percent correct cut score and the highest acceptable percent correct cut score, based on which the HP and LP teachers were selected.

3.2.2. Homogeneity Test

In the next stage, randomly selected from 150 students from six HP and six LP teachers' classes, 115 students were selected. However, To make sure that there was no pre-existing difference between the student participants regarding their general English proficiency and that the participants were homogeneous in their general English, before assigning the students randomly into two groups, the students were asked to take a sample of Koonkoor (Gozine 2) test administered for university entrance examination. The test included 30 items (10 grammar, 10 vocabulary, and 10 reading comprehension items) in multiple choice format, which acted both as a homogeneity test and a pretest. The reason beyond using the test was that the test is similar to the kind of test the students will have in their Koonkoor exam as it is one of the many sets of tests used for this purpose. Most importantly, the testing materials matched the teaching materials of 3 lessons of high school English book, Vision, taught at the third grade (see Appendix A). Although the test (or a similar type of it) is used for Koonkoor and has perceivably high validity and reliability estimates, Kuder-Richardson formula 21(KR-21) was used to estimate the reliability of test. Since the entire test should be aimed at tapping a single domain, and if the test is not clearly focused on a single underlying concept, the reliability value will be underestimated, each section of the test (grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension) was estimated separately to save this criterion of KR-21 formula. However, the total reliability estimate was reported. It is worth mentioning that to safeguard the content validity of the test, a copy of the test was given to the teachers in question. They were given the due time to judge the test items and match them with the contents of the lessons to be covered. The teachers qualified the content of the test although some item modifications were suggested.

According the analysis of test results, 67 high school students, 32 in HP and 35 in LP teachers' classes, with the score of 1 SD above and below the mean (± 1SD from the mean) were selected as the participants of the experiment phase.

Regarding the nature of the study, an experimental design built on a quantitative approach to answering the research question, characterized by the administration of a pretest, non-random selection of the participants into study groups, application of the treatment, and a posttest, was employed to test whether teachers' perceived practice of pedagogical competence had any statistically significant effect on the Iranian high school students' learning of English. The participants were chosen from intact classes and were non-randomly assigned into two experimental groups. There was no control group or placebo since both groups were experimental and received the same treatment types but from two different groups of teachers.

Next, the students received instruction from HP and LP teachers who taught three lessons of the high school English book 'Vision'. The instruction lasted for almost three months (12 weeks). The teachers in both groups taught the classes according to syllabus proposed by the book 'Vision'. They had their own skills of teaching in imparting their knowledge to the students regarding the three skills of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Quantitatively, both groups received the same amount of instruction that included three lessons of the book mentioned. Qualitatively, the students seemed to receive different treatment types as the teachers' level of pedagogical competence differed from each other based on the responses they had given to the ELTPC questionnaire according to which they were divided as HP and LP teachers. What was different referred to the teachers' practice of the components of pedagogical competence, namely preparation, teaching, management, assessment, subject mastery, attitude, and belief that made the types of instruction different.

Finally, another set of test as the posttest including grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension based on the materials taught was given the students. In order to avoid the potential for students' knowledge bias, which is a threat to the reliability of the test, it was ascertained that not one student was taking any kind of private or public English language classes outside the schools. Thus, the potential of students' external learning or knowledge effect on the posttest was controlled to save an appropriate level of reliability estimate.

The posttest was also taken from a sample of Koonkoor (Gozine 2) test administered for university entrance examination. It also included 30 items that consisted of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension each with 10 items. Likewise, the validity of the test was sought for as it was done for the pretest. Moreover, the reliability of the posttest was also estimated through KR-21.

Another factor considered was the difficulty degree of the items in the test that aimed the level of the knowledge of the students on the test items. Since it was a knowledge test, it was chosen appropriately to the knowledge level of students. The results of students' achievement in the test of the skills were then utilized to determine the quality of each particular item in terms of item difficulty. Item difficulty, commonly known as p-value refers to the proportion of examinees that responded to the item correctly.

4. Results

Item analysis was performed to determine the degree of difficulty of each item. The results of item analysis was used to select items of desired difficulty that best discriminated between easy and difficult items. The p-value or item difficulty was calculated using the formula: $p = R / T$, where p = item difficulty index, R = the number of correct responses to the test item, and T = the total number of responses comprises both correct and incorrect responses. The p-value ranges from 0.0 to 1.00. A high p-value indicates an easy item (see Table 1).

Table 1: Evaluation of Item Difficulty for Item Analysis

Item Difficulty Index (p)	Item Evaluation
Above 0.90	Very easy item
0.62	Ideal value
Below 0.20	Very difficult item

Source: Instructional Assessment Resources (IAR 2011)

Based on recommendations by Instructional Assessment Resources (IAR), test items were classified into three categories in terms of level of difficulty as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Level of Difficulty of Pretest and Posttest Items

Item Difficulty Index (p)	Total Item	
	Pretest	Posttest
Above 0.90	9	11
Moderate (0.20-0.90)	30	30
Difficult (Below 0.20)	6	4

According to results of the distribution of pretest and posttest items in terms of level of difficulty in categories, of 90 items both in the pretest and posttest, 60 items having moderate level of difficulty were selected for the pretest and posttest, 30 items each, for the purpose of current study.

The reliability of the both pretest and posttest was estimated through Kurder-Richardson Formula known as KR-21. The results of the reliability estimates are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: KR-21 Reliability of Pretest and Posttest

	N	Mean	Variance	KR-21
Pretest	30	12.32	45.61	0.86
Posttest	30	16.56	59.37	0.90

As observed in Table 3, the reliability coefficients of the pretest (.86) and posttest (.90) were high indicating that the tests were reliably acceptable for the purpose of the research. The values of the reliability were interpreted according to the reliability criterion recommended by Pallant (2013) in which a reliability index beyond .70 is considered to be acceptable, and a reliability index of .80 and beyond is considered to be a good and an excellent index.

To answer the research question, both descriptive statistics displaying the students' performance on the pretest and posttest and inferential statistics displaying the difference in the

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performance of the groups and the amount of progression from pretest to posttest were used (see Table 4).

Table 4: Group Statistics of Students' Pretest Scores in HP and LP Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HP G.	32	11.8259	1.58975	.71452	7.8952	10.5897	9.00	14.00
LP G.	35	11.3895	1.63598	.71358	6.4582	10.2598	9.00	14.00
Total	67	11.6095	1.61286	.71405	7.1767	10.2447	9.00	14.00

As Table 4 shows, the mean scores of two groups are highly close to each other, implying that, before applying the treatment, the two groups were homogeneous regarding their ability to answer the test questions pertinent to their lessons. In other words, for the test administered at the beginning of the study, the mean scores for the HP and LP groups were 11.82 and 11.38, respectively. Therefore, it can also be seen that the mean scores were approximately the same demonstrating the similar level of writing ability. The small number of SD compared to the mean also showed that the groups were homogeneous.

Furthermore, to make sure of the students' homogeneity in the pretest and that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups at the start of the instruction, an independent samples t-test was run (Table 5)

Table 5: The Independent Samples t-Test of Pretest Scores in HP and LP Groups

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Er. Dif.		Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	1.22	.62	.34	39	.641	.46	.51		-.86	1.22
	Equal variances not assumed			.34	38.5	.641	.46	.51		-.86	1.22

According to Table 5, the two-tailed sig of the test above is '0.95' which is much higher than assumed p value, '0.05'. For the pretest, there was no significant difference in scores for the HP group (M =11.82, SD = 1.58) and LP group (M = 11.38, SD = 1.63; t (39) = .0349, p = .64, two-tailed). In other words, the two groups were approximately at the same level of proficiency in terms of their knowledge in the test administered at the beginning of the study. Moreover, according to Table 5, the Levene's test was not significant for the pretest scores: F pretest (.1.22) = .034, p = .62 at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for the sample. Therefore, it can be inferred that there was no significant difference between the groups at the onset of the experiment in the pretest taken by students in both HP and LP groups.

The descriptive analyses of the students' posttest scores, as shown in Table 6, were also run to compare the overall learning of participants in the two groups and to check whether the teachers' practices of pedagogical competence were effective.

Table 6: Group Statistics of Students' Posttest Scores in HP and LP Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HP	32	17.5897	2.25985	1.05892	14.2658	19.2562	15.00	19.00
LP	35	13.5982	2.69852	1.04251	11.9852	17.5982	11.00	15.00

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| Total | 67 | 15.59395 | 2.47905 | 1.05071 | 13.1255 | 18.4272 | 13.00 | 17.00 |

The mean score obtained in HP teacher group (17.5) is higher than that of LP teacher group (13.5); the difference in mean scores is believed to be significantly meaningful. Graphically displaying about the results, Figure 1 illustrates the trend of progression of the groups from pretest to posttest.
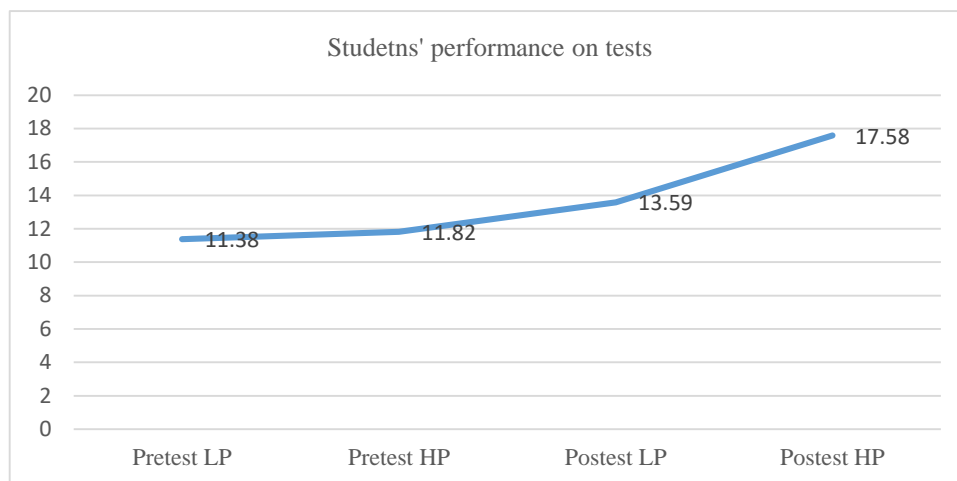

Figure 1: The mean scores of HP and LP groups in the pretests and posttests

This illustration indicates the outperformance of the HP group over the LP group as the mean scores of the groups clearly show. To see whether there existed a statistically significant difference in the performance of the groups on the posttest, an independent samples t-test was run (see Table 7).

Table 7: The Independent Samples t-Test of Posttest Scores in HP and LP Groups

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Er. Dif.		Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	3.14	.571	-6.12	38	.020	3.99	1.44		.05813	.64187
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.12	34.88	.021	3.99	1.44		.05727	.64273

As shown in Table 7, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the HP group scores with LP group scores. The amount of two-tailed sig, 0.015, is significantly less than the predetermined amount of p value, 0.05. It shows that there is a significant difference between the groups. There was a significant difference in scores for the HP group (M =17.58, SD = 2.25) and LP group (M = 13.59, SD = 2.69; t (38) = .5.12, p = .571, two-tailed). In other words, the two groups were significantly different in terms of their knowledge in the test administered at the end of the study. In other words, since the amount of t, 2.5, is higher than the critical value, it can be concluded that the group that received instruction from HP teachers outperformed the group instructed by LP teachers. This further indicates that the students in the HP teachers' class improved their language proficiency to a statistically significant degree in comparison with the students in the LP teachers' class.

In addition, according to Table 7, the Levene's test was not significant for the posttest scores: F pretest (.3.14) = .5.12, p = .57 at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated for the sample in the posttest. Eta squared representing the effect size was

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also calculated to be moderate (.62) using the information provided in the output of independent-samples t-test based on the following formula:

$$\text{Eta Squared} = \frac{t^2}{t^2+(N1+N2-2)} \quad \text{Eta Squared} = \frac{37.4544}{59.4544} = 0.62$$

Since the results have shown an overall statistically significant difference in group means, a paired samples t-test was run to confirm where the differences occurred between groups. Accordingly, to investigate the amount of students' progress within groups, a set of paired-samples t-test was also administered to students' performance in HP and LP teachers' classes (Table 8).

Table 8: Paired Samples t-test, Comparing the Scores of Pretest and Posttest of students in HP and LP groups

		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre. HP	-.576	1.589	.598	-.8125	.0214	-1.589	12	.05
Pair 2	Post. HP								
	Pre. LP	-2.21	2.358	.635	- 4.475	2.137	-5.257	12	.00
	Post. LP								

A Paired Samples t-test was run to compare the scores of pretest and posttest of students in HP and LP groups. As displayed in Table 8, the mean difference of -5.76 between the HP students' test score from pretest to posttest was statistically significant. This indicates that the students boosted their language proficiency to a statistically significant degree as they received instruction from the HP teachers. The level of significance calculated as to be 0.00 indicates that the learning of students in both HP and LP groups differed greatly. There was a statistically significant increase in language proficiency from the pretest (M = 11.82, SD = 2.58) to the posttest (M = 17.58, SD = 1.05), t (12) = 1.58, p <.05 (two-tailed). The mean increase in L2 writing scores was 5.75 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.8125 to .0214. The eta squared statistic (.75) also indicated a large effect size following the formula below:

$$\text{Eta Squared} = \frac{t^2}{t^2+(N-1)} \quad \text{Eta Squared} = \frac{2.524921}{33.524921)} = 0.75$$

5. Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, teachers' practicing of pedagogical competence resulted in the improvement of language ability in learners. The difference between the performances of two groups of students receiving treatment from two groups of HP and LP teachers was a valuable finding. Thus, practicing pedagogical competence was a determining factor that affected teachers' teaching and resulted in fostering students' learning.

The result revealed that the pedagogical practice of HP teachers fostered the students' mastery of their English language proving that practicing pedagogical competence was an important factor leading to the utilization of pedagogical competence in the classroom setting, and that, as Darling-Hammond (2013) believes, teachers' practices and abilities play a dominant role in students' achievements and performances. It means that among the greatest determining factors of student achievement are teachers' pedagogical practices.

Pedagogically, teachers have high responsibilities in shaping the character of the students. The quality of training is a focal subject in education systems. The quality of instruction is progressively judged by concentrating on students' performance, what students actually learn, and how well they learn it (Kulshrestha & Pandey, 2013). Moreover, accomplishment of instructive plans in each country depends on the teachers equipped with pedagogical competences (Kumar, 2013).

It was also found that effective pedagogical practice promotes student general English learning achievement, and teachers with pedagogical competence are capable of developing their

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pedagogical practice in specific contexts they practice teaching (Fullan, 2005). Pedagogically, this implies that pedagogical competence needs to be boosted in all schools, and it must be an integral part of any educational career.

The findings of the current study is in harmony with findings of the research done by Nehls, König, and Kaiser (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.

Much of what is mentioned focuses on learning achievement of students influenced by teachers' pedagogical practices as found in the current study, which supports Darling-Hammond's (2013) argument that teachers function well in their pedagogical practice in relation to the students, and their pedagogical practices play a critical role in students' achievements.

Since effective pedagogical practice promotes student achievement and builds up effective confidence of the teachers in teaching (Fullan, 2005), teachers' performance can possibly be assessed through student's learning. In addition, the availability of teaching materials, supporting teachers by providing more training on pedagogical competences are key support resources (Kuyini, Asiama, Kumar, & Alhassan, 2016) which will enhance teachers' effectiveness in the classroom to support students' learning.

On the other hand, the issue why some teachers may not operate the pedagogical competence should be dealt with. They may do so for quite a lot of reasons such as not owning the required knowledge of preparing a lesson plan, and of the assessment principles, not having time to update their knowledge, and not being in mood of any change in their instruction due to being demotivated as a result of their financial problems, and students' poor learning condition. One very important reason, to the researcher, which influences the quality of any job, is the financial problems being mostly objected to by Iranian teachers. Kazeem (as cited in Kamoh, Ughili, & Abada, 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.

The findings of Emiliasari's (2018) study of teachers' pedagogical competence are in harmony with the findings of the current study since teachers with higher training were reported to enjoy a better pedagogical competence concerning classroom management, understanding the students' characteristics, curriculum development, lesson plan, and teachers' talk which resulted in their higher practice of pedagogical competence in the classrooms. In contrast, teachers with no or less training had no reflective action in teaching and had less understanding of classroom action suggesting that there is comparability between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' learning that implies teachers' pedagogical competence needs to be improved significantly in order to improve the quality of learning.

Teachers' not practicing pedagogical competence might be attributed to what has been referred to by Kumaravadivelu's (2012) possibility issue accounting for specific cultural, social, political, and economic contexts and constraints that result in a mismatch between what the teachers know and believe as pedagogical competence and the non-operationalization of them due to the possibility factors mentioned. Accordingly, the development of pedagogical competence of the English language teachers should be geared to aimed and continuous activities developed and designed in order to update, develop, and increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in personal, managerial, and academic fields of teachers so that improvements in student learning can be fulfilled (Erdem & Koc, 2016).

Furthermore, four categories of teaching competences, namely knowledge, skills, professional behaviors, and dispositions are teaching competences are found to be significant features of teachers' pedagogical competence (Swank & Houseknecht, 2019). The authors believe

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that teachers need training to develop their competences in order to have effective teaching that yields students' learning.

In addition, Naz's (2017) exploration of professional competence of teachers supports the findings of the current study in that teachers' professional competence scores were significantly effective in students' achievements scores. The study conducted by Boset, Asmawi, and Abedalaziz (2017) showed a similar result to the findings of the current study as the authors concluded that the higher the level of experience, the greater the levels of competence and work interest among the EFL teachers that would result in better and higher students' learning.

Finally, if the idea that language teachers construct their own practices is welcome (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011), teachers need to own the belief that represents the way they see the English language, the stand they take against it, the belief they carry out according to the importance of language skills and sub-skills, and most importantly, their belief in the instructional objectives designated for the course.

7. Conclusion and Implications

By exploring the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on the learners' language learning, valuable views can be accomplished on teachers' decision-making and classroom practices. The information concerning teachers' practice of pedagogical competence can entail important implications for designing and implementing sustained and integrated teacher education programs to promote the development and transformation of teacher beliefs for teachers' professional growth. Thus, the handling of questions concerning the development of pedagogical competence ought to be characterized by a holistic view that integrates several perspectives, such as those of teachers, students, administration, and research results in the area.

English language teachers are by no means an exception and their key role in effective language learning cannot be overlooked. Special attention must be paid to this link between teachers and learners in countries like Iran where language learning happens mainly in formal classroom settings (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007), and teachers, as the main source of language input to students, affect their learning directly.

It can be inferred that there is a correspondence between the teachers' acknowledgment of what and how students learn, along with the conditions for that learning, and the teachers' success in teaching. Therefore, pedagogical competence can be generally regarded from different perspectives that collectively view it as a collection of potential behaviors and capacities and a harmonious combination of all professional characteristics of a teacher, his beliefs, attitude, knowledge, skills, management, and assessment that are fully used in educational, organizational, methodical, scientific, and cultural activities of an educational process. These characteristics allow teachers for the efficient manifestation of their practice which will lead to the better application of education through competences.

In light of these findings, it seems even more important to conduct studies where all the relevant constructs related to teaching practices in the current research are integrated simultaneously. This would enable us to specifically determine whether the professional competences would discriminately explain the quality of instruction that tries to leverage the potential of all the competences.

Finally, teachers' competence should be based on a concept of teaching practice that combines theory, practice, and the ability to reflect critically on their own and others' teaching practice rather than on a concept of teaching as the acquisition of technical skills.

In needs to be mentioned that the current study investigated the effect of teachers' practice of pedagogical competence on the learners' language learning at high school level in Iran's context. Thus, based on the context of setting and unique specifications of teachers and students in Iran, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other settings in other countries, or the cautious considerations should be applied if generalizations are to be done. This limitation may inspire other researchers to conduct similar study in their own settings and culture as the multidimensional

aspects of pedagogy are different in different countries and cultures which require their own specific conditions of pedagogical implementation.

Students' roles in giving feedback on teachers' should be taken into account in the future research as the students' rating and evaluation of their teachers' in-class performance are of prime importance and are linked with the student cognitive and affective outcomes based on the teachers' teaching practice.

In addition, the effect of English language teachers' awareness of pedagogical competence on students' language learning achievements may be worthy of investigation since developing pedagogical awareness may help teachers convey the subject matter effectively to students.

What is more, teachers' belief of what learning and teaching process is and how teachers view this process (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Kalaja, 2011) highly affect their practice and their treatment of action in the classroom. Thus, investigating English language teachers' belief of pedagogical competences, its building constructs, and their classroom practices can be worth investigating.

The implementation of pedagogical competence in teacher education needs to be encouraged. In this regard, the education administration and the English language committees should stress the need for developing pedagogical awareness and its practice as an integral part of pedagogical competence to ensure the quality of education that will end up with learners' language learning. In addition, teacher education programs should be designed to link theoretical concepts with practical and real-world teaching settings, and to narrow or bridge the fracture between theory and practice. Thus, in designing curriculum for teacher training, courses related to classroom management, planning for teaching, instructional techniques, and assessment techniques should be prioritized.

Education, particularly at school level, is the first key toward opening the doors into the future of any country. An evaluation of teachers' pedagogical activities acts as feedback on the teaching quality, which is an indispensable component in enhancing the teaching process, students' learning, as well as the whole system of education. Influential teachers in the teaching and learning process undertake a heavy responsibility in their classes. Being considered the key players in classrooms, teachers need to be professionals to affect the success of students as they deal with the system approach of instruction that includes components of pedagogical competence in an outcome-based curriculum.

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Appendix A

Test of Gozine 2 used as Pretest

Grammar

1- This academic center has given Mr Rahimi a prize ……he has been the best scholar during the last ten years.
 1) unless2) even though   3) since   4) so that

2- All the experiments ………… in this university were based on observations and researches on this new product.
   1) conducted   2) conduct   3) conducting   4) were conducting

3- Please keep the kids quiet ………… the grandpa can rest.
   1) so as to   2) although   3) so that   4) while

4- I need to know all details about this project. I can't risk ………… a large amount of money on such a plan like it.
   1) spend   2) spending   3) to spend   4) be spent

5- The man hasn't been able to walk on his own ……………….. he returned to consciousness.
   1) since   2) as   3) so   4) whenever

6- Hardly do I believe that your brother will pass his exams, he is ………..lazy to get good grades.
   1) much too   2) too much so   3) very   4) enough

7- The books ………………..in this library are all rare ones.
   1) which used   2) which are using   3) which are used   4) use

8- A: Let's ………………..the conference room.
   B: Oh, no. We are not allowed to do this.
   1) enter   2) not enter   3) not to enter   4) entering

9- The scientist ---------- about climate changes are concerned about global warming.
 1) talk 2) talked 3) talking 4) to talk

10- We were having --------- lot of fun at the party that I didn't want it to finish.
 1) so 2) too 3) such a 4) much a

Vocabulary

1- A pair of birds can often care for its young better than a single one. One parent can guard the nest, while the other is ………………..from his responsibility to gather food.
   1) released   2) reacted   3) distracted   4) evaluated

2- During a ………………..speak slowly and if eye contact bothers you, look just above their heads at a point such as a clock.
   1) creation   2) presentation   3) disturbance   4) contrast

3- The solution to land pollution is: reduce, re-use and recycle, on the other hand we can try to save our environment by not leaving ………………..on it.
   1) dash   2) crust   3) aid   4) trash

4- To avoid speaking quickly emphasize some letters liked, k, t and don't look directly into someone's eyes, they could ………………..you.
   1) mention   2) protect   3) distract   4) involve

5- Everybody knows what sort of ………… an inappropriate film may have on kids and even adults.
   1) goals   2) effects   3) samples   4) details

6- Because of information technology a scientist can ………… the latest technology into universities and academic centers.
   1) emphasize   2) attract   3) survive   4) introduce

7- The city officials have taken serious ………… to stop inflation and unemployment.
   1) services   2) measures   3) abilities   4) functions

8- It may not bother you if you have ………… any kind of failure. However, it will hurt you when you want to make your previous mistake once again.
   1) estimated   2) increased   3) performed   4) experienced

9-Nowadays it is much easier to………… documents, money, and whatever you want to any part of the world.
   1) involve   2) transfer   3) stretch   4) attach

10-Students………… picked up the next pamphlet as soon as they were allowed to do so.

1) interchangeably 2) continuously   3) immediately   4) efficiently

Reading Comprehension

Passage I

Robots seem very new to most people. But they have a long history. They began as mechanical toys. For more than two thousand years, people have been trying to make machines that copy what living things do. The first one was made by a Greek inventor. The bird could rotate, turning on the end of a wooden bar. A device like this sounds simple to us. But the strange bird delighted the Greeks of long ago. Workers in France built a mechanical lion in 1500. To get it to work, they rebuilt the lion several times. Finally, it was able to walk around the court of the king. It could even raise its paw as a salute to the French flag.

In the 1700 s, a Swiss clockmaker built a puppet. It looked like a child sitting at a desk. The puppet's right hand was equipped with a pen. The clockmaker would hook a machine to his own arm and write a message. The machine inside the puppet would then copy his arm movements. The puppet was then able to write the same message as the clockmaker's. The puppet seemed to have the intelligence of a thinking being. However, it needed the help of a human being to make it work.

Early robots were made for fun. Dolls that could walk, dance, and even pick things up were sold as merchandise in fine shops. People seemed surprised at machines that were automatic. They could operate by themselves once they had been turned on. Today's robots are very complicated machines with many different uses. They work in many modern factories. They even work in space. The uses of robots seem endless.

1- The Greeks of long ago…………
    1) were delighted by the rotating toy - bird. 2) were all inventors of robots.
    3) copied the things that birds did.   4) invented devices that made simple sounds.
2- The mechanical lion built in France could do the following except:
 1) walking around the king's court   2) raising its paw
    3) raising the French flag   4) saluting the French flag
3- It is not true that the Swiss clockmaker's puppet…………
    1) looked like a human child   2) had a pen in its right hand
    3) could copy the arm movements of its builder 4) had the intelligence of a thinking being
4- The following are true about the puppet except that it…………
    1) had a machine inside   2) needed the help of its maker to work
    3) could write the messages dictated to it   4) was sitting at a desk
5- The writer has tried to imply that…………
1) modern robots are quite different from the early ones.
2) robots of today do not surprise people.
3) robots of our time are in fact the advanced forms of the early robots.
4) today's and yesterday's robots have many different uses.

Passage II:

In October 1957, the first satellite, called "sputnik" was sent into orbit. Today, hundreds of satellites are spinning around the Earth. Communications satellites are among the most important of these man-made moons. In countless ways these satellites have improved life for much of humankind. They brought people together and made Earth a smaller place.

For us, watching an Olympic competition live from the other side of the planet was an impossibility just a few years ago. But today we can see a sporting event that takes place anywhere in the world -and from the clarity of the image, we cannot tell that the program -in color and in focus- is coming from the far side of the globe.

How does satellite communication work? Powerful devices send TV signals from the Earth to the satellites. After a satellite picks up the TV signals, it beams them back to Earth over a wide area. These signals are received by special "dishes" on Earth. These dishes are electronic devices with large curved shapes that resemble a dish. They transmit the signals, sending them out to be picked up by your television set and also people can set up the dishes that take up a small area of the roof of a house.

In another way, communications satellites have increased our closeness to the rest of the world. Before this century, there was no such thing as an overseas telephone call. Instead, people sent letters and other correspondence across the oceans by ship. The first phone calls often crackled and faded. But today people can talk to friends and relatives on other continents and their voices sound perfectly clear.

This is made possible by satellite, communications satellites have far exceeded the dreams of the first pioneers who launched them. They do more than these pioneer scientists ever expected to make Earth a smaller world.

6- Paragraph 1 does not tell us that communications satellites …………

1) are no more called man - made moons.   2) brought people closer to each other.

3) have improved life for mankind.   4) have made a smaller Earth.

7- According to the passage, which one of the following is not true today?

1) Watching live programs of an Olympic competition is possible.

2) We can get TV programs from the other side of the planet.

3) Nowadays the phone calls are not so clear.

4) People can watch sporting events coming from the far side of the globe.

8- A satellite communication system does not depend on …………

1) very strong devices to send signals from the Earth.

2) TV signals to be sent to the satellite.

3) special dishes on Earth to receive signals.

4) enough area on the roof of a house for dishes.

9- What was impossible before the present century?

1) surface mail correspondence. 3) an overseas telephone call.

2) sea mail correspondence. 4) writing to friends and relatives on other continents.

10- The author concludes that communications satellites …………

1) have not met the expectations of the scientists.

2) were used by the first pioneers.

3) have done jobs far beyond what the pioneer scientists expected.

4) have not really made Earth a smaller world.