An Investigation of Iranian High School English Language Teachers' Perceptions of Pedagogical Competence

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Abstract

Effective pedagogical practice promotes the achievement of students and builds up confidence of the teachers in teaching. The major cause for the gap in pedagogical practices can be attributed to the lack of pedagogical competence. The present study employed a mixed method research approach to examine Iranian high school English Language teachers' perception of pedagogical competence in two phases. A 53-item questionnaire of pedagogical competence was, first, administered to 365 high school English teachers of 415 teachers practicing teaching in Guilan Province, Iran, through probability sampling method (stage cluster sampling). The teachers' age, gender, fields of study, university degrees, and years of teaching were taken into account. Second, to complement the findings of the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview based on the seven constructs was conducted to 84 high school English teachers selected through stage cluster sampling in Guilan's high schools. The results of MANOVA and interview analyses revealed that teachers with different demographic features generally had positive perceptions of pedagogical competence despite some opposing views they had on pedagogical competence regarding their age and experience. The findings would be practically used by teachers, schools, and education administration.

Keywords: English language teachers, high school level, pedagogical competence, student achievements, education system

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1. Introduction

The quality of education has been a major educational focus since the commencement of teaching pedagogy that contributed to bringing quality of learning and teaching to the classrooms, and teachers' qualifications have always been of concern for pedagogical circles and those in charge of staffing schools with qualified professionals. Language teachers, as Lacang (2007) asserts, are believed to be very influential in the L2 teaching and learning process and their pedagogical competence contributes highly to the quality of learning and teaching. Effective pedagogical practice promotes the achievement of students and builds up confidence of the teachers in teaching (Kul Narsingh, 2008). Thus, an understanding of English language teachers' pedagogical competence (ELTPC), as a feedback on the quality of teaching, is an essential element in improving the teachers' teaching practice, and students' language learning achievements, consequently.

The traditional view of ELTPC was chiefly a problem of practice in the classroom whereby a teacher develops teaching situation to function and creates conditions for learning through knowledge, methods, and actions. Oldsjo (2010) asserts that this view is a very poorly constructed reasoning that does not include a scientific attitude towards English language teaching and learning. Promoting the traditional concept of pedagogical competence that considers it as merely teaching skill or ability, Thomas (1987) adds three more dimensions to ELTPC, namely management, preparation, and assessment. He adds that teaching is not the only determining factor; teacher's managerial and disciplinary, preparatory and planning, and assessment and monitoring abilities are also critical. Likewise, Olsson, Martensson, and Roxa (2010) certify that pedagogical competence enjoys a much broader concept than that of only teaching skill, and that the components of pedagogical competence can be divided into overlapping types illustrated in Kolb's (1984) model. In this model, pedagogical competence involves four essential aspects of pedagogical competence, namely, pedagogical practice or actual teaching activities related to student learning, observation of teaching and student learning, theory or theoretical knowledge of teaching and student learning, and planning as a means for improved pedagogical practice.

As pointed out in ETUCE's (2008) report, teachers need to possess the ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity, and adapt to the needs of individual learners. Teachers' competence is built on a concept of teaching as praxis in which theory, practice, and the ability to reflect critically on one's own and others' teaching

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practice complement each other, rather than on a concept of teaching as the acquisition of technical skills. Suciu and Mata (2011) also developed a taxonomy of pedagogical competence that included cognitive, managerial, psychological, personal, and social facets. This taxonomy was proposed after Gliga (as cited in Suciu & Mata, 2011) developed a framework of professional competences that included methodological, communication and relationship, student assessment, psycho-social, technical and technological, and career management.

As seen, there has been a clear development from what was previously referred to as the teaching ability or skill to a more comprehensive definition of pedagogical competence implying that pedagogical competence is a part of professional competence for the teaching career. Besides, the contemporary views on the process of education through focusing on the development of pedagogical competences do not refer strictly to methodological and assessment competences. Thus, pedagogical competence has to be viewed in all of its aspects, as a whole, to attain genuine efficiency and to make learners knowledgeable individuals in the field. Because of the comprehensiveness and significance of pedagogical competence, an investigation of teachers' view of pedagogical competence is indispensable to improve the process and quality of teaching, as well as students' language proficiency, and the entire educational system. Moreover, one possible reason that has led to the gap in pedagogical practices is that the components of the pedagogical competences are not clearly known so that the perceptions on ELTPC could thoroughly be investigated. This issue justifies any research in this regard, and the present study attempts to explore the English language teachers' perception of pedagogical competence in Iran's education system at high school level so that the issue could be progressively followed and given the due attention by the education ministry, schools, and teachers.

1.1 Components of Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogical competence involves broad and deep knowledge of the subject of teaching to learners, when a pedagogically proficient teacher possesses a good ability to use the knowledge in practically pedagogical activities which center on the student learning performance. As Olsson et al. (2010) argue, pedagogical competence is underpinned by knowledge about teaching and is a merge of theory and pedagogical practice to develop a pedagogical understanding that serves student learning. So, it is multidimensional in nature, and a pedagogically competent teacher should possess a wide range of competences, explained as follows:

Preparation or planning for teaching as a prerequisite to teaching in class is an essentially imperative division of the overlapping activities of teaching since lesson planning and preparation for teaching have long been recognized by educational institutions as an integral part of teacher preparation world-wide (Kizlik, 2008; McBer, 2000). Different *teaching skills and strategies* as a central part of pedagogical competence demonstrated in prior research should be employed by teachers to present language in its various facets to learners as they are teachers' classroom practices shaped by a wide range of interacting factors (Thomas, 1987). At the same time, a teacher should demonstrate a good ability to use *subject knowledge* in practical and pedagogical actions with student learning in focus (Shulman, 1986), and that the teachers' familiarization with the science and the dimensions of the related subject they intend to present to students in a certain class is of great importance (Zvarych, 2013).

In addition, the whole teaching should also be done in a controlled and managed class since, according to Shinn, Stoner, and Walker (2008), the issues of effective *classroom management* are highlighted by prior research as a key to effective student learning. Besides, the practice of teaching and learning needs to be monitored and assessed in an ongoing process of *assessment* (Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2013). All these activities mentioned are based on teachers' *attitude* about how they perceive their role and responsibility and the role and responsibility of their students (Apelgren & Giertz, 2010) accompanied by their *beliefs* of how teachers view language and language teaching and learning. Knowing teachers' beliefs and attitude is knowing teachers' classroom practices and actions (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Brown, 2009) since teachers' beliefs and attitude affect the way they choose, evaluate, and comprehend the knowledge acquired, as well as the way they benefit from this knowledge in practice, as this very practice is shaped by that knowledge.

Thus, pedagogical knowledge refers to the knowledge of nature of teaching and learning, including teaching methods, subject mastery, classroom management, instructional planning, assessment of student learning based on teachers' attitudes and beliefs, personal qualities, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gourier, 2010) integrated with pedagogical practices to develop a pedagogical understanding that creates the prerequisites for continued development (Olsson et al., 2010) and promote the learning of learners in an outcome-based approach.

1.2 Review of Background Knowledge

The study of pedagogical competence has gradually been professionalized in the last 30 years (Oldsjo, 2010), and contribution to the creation of good conditions for careful and qualified investigation of pedagogical competence in connection with student advancement is a goal for professional development. Research (e.g., Malikow, 2005) today has shown that the way in which teachers carry out their work is determined by a set of related factors that are a combination of their personality traits, attitudes and beliefs, and a set of knowledge acquired professionally. Additionally, teachers' belief about themselves, teaching, learning, and research (Tapia, 2013) and as a tool to deal with the problems and questions of the teaching and learning possesses (Kalaja, 2011) is a very important component of pedagogical competence.

It seems that effective teaching entails setting realistic objectives, applying various teaching methods, presenting information in a clear manner, and using various teaching aids (Anderson, as cited in Liakopoulou, 2011). Monitoring and evaluating the progress of students, setting assessment criteria for students and informing the students about them, and providing feedback to the students (Harslett, Harrison, Godfrey, Partington, & Richer, 2000) are also important measures carried out by teachers. Research also shows that more effective teachers keep all happenings in the classroom in check, that they are constantly on alert, that they swiftly deal with any problem that may arise and that they adopt various ways of working with students (Everston & Randolph, as cited in Liakopoulou, 2011). Another important qualification is the acquisition of an extended body of knowledge which contributes to the way the teacher performs in practice. This body of knowledge is determined by the personal experiences, beliefs, and needs of each teacher. In Shulman's (1986) term, content knowledge (CK), i.e. the knowledge about the actual subject matter to be learned or taught, includes the knowledge of concepts, theories, ideas, organizational frameworks, knowledge of evidence and proof, as well as established practices and approaches toward developing such knowledge. Markova (as cited in Zvarych, 2013) also found that teachers' competence is related to their personal development within the framework of teaching profession, i.e., willingness to grow professionally in language teaching career. Previous studies concerning the effect of teacher's competence on teacher's performance is always considered as a separate subject as it is concerned with investigating only pedagogical competence or professional competence. The results of a study conducted by Setyarahajoe and Irtanto (2013) at senior high school revealed that the

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degree of teachers' competence is satisfactory in line with standard categories, especially the pedagogic, personal, professional, and social competence. In addition, Miller's (2009) report revealed that characteristics of student, school, and teacher that account for variance in student achievement are 80%, 7%, and 13%, respectively. Marzano (2003) reviewed a study which revealed a 39 percentage-point difference in student achievement between students with most effective and least effective teachers. The development of lesson plan as the main task of the teacher in the learning process is not optimally done, which resulted in "the teachers who are not ready to implement good things in the learning process" (Nunuh, as cited in Rahman, 2014, p. 28).

The issue of teachers' competence evaluation is being broadly discussed and explored by different educational systems throughout the world (e.g., Henard & Roseveare, 2012, for Portugal; Hussain, Sarwar, Khan, & Khan, 2010, for Pakistan; Ryegard, Apelgren, & Olsson, 2010, for Sweden; Tynan & Garbett, 2007, for New Zealand). The results of these studies maintain that the average competence of the teachers need to be developed with a variety of efforts, i.e. by offering instructional media that complement teachers' work, enhancing the achievement motivation of teachers, improving the principals supervision, and developing teachers' competence to do research.

However, the studies do not yield a clear-cut criterion and pervasive account of ELTPC as they propose general constructs of the pedagogical competence by resorting to portfolio assessment of teachers longitudinally, subject to many changes and deviations because of the dynamicity of teachers' acts and outlook in a period of time. Thus, the current study intended to explore the English language teachers' perception of their preparation, classroom management, teaching skills, subject mastery, assessment strategies, teachers' attitude and belief as seven distinct constructs of pedagogical competence in Iran's education system at high school level so that the issue could be progressively followed and given the due attention by the education ministry, schools and teachers.

2. Method

The present study employing a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative paradigms to investigate Iranian high school English language teachers' perception was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, 365 high school English teachers were chosen out of 415 teachers through probability sampling method, stage cluster

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sampling. The sample was taken from the province of Guilan, Northern Iran, divided into four clusters of North, South, East, and West. Almost all high schools from each cluster were selected as a stratified sample of the study. A questionnaire instrument of ELTPC (Aghajanzadeh, 2016) was utilized to collect data (See Appendix A). The questionnaire had already been validated through factor analysis which yielded in 53 items. Having the questionnaire administered, a thorough analysis of the number of participants, invalid respondents, missing data or falsely filled questionnaire was carried out. It was thus found that 45 questionnaires administered were considered invalid because 23 of them had not completely been filled, 16 participants had filled the questionnaire hastily because they had filled one code in successive 20 items, and 6 participants had submitted the questionnaire not filling in the demographic section of the questionnaire. On the whole, out of the 365 questionnaires distributed, 320 questionnaire (87%) were returned completely filled. The demographic data of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall descriptive statistics of the teacher participants

		Frequency	Percent
Male		148	45.4
Female		172	54.6
Age range	**25–30**	46	20.0
	31–35	39	10.4
	36-40	35	8.8
	41-45	109	37.3
	+46	73	23.4
Fields	**Teaching**	170	59.6
	Linguistics	44	11.2
	Translation	25	3.8
	Literature	81	25.4
Degree	**BA**	93	29.06
	M A	116	36.25
	MA can.	72	22.5
	PhD can.	21	6.5
	PhD	18	5.6
Teaching	**1-5**	43	12.7
experience	**6.10**	55	17.3

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11-15	59	18.8
16-20	76	25.4
21-25	54	16.9
+26	33	8.8

In the second phase of the study, a semi-structured interview consisting of 18 questions was conducted, but the interviewee had a great deal of leeway in how to reply. First, a list of 220 high school English language teachers who were accessible in Guilan based on the school locations in the Province was provided by the Office of Educational Groups. The list was coded and numbered from 1 to 220. Of this numbered list, 92 teachers were randomly chosen via True Random Generator on the Internet. However, 84 teachers welcomed the interview. Geographically, the teachers were equally distributed in different parts in Guilan, namely Rasht, Shaft, Fouman, Somesara, Roudbar-Manjil, Lahidjan, Astaneh, Bandar Anzali, Talesh, and Roudsar from which 24, 9, 8, 5, 8, 9, 4, 6, 4, and 7 teachers were respectively selected. The interviewees were made sure that the interview would be done only for the purpose of study. The interview data were analyzed through content analysis; that is, the interview questions were developed from the seven constructs of the questionnaire and the pertinent items to each one. The responses were recorded and some written notes were taken. The interview was conducted with 30 English language teachers chosen randomly out of total number of participants taking part in the research. After completing the interviews, formal analysis began on the audio recordings and written notes collected during each interviewees' session. The recordings and notes were then transcribed and digitized for easier analysis. The analysis of the interview data included reading the transcripts for content analysis (Creswell, 2003) and deriving codes that were later organized into themes. Thus, the interview was first transcribed, and then analyzed (re-read) by two colleagues and was finally verified and coded. The Cohen's Kappa, an index that measures inter-rater agreement for categorical (qualitative) items, was conducted to calculate the ratio of coding agreements so that it could give a quantitative measure of the magnitude of agreement between raters. The inter-rater agreement calculated through Cohen Kappa statistics, according to which, a kappa of 1 indicates perfect agreement (Viera & Garrett, 2005), was 0.88, indicating an almost perfect agreement as it was between 0.81-0.99. *The findings were analyzed through Multivariate* analysis of variance (MANOVA) *and interview analyses*.

3. Results

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) which is a test of the significance of group differences in some multi-dimensional space where each dimension is defined by linear combinations of the original set of dependent variables, was used to examine whether there were significant differences between the respondents' personal and professional backgrounds, such gender, age, field of study, university degree, and years of teaching experience and their perception of ELTPC. The MANOVA analysis overall used Pillai's Trace value (See Table 2) as it was comprehensive and suitable for a different number of respondents for each category involving the variable (Grice & Iwasaki, 2007).

Table 2. The result of Pillai's Trace multivariate tests of teachers' demographic variables

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Eta Sq.	Observed Power[d]
Pillai's Trace	2.142	5.542	5.000	277.000	.000	0.153	1.000

The results of the multivariate Pillai's Trace test indicated that there is significant difference at least among one of the demographic variables of the teachers' personal and professional backgrounds (F $(5,277)$ =5.542, $p<0.01$). With regard to the results gained in the Pillai's Trace test, the analyses of the effects of variables were conducted. Thus, for the research question of the study i.e., "Is there any significant difference between Iranian high school English teachers' perception of ELTPC and their gender, age, fields of study, university degrees, and years of teaching experience?", a MANOVA analysis was run to figure out the degree of differences in the five factors from the teachers' perception of ELTPC. Table 3 indicates the results of the analysis.

Table 3. Results of MANOVA on the relationship between teachers' demographic features and ELTPC

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Sq.
Intercept	**Sex**	398.498	1	398.498	0349.287	.000	0.128
	Age	1823.973	1	1823.973	1180.661	.000	0.044
	Degree	657.202	1	657.202	0333.042	.000	0.121
	Experience	1795.704	1	1795.704	1257.128	.000	0.089
	Field	523.430	1	523.430	0432.277	.000	0.112

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Error	**Sex**	47.665	281	.170
	Age	434.110	281	1.545
	Degree	138.535	281	.493
	Experience	401.386	281	1.428
	Field	270.735	281	.963
Total	**Sex**	875.000	320	
	Age	4334.000	320	
	Degree	1513.000	320	
	Experience	4491.000	320	
	Field	1706.000	320	

The results of the study found that there was not a major effect of the demographic factor of gender which was not significant ($F_{(1, 281)} = 0349$, $p < 0.05$). The MANOVA test results showed that there was no major effect of gender on teachers' perception of ELTPC in this study. The results of the multivariate Pillai's Trace test showed that teachers' perception of ELTPC) was not influenced by gender.

The MANOVA test analyses performed on fields of study and university degree clearly showed that there were no significant differences between the four categories of fields of study, and five categories of university degree on teachers' perception of ELTPC ($F_{(1, 281)} = 0333$, $p < 0.05$) and ($F_{(1, 281)} = 0432$, $p < 0.05$), respectively. These results indicated that fields of study and university degree did not influence the teachers' perception of ELTPC. The results of multivariate Pillai's Trace also indicated that there was no effect of fields of study and university degree on the teachers' perception of ELTPC.

Meanwhile, the results of the multivariate Pillai's Trace test indicated that the age difference affected the teachers' perception of ELTPC since the results were significant ($F_{(2,142)} = 5.542$, $p < 0.01$). MANOVA test analyses performed on variables in age indicated that there was significant difference between teachers; perception of ELTPC and their age differences ($F_{(1,281)} = 11.66$, $p < 0.05$). However, MANOVA test analyses which were performed on all dependent variables in age category separately showed that there were significant differences between the two categories of age difference (25–30) and (+46) on the teachers' perception of ELTPC ($F_{(1,281)} = 2.29$, $p < 0.05$) ($F_{(1,281)} = 3.75$, $p < 0.05$). The results of multivariate Pillai's Trace showed that years of teaching experience affected

(teachers' perception of ELTPC) since the results were significant. In addition, the MANOVA test analyses performed on all dependent variables in the category of teaching experience separately showed that there were significant differences between the two categories of years of teaching experience (1-5, 6-10) and (21-25, +26) on the teachers' perception of ELTPC (F (1, 281) = 14.164, p<0.05) (F (1,281) = 11.526, p <0.05). These results indicated that the years of teaching experience influenced teachers' perception of ELTPC.

3.1 Test of Hypotheses

What follows is testing the hypotheses on the Iranian high school English language teachers' perceptions in the five domains of gender, age, field of study, university degree**,** and years of teaching investigated in the second phase of the present research through a reliable and validated researcher-developed questionnaire and a one-way MANOVA.

With regard to the teachers' view of the pedagogical competence and their gender analyzed, it can be claimed that men and women enjoyed the same view since there was no significant multivariate main effect for teachers' gender (F (1, 281) = 0349, p<0.05), partial eta squared = .128). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is not any statistically significant difference between high school English teachers' gender and their perception of ELTPC was confirmed.

Concerning the age-range of the teachers, there was no significant multivariate main effect for teachers' fields of study (F (1, 281) = 0333, p<0.05), partial eta squared = .112). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is not any statistically significant difference between high school English teachers' fields of study and their perception of ELTPC was confirmed.

Similarly, with regard to the teachers' perception of the pedagogical competence in terms of their fields of study, there was no significant multivariate main effect for teachers' university degree (F (1, 281) = 0432, p<0.05), partial eta squared = .121). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is not any statistically significant difference between high school English teachers' university degrees and their perception of ELTPC was confirmed.

However, there was a significant multivariate interaction effect of teachers' age and ELTPC (F (1,281) = 11.66, p<0.05), partial eta squared = .0.44). Thus, the

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null hypothesis that there is not any statistically significant difference between high school English teachers' age and their perception of ELTPC was rejected.

For the last hypothesis that said there was no difference among teachers' views of the pedagogical competence based on their years of teaching, it was found that there was a significant multivariate interaction effect of teachers' years of teaching experience and ELTPC (F (1, 281) = 14.164, p<0.05), partial eta squared = .0.44). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is not any statistically significant difference between high school English teachers' years of teaching experience and their perception of ELTPC was rejected. The result revealed that teachers with different years of teaching experience viewed pedagogical competence differently.

3.2 Teacher Interview

Since qualitative interviews offer the possibility of investigating respondents' points of view and the meaning they attach to their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009), an interview study seemed appropriate because the research focus was on the individual, subjectively lived experience of the research participants (Marshall & Rossman 2006). Besides, the reason behind which an interview was employed was that the interview would allow the researchers to explore the diversity and heterogeneity within the topic of pedagogical competence, not covered fully by the questionnaire. What follows is the result of the interview with high school English teachers on the seven constructs of ELTPC, namely, preparation, teaching, management, assessment, subject mastery, attitude, and belief.

3.3   Preparation

In response to the questions and issues raised with regards to preparation and planning for teaching, when asked "*if they make a lesson plan for each lesson*", all teachers (100%) reported full use of the lesson plan. However, in response to question "*if there is a particular format that you use*", some 75% of the teachers mostly experienced and high experienced ones reported an oral lesson plan. They clarified that they followed a lesson plan by heart as they were teaching the same books with mostly the same school administration for years. They felt they did not need to have a printed copy of the lesson plan. The younger teachers (92%), on the other hand, deemed writing lesson plan as an important tool for an ordered classroom teaching. They believed that lesson plan would help them order their time in class and cover the specified materials to a high extent. Concerning the issue of overall

preparedness, low-experienced teachers showed a higher enthusiasm of their own planning and preparation plans for class to carry out specific teaching duties.

3.4 Teaching

Answering the question "*if you update your teaching methods and technique*", majority of younger teachers (%78) believed that updating the overall knowledge of teaching practice of the English language was seriously needed. This, they claimed, required attending national and international conferences and reading related articles and studies published. Consequently, in response to question **"***if you attend workshops to improve your teaching skills and strategies*"**, some 79% of the interviewees noted that regular and timed workshops in the district or region they were teaching would be beneficial. Moreover, almost all teachers (96%) suggested the invitation of proficient university professors in TEFL to hold intra-district workshops and classes with regard to the 'hows' of teaching language skills. In response to question "*if you incorporate educational aids in your teaching***",** 58 % of teachers indicated that, although they knew good educational aids, finding them could be expensive and using them was hard and time consuming preventing them from covering the predetermined syllabus. Furthermore, 42 % indicated that, while they knew good materials, they did not have the motivation to purchase and use them because they believed it to be the responsibility of the school administration to provide the needed materials. Besides, the teachers acknowledged that they had problem communicating in spoken and written English. Some 27% of teachers, even welcomed the idea of going to some private classes to improve their communicative proficiency.

3.5 Management

Answering *"if managing classroom and students is important to you",* the older and more experienced teachers reported higher levels of efficacy and robust. However, the younger teachers confessed lower management skills of the classrooms. Over half of the teachers, (54%), believed that it is demanding to keep learners involved in an activity and maintain discipline and order in classroom, simultaneously. When asked "*if you follow certain disciplines or orders to organize and manage your classroom*" and "*if it is a challenge*", all teachers, especially, experienced teachers, had this belief that learning could not take place unless the classroom were organized and under control. However, over half of the teachers, (55%) complained that they focused their time and energy on controlling students rather than the teaching-learning process.

3.6 Assessment

Answering the question "*if you follow any assessment policy in evaluating your students*", all teachers (100%) believed that their daily, weekly, and monthly assessment decisions and practices are influenced by their assessment policies, and assessment training. However, when asked about the latest issue, assessment training, "*if you like to attend classroom assessment workshop*", almost all teachers (92%) welcomed the suggestion saying that they would surely learn new approaches, methods, and techniques of assessing students which could be applicable in their classes. Only 8% resisted the new assessment training expressing that the current assessment methods and technique they employed were efficient to a high extent with regard to the current needs of students and the instructional objectives issued by the administration. To answer "if *your assessment is pre-planned or it is done spontaneously*", almost half of the teachers (66%) accepted the need to make rapid and good decisions dealing with issues, such as choosing suitable activities on evaluating students' performance. However, most old teachers believed that they would follow their own lesson plan and implement tests and quizzes as planned.

3.7 Subject mastery

Considering the fact that mastering the subject materials is a necessity for teachers, the question "*if you have mastery over all the subjects and skills of the English book you are teaching*" was confirmed by all teachers (100%), and they expressed that they were able to teach the pre-specified books and materials to students. However, the problem lies, as they noted, in teaching new materials they mostly find difficult handling in classrooms. This happens when a new book is introduced by the Education Ministry. Besides, in response to question: "*If you think attending workshops helps you develop professionally*", majority of teachers (86%) welcomed the idea of holding workshops and training classes or even intra- or inter-school classes or workshops to remove the possible problems and confusion that they may face while teaching new books in order to be able to teach powerfully and respond to the students' occasional challenging questions.

3.8 Attitude

When the teachers were asked about motivational factors affecting their attitudes toward teaching, 89% of teachers considered political, economic, social, cultural, historical, as well as educational facets in response to question about "*factors that influence your attitude toward your job and motivate or demotivate you in your teaching practice,*", they also pointed out that the government's educational

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policy and the societal effects resulting from the overall atmosphere of the society about teachers affected their profession making them inactive and demotivated. Accordingly, over 70% of teachers (mostly experienced teachers) acknowledged that their profession was not very valued and respected although English language needed in the society.

The older teachers specially argued that financial issues influenced their profession in general and their teaching in particular. This was very prevalent among old and experienced teachers showing a very shallow motivation in their profession of teaching English. Thus, in response to question, "*if payment or economy affects your motivation in teaching*", they claimed that economy had the most appalling effect on their teaching practice.

Answering "*if you get motivated or demotivated by students' achievement*", almost 82% teachers (mostly young teachers) believed that motivating students to learn English and teaching motivationally result in students' learning achievements, and they reflect in their teaching by making their best efforts.

3.9 Belief

With regard to "*the important goals of English language learning*", young teachers regarded communication to be the goal of learning English at school through emphasizing the communicative teaching of grammar and vocabulary rather than focusing on the forms. They deemed pronunciation very important. The more experienced and older teachers, on the other hand, believed grammar and vocabulary were needed for university entrance examination, and they must be emphasized from the beginning.

As such, regarding " *your choices of skills to focus on in your classrooms*", over 80 % of the younger teachers indicated that, although they knew listening, speaking, and pronunciation were needed for the communicative aspect of English language learning, the instructional objectives that aim at preparing learners for final examination and the university entrance examination are prioritized over the oral communicative skills.

However, answering "if *the skills of grammar and vocabulary s*hould be *emphasized*" the majority of interviewees (87%) did not feel that emphasizing grammar or vocabulary would help learners improve their English language or communicate in the real life situation. Instead, teachers, especially young ones,

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acknowledged that oral skills should be given the due superiority over written skills due to the (1) abundance of software related to oral skills (55 %), (2), existence of technologically equipped listening and speaking classes like language labs (47%), and (3), book-based written skills not complemented by technology (42%).

4. Discussion

The questionnaire survey and the teacher interview helped explore the high school English language teachers' views of pedagogical competence. The findings of multivariate analysis of variance indicated that teachers generally have positive perception toward pedagogical competences. The analyses of five characteristics of high school English language teachers, namely, gender, age, fields of study, and university degrees, yielded that the teachers' different university degrees, different fields of study, and gender make no difference as far as their views on ELTPC are concerned. However, the teachers' different years of teaching experience and their age closely related to their teaching experience seem to influence the different views toward ELTPC.

The results of the interview were generally in with the findings of multivariate analysis of variance. With regard to the issue of preparation and planning for teaching, the findings showed that delivering well-prepared lessons was what all the teachers (100%) felt they needed to have to be successful in their teaching practice, which, according to Lacang (2007), would be manifested in their students' learning and fulfillment of the instructional objectives. The teachers' perception of the issue was also in line with the report prepared by Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005), suggesting that preparation for teaching English led to greater confidence in teachers' skills for working with students successfully.

Most teachers welcomed the idea of holding training workshops to improve their teaching strategies and practice. Adey (2004) believes that education and training activities felt needed by all teachers in the study fulfill improvement and development requirements of teachers in profession. Most teachers felt that they suffered from the lack of communicative language skills to a high extent, which was seen a hindrance to have a high confidence for better teaching performance. The issue is confirmed by Gandara, et al (2005) that teachers' communicative ability in teaching English learners would result in greater teachers' confidence in their teaching practice as the teachers in the study indicated their lack of communication

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ability in English affected their self-confidence in their teaching and even academic gatherings.

In line with the result of the questionnaire, the interview showed classroom management to be a challenging area with overwhelming stress for teachers. The teachers' need to maintain order and discipline was supported by the literature that represented this construct as an area of high stress for teachers (e.g., Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). This is an area in which the low-experienced or beginner teachers expressed lower levels of efficacy and acknowledged lower managing of the classrooms, while the older and more experienced teachers reported higher levels of efficacy and robustness, a factor shown to be significant in teachers' assessment of their efficacy (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). The teachers' assertion of the demanding job of classroom management was also supported by Doyle's (1986) West-white's (2007) study that reported that teachers need to make many decisions, exceeding 500 in numbers in every school, and that the teachers' concerns about the discipline issues and classroom management are attributed to the lack of teaching training programs that were the most welcome service the teachers in this study felt necessary to have.

Based on the results of questionnaire and interview on teachers' assessment strategies, it was indicated that all teachers with different characteristics made use of classroom observation and learning activities, quizzes, mid-term, and final tests to grade students for a lesson or the whole course. Furthermore, teachers mostly believed that the assessment strategies they adopted and the outcomes they gained in the student learning process had a kind of wash back effect on their teaching and assessment activities. Nitko's (2004) study confirms the findings by reporting that the results from classroom learning activities, quizzes, tests, class projects, assignment papers, and informal observations can be used to grade students for a lesson, or unit, or course and to show how well the teacher practices teaching and assesses students. Regarding the need to update assessment strategies of the teachers, most teachers welcomed the issue by attending the assessment training programs. This issue matched Inbar-Louries' (2013) assertion that language teachers need a solid background in assessment through training and education to be equipped well to integrate assessment with instruction and use appropriate forms of teaching leading to enhanced learning.

All teachers in the interview, with no opposing ideas in their responses to questionnaire items on the issue of subject mastery, confirmed that they all had

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mastery of subjects they were presenting to students, and they believed they were successful in subject mastery unless new books and materials were introduced, which were challenging for the first time they were using them. However, the interviewee believed that a competent teacher needed to be knowledgeable in the subject areas s/he practices teaching. The results confirmed what Lacang (2007) found that being knowledgeable of subject matter and content mastery plays a significant role in delivering materials to the students.

Regarding attitude, both the questionnaire and the interview, the young teachers' attitude was positive in terms of encouraging team work, persuading the students to learn, and recognizing the importance of the English language in today's world. The findings on attitude were in line with the findings of studies conducted by Liakopoulou (2011) that teachers' attitudes on teaching, learning, and their role affect the way they choose to teach, act upon, and evaluate their teaching, and that teachers' attitude was attributed to teachers' effectiveness, to their own personality traits, such as love of children and love for the profession, sense of humor, and enthusiasm all which were pinpointed in the questionnaire.

Moreover, the financial problem was reported to be teachers' hindering obstacle to get motivated in their teaching practice. It was found that low, delayed salaries and inadequate allowances demotivated the teachers in their job. The finding that financial and economic problems influence the quality of teaching was supported by Kazeem, (as cited in Kamoh, Ughili, & Abada, 2013) who reported that financial force influences teachers' attitude, and teachers tend to remain content and reasonably motivated as long as their salaries are paid on time, where the payment of salaries is the key factor that shapes teachers' attitudes toward their work.

On teachers' belief, the results of questionnaire data and the interview supported each other. It was found that teachers' experience emerged as a contributing factor in their decision not to the emphasis on the use of grammatical terminology communicatively unfulfilling although all teachers believed grammar and vocabulary were the main objectives of learning. The study conducted by Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (as cited in Borg, 2003) confirms the finding of the interview. They found that "teachers' experiences as language learners had a significant influence on their teaching and emphasizing grammar and vocabulary" (p.59). The finding was also in harmony with what Borg (2003) and Kern (as cited in Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2015) found in their investigation of beliefs of

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experienced teachers on the importance of grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening and understanding.

The more experienced and older teachers believed grammar and vocabulary were needed for university entrance examination, and that they must be emphasized from the beginning, and pronunciation should not highlighted for them. They believed that the existing system of sticking to grammar and vocabulary could help learners overcome the instructional objectives of the course, and most importantly the university entrance examination. However, the majority of teachers stressed that the current educational system focusing on grammar, translation, and reading would not end up in developing proficient learners. The results somehow mismatched those of the study done by Burgess and Etherington (2002), in which teachers reported positive views toward formal instruction which contributed to the development of students' proficiency and conscious knowledge of grammar that played a role in the students' final success with language learning.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research confirm the components of pedagogical competence reached in the related literature. But, in a holistic framework to make up the profile of a competent teacher, most teachers seem to associate their effectiveness at work with pedagogical competences. The particular findings contribute to a systematic and analytical description of the content of pedagogical competence that is indicative of successful performance of a teacher's pedagogical and didactic work. Based on the findings, the following intervention plans at educational reform level can be suggested:

a) Teachers' preparation programs as initial trainings to shape the pedagogical and didactic work of teachers.

b) In-service training programs to preserve the ongoing and dynamic nature of pedagogical competences based on the teachers' and students' needs.

c) A system of assessment based on the related criteria to evaluate the professional competence of teachers.

Being aware of the high school teachers' views of pedagogical competence, English language committees should always stress the need for developing pedagogical competence of English teachers to ensure the quality of education that

will end up with learning achievements. Since pedagogical competence reflects the teachers' competence regarding their synergistic combination of resources to promote the quality of pedagogy for achieving higher learning levels, courses related to school curriculum, classroom management, planning for teaching, instructional techniques, planning and preparation, the use of instructional materials, the use of various tools for assessing students, and effective communication should be emphasized.

Here, the education administration, as the only organization responsible for the quality of education at school levels, needs to take English language teacher education into account seriously to guarantee a qualified English language teaching in high schools. In this regard, measures to assess the development of teachers' competences should be a requirement because they can raise teachers' awareness of the need to develop their competences. The assessment of English teachers' competences needs to be based upon a shared understanding about the competences required by teachers, such as a national framework of teacher competences. The main purpose of this framework should be to provide a guideline for professional development, to enhance quality, to create a common language, as well as to stimulate teachers' responsibility and awareness of their own professional development that is generally defined as making progress in one's career.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Instrument of 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 in-service courses.					

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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.					