

## The impact of Erasmus+ on self-efficacy of English language teachers



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### ABSTRACT

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The study aimed to investigate if Erasmus+ program made a significant change in the self-efficacy perceptions of English language teachers. A descriptive correlational design was used in this study. To collect data, a self-efficacy scale was administered to 202 English teachers from various countries, 82 of whom participated in the Erasmus+ program. The data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0. Independent sample t-test was performed to calculate and compare any potential variations in means between the groups. Based on the test results, it was found out that there was no discernible difference between the teachers that took part in an Erasmus+ program and those that did not. This might imply that the Erasmus+ program had no impact on the self-efficacy of English language teachers. Similarly, in the factors of the scale, such as student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management, no significant difference was revealed between the groups. Taken together, these results suggest that Erasmus+ offers teacher candidates a fantastic opportunity for an international education and personal development, but it does not appear to be a predictor of strong self-efficacy in their teaching profession.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study attempts to bring a new perspective regarding the impact of Erasmus+ programs on English teachers in terms of their self-efficacy. The study showed how Erasmus+ programs can offer opportunities of international education and personal development in teaching profession.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Having a good command of English has been an important merit considering the requirements of the 21st century workforce. Therefore, there is a constant need for English teachers in the world. For this purpose, English teacher education programs train the teacher candidates by means of their localized curriculum and equip them with necessary skills. With the emergence of the Erasmus+ program in 1987, the students in Europe can be trained in different countries in the same departments after fulfilling some requirements. Many students benefited from this opportunity (European Commission, 2019a). The program gives the students an international perspective as well as provides them with education from different academics around the world. Throughout the years the program has evolved and included more activities than student exchange. Nowadays the name of the program is Erasmus+, the aim of which is stated as to support excellence in teaching and research in European integration among academics, students and citizens and improve language teaching and learning (Mede & Tuzun, 2016). Given the

aforementioned opportunities, many English teacher candidates and English teachers were benefited from the program. As Erasmus+ gained popularity in Europe, it also did in Turkey. According to the European Commission (2019b), 144,953 participants in 1,333 Turkish projects benefited from mobility in higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult learning and youth for a total grant amount of € 83 million in 2019. There are many studies about the Erasmus+ program and its impact on candidate teachers and teachers in general (Aydin, 2012; Bracht et al., 2006; Engel, 2010; Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019). However, there are not many studies investigating the impact of these programs on self-efficacy for English Language Teaching field in particular. The program may have different effects on the teachers in their profession later on. Therefore, the study at hand intends to shed a light on the effects of the Erasmus+ experience, particularly the effects on self-efficacy perceptions of English Language Teachers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Erasmus+ Program

Erasmus+ is a European Union (EU) initiative that facilitates student mobility and international cooperation of universities and is one of the greatest and most successful initiatives in this field. The Erasmus+ program was established by the European Commission in June 1987, to promote cooperation between higher education institutions in the world (Kabanbayeva, Gureva, Bielik, & Ostasz, 2019). Later, the Erasmus+ program collaborated with other initiatives including Socrates in 2000, Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) in 2007, Youth in Action and some other initiatives, and served as a symbol of EU's emphasis on education and training which was outlined in the Lisbon Treaty (Pepin, 2007). In these programs, student mobility contributed to students' personal and professional development, as well as equipped them with transferable skills that employers and the society value. The development of soft skills, such as the capacity to quickly adapt to changes and novel situations, solve problems, work in teams, think critically, be tolerant of different viewpoints, and communicate effectively, goes hand in hand with the improvement of students' proficiency in foreign languages and their increased cultural awareness. (European Commission, 2015). Erasmus+ permitted students to study abroad for up to 12 months of higher education and was likely the most well-known European program. During the first decade, the number of participating students increased rapidly from 3,000 in 1987- 88 to 86,000 in 1997-98. Thirty years later, during the 2017-2018 academic year, over 300,000 students participated in international exchanges for a 2.6 billion Euro annual budget (European Commission, 2019b).

According to a study by Engel (2010), students who had the experience of studying abroad via Erasmus+ considered that they had better skills after graduation. These students reported that they can adapt to different environments easily, have good foreign language proficiency because of their time spent abroad. Moreover, they also thought that their study field related knowledge and skills were also good when asked to compare themselves with the non-mobile graduates. They found themselves much better in terms of international competences like knowledge of other countries and intercultural understanding. Similarly, Unlu (2015) reports that teacher candidates who participated in the Erasmus+ Program acquired different academic, cultural, and personal gains. Bracht et al. (2006) suggest that students with Erasmus+ experience hardly can count on higher status and income than their non-mobile peers, but access to employment is facilitated, and they are more often internationally mobile and work in an international environment.

Aydin (2012) concluded that the students participating in the Erasmus+ program thought their professional development makes it easier to find a job in Turkey and abroad. Moreover, they had more specific experiences in terms of teaching English after their participation in the program. They also could compare the education in the countries with their own. In a study carried out by Unlu (2015), pre-service teachers from all departments thought they too got many academic gains out of the program.

## 2.2. Teacher Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1994) definition of "self-efficacy," which is defined as people's beliefs about their skills to produce desired levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives, serves as the foundation for Teacher Self-Efficacy. People's feelings, thoughts, motivation, and behavior are all influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs. Through four main processes, such beliefs cause these diverse effects. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. Similarly, the ideas that instructors have about their own capacity and competence in carrying out specific instructional activities are referred to as teacher self-efficacy. An essential motivational concept that influences teachers' success in the classroom is teacher self-efficacy. As Bergil and Sariçoban (2017) state, teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy are more effective in their instruction and are more likely to work for assisting all students to attain their potential. Contrarily, it has been discovered that teachers who have low levels of self-efficacy are less inclined to work harder to meet the educational needs of all of their students.

As a result, the factors that influence teacher self-efficacy are crucial. Teachers' sense of self-efficacy has been the subject of numerous studies over the years. For instance, student teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are greatly influenced by teacher education programs (Gomez-Johnson, Schaffer, Nix, & Hayden, 2020; Nikoçeviq-Kurti, 2022; Pitkäniemi & Martikainen, 2021).

Mahasneh and Alwan (2018) investigated the effects of project-based learning on student teachers' performance and self-efficacy in another study. They determined that project-based learning had a high-quality effect on the self-efficacy of the student teachers. According to some other researchers, the greatest ways to increase self-efficacy were through specific, evidence-based practices, numerous field experiences, and lesson-related mastery experiences (Nikoçeviq-Kurti, 2022; Rupp & Becker, 2021; Sciuchetti & Yssel, 2019).

Besides the studies investigating the self-efficacy in English teachers, there are some studies focusing on the correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and other structures like classroom management (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013; Kaygisiz, Anagun, & Karahan, 2018; Korkut, 2009). A teacher's high perception of self-efficacy can lead to self-confidence and this is reflected in their teaching. Kaygisiz et al. (2018) found out that as levels of self-efficacy increased, English teachers' motivation to employ communication-oriented teaching methods also increased.

Moreover, teachers' beliefs of their self-efficacy is also effective in the choice of instructional methods preferred. It can be said that these teachers have a positive effect on their students' academic success (Azar, 2010 as cited in Peker, Erol, and Gultekin (2018)).

Similarly, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003, as cited in Peker et al. (2018)) stated that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have an important role on student engagement and learning that takes place in the classroom. Teachers with high self-efficacy may have confidence in their abilities as educators, which would show with their actions (Baltaoglu & Güven, 2019).

In an attempt to open another window to the discussion of factors effective on self-efficacy of teachers, this study investigates the self-efficacy beliefs of the language teachers who went through the Erasmus+ exchange program during their education at their universities by using the research questions below:

1. Is there a significant difference between total self-efficacy scores of language teachers who participated in an Erasmus+ program (Erasmus+ language teachers) and the ones who did not participate in an Erasmus+ program (Erasmus- language teachers)?
2. Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in student engagement of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?
3. Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in instructional strategies of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?
4. Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in classroom management of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study used a descriptive correlational design that intended to find out if Erasmus+ experience had an impact on the self-efficacy of the English Language Teachers. For this goal, the researchers collected data from 202 English language teachers, 82 of whom had Erasmus+ experience, through an online survey.

#### 3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The participants responded to the scale items consisted of 202 volunteer teachers of English (from elementary to high school) from different countries around the world (Turkey, Bulgaria, Algeria, England, UK, Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt, Belarus, Lithuania, Burkina Faso, Romania, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Palestine, Belgium, the USA, Uzbekistan, Georgia, the Netherlands, Hungary, Spain, France, Portugal, Croatia, Denmark, Italy, and Indonesia). Participants were invited in a random way via social media and email invitations, and the sample was selected by using convenience sampling method considering their convenient accessibility and ease to reach (Patton, 1987). No information of personal identification was requested from the respondents except some particular information for descriptive analysis which are given below in Table 1. A total of 82 respondents participated an Erasmus+ program during their BA or career, and 120 did not participate in an Erasmus+ program during their BA or career. Their experience is also given categorically in the table.

**Table 1.** Respondents' experience in teaching.

Experience	0-5 Years	5-10 Years	10-15 Years	15-20 Years	20+ Years	Total
F-ERASMUS+	34	23	9	11	5	82
F-ERASMUS-	20	43	26	14	17	120
F-total	54	66	35	25	22	202

The short form of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschanne-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001) was employed to find out the participants' self-efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices, and efficacy in classroom management. The Likert scale ranging from "A Great Deal (9)" on one end to "None at all (1)" on the other on a 9-point scale was used. For collecting responses, an online survey software was utilized. The scale had three moderately correlated factors: Efficacy in student engagement (SE), efficacy in instructional strategies (IS), and efficacy in classroom management (CM), which have the following reliabilities:  $\alpha$ : total= 0.90; SE= 0.81; IS=0.86; CM= 0.86.

#### 3.3. Analyzing of Data

To analyze the data and descriptive statistics, SPSS 23.0 was mainly employed. To compute and compare the potential differences in means between the groups, Independent Samples t-test was used.

### 4. FINDINGS/RESULTS

The results in this section are presented based on the research questions.

*Is there a significant difference between total self-efficacy scores of language teachers who participated in an Erasmus+ program (Erasmus+ language teachers) and the ones who did not participate in an Erasmus+ program (Erasmus- language teachers)?*

First of all, the teachers' descriptive statistics are given in the Table 2:

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the teachers.

Teachers	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Erasmus+	82	73.085	25.707	2.839
Erasmus -	120	72.491	27.420	2.503

As seen in **Table 2**, there are 82 teachers who participated in an Erasmus+ program, and there are 120 teachers who did not participate in an Erasmus+ program. The mean of Erasmus+ teachers is slightly higher than the mean of Erasmus- teachers with a slightly lower standard deviation from the mean. The potential difference between the groups were computed by independent samples t-test, and the results are given in **Table 3**:

**Table 3.** The difference between Erasmus+ teachers and Erasmus- language teachers.

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.879	0.350	0.155	200	0.877	0.594	3.831	-6.961	8.148
Equal variances not assumed			0.157	181.310	0.876	0.594	3.785	-6.874	8.062

**Table 3** presents Levene's test for equality. It shows that the variances of the groups are not significantly different from each other. Independent samples t-test also shows that there is not a significant difference between the groups who participated in an Erasmus+ program and who did not. This might mean that Erasmus+ program does not make an effect on language teachers' self-efficacy.

*Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in student engagement of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?*

**Table 4** presents some descriptive statistics of the teachers in student engagement.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of the teachers in student engagement.

Teachers	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
SE-Erasmus+	82	23.732	8.857	0.978
SE-Erasmus-	120	23.358	9.249	0.844

The mean of Erasmus+ language teachers for student engagement is also slightly higher than the mean of Erasmus- language teachers with a slightly lower standard deviation from the mean. The potential difference between the groups were also computed by independent samples t-test, and the results are given below:

**Table 5.** The difference between Erasmus+ teachers and Erasmus- language teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement.

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.166	0.684	0.287	200	0.775	0.373	1.303	-2.195	2.942
Equal variances not assumed			0.289	179.028	0.773	0.373	1.292	-2.176	2.923

**Table 5** also shows the Levene's test for equality, and it indicates that the variances of the groups are not significantly different from each other. Independent samples t-test also shows that there is not a significant difference between the groups who participated in an Erasmus+ program and who did not in student engagement. This might mean that Erasmus+ program does not make an effect on language teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement.

*Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in instructional strategies of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?*

**Table 6** presents the descriptive statistics of the teachers in instructional strategies.

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics of the teachers in instructional strategies.

Teachers	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
IS-Erasmus+	82	24.781	8.951	0.989
IS-Erasmus-	120	25.133	9.607	0.877

The mean of Erasmus+ language teachers for self-efficacy in instructional strategies is slightly lower than the mean of Erasmus- language teachers with a slightly lower standard deviation from the mean. The potential difference between the groups were also computed by independent samples t-test, and the results are given below:

**Table 7.** The difference between Erasmus+ teachers and Erasmus- language teachers' self-efficacy in instructional strategies.

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.891	0.346	-0.263	200	0.792	-0.353	1.339	-2.994	2.288
Equal variances not assumed			-0.267	181.956	0.790	-0.353	1.321	-2.960	2.254

**Table 7** presents that the variances of the groups are not significantly different from each other based on the result of Levene's test for equality. Independent samples t-test also shows that there is not a significant difference between the self-efficacy of the Erasmus+ group and Erasmus- group in instructional strategies. This might mean that Erasmus+ program also makes no effect on language teachers' self-efficacy in instructional strategies.

*Is there a significant difference between self-efficacy scores in classroom management of Erasmus+ language teachers and Erasmus- language teachers?*

The descriptive statistics of the teachers in classroom management are presented in **Table 8**:

**Table 8.** Descriptive statistics of the teachers in classroom management.

Teachers	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
CM-Erasmus+	82	24.573	8.672	0.958
CM-Erasmus-	120	24.000	9.336	0.852

The mean of Erasmus+ language teachers for self-efficacy in classroom management is slightly higher than the mean of Erasmus- language teachers with a slightly lower standard deviation from the mean. The potential difference between the groups were also computed by independent samples t-test, and the results are given below:

**Table 9.** The difference between Erasmus+ teachers and Erasmus- language teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management.

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.769	0.382	0.441	200	0.660	0.573	1.300	-1.990	3.137
Equal variances not assumed			0.447	182.277	0.655	0.573	1.282	-1.956	3.103

Finally, **Table 9** shows that the variances of the groups are not significantly different from each other. Independent samples t-test also shows that there is no significant difference between the self-efficacy of the Erasmus+ group and Erasmus- group in classroom management. This might mean that Erasmus+ program also makes no effect on language teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results basically showed that Erasmus+ experience did not make a positive effect on teachers' total self-efficacy scores. Independent samples t-test also revealed that there is not a significant difference between the self-efficacy scores of the Erasmus+ group and Erasmus- group in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

[Bandura \(1986\)](#) states that people must believe that they have some degree of control over the circumstances that affect their life to be successful. For a teacher to be successful in the classroom, he or she must have faith in their capacity to influence student learning. Because of this, instructors' classroom behavior is influenced by their thought and emotional habits. Hence, some teacher candidates or teachers make decisions and go through programs like Erasmus+ to make a difference or to experience learning and teaching in another context, that is in another country and another department.

A lot of interest is shown for these programs all around the world. Therefore, this study set out on its way to compare the self-efficacy of English teachers who participated in the Erasmus+ program and the ones who did not. Teachers who made the decision to improve themselves or had the chance as teacher candidates, benefited from the Erasmus+ program. However, it was found out that it did not bring out meaningful differences in terms of self-efficacy of the teachers who participated in the program. This might lead us to the four factors which influence teacher self-efficacy: mastery experiences (one's own experiences of success and failure); verbal persuasion (feedback from significant others); vicarious experiences (modelling and observation of ideal person and/or performance); and emotional arousal (associated with perceived capability that influence the process and outcomes of the attempted task) ([Alamayehu & Genene, 2019](#)).

Erasmus+ program on its own did not seem to be sufficient for an increased self-efficacy of the teachers who participated in the program. According to the described factors, experiences like Erasmus+ fall under mastery experiences. The teachers might have completed a successful semester in the universities where they followed the Erasmus+ program, but if they had missing factors like verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences and emotional arousal, they might not have ended up with high self-efficacy levels as expected. It might be concluded that Erasmus+ is not a stand-alone factor to increase the self-efficacy of English teachers.

From another perspective, the general self-efficacy scores of the whole group of teachers participating the research is above the average. It can be said that they have moderate self-efficacy. Teachers with Erasmus+ experience scored 65.3% and the ones without Erasmus+ scored 65.8% in the survey. As this study focused only on the difference between these two groups in terms of self-efficacy, the general concept of self-efficacy and the other contributing factors have not been discussed.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Erasmus+ program did not create a difference in terms of self-efficacy for the English language teachers. The program has contributed to the field of higher education and education in general for many years, and found out to have many positive impacts on many factors as found out in different studies. For example, [Jacobone and Moro \(2015\)](#) found out that similar programs had positive outcomes in terms of cultural enhancement, personal development, and foreign language proficiency. Supporting this view, [Aydin \(2012\)](#) also found out in this study that the Erasmus+ process is mostly effective on the language skills and knowledge of the participating teachers, their professional and personal development, and their perceptions towards culture and recreational activities.

He also added that it increased the self-confidence and reduced communication apprehension. [Asoodar, Atai, and Baten \(2017\)](#) also concluded that becoming more independent, gaining another perspective on the way things are at home, and interacting with people from other cultures were important outcomes for Erasmus+ participants. When it comes to this study, it is surprising to see that this experience did not result in high self-efficacy for the

English teachers. The studies carried out just after the completion of the Erasmus+ gave out more positive outcomes as listed above. However, this study did not. This might have stemmed from reasons such as the time interval between the time spent in the Erasmus+ program and the time this study was conducted. The teachers have been working in the field as teachers for some years (0-5 minimum). Many changes might have occurred in the participants' professional lives.

Extraneous factors might have affected their self-efficacy. The teachers who participated in the Erasmus+ and the ones who did not, have the same self-efficacy scores, and there was a slight difference between them (-+0.5%). As the study just focused on comparing the two groups, it did not focus on the other factors affecting self-efficacy. This study consisted of 202 English teachers from different countries with different educational backgrounds in different parts of the world. Besides, the sample was limited, and the results cannot be generalized. The experience these participants had in their teaching career also differed. Therefore, this study is limited in terms of the background of the participants involved.

Therefore, it might be concluded that Erasmus+ might be an outstanding opportunity for teacher candidates for receiving an international education and improving themselves, but it does not seem to be a predictor of high self-efficacy in their teaching career.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

For future studies, it can be suggested to include more participants to make a better comparison. Conducting further interviews and collecting in-depth information on self-efficacy of teachers might also reveal more insight and extensive results to explain this experience and its effects on self-efficacy. It might also be more convenient to contact Erasmus+ offices in charge at universities and collect contact information of the participants to reach to a larger sample of teachers under possible conditions.

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