



Effects of Neuro-Linguistic Programming on Language Learners' Self-Efficacy and Language Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

The present study strived to determine the degree to which Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) influenced Iranian EFL learners' language proficiency and self-efficacy. To this end, the researchers non-randomly selected 50 intermediate-level male EFL learners from among the learners of two intact classrooms of a private language institute in Rasht (Iran) as the participants. Next, they randomly appointed to one of these classes as the NLP group and the other class as the control group. After that, they administered the Nelson English language proficiency test, and a self-efficacy questionnaire to the NLP group and the control group as the pretests. Then, the researchers provided the NLP group with NLP treatment in 10 sessions. Notwithstanding, the control group received traditional language instruction. Finally, after the treatment sessions, the researchers administered the above-mentioned proficiency test and self-efficacy questionnaire to the participants as the posttests. SPSS 24 was used to perform the data analysis of the present study. The result of the study highlighted the fact that NLP significantly ameliorated the participants' language proficiency and self-efficacy. The results may provide EFL teacher educators, syllabus designers, and teachers with guiding principles regarding NLP in foreign language contexts.

KEYWORDS: Learner Factors; Neuro-Linguistic Programming; Personal Development; Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem

INTRODUCTION

A close perusal of the pertinent literature (e.g. Doughty & Williams, 1998a, 1998b; Ellis, et al. 2006; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Lyster, et al. 2013; Nakatsukasa & Loewen, 2015) indicates that the researchers have been mainly concerned with the specification of the most advantageous language teaching approaches in the field of Second language Acquisition (SLA) (Ghaith, 2002). Notwithstanding, the majority of the pertinent approaches have oblivious of the significant role of *personal development* in the process of language learning (Dilts, 1983). As Craft (2001) points out, the field of language instruction has not scrutinized the utility of the pedagogical approaches in the fields of *psychology* and *training* which may provide the learners with a more thorough understanding of their objectives and may expedite their communication in the context of the classroom. Among the multitudinous psychological-skill training approaches to human education, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (NLP) has attracted considerable attention in the field of SLA.

Stock (2010) states that NLP was developed in order to highlight the fact that the individuals are able to affect their peers' behavior. Moreover, it intended to show that emulating the successful individuals' behavioral patterns may facilitate the people's learning and might expedite their task performance in various situational contexts. Considering the main objective of NLP, Revell and Norman (1999) make an effort to provide an operational definition of it in the field of education. As they stated:



NLP is a collection of techniques, patterns, and strategies for assisting effective communication, personal growth, and change, and learning. It is based on a series of underlying assumptions about how the mind works and how people act and react (p. 14).

Likewise, Kong and Farrell (2012) note that NLP is an approach which intends to empower the individuals to make major changes to their behaviors in order to achieve their goals. They defined NLP as a comprehensive system which encompasses various strategies and techniques that are formulated and implemented to ameliorate their users' communication and interaction with their interlocutors. Furthermore, these strategies and techniques are used to help the practitioners to obtain information about their interlocutors' diverse characteristics, beliefs, and attitudes, and to empower them to take advantage of their innate abilities in order to achieve their objectives.

Similarly, Tosey and Mathison (2003) argue that NLP constitutes a cluster of techniques which aim to enable the individuals to perform their tasks in an appropriate way. They expounded on the name of this approach and stated that the term *neuro* highlights the fact that neurological functioning underlies the individuals' information processing. That is, it empowers them to process the sensory information of the world and constitutes the basis of their experiences of it. Furthermore, as they noted, the term *linguistic* accentuates the consequential role of the language in the realization of the individuals' experiences. More specifically, language enables the individuals to share their knowledge and experiences of the world with their peers and assists them to develop an understanding of their perspectives on the various aspects of human life. Finally, as Tosey and Mathison (2003) point out, the term *programming* reflects the systematic nature of human emotions and cogitation. In other words, this term refers to the individuals' ability to exert control over their thoughts and feelings (which function as programs) and to modify or reprogram them on the basis of the requirements of the diverse situational contexts. As Tosey and Mathison (2003) conclude, NLP is likely to affect the language learners' *proficiency* and their *personal characteristics* including their self-efficacy among the others.

An examination of the relevant literature (e.g. Owens, 2016) shows that language learners' proficiency has been one of the main concerns in various academic settings. Bremner (1999) stated that, language learners' proficiency is closely linked to their *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1966) which determines the language users' capability to take advantage of their *strategic, pragmatic, and discourse-based* competences in order to engage in communication with other language users in various situational contexts. Considering this issue, he defined language learners' proficiency as their ability to use the target language in an accurate and fluent way in order to interact with their peers and the teacher in an effective way.

Likewise, Leonard (2018) stated that learners' language proficiency determines the degree to which they are able to use the various skills and aspects of the target language in order to express their intended meanings (using the oral or written modes of the target language) and to interpret the other language users' intentions in a satisfactory way. As Leonard (2018) notes, the syllabus designers, language teachers, and researchers have been concerned with this construct due to various reasons. According to him, the syllabus designers make an attempt to examine the learners' proficiency level to place them in the appropriate language courses which help the learners to corroborate their current knowledge of the target language and to gain information on the various aspects of the relevant second language. Moreover, language teachers make an endeavor to examine their learners' language proficiency in order to determine the most effective language teaching strategies and techniques for ameliorating their language learning. Finally, the SLA researchers are interested in the language learners' language proficiency to determine the impact of various approaches on their language learning and personal factors. As Leonard (2018) conclude, the language learners' proficiency is interlinked with their personal characteristics including their *self-efficacy* among the others.

Bandura (1997) avers that self-efficacy encompasses an affective factor which is likely to sway all of the dimensions of a person's life in the society. He defined this factor as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 97). Likewise, Deuling and Burns (2017) specify three-subcomponents of self-efficacy including *initiative, endeavor, and persistence*. Based on these sub-components, they defined self-efficacy as an affective factor which prompts the individuals to initiate various activities, empowers them to put considerable effort into doing the pertinent activities, and motivates them to persist



in relishing the relevant challenges. In the field of education, self-efficacy has been conceptualized as a learner's overall appraisal of his/her capacity to pursue and to accomplish educational objectives (Pajares, 2008).

Considering the above-mentioned discussion of self-efficacy, Cai, Liu, Wang, Liu, and Liang (2021) expounded on the underlying characteristics of the learners with high levels of self-efficacy. They note that these learners have a high opinion of their learning potentiality and consider themselves to be active and responsible in the context of the classroom. Furthermore, they set clear and specific learning goals and strive to achieve them in their relevant educational settings. As Cai et al. (2021) conclude, there is a need for more empirical studies of this construct in diverse academic settings.

The examination of the pertinent studies of NLP in the field of SLA indicates that SLA researchers have disregarded certain lines of research on this approach. More specifically, a number of studies (e.g. Cai et al., 2021; Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015) have examined the extent to which NLP influences the language teachers' success in the context of the classroom. Other studies (e.g. Hosseinzadeh & Baradaran, 2015; Liu & Liang, 2021) have made an effort to determine the impact of NLP on the language learners' autonomy during the process of second language acquisition. Furthermore, a group of empirical studies (e.g. Deuling & Burns, 2017; Tosey & Mathison, 2010) have tried to determine the language learners' and teachers' perspectives on NLP as an innovative approach to the instruction of the second language in different academic settings. Finally, some of the relevant studies (e.g. Leonard, 2018; Pishghadam, Shayesteh Ferdowsi & Shapoori, 2011) have tried to validate the relevant NLP scales in the foreign language learning contexts.

Nonetheless, the pertinent studies of NLP have followed the above-mentioned lines of research to the exclusion of the scrutiny of language learner's proficiency and other individual factors including self-efficacy among others. More specifically, the relevant studies have not examined the extent to which NLP influences the language learners' proficiency and self-efficacy in the context of the classroom. This issue shows that there is a need for more empirical studies of NLP in foreign language learning contexts including the EFL context of Iran. The present study made an endeavor to deal with this issue in the EFL context of Iran.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

Considering the main aims of the study, 50 intermediate-level male EFL learners were selected from among 379 language learners of a private language institute in Rasht (Iran) based on their results on a placement test as the participants of the present study. These participants were non-randomly selected from two intact classrooms (i.e. 25 learners in each classroom). Moreover, all of them were native speakers of Gilaki and ranged in age from 17 to 24. Finally, they had taken general English courses for two years.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

PLACEMENT TEST

The intermediate-level EFL learners had to be selected as the participants of the study. To this end, *Oxford Placement Test*, which was developed by Allan (2004), was used to select the participants. This placement test comprised three main sections including: *cloze test*, *grammar*, and *vocabulary*. Each of these sections encompassed 20 multiple-choice items. The test instructions noted that the participants whose scores ranged from 30 to 39 had to be placed at intermediate-level. The reliability (.84) and validity (.86) indices of this test have proved to be satisfactory (Allan, 2004). Notwithstanding, Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency was utilized to examine the reliability of this test. The results of the reliability analysis showed that the reliability index (.85) of the test was acceptable. Consequently, it was used in the present study.



THE PROFICIENCY TEST

Nelson English Language Proficiency Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) was used as the language proficiency pretest and posttest of the study due to its compatibility with the objectives of the study. This test encompassed 50 multiple-choice items in three major sections including: cloze test, vocabulary, and structure. Fowler and Coe (1976) pointed out that the results of statistical data analysis revealed that the reliability (.84) and validity (.87) indices of the test were satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency showed that the reliability of this instrument was .81 in a pilot study in Iranian context. Therefore, it was used in this study.

SELF-EFFICACY QUESTIONNAIRE

Considering the objective of the present study, the researchers used Farsi version of Wang, Kim, Bai, and Hu's (2014) self-efficacy questionnaire as a pretest and a posttest in order to examine the participants' self- prior to the onset of the treatment of the study and after its termination. This self-report questionnaire encompassed 32 Likert-scale items which were rated on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from *I cannot do it at all* to *I can do it very well*. As Wang et al. (2014) pointed out the reliability (.84) and validity (.87) indices of the questionnaire were satisfactory on the basis of the results of the relevant analyses and it constituted an appropriate instrument for examining the language learners' self-efficacy. Based on the Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency, the reliability of this instrument was .82 in a pilot study in Iranian context. Consequently, it was used in this study.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The researchers conducted the present study during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period of time, the general English classes at the pertinent language institute of the present study were taught online using the *Adobe Connect* learning management system due to the fact that it was not possible to attend the in-person classes. Considering this issue, the researchers used the Adobe Connect learning management system to provide the experimental and the control groups of the present study with their appropriate treatments. This management system enabled the researchers to take advantage of the file-sharing and web-conferencing features to conduct the present study.

PROCEDURE

In the present study, first, 50 intermediate-level male EFL learners were non-randomly selected from among the learners of two intact classrooms of a private language institute in Rasht (Iran) based on their results on the Oxford Placement Test (Allan, 2004) as the participants of the present study. Next, one of the above-mentioned classes was randomly appointed as the experimental group or the NLP group and the other class was appointed as the control group of the study. Then, Fowler and Coe's (1976) Nelson English Language Proficiency Test, and Wang et al.'s (2014) Self-Efficacy Questionnaire were administered to the NLP group and the control group as the pretests of the study using Google Forms during a 2-week period of time prior to the onset of the treatment of the study. The participants completed the proficiency test, the self-esteem questionnaire, and the self-efficacy questionnaire in of the study in about 60 and 15 minutes respectively.

After that, during the treatment sessions, the NLP group and the control group were provided with their appropriate treatments. More specifically, in the NLP group, the researchers provided the language learners with the instruction of second language forms including its vocabulary items and grammatical structures (due to the learners' intermediate proficiency level) based on Revel and Norman's (1999) NLP principles including *specification of objectives, development of rapport, utility of senses, and adaptability of responses*. That is, the researchers made the learners of this group aware of the required outcome of the relevant tasks in a suitable way. Moreover, they established rapport with the learners in order to facilitate the second language communication in the context of the classroom. Furthermore, they prompted the participants to use their visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory senses to gain a satisfactory understanding of their intentions and the other learners' intentions during the process of task performance. Finally, the researchers encouraged the students to brainstorm ideas in order to specify alternative solutions to the problems that they faced during the performances of the relevant tasks. More specifically, they



motivated the learners to develop diverse kinds of skills which could be used when their current skills were not effective in the pertinent situational contexts. The learners' development of these skills could have an advantageous impact on the learners' self-efficacy.

For instance, in order to provide the learners of the NLP group with the instruction of the present perfect tense, the researchers assisted them to grasp the meaning of this tense with the help of an imaginary journey to the gym. That is, first, the researchers made the learners aware of the fact that they needed to use the present perfect tense as the outcome of the task. Second, they ensured that the learners were able to understand the relevant vocabulary items of the task such as *gym* and *dumbbell* among others. Third, they asked the learners to relax, close their eyes and imagine a gym with a lot of equipment including various kinds of dumbbells. Fourth, they motivated them to imagine a 10-minute dumbbell workout at the gym. More specifically, they guided them to follow the procedure of a dumbbell workout in a stepwise fashion. They motivated the learners to use all of their senses to have a better imaginary experience of the workout procedure. At the end of the imaginary workout procedure, the researchers repeated the sentence "You have worked out at the gym". Fifth, they asked the learners to open their eyes and bring back the experience of the gym which constituted the experience of the present perfect tense. That is, they asked them to bring back the feeling of fatigue in their arms in order to grasp the intention of the present perfect tense which links the past to the present. Lastly, they wrote the sentence "You have worked out at the gym" on the board and asked the learners to contrast it with the sentence "You worked out at the gym", which was the topic of the preceding session, in order to help the learners understand the differences between the simple past tense and the present perfect tense by distinguishing their pertinent feelings from each other. Notwithstanding, the control group did not receive the above-mentioned NLP treatment. In this group, the researchers used the traditional focus on forms approach in order to teach the relevant forms (e.g. vocabulary items & grammatical structures). The NLP group and the control group received their relevant treatments in 10 sessions during a 5-week period (i.e. 2 sessions per week). The researchers expected NLP to ameliorate the learners' self-efficacy because it made them aware of the utility of their internal resources.

Finally, subsequent to the end of the treatment sessions, the researchers administered Fowler and Coe's (1976) Nelson English Language Proficiency Test, and Wang et al.'s (2014) Self-Efficacy Questionnaire to the participants using Google Forms as the posttests of the study. Similar to the pretests, the participants answered the items of the proficiency test and the self-esteem questionnaire of the study in about 60 and 15 minutes respectively. SPSS 24 was used to perform the data analysis of the present study.

DESIGN

Mackey and Gass (2016) argued that the quantitative approach to research takes advantage of numeric and quantifiable data to answer the raised questions. As they explained, the experimental design constitutes a major category of the designs in the quantitative approach to research. This research design takes advantage of trials in the form of pretest-treatment-posttest procedures in order to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables and to accept or reject the pre-determined research hypotheses. Mackey and Gass (2016) averred that the experimental designs are distinguished from the quasi-experimental designs based on their random assignment of the participants to the experimental and control groups.

In the present study, the researchers collected numeric data on the examined variables using the relevant instruments of the study. Moreover, they used the pretest-treatment-posttest procedures to examine the impact of the independent variable of the study (i.e. NLP approach to language teaching) on the dependent variables (i.e. language proficiency & self-efficacy) and to answer the pertinent research questions. Nonetheless, they were not able to randomly assign the participants to the experimental group and the control group of the study. Considering these issues, it can be argued that the present study adopted the quantitative approach to research and used the quasi-experimental design in order to answer the raised research questions.



Results

The collected data were scrutinized to specify the requisite statistical tests for analyzing them. A careful perusal of the data characteristics indicated that they were: a) interval; b) gathered independently; and c) normally distributed based on the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Therefore, *t-test* was used to analyze the data. Table 1 and Table 2 show the normality results:

Table 1

Tests of Normality of the Performances of the NLP Group on the Language Proficiency and Self-Efficacy Pretests and Posttests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Language Proficiency Pretest	.115	25	.241	.922	25	.496
Language Proficiency Posttest	.141	25	.258	.961	25	.441
Self-Efficacy Pretest	.138	25	.285	.937	25	.472
Self-efficacy Posttest	.121	25	.265	.981	25	.467

Table 2

Tests of Normality of the Performances of the Control Group on the Language Proficiency and Self-Efficacy Pretests and Posttests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Language Proficiency Pretest	.122	25	.222	.912	25	.443
Language Proficiency Posttest	.167	25	.259	.998	25	.476
Self-Efficacy Pretest	.196	25	.232	.964	25	.455
Self-efficacy Posttest	.154	25	.243	.932	25	.446



Question 1 focused on the impact of NLP on participants' language proficiency. On the basis of the objective of this research question, first, the performances of NLP group and control group on language proficiency pretest were compared for ascertaining their homogeneity prior to the onset of the study. Table 3 provides these results:

Table 3
Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Language Proficiency Pretest

Proficiency Pretest	N	M	SD	SEM
NLP Group	25	27.36	3.108	.622
Control Group	25	28.64	4.081	.816

A t-test was used to examine the significance of the results. Table 4 shows the relevant results:

Table 4
The t-test of the Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Language Proficiency Pretest

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CID	
								L	U
Equal variances assumed	2.094	.154	-1.248	48	.218	-1.280	1.026	-3.343	.783
Equal variances not assumed			-1.248	44	.219	-1.280	1.026	-3.347	.787

According to Table 4, p-value (.218) was greater than .05. Therefore, the above-mentioned was not significant. Figure 1 shows these results:

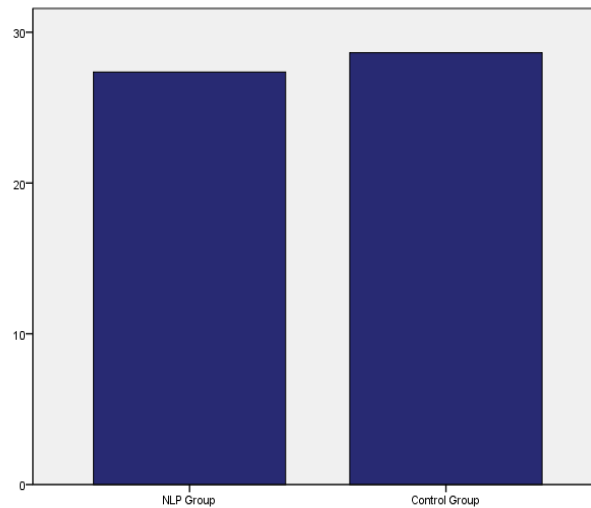


Figure 1. Pretest Results of Language Proficiency

Consequently, the researcher compared the performances of NLP group to determine the effectiveness of treatment for ameliorating the participants' language proficiency. Table 5 provides these results:

Table 5

Performances of NLP Group

	M	N	SD	SEM
Proficiency Pretest	27.36	25	3.108	.622
Proficiency Posttest	36.28	25	3.565	.713

The researchers used a t-test to for examining the statistical significance. Table 6 shows these results:

Table 6

The t-test of Performances of NLP Group

	PD			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	df	Sig.
	M	SD	SEM				
Proficiency Pretest - Proficiency Posttest	-8.920	4.600	.920	-10.819 -7.021	-9.696	24	.000

According to Table 6, p-value (.000) was less than .05. Consequently, the difference was significant. Figure 2 provides the results:

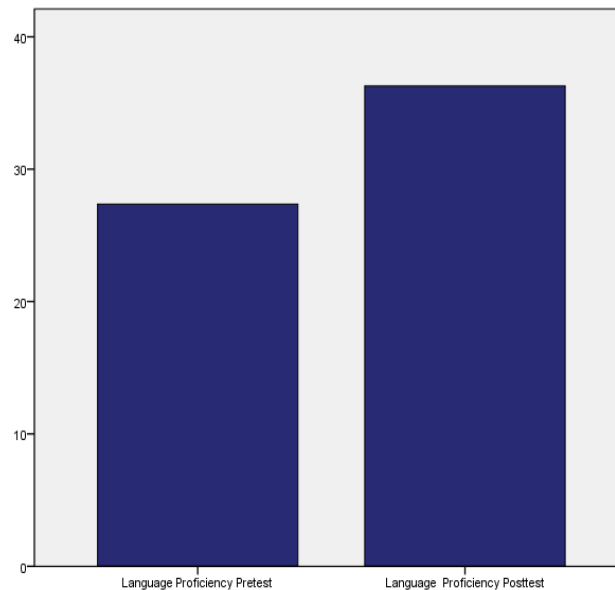


Figure 2. NLP Group Results

Notwithstanding, to eliminate the possibility of the impact of chance on the obtained results, the researcher compared performances of NLP group and control group on the language proficiency posttest. Table 7 provides the results of this comparison:

Table 7
Performances of NLP Group and Control Group on Language Proficiency Posttest

Language Proficiency Posttest	N	M	SD	SEM
NLP Group	25	36.28	3.565	.713
Control Group	25	31.60	2.887	.577

The researcher used a t-test for examining statistical significance. Table 8 shows these results:

Table 8
The t-test of Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Language Proficiency Posttest

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CID	
								L	U
Equal variances assumed	1.697	.199	5.101	48	.000	4.680	.917	2.835	6.525



Equal variances not assumed	5.10 1	46.0 1	.000	4.680	.917	2.833	6.527
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According to Table 8, p-value (.000) was higher than .05. Therefore, the difference was significant. Figure 3 provides the results:

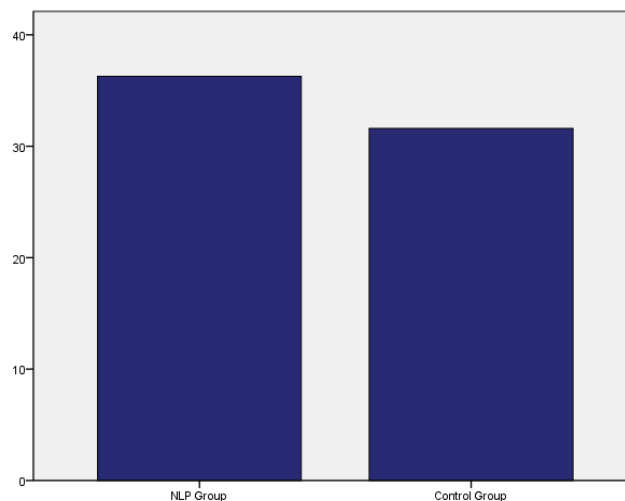


Figure 3. Results of NLP and Control Groups

Question 2 strived to determine the degree to which NLP influenced the EFL learners' self-efficacy. Considering this objective, first, the performances of NLP and control groups were compared on self-efficacy pretest. Table 9 shows the relevant results:

Table 9
Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Self-Efficacy Pretest

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
NLP Group	25	125.24	2.976	.595
Control Group	25	126.60	3.979	.796

A t-test was used to examine the statistical significance. Table 10 provides these results:



Table 10

The t-test of Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Self-efficacy Pretest

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CID L	UU
Equal variances assumed	2.503	.120	-1.369	48	.178	-1.360	.994	-3.358	.638
Equal variances not assumed			-1.369	44.451	.178	-1.360	.994	-3.362	.642

Based on Table 10, the p-value (.178) was higher than .05. Therefore, the difference was not significant. Figure 4 shows the above-mentioned results:

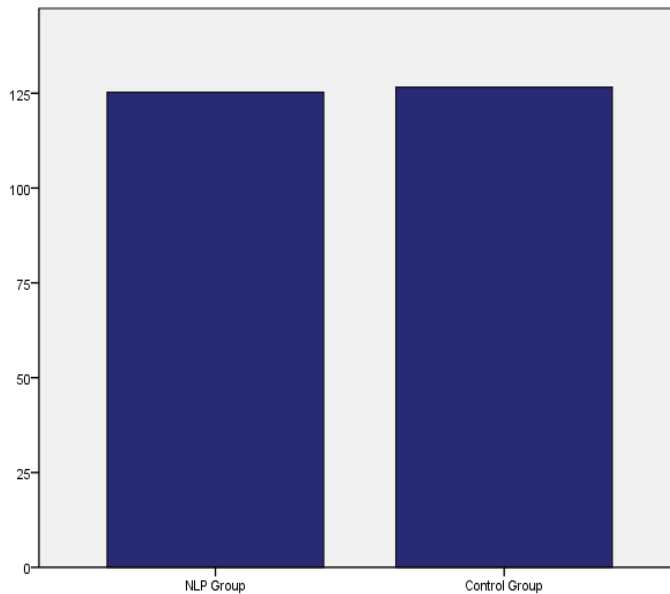


Figure 4. Results of NLP and Control Groups on the Self-Efficacy Pretest

The performances of NLP group on self-efficacy pretest and posttest were compared to determine the impact of treatment on participants' self-efficacy. Table 11 shows these results:



Table 11

Performances of NLP Group on Self-Efficacy Pretest and Posttest

	M	N	SD	SEM
Self-Efficacy Pretest	123.24	25	20.080	4.016
Self-Efficacy Posttest	151.36	25	10.226	2.045

The researchers used a t-test for examining statistical significance. Table 12 provides these results:

Table 12

The t-test of Performances of NLP Group on Self-Efficacy Pretest and Posttest

	PD				t	df	Sig.
	95% CID						
	M	SD	SEM	L U			
Pretest - Posttest	-28.120	23.210	4.642	-37.701 -18.539	-6.058	24	.000

According to Table 10, the p-value (.000.) was less than .05. Therefore, the difference was significant. Figure 5 indicates this difference:

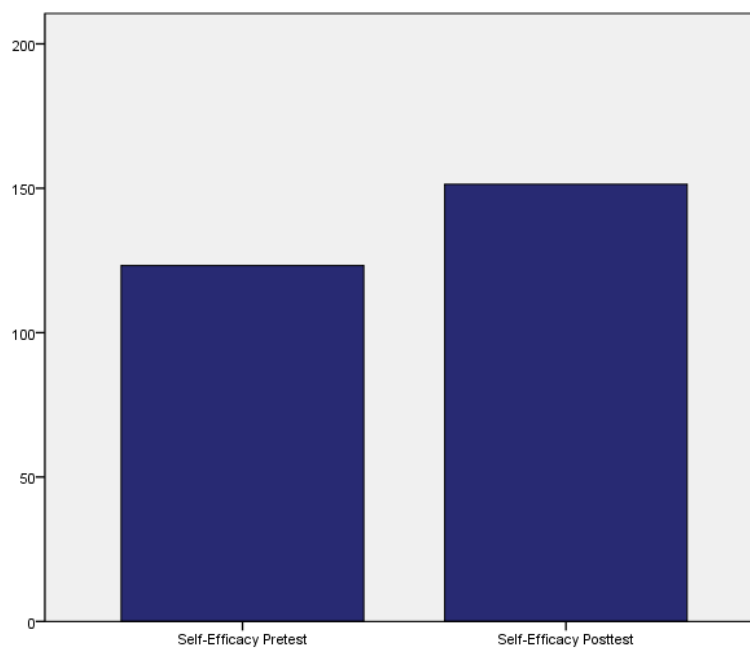


Figure 5. Results of NLP Group

Notwithstanding, to eliminate the possibility of the impact of chance on the obtained results, the researchers compared performances of NLP and control groups on self-efficacy posttest. Table 13 shows these results:

Table 13
Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Self-Efficacy Posttest

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
NLP Group	25	151.36	10.226	2.045
Control Group	25	130.36	3.402	.680

The researchers used a t-test for examining the statistical significance. Table 14 provides these results:



Table 14

The t-test of Performances of NLP and Control Groups on Self-Efficacy Posttest

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CID	
								L	U
Equal variances assumed	25.494	.541	9.743	48	.000	21.000	2.155	16.666	25.334
Equal variances not assumed			9.743	29.248	.000	21.000	2.155	16.593	25.407

According to Table 14, p-value (.000) was less than .05. Therefore, the difference was significant. Figure 6 indicates the results:

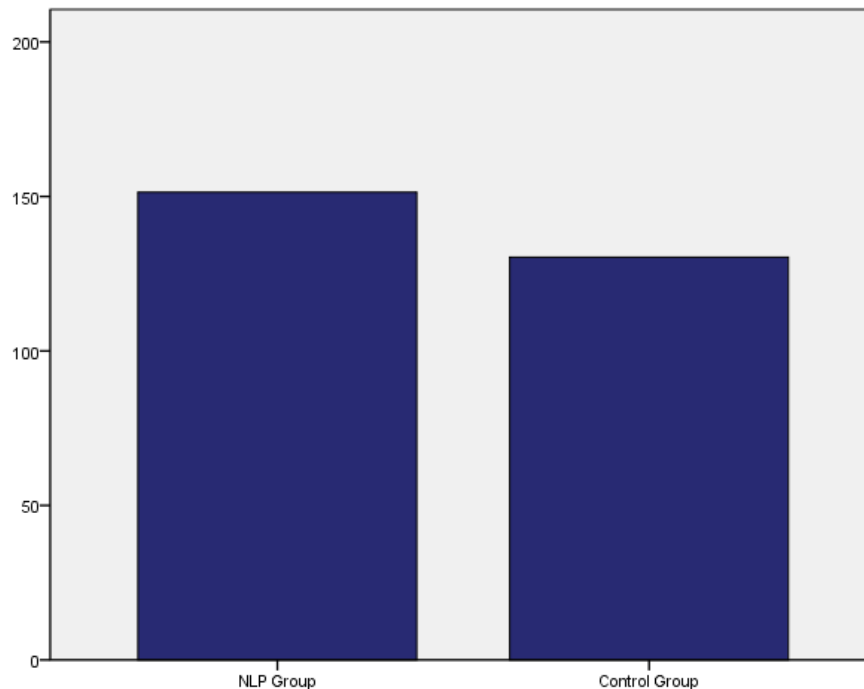


Figure 6. Results of NLP and Control Groups

DISCUSSION

The first research question of the study made an effort to determine the impact of NLP on the language learners' language proficiency in the context of the classroom. The obtained results showed that this approach significantly ameliorated the participants' language proficiency. In general, these results are in line with the results of the studies by Millroad (2004), and Pishghadam et al. (2011) which indicated the positive effect of NLP on the language teachers' classroom discourse and success in their academic settings.



Kong and Farrell (2012) pointed out that the NLP approach is likely to motivate the language learners to consider their more competent peers as models in the context of the classroom. As they explained, this approach makes the learners aware of the language learning strategies which are used by the successful language learners and prompts them to take advantage of them in order to learn the various aspects of the target language. Likewise, Stipancic et al. (2010) noted that NLP encourages the language learners to ask their more competent peers to provide them with constructive feedback on the diverse aspects of their language output. As they pointed out, this kind of feedback enables the language learners to determine their strengths and weaknesses in the process of language learning and empowers them to improve their language proficiency in the context of the classroom.

Considering these issues, it can be argued that, in the present study, NLP had an advantageous impact on the language learners' language proficiency due largely to the fact that it prompted them to model their competent peers and to take advantage of their effective language learning strategies. Moreover, this approach motivated the learners to take advantage of their competent peers' feedback to deal with their weaknesses in the process of task performance and to ameliorate their language proficiency. The second research question strived to determine the degree to which NLP influenced the language learners' self-efficacy. The results of the study showed that this approach to language instruction had an advantageous effect on the participants' self-efficacy in the context of the classroom. In general, these results support the results of the study conducted by Hosseinzadeh and Baradaran (2015) that showed NLP had a positive impact on the increase in the language learners' autonomy in the process of language learning.

Peker (2010) stated that NLP may have a beneficial impact on the language learners' appraisals of their language learning capabilities in their language classes. He argued that, this approach to language instruction empowers the learners to deal with the stress-inducing factors in the context of the classroom and prompts them to develop specific affective strategies for coping with their negative emotions in the process of language learning. According to him the learners' ability to deal with these emotions has a positive impact on their perspectives of their language learning abilities. Moreover, Wikowski (2012) pointed out that, NLP constitutes an approach to language instruction that enables the learners to formulate and implement effective plans for achieving their language learning objectives in the relevant settings. As he explained, this approach makes the learners aware of the consequential role of goal-setting in the process of learning and empowers them to evaluate their performance on the basis of the pre-determined criteria. According to him, the learners' use of the efficacious learning plans and their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses ameliorate their perspectives on their own language learning abilities. Considering these issues, it can be argued that, in the present study, NLP had an advantageous effect on the participants' self-efficacy since owing to the fact that it ameliorated their perspectives on their language learning abilities by empowering them to deal with their negative emotions and by helping them to formulate and implement efficacious language learning plans in their relevant setting.

CONCLUSION

The present study strived to determine the degree to which NLP affected EFL learners' language proficiency and self-efficacy. The results underlined the fact that this approach to second language instruction ameliorated the participants' language proficiency and empowered them to build self-efficacy in the context of the classroom. It appears that a number of provisional conclusions can be drawn based on the above-mentioned results. First, the teacher education courses in the EFL contexts including the Iranian EFL contexts have to be thoroughly redressed (Dilts, 1983). This major overhaul has to focus on the teacher educators and the course modules. The examination of the characteristics of the preponderance of the teacher educators indicates that they are experienced instructors who have gained national or international teacher education certificates during their in-service years (Ghaith, 2002). Consequently, these educators tend to focus on the practical and efficacious techniques and strategies which facilitate the instruction of the various skills and aspects of the target language. This issue shows that, in general, they are not reasonably well-informed about the psychology-based training approaches including NLP among others. In the above-mentioned overhaul process, the teacher educators have to be provided with comprehensive education regarding the underlying assumptions of NLP. The relevant education courses should familiarize the teacher educators with the theoretical discussions of NLP along with its practical implications. The teacher educators need to be able to train the prospective language teachers to take advantage of NLP in order to teach the forms and functions of the target language in an effective way.



Furthermore, the scrutiny of the teacher education curricula underscores the fact that most of them have been developed to provide the pre-service and in-service teachers with guiding principles of the instruction of diverse skills and aspects of the pertinent target language (Leonard, 2018). In certain cases, the teacher education courses of language institutes make an endeavor to train the instructors to teach the pre-determined course books of the relevant institutes. Therefore, these courses do not provide the language instructors with adequate information on psychology-based instructional approaches including NLP and the language learners' individual factors such as their self-efficacy among others. Considering these issues, it can be argued that the teacher education courses have to be remolded in order to involve certain modules in which the prospective language teachers are furnished with sufficient information on the language learners' factors including their self-efficacy and the fundamental principles of NLP. Furthermore, the relevant course modules have to train the prospective teachers to employ the techniques of NLP and to implement its strategies in order to ameliorate the learner factors (e.g. self-efficacy) in an effective way.

Second, the EFL syllabus designers should thoroughly revise both the EFL materials and teachers' manuals. The preponderance of the tasks and activities in the EFL course books predominantly focus on language skills and aspects and disregard the learners' psychology-based training which might facilitate and expedite their acquisition of the various aspects of the target language in an effective way. Consequently, there is a need to revise the relevant course books based on the fundamental principles of NLP. More specifically, these course books have to help the learners to determine the relevant objectives of tasks, establish rapport with their peers, take advantage of their senses, and adapt their learning strategies to the requirements of the relevant tasks. Moreover, the perusal of the teacher manuals shows that they mainly focus on the teaching of the relevant course books and disregard the psychological training strategies. Therefore, these manuals have to be reworked to apprise the teachers of the underlying assumptions of NLP and to train them to use its techniques in order to empower the learners to learn the target language and to build their self-efficacy.

Finally, the language teachers have to obtain sufficient information on the theoretical and practical considerations of NLP in order to ameliorate their learners' self-efficacy. Teachers can hold workshops on the above-mentioned issues of NLP with the help of their colleagues in order to understand the major principles of this approach and to apply them in their classrooms in an effective way. In addition, they can form groups on the social media applications to assist their peers to share their classroom experiences with the NLP strategies and to receive constructive comments on their classroom practices. The present study had a number of limitations since it focused on male learners and selected its participants from one language background. Furthermore, it had certain delimitations due to the fact that it investigated the effectiveness of NLP at the intermediate proficiency level and did not examine the other levels of proficiency. The future studies have to deal with these limitations and delimitations. More specifically, these studies should involve larger samples and need to select their participants from among male and female learners. Moreover, they have to focus on participants from different language backgrounds and proficiency levels. Furthermore, the future studies need to examine the impact of NLP on the other learner factors such as motivation, learner beliefs, and attitudes among others. Finally, the pertinent studies should be conducted in different academic settings in both second and foreign language learning contexts.



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