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# A study on preservice English teachers' self-efficacy perceptions and tendency towards academic dishonesty

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine preservice English teachers' self-efficacy and tendency for academic dishonesty levels. A total of 239 university students participated in the study. Data were gathered by using the "Teacher Efficacy Scale" and "Tendency towards Academic dishonesty Scale". The results revealed no meaningful difference between tendency for academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perception levels by gender or school type. Additionally, 4th year students had a higher tendency for academic dishonesty than 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students; 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students had higher self-efficacy perception levels than 4th year students; and a weak, negative and meaningful relationship was found between tendency for academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perception levels.

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*Keywords:* Department of English Language Teaching; preservice English teacher; self-efficacy perception; teacher self-efficacy perception; academic dishonesty.

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## 1. Introduction

The construct of self-efficacy has been developed by Schunk and is based on Bandura's Social Learning theory (Acıkgöz, 1998). It is defined as a determining influence in the formation of one's behaviors, a belief that one has the capacity to successfully execute the necessary courses of actions to attain certain goals. According to this, an individual's self-efficacy perception can be easily observed in his behaviors because an individual with a high self-efficacy perception level fulfils tasks with his intrinsic motivation, without feeling the need to be extrinsically motivated (Bandura,1986). Armor and Bandura define teacher efficacy perceptions as teachers' beliefs about their own effects on the achievement and learning of students who are particularly hard to motivate (cited in: Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, 2001).

Kibler, Nuss, Paterson and Pavela (1988) state that academic dishonesty consists of students' cheating and plagiarism behaviors, which include any attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without due acknowledgment or borrowing work that belongs to another person (cited in: Aluede, Omoregie and Osa-Edoh, 2006). Similar to all stages of the education process, academic dishonesty is also present at universities. Common and on the increase, such behaviors are considered normal by some students. The first step in preventing these

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behaviors within the instructional process is to identify those students who have the tendency towards them (Eminoglu, 2008).

## 2. Method

As the study aimed to explore the existence and/or degree of relationship between two or more variables, the study adopted the relational survey model (Karasar, 2003).

### 2.1. Study Group

Participants were 239 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students from the Department of English Language Teaching.

### 2.2. Data Collection Tools

This study utilized the “Teacher Efficacy Scale” developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984) and later revised by Guskey and Passaro (1994) and adapted to Turkish and tested for validity and reliability by Diken (2005) and the “Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale” developed and tested for validity and reliability by Eminoglu (2008). Guskey and Passaro’s (1994) 21-item “Teacher Efficacy Scale” is a five-point Likert type instrument. The statements are scored as follows: Definitely agree 5 points, Agree 4 points, Undecided 3 points, Disagree 2 points, Definitely disagree 1 point. The maximum possible score that may be obtained from the scale is 105, and the minimum score 21. The scale consists of two independent subdimensions. The first dimension includes 11 items about external factors that affect teacher efficacy. The second dimension, on the other hand, includes 10 items about individual/personal teacher factors that affect teacher efficacy. As the score from the scale increases, so do teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy (Diken, 2005). The other scale used in the study, Eminoglu’s (2008) 22-item “Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale” is also a five-point Likert type instrument with 22 items. The statements are scored as follows: Definitely agree 5 points, Agree 4 points, Undecided 3 points, Disagree 2 points, Definitely disagree 1 point. The maximum possible score that may be obtained from the scale is 110, and the minimum score 22. The first factor of the scale is named “tendency towards cheating”, the second factor “tendency towards dishonesty in work such as home assignments or projects – general”, the third factor “tendency towards dishonesty in research and reporting process” and the fourth factor “tendency towards dishonesty in references” (Eminoglu, 2008). The independent t-test was used in order to reveal the differences in girls’ and boys’ self-efficacy perceptions and their tendency for academic dishonesty, one-way analysis of variance was used in order to reveal the differences in year of study and the type of high school students graduated from, and correlation techniques were used in order to reveal the relationship between students’ self-efficacy perceptions and their tendency towards academic dishonesty.

## 3. Findings and Comments

### 3.1. Findings about the first sub-problem

The first sub-problem of the study was: “Do students’ self-efficacy perceptions and their tendency towards academic dishonesty vary by gender?” Results pertaining to this sub-problem are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Results of the Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale and the Self-Efficacy Scale by Gender

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	sd	t	df	p
Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	Girls	152	2,6232	,59871	-1,098	237	,274
	Boys	87	2,7142	,64733			
Self-Efficacy Scale	Girls	152	3,1569	,37803	-1,718	237	,087
	Boys	87	3,2421	,35172			

Table 1 shows that no meaningful difference existed between male and female students' tendency for academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perception levels.

### 3.2. Findings about the second sub-problem

The second sub-problem of the study was: "Do students' self-efficacy perceptions and their tendency towards academic dishonesty vary by year of study?" and the results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA Results of the Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale and the Self-Efficacy Scale by Year of Study

Source of Variance		Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p
Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	Between groups	16,375	3	5,458	17,276	,000
	Within groups	74,247	235	,316		
	Total	90,622	238			
Self-Efficacy Scale	Between groups	7,343	3	2,448	22,787	,000
	Within groups	25,134	235	,107		
	Total	32,476	238			

According to Table 2, a meaningful difference existed between students' tendency for academic dishonesty [ $F(3,235)=5,46$ ,  $p<.01$ ] and their self-efficacy perception levels with respect to their year of study [ $F(3,235)=2,45$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of the Scheffe test conducted to identify the meaningful difference.

Table 2.2a. Scheffe Test Results for the Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale by Year of Study

	(I) year of study	(J) year of study	Difference in means (I-J)	Standard Error	p
			J		
Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	1	2	-,38679*	,10626	,005
		3	-,22833	,10480	,194
		4	-,73873*	,10705	,000
	2	1	,38679*	,10626	,005
		3	,15847	,09941	,469
		4	-,35193*	,10179	,009
	3	1	,22833	,10480	,194
		2	-,15847	,09941	,469
		4	-,51040*	,10026	,000
	4	1	,73873*	,10705	,000
		2	,35193*	,10179	,009
		3	,51040*	,10026	,000

Table 3 shows that 4th year students displayed a higher tendency towards academic dishonesty than 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students.

Table 4. Scheffe Test Results for the Self-Efficacy Scale by year of Study

	(I) year of study	(J) year of study	Difference in means (I-J)	Standard Error	p
Self-Efficacy Scale	1	2	,09484	,06218	,509
		3	,18783*	,06110	,026
		4	,47751*	,06242	,000
	2	1	-,09484	,06218	,509
		3	,09299	,05821	,467
		4	,38267*	,05959	,000
	3	1	-,18783*	,06110	,026
		2	-,09299	,05821	,467
		4	,28968*	,05846	,000
	4	1	-,47751*	,06242	,000
		2	-,38267*	,05959	,000
		3	-,28968*	,05846	,000

As can be seen from Table 4, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students seemed to have higher self-efficacy perception levels than 4th year students.

### 3.3. Findings about the third sub-problem

The third sub-problem of the study was: “Do students’ tendency towards academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perception levels vary by school type?” and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA Results for the Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale and the Self-Efficacy Scale by School Type

	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p
Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	Between groups	3,280	4	,820	2,197	,070
	Within groups	87,342	234	,373		
	Total	90,622	238			
Self-Efficacy Scale	Between groups	,800	4	,200	1,472	,211
	Within groups	31,676	234	,136		
	Total	32,476	238			

As shown in Table 5, no meaningful difference existed between students’ tendency for academic dishonesty and their self-efficacy perception levels with respect to the type of school they graduated from.

### 3.4. Findings about the fourth sub-problem

The fourth sub-problem of the study was: “Does a meaningful relationship exist between students’ tendency towards academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perception levels?” and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale and Self-Efficacy Scale

		Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	Self-Efficacy Scale
Tendency towards Academic Dishonesty Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	-,217**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	239	239
Self-Efficacy Scale	Pearson Correlation	-,217**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	239	239

A weak, negative and meaningful relationship existed between tendency towards academic dishonesty and self-efficacy perceptions ( $r=-,217$ ;  $p<.01$ ). This reveals that as students’ tendency towards academic dishonesty increased, their self-efficacy perception levels decreased.

## 4. Discussion

Compulsory foreign language courses starting from the fourth grade of primary school her gain increasingly more importance. This is caused by the need to be informed about and keep up with the rapid changes in science and technology. Thus, higher self-efficacy perceptions in foreign language teachers will positively affect students’ self-efficacy perceptions as well. This study examined preservice English teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions and tendency for academic dishonesty from the perspective of several variables and makes the following recommendations in the light of the findings obtained.

The results showed that 4<sup>th</sup> year students’ tendency towards academic dishonesty was higher than that of 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students, but the latter’s self-efficacy perception levels were higher than that of 4th year students. As

can be seen, as the tendency towards academic dishonesty increases, students' self-efficacy perceptions decrease. In a similar vein, Marsden et al. (2005) studied 954 Australian university students in his study entitled "Who Cheats at University? A Self-Assessment Study on Dishonesty with Australian University Students". He aimed to reveal academic dishonesty behaviors and their relationship to demographic factors, the academic policy offered to students, self-efficacy and academic orientation. He concluded that a high level of dishonesty correlated with a low learning orientation, a high performance orientation, low academic self-efficacy, plagiarism and cheating. In contrast to these corroborating results by Marsden et al., the results of the present study are contradicted by Eminoglu-Kucuktepe (2007) in a study entitled "A Study on Preservice Preschool Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception Levels with respect to Several", which concluded that 4th year preschool education students had higher self-efficacy perception levels ( $X=3,33$ ) than that of 1st year students ( $X=3,16$ ). A similar finding was also obtained by Gorrel and Hwang (1995) in a study about the competences of South Korean first and last year preschool and elementary school education students. The results suggested that 4th year preschool education students had more positive personal competence beliefs than first year students. The quality of courses where students are expected to develop self-efficacy perceptions may be improved to enhance their self-efficacy perceptions. On the other hand, educational institutions may take preventive measures to decrease students' tendency towards academic dishonesty.

A weak, negative and meaningful relationship has been determined in this study between students' tendency for academic dishonesty and their self-efficacy perception levels ( $r=-,217$ ;  $p<.01$ ). This suggests that increased self-efficacy perceptions reduce the tendency for academic dishonesty, which is a promising result.

As mentioned earlier, in their study about the competences of South Korean first and last year preschool and elementary school education students, Gorrel and Hwang (1995) found that 4th year preschool education students had more positive personal competence beliefs than first year students. When preschool education students' self-efficacy perception levels were examined with respect to the type of high school they graduated from, a meaningful difference in favor of teacher's high school graduates was found in self-efficacy perception levels at the level .05. Also, the self-efficacy perception level of 4th year preschool education students' ( $X=3,33$ ) was higher than that of first year students ( $X=3,16$ ).

In a study about academic dishonesty at university level, Wajda-Johnston et al. (2001) examined the definition and extent of academic dishonesty, how its extent and impact can be recognized and how the perpetrators justify themselves. The sample of their study included 246 tertiary level students, 49 instructors and 20 administrators. The study used a version of LaGrange's (1992) "Cheating, Academic Dishonesty Scale". The results showed that between 2,5 and 55% of students resort to academic dishonesty naturally. Other studies have found an association between cheating at school and shoplifting (Beck and Ajzen, 1991) tax cheating (Fass, 1990), becoming involved with hazardous substances (Blankenship&Whitley, 2000; Kerkvliet, 1994), and cheating in graduation and professional life as well as displaying unacceptable work ethics (Baldwin et al., 1996).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The results showed that:

Fourth grade students' tendency towards academic dishonesty is greater than first, second, and third grade students. On the other hand, students' perceived self-efficacy beliefs in first, second and third grades are greater than students in fourth grade.

A moderately significant negative relationship was found between students' academic dishonesty behaviors and their perceived self-efficacy beliefs.

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