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The Effect of Gender Differences on Language Achievement Considering Motivation and Self-efficacy in Iranian Context

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Abstract
Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to carry out, organize and perform a task successfully. Motivation consists of the internal and external factors that stimulate the desire to attain a goal. Both are forces that make people pursue a goal and overcome obstacles because people with higher self-efficacy and motivation do their best and do not easily give up when confronted with difficulties. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the academic self - efficacy levels and language learning motivations and their effect on language achievement in different gender groups. Teacher as the researcher chose 40 students who were passing general English course at Islamic Azad University- Tabriz Branch. They were chosen by a modified PET test to choose two homogenous groups. They were randomly divided into two gender groups. This is a comparative study. In the first comparative group, the learners were females and in the other comparative group, learners were males. It was found that there was a strong correlation between English language learning motivation and self-efficacy beliefs of students in two groups on language achievement. It revealed that language learning motivations of the students show a significant difference that favors females. Besides, there is a statistically significant difference in the students' academic self-efficacy beliefs in terms of gender. Male students had higher self-efficacy. The results revealed that high motivation can lead to high language achievement. However, higher self-efficacy does not necessarily lead to better achievement.

Key Words: EFL, language achievement, Motivation, Self-efficacy

1.Review of Literature

Self-Efficacy was developed by Albert Bandura's as part of a larger theory, the Social Learning Theory (Ashford & LeCroy, 2010), which has progressed into the Social Cognitive Theory (Levin, Culkin, & Perrotto, 2001). Social Cognitive Theory was presented by Bandura in response to his dissatisfaction with the principles of behaviorism and psychoanalysis. In these two theories, the role of cognition in motivation and the role of the situation are largely ignored (Bandura, 1977; as cited in Redmond, 2010). "Unidirectional environmental determinism is carried to its extreme in the more radical forms of behaviorism" but humanists and existentialists, who stress the human capacity for conscious judgment and intentional action,

contend that individuals determine what they become by their own free choices.

Self-efficacy is a kind of personal expectation or judgment concerning one's capability to accomplish some task. Schunk (1991) defines self-efficacy as "an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions" (p. 207), Bandura (1986) defines it as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391), and Pintrich (2003b, p. 107) defines it as "students beliefs about their ability to do the task."It is a specific view of one's capacities in a given domain. A student's self-efficacy may play an important role in his or her academic achievement. Schunk (1991) claims that "there is evidence that self-efficacy predicts ... academic achievement" (p. 207). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy affects the amount of effort and persistence that a person devotes to a task.

Suppose that you are taking a class in how to use a computer program for conducting simple statistical tests; since you have never used a statistics program before, your self-efficacy for this task is still undeveloped. After a few minutes, you find that you are able to use the program easily, so your self-efficacy increases. You look over to see that other first-time learners like yourself are learning to use the program. Your self-efficacy soars because you assume that "if they can do it, I can do it." Your instructor walks by and says, "You can do this!" Again, your self-efficacy grows. Your initial sense of high anxiety, including high heart rate and nausea, has left, and now you feel more relaxed. This bodily change also signals an increase in self-efficacy These examples describe four sources of self-efficacy: interpreting one's own performance, interpreting the performance of others, interpreting others' expressions of your capabilities, and interpreting one's physiological state(Schunk,1991).

In any learning situation, students enter with a sense of efficacy that is based on their aptitudes and past experiences in similar tasks. Students' self-efficacy influences what they do, how hard they try, and how long they persist—that is, what Schunk calls "task engagement variables." Throughout the learning episode, the students seek efficacy cues signaling how well they are capable of doing on the task. They use these efficacy cues to establish their self-efficacy for similar tasks in the future. According to Schunk (1991):

Students derive cues signaling how well they are learning, which they use to assess efficacy for further learning. Motivation is enhanced when students perceive they are making progress in learning. In turn, as students ... become more skillful, they maintain a sense of self-efficacy for performing well (p 209)

In short, self-efficacy for a given task both influences and is influenced by students' performance on a task. However, self-efficacy is influenced by how students interpret performance feedback rather than the feedback itself; thus, students who have established high levels of self-efficacy over the course of many experiences are unlikely to suffer lowered self-efficacy as the result of negative performance feedback(Schunk,1991).

Self-efficacy theory predicts that students work harder and longer when they judge themselves as capable than when they judge themselves as unable to perform a task. Pintrich (2003a) summarizes the findings on self-efficacy as follows: "It has been a major finding ... that when people expect to do well, they tend to try hard, persist, and perform

better" (p. 671). This pattern was confirmed in a recent review of self-efficacy studies in which 54 out of 60 effects were positive, prompting the authors to conclude that there was a "small favorable influence of positive self-beliefs on academic achievement" (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004, p. 126).

Motivation is an inner drive which, as Dornyei (1998) says, "…energizes and directs human behavior". There is a consensus on the belief that learners' self-efficacy beliefs have an effect on their goals and motivational factors (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). The study of Cain and Dweck (1995) supports the relation between motivational patterns and beliefs about ability and achievement (self-efficacy) in elementary school children. Another study conducted by Zimmerman & Kitsantas (1997) suggests that increased self-efficacy is accompanied by enhanced intrinsic motivation (Bong & Clark, 1999). Similarly, self-efficacy beliefs and intrinsic values are found to be positively related in a study conducted by Pintrich and De Groot (1990).

The ideas presented so far and the findings of the research into learners' beliefs about self-efficacy and motivation might help language teachers gain a better understanding of the reasons underlying their students' different academic outcomes and thus may help them find ways to enhance appropriate instructional designs. Hence, the relationship between the academic self-efficacy levels and language learning motivations of students appears to be a significant

variable in foreign language classrooms. For this purpose, the following questions are addressed in the current research:

1. Is there a significant relationship between language learning motivation and academic self-efficacy of Iranian EFL students?
2. Do language learning motivations of the students differ significantly with respect to gender?
3. Do academic self-efficacy beliefs of the students differ significantly with respect to gender?

2. Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were 40 EFL students from Islamic Azad University-Tabriz Branch in Tabriz, Iran. They were chosen after assigning a modified PET test for having homogeneous groups. Students were all at intermediate level. Design of this study is comparative research. In this research we have two comparative groups in different gender. It means that one comparative group is for female learners and the other comparative group is for male learners.

Instrumentation

Different instruments used in the present study involve a PET test in the pre-test. In order to collect information on academic self-efficacies the "Perceived Academic Self-Efficacy Scale" by Morgan and Jinks (1999) is used. There are 30 items in the scale. All the items are designed using a four-interval scale of really agree, kind of agree, kind of disagree, and really disagree. The other data collection tool is 'Academic Intrinsic Motivation' developed by Regina M. Shia

Wheeling Jesuit University .There were 60 items in the scale and students gave their responses on a 7-point Likert scale from Does not describe me to strongly describes me.

Procedure

Learners were divided into two comparative groups. Every group had 20 learners. Students

were chosen based on a PET test. After completing two questionnaires for assessing motivation and self-efficacy; at the end of the term, students score for their general English exam was used to compare their language achievement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Independent sample t-test for PET test

group	N	mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig(2-tailed)	F	t	df
PET male	20	66.75	.01150	.02235	.840	1.783	-.234	38 37.217
female	20	68.61	.07624	.04377	.840		-.234	

As Table 1 shows, scores in the PET-test for the male group are (M =66.75, SD =.011) and female group (M=68.61 SD =.076), t (38) =-.234, P>.05. The mean score shows that two groups in the pre-test were the same.

Table2. Independent Sample t-test for General English Score in the Post-test

group	N	mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig(2-tailed)	F	t	df
score Male	20	16.95	.06150	.02235	.003	1.783	-.154	38 37.217
Female	20	19.61	.02624	.04377	.003		-.154	

As Table 2 shows, scores for the male group are (M =16.95, SD =.061) and female group (M=19.61 SD =.026), t (38) =-.154, P=.003. The results show that there is a significant difference between two groups in the post-test. In the post-test, the female group outperforms the male group in language achievement exam.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between EFL learners' Motivation and Language Achievement between Male and Female Learners

	Male(motiv)	Achievement
Male Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	1.000 . 20	.574** .000 20
Achievement pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	.574** .000 20	1.000 . 20

N		
	Female(mot)	Achievement
Female Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	1.000 . 20	.994** .000 20
Achievement pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	.994** .000 20	1.000 . 20

According to the Table 3, there is a positive correlation between motivation and language achievement. This correlation is higher for female learners.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation between EFL learners' Self-efficacy and Language Achievement between Male and Female Learners

	Male(efficacy)	Achievement
Male Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	1.000 . 20	-.584** .000 20
Achievement pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	-.584** .000 20	1.000 . 20
	Female	Achievement
Female Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	1.000 . 20	-.694** .000 20
Achievement pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	-.694** .000 20	1.000 . 20

According to the Table 4, there is a negative correlation between self-efficacy and language achievement between different genders.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation between EFL learners' Self-efficacy and Motivation between Male and Female Learners

	motivation	Self-efficacy
motivati Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	1.000 . 40	-.484** .000 40
Self-efficacy pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed) N	-.484** .000 40	1.000 . 40

As Table 5 shows, There is a negative correlation between motivation and self-efficacy.

Table6. Descriptive Statistics for Motivation and Self-efficacy

group	**N**	**mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Motivati male	20	365.76	.01650	.05035
female	20	412.48	.07124	.03377
efficacy male	20	118.74	.34583	.03718
female	20	89.56	.24576	.04025

As table 6 represents, motivation is higher among female learners. On the other hand, self-efficacy is higher among male learners. As results reveal language achievement favors females and high motivation. The most significant conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of this study is that there is a low-level negative correlation between English language learning motivation and self-efficacy beliefs of students. As discussed earlier, high self-efficacy and negative outcome expectations are similarly possible. If the students are guided and informed about the advantages of learning a foreign language, their outcome judgments in relation to foreign language learning will be more positive and they might be more motivated to learn the target language, work more eagerly to overcome difficulties, take on challenging tasks and develop interest. The other significant conclusion is the effect of motivation level on students' levels of language achievement. It is interesting that more motivated children have lower-levels of self-efficacy but distribute stronger motivation to learn English. Since sustaining student motivation is a key ingredient for teaching a foreign language successfully. It is important to inform students who have lower-levels of language learning motivations about the benefits of acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language. Finally, the literature suggests that high-levels of self-efficacy would contribute to students' academic success. However, motivation is more important than self-efficacy for language achievement. Furthermore, the results show that motivation is higher among female learners; this clarifies why they get higher marks. Male learners have higher self-efficacy;

however, they get lower marks than female learners. A further study might look into whether students who have higher-levels of self-efficacy are more successful academically when compared with those who have lower-levels of self-efficacy or not.

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