

Self-efficacy Activation Factors: Analysis of Saudi English Language Learners' Self-Efficacious Discourse

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims at investigating Saudi English language learners' self-efficacy activation factors. Seventy-eight participants were recruited through random sampling wherein 46 belonged to English department, 20 belonged to Computer Science department, and 12 were enrolled in Business Management Diploma at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Initially, classroom observation was carried out to identify the items for the unstructured questionnaire. Unstructured questionnaire and interviews were employed as the main data generation tools. Content analysis was employed to the participants' self-efficacious discourse derived from the data which revealed three main themes: 1) ideological beliefs activated learners' self-efficacy; 2) good management of time improved language learning outcomes; and 3) teachers' active role in engaging the learners in language practicing sessions and in LMS activated their self-efficacy. Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism framework was incorporated in the analysis and discussion of the participants' discourse in relation to the emerged themes. The twofold analysis revealed learners' ideological beliefs as the main psychological factor; time management as the main personal factor; and learners' engagement in technologically assisted learning (LMS) as the main environmental factor that constituted learners' reciprocal determinism for achieving the language learning outcomes.

Keywords: Language Learners, Self-Efficacy, Triadic Reciprocal Determinism, Ideological Beliefs, Technology Assisted Language Learning.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the Saudi government has been making substantial efforts to introduce and reform English language teaching. In the early fifties, an initiative to introduce English in the seventh and ninth grades was taken (Abi-Mershed, 2009). The Ministry of Education, recognising the importance of English, assumed responsibility for devising and executing language policies in public and private schools (Kirkpatrick, 2017).

The Saudi school system includes twelve grades: six primary, three intermediate, and three secondary grades. Public school students begin studying English as a mandatory subject four times a week from the sixth grade. English was introduced to seventh-grade students in public schools in Saudi Arabia in 1970 (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

On the other hand, private school students start learning English from the first grade and sometimes even at preschool. Since the early 1970s, nearly all private schools have included English education from the first grade. In 2003, the Saudi government introduced English in all primary schools (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

The Saudi government has allocated significant resources and efforts to improve English language proficiency in the country, with the goal of reaching the desired level (Fallatah & Syed, 2018). Despite a generous budget allocation and efforts by the Ministry of Education, the targets have yet to be fully achieved (Barnawi, 2017).

The English language proficiency of numerous Saudi students falls significantly short of the anticipated standard (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Typically, the root of this issue is traced back to curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and classroom environments. Even so, universities and other higher education institutions continue to grapple with meeting their set objectives. These institutions encounter myriad challenges, including socio-economic issues, individual and psychological motivational factors, and initial preparedness.

English language instruction at Saudi universities, though only for two hours per week, began at the Islamic Law College established in Makkah in 1949. The first English department for male students was set up at King Saud University in 1957, and for female students, it was established at the Women's College of Education in

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Makkah in 1972. Today, English as a foreign language holds significant importance in the curricula of Saudi schools, colleges, and universities, with almost all such institutions having English language centres, institutes, or departments.

In higher education, English learning is generally categorised into two groups (Shehzad et al., 2020): English for General Academic Purposes, and English for Specific Academic Purposes. The proficiency of English learners is assessed through listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading, and writing tests. Notably, students in Arabian countries, especially Saudi Arabia, encounter difficulties in achieving English proficiency. Recent studies reveal low language proficiency among these students, with an average IELTS score of 3.90 in 2017 (Shehzad et al., 2020). Several factors contribute to these learning deficits, including students' exam preparation methods, which often involve rote memorisation rather than reading and comprehension (Shehzad et al., 2020).

Programs such as the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) offer English language instruction over one or two semesters to help students improve their language skills before entering the university system (Al-Shehri, 2017). For instance, at King Khalid University, PYP students receive sixteen hours of English instruction per week throughout the academic year. In modern times, English has become the primary language of instruction in the majority of higher education institutions. Students have also begun acknowledging the importance of English for higher education, international communication, and business (Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013).

Studies (e.g., Al Asmari, 2013; McMullen, 2014; Alrabai, 2018; Hidayati et al., 2020) pointed out that students' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards English language play a vital role in the language learning process and their academic achievement (Alrabai, 2018). Learning English in Saudi Arabia is influenced by multiple factors, such as the community, religion, culture, and the predominant use of the native language, Arabic (Al Asmari, 2013). The Saudi community, characterised by strong religious and tribal ties, adheres to deep-rooted traditions that hinder individuals from acquiring proficiency in the English language (McMullen, 2014). A misconception exists that the adoption of English might undermine their culture, customs, and identity, thereby instilling fear among individuals (McMullen, 2014). Additionally, the education system in Saudi Arabia operates according to Islamic principles, and regulates the complete separation of study and work environments for women and men. Recent shifts like Saudisation and Saudi Vision 2030 have reshaped the country's trajectory in numerous ways, putting the spotlight on the importance of English language instruction and learning (Hidayati et al., 2020). Therefore, the focus on the research on English language learning in Saudi Arabia seems more productive than it was in the past.

The current study investigates the self-efficacy activation factors and their impact on the performance of English language students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Taking into account the proposition of intrinsic influence of self-efficacy on the language learning (Oettingen et al., 2018; Shehzad et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2020), this qualitative study aims to investigate English language learners' self-efficacy activation factors and its role in the learners' academic achievement. Adapting the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism theoretical framework, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that activate Saudi English language learners' self-efficacy at King Khalid University?
2. How do the self-efficacy activation factors contribute to Saudi English language learners' performance in the learning process at King Khalid University?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism Framework

According to Bandura (1986, 2001a), reciprocal determinism proposes that three elements, namely personal characteristics, the learning environment, and learning behaviours, interact and mutually influence each other. For instance, positive experiences in the language learning environment can enhance a learner's motivation and self-efficacy, subsequently fostering increased effort and engagement in language learning activities.

Bandura (1986, 2008) proposed the model to show continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors that shape an individual's ongoing functioning, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

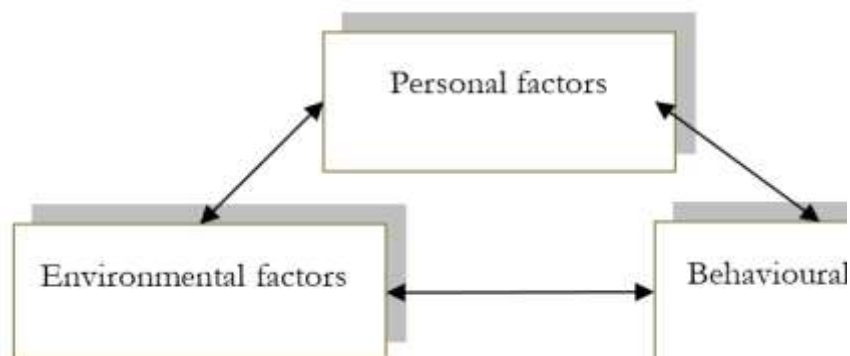


Figure 2.1 Bandura's model of triadic-reciprocal determinant perspective of learning

According to Booker and Dunsmore (2017), within the classroom learning context, student behaviour is influenced by various factors present in the academic environment. These factors include external reinforcements from others as well as the internal thought processes and introspection of the student, both of which can modify behaviour. Hence, in line with reciprocal determinism, all three factors must be taken into account in order to understand and influence a student's learning outcomes (Bandura, 2008). Any alteration in one of these factors will have an impact on the other factor (Booker & Dunsmore, 2017; Bandura, 2008). For instance, personal factors such as expectations, beliefs, efficacy, self-perceptions, goals, and intentions play a role in shaping and guiding behaviour.

Similarly, a change in a student's behaviour can have an impact on the surrounding environment, such as prolonged exposure to a specific environmental factor can influence personal factors (Alias et al., 2014; Camelia et al., 2015; Lashari et al., 2013). For instance, if students encounter difficulties in one of their subjects, it may lead to a dislike for that particular subject, subsequently resulting in poor performance. Another scenario involves an unfavourable learning environment, which can contribute to student maladjustment, impeding the learning process and causing frustration for teachers.

Recent Studies on English Language Learners' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

The English language has gained much importance in today's globalised world. Barnawi (2017) pointed out that English has been chosen as a medium of instruction worldwide, including in the Gulf countries, and the problem of achieving English language learners' proficiency has attracted the attention of several researchers e.g., (Başaran & Cabarolu, 2014; Al Samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Paradewari, 2017; Truong & Wang, 2019; Yough, 2019; Loo & Choy, 2013; Arslan, 2013; Raoofi et al., 2012) who have investigated learners' self-efficacy beliefs as crucial factor towards achieving learning outcomes.

Başaran and Cabarolu (2014), conducted a study to examine the effects of E-Learning experiences on English self-efficacy among intermediate and higher-level first-year university students. The participants engaged in a 12-week podcast-based language learning program, completing task-based activities. Self-efficacy in listening, speaking, reading, and writing was assessed, along with motivations and expectations. The study found that participants' perceptions of listening, speaking, and reading abilities did not significantly differ, but there was a notable improvement in writing ability. However, limitations included basic podcasts and tasks, as well as an insufficient duration for achieving high self-efficacy. Advanced-level skills did not show improvement. Overall, analysing self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions in student development proved to be challenging.

Al Samadani and Ibnian (2015) investigated the Saudi students' perspectives) regarding learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as the factors influencing their attitudes towards EFL learning. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore the correlation between students' attitudes and their grade point average (GPA). A

questionnaire was developed by the researchers to assess the students' attitudes towards EFL learning. In addition, interviews were conducted with several English major students to explore the factors influencing their attitudes towards EFL learning. The sample for this study consisted of 112 English major students from Umm Al-Qura University's Al-Qunfudah branch, who were randomly selected from different academic years (second, third, and fourth year students). The findings of the study revealed that the students generally exhibited positive attitudes towards learning EFL. Moreover, the results indicated that students with high GPAs displayed the most positive attitudes towards learning English, followed by students with medium GPAs, and finally, students with low GPAs.

Zheng et al. (2017) conducted a study to assess the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement among English language learners. The authors developed a quantitative tool to measure learner self-efficacy and its impact on English proficiency. The participants were Chinese university students interested in taking a mandatory language course. The study revealed that social persuasion, such as support from parents, teachers, and peers, played a significant role in learners' academic self-efficacy across various aspects of language learning. Cultural values and the supportive social network in China were identified as influential factors in learner self-efficacy. The authors suggested that positive recognition and acknowledgment of learners contribute to maintaining their academic self-efficacy. The findings also prompted the authors to recommend conducting similar research with participants from different universities.

Paradewari (2017) conducted a study to explore students' self-efficacy in public speaking. The focus was on students' apprehension about speaking English in front of their peers, rather than their language proficiency. The author observed that self-efficacy influenced students' selection and acceptance of speaking challenges. Previous research has indicated that students with higher academic achievement tend to have higher self-efficacy, which is influenced by their awareness of their own accomplishments. The study involved a survey using purposive sampling, conducted with 43 students from the English language educators' study program at Santa Dharma University. The findings revealed that speech delivery strategy, confidence, and effort were considered important factors by 93% of the participants. Additionally, 95.4% acknowledged the significant role of friends in providing support. The study emphasised the importance of motivation and the classroom environment in enhancing students' self-efficacy. The research aimed to explore and analyse the sources of self-efficacy, such as speech delivery strategy, confidence, effort, friends' support, motivation, and the classroom environment, in understanding students' self-efficacy in language learning.

Truong and Wang (2019) conducted a study to explore the self-efficacy beliefs of Vietnamese college students regarding their English language proficiency. Despite English being a required course in higher education institutions in Vietnam, students tend to be passive, shy, and lack confidence in their language abilities. The authors aimed to gain a better understanding of Vietnamese self-efficacy beliefs in this context. The study included 945 first-year undergraduate students from private universities in southern Vietnam. Two questionnaires and two sets of English proficiency tests were designed for data collection. The analysis was primarily based on descriptive statistics. Convenience sampling and the exclusion of item-level data from the English proficiency test were limitations of the study. The findings showed that first-year students had a moderate level of self-efficacy in the English language, with no significant differences observed based on gender or students' self-efficacy beliefs. Most of the English classes in the study were delivered online at the university level, indicating the dominance of mastery experience as a source of self-efficacy. However, face-to-face English classes might yield different results. The study also revealed a relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, regional differences, cultural factors, and linguistic variations. Students from urban areas reported higher levels of self-efficacy, likely due to greater English language access. The study highlighted the importance of instructor encouragement in helping students overcome self-imposed limitations, leading to the inclusion of teacher support as a factor in self-efficacy activation.

Yough (2019) conducted a study on the role of teacher self-efficacy in promoting the teaching of English language learners. Teacher self-efficacy refers to the ability of teachers to engage students in their learning outcomes, even when faced with difficulties. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more dedicated to their profession and set higher goals for their professional development. The study found that teachers generally

have higher self-efficacy when teaching students from the same cultural or linguistic background. However, assessing self-efficacy among English language learners remains challenging. The study focused on university students from the Midwest who were enrolled in a psychology course, with a sample size of 209 undergraduate students. The study used a survey comprising a teacher efficacy scale, an English language learner scale, and a demographic section. The study lasted ten weeks and involved various instructors. While interventions aimed at increasing self-efficacy showed positive results, preparing students from different linguistic groups remained a challenge. The author suggested that future research should explore self-efficacy factors based on a social perspective.

To synthesise, the conceptualisations of factors in triadic reciprocal determinism seemed to play an important role in learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Personal factors, including cognitive abilities, motivation, and confidence, played a significant role in the language learning progress of English language learners. Learners with higher cognitive abilities can understand linguistic concepts more effectively, while those with high motivation and confidence are more likely to persist in their language learning efforts. Similarly, the language learning environment also plays a crucial role in language learners' learning process. The language learning environment include factors such as exposure to English-speaking contexts, the availability of learning resources, instructional strategies, and peer interactions. Finally, learners' language learning behaviours, including their study habits, engagement in communicative activities, and self-regulation strategies, also contribute to their self-efficacy. Based on the discussion, this study confidently utilises Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework as the guiding principle to identify the Saudi English language learners' self-efficacy activation factors at King Khalid University. This study is novel in the sense that it is the first study to analyse language learners' self-efficacious discourse in the context of Saudi Arabia.

METHODOLOGY

This ethnographic qualitative study employed unstructured open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as the main data generation methods. Researchers e.g., (Shehzad et al., 2020; Ghanbarpour, 2016; Zimmerman, 2000) have highlighted the significance of employing direct observation alongside a comprehensive observation checklist. According to these researchers, this approach ensures the inclusion of pertinent items in a questionnaire designed to elicit descriptive responses for qualitative analysis. Therefore, primary phase involved direct observation of the language learning classes from where the researchers identified the relevant items. For this purpose, we sought permission from the authority and then managed the observation of 4 classes per week which were aligned to my free hours. Multiple observations of the same students enabled us to avoid bias in the data collection. The researchers observed the items related to personal factors such as learners' existing ability, psychological factors such as confidence and hesitation to participate, and environmental factors such as teaching strategies and learners' engagement in the learning process. The researchers documented and analysed the personal, environmental, and psychological factors observed among the observed language learners, which appeared to influence their self-efficacy beliefs.

The researchers discussed the identified factors initially with the team of four teachers and finally with two inter-coders who are ethnographic research experts. Together, they determined the key factors that were associated with students' self-efficacy beliefs, which included:

- Ideological belief
- Time management and utilisation
- Language influence
- Teacher's motivation

Additionally, the inter-coders provided guidance on structuring the items pertaining to these factors in an unstructured, open-ended questionnaire to elicit comprehensive data. Consequently, following the discussion, the items were refined and incorporated into the questionnaire.

All the students were given informed consent forms and verbal explanation of the required consent was made in all the four classes. Seventy-eight language learners gave their consent to participate in this research wherein

46 belonged to English department, 20 belonged to Computer Science department, and 12 were enrolled in Business Management Diploma. Thus, 78 students were recruited in this study.

In the data generation phase, unstructured questionnaire containing 20 items was distributed among the participants and the recorded responses were scrutinised and discussed with the inter-coders to ensure the clarity and the relevance. However, 17 learners' responses were rejected due to unclear and incomplete information and thus, 61 responses were finally retained for the analysis. In the second data generation phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the students and responses were recorded using high quality mobile phone recording app. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to reconfirm the written responses from the first phase and to further explore language learners' self-efficacy beliefs and the involved factors in line with the queries that emerged from learners' responses in the first phase. Consequently, the participants constructed self-efficacious discourse of their own choice without any length constraints. Therefore, the triangulation of data ensured the reliability and validity of this study. The researcher transcribed the interview data by himself to ensure the participant protection and data confidentiality. Jefferson's (2004) notation convention was utilised for transcribing the data.

The data from both phases were organised to get it ready to analyse in a discursive thematic fashion. For this purpose, codes were assigned to the generated data. Examples of codes used are shown below:

Haggle/UQ2-16 = Haggle's response to question no. 16 in the second unstructured questionnaire in the data set of 61 questionnaires.

Tim/I2-Q5 = Tim's response to question no.5 in the semi-structured interview that was the second interview in the data set of 61 interviews.

Analytical Lens

The data were analysed using a twofold thematic lens consisted of Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework and content analysis. The triadic reciprocal determinism framework informs the bidirectional influence of learners' personal, behavioural, and environmental factors. This framework identifies the learners' perceptions of factors such as challenging yet achievable tasks, constructive feedback, positive role models, and a supportive learning environment that can all contribute to strengthening learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Meanwhile, the process of content analysis involves transforming literal content into underlying meanings by abstracting data at each distinct step of text analysis, using verbatim transcribed interviews as the basis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Rosendahl et al., 2019).

In this qualitative study, content analysis is the most suitable method for systematically transforming a large volume of transcribed text into a well-organised and detailed summary of key findings, as well as extracting main themes. Content analysis inspired by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), was employed to draw the themes. The framework developed by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) was deemed the most appropriate for this study due to its practical approach, providing step-by-step guidance for analysing interview and unstructured questionnaire data. At the same time, triadic reciprocal determinism framework guided the analysis of factors involved in the activation of learners' self-efficacy.

Selection of Exemplary Excerpts

The extracts related to the learners' self-efficacy beliefs as expressed by the participants, and the extracts that offer learners' engagement in personal, environmental and psychological factors while expressing their self-efficacy beliefs; are selected on the basis of being more insightful, frequent in expression and in contrast to the implicitly expressed concerns, the extracts that offer explicit opinions and concerns were chosen for the presentation. The researchers selected the excerpts from different participants based on degradations and contrasts among all the responses to a single question. For example, in the discussion of the first theme, [Pat, 6] stands for Pat's response to question number 6. His response explicitly constructs the argument about the lack of autonomy for decision making, financial planning and initiating development project in the university. His response was analysed through constant comparison with the upcoming and previous similar responses. An intercoder who is a senior researcher in this field verified the coding process and constant comparison

analysis. He informed the overlaps among the similar responses; those were excluded to select exemplary excerpts for the presentation. Pat’s response emerged as a unique excerpt in this process and all the exemplary excerpts have been selected through this process.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial analytical phase, descriptive data from the unstructured questionnaire and the transcribed data from the interviews were carefully examined to identify significant portions of information to draw condensed meaningful units. These meaningful units could include parts of sentences, complete sentences, or multiple sentences that were relevant to the research questions framed in this study (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). Representative codes were assigned to the condensed meaningful units.

In line with Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), generated codes were validated by the expert inter-coders before assigning the categories to the code groupings. They agreed with the topical categorisation of assigned codes to the participants’ perceptions involving personal, behavioural, and environmental factors related to their self-efficacy beliefs. They further informed particular overlaps of personal, psychological, and environmental factors linked to their self-efficacy. These insights aided the researchers in identifying the primary triadic reciprocal determinants that emerged from the participants’ responses, ultimately contributing to the overall findings. Therefore, based on the differences and similarities, the codes were organised into groups wherein, based on distinct code groups, 14 sub-categories emerged. These sub-categories were explicated to draw the representative themes, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Derived Themes from the Coded Distinct Subcategories.

Sub categories	Themes
1. God’s help is the source of learners’ confidence in learning 2. God is the first ever teacher of language and Adam is the first ever learner of language 3. God has granted the Arabs fertile brains	Ideological beliefs activate and boost self-efficacy
4. Acquiring knowledge is among the fundamentals of Prophet Muhammad’s teachings 5. Learners manage time well when the exams are at hand 6. Family life engagements and use of mobile phones are the biggest distractions for the language learners	Good management of time by avoiding distractions can enhance learner’s achievement in language learning
7. Lecture method hurdles the learning process by limiting learners’ engagement in real time communication for the language practice 8. Learners feel need of more focus on reading and writing activities because they consider these two skills more time consuming 9. Learners having planned encounters with English language consider the language learning process at the university smooth and easy	Learners believe teachers’ role as more crucial and central to the learning process
10. Students’ practical engagements in listening, speaking, reading and writing enhance their interest and confidence in language learning 11. Learners enjoy the language practice sessions more than the long lectures on language skills 12. Teacher’s positive feedback motivates the learners to put more conscious efforts in language learning 13. More criticism and less appreciation of the learners’ understanding of the language in the classroom reduce learners’ confidence and interest in the learning process 14. When teachers make the learners fully utilise Blackboard (LMS), the learners feel confident in language learning as well as aspire for future jobs	

To address the research questions, the themes were further classified into two broad categories, which were determined based on the research questions in this study, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Major Themes and the Aligned Broad Categories in Relation to the Research Questions

Broader categories	Themes
Psychological factor of ideological beliefs, learners’ self-efficacy, and learning outcome	1. Ideological beliefs activate and boost self- efficacy.
Personal factor of good time management, learners’ self-efficacy and learning outcome	2. Good management of time by avoiding distractions can enhance learners’ achievement in language learning.
Environmental factors of teaching strategies and utilisation of online resources, learners’ self-efficacy, and learning outcome	3. Teaching methods and strategies play a crucial role in the language learners’ achievement.

In the fashion of discourse papers, it is a common practice to present selected excerpts from a large data to avoid length constraints in the discussion of the themes. Therefore, the emerged themes are discussed in the light of exemplary excerpts from the data.

Theme 1: Ideological Beliefs Activate and Boost Learners' Self-Efficacy

This theme was drawn from the subcategories such as: God's help is the source of learners' confidence in learning; God is the first ever teacher of language and Adam is the first ever learner of language; God has blessed the Arabs with fertile brains; and Acquiring knowledge is among the fundamentals of Prophet Muhammad's teachings. The participants seemed to frequently incorporate intertextual references from their believed ideology in answering the questions in the interview and unstructured questionnaire. The participants with low English language proficiency incorporated such ideological references more frequently than the participants who showed greater achievement in the language learning process. The following excerpt represents ideological belief as the self-efficacy activation factor among the participants with less achievement in the language learning process in line with the evaluation of their performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking exams.

You know, learning a new language is not new in Arab culture. We can see, in early days of Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) advised several companions to learn different languages to spread the message of Islam. Seeking inspiration from such events, I take the English language learning as a requirement to compete with the world. For my own career and to play a positive role in the development of the society, I am eager to learn English language ان شاء الله باذن الله تعالى (With the help and will of God). Though, I face problems in communication with teachers and friends, I am confident to achieve fluency in English language. يجيب الله مطر (May God shower blessings on me). I will never give up my hope. الله يوفقتني (May God guide me to the right path).

[Haggle/UQ2-3]

This excerpt presents Haggle's perception about of his self-motivation towards English language learning. He starts his response by referring to the Islamic history that the Prophet of Islam emphasised on learning new languages. He seems drawing his motivation of language learning from his ideological belief, which he explicitly narrates in the third line of the excerpt. Therefore, ideological belief is considered a strong factor of activating his self-efficacy. Ideological beliefs have a strong psychological influence and regulate believers' actions in several ways and thus embarking on Bandura (2001) learners' ideological beliefs are considered a psychological factor that interacts with environmental and personal factors. Haggle then explicitly expresses his motive of language learning where he connects his hope of better career and his potential positive role in the society as a result of successful language learning. Using an ideological expression ان شاء الله باذن الله تعالى (With the help and will of God), he shows his resolve to learn the language. Though he admits the problems in his communication with the teachers, he is confident enough he would overcome the difficulties in language learning. The psychological influence of his ideological beliefs appears again connected to his confidence when he invokes GOD يجيب الله مطر (Literal, "May God bring rain"; meaning, May God shower blessings on me) to imply his hopes for success in language learning. Towards the end of his response, he repeats his resolve that shows his self-efficacy of learning the language, where again an ideological expression الله يوفقتني (May God guide me to the right path) emerges as a strong self-efficacy activation factor.

So far as my own inspiration is concerned, I believe in ALLAH, who is the Creator of first human language. You know He created Adam and taught him language. So, I believe He has created every human being with the wisdom to learn languages. Due to my weak academic background, I face difficulties in learning the English language, but I draw motivation from my belief in ALLAH, which strengthens my confidence in learning the language. الله المستعان (ALLAH is the best source of help) I respect my teachers and express my good wishes to them such as لا خلى ولا عدم (May ALLAH never deprive me of you). I cannot say that I don't need motivation from my teachers. Without my teachers, I cannot learn the language. You can say that through the personal motivation from my teachers I will overcome the difficulties that I face in language learning تزين ان شاء الله (Everything will be fine with the grace of ALLAH).

[James/I14-Q4]

This excerpt presents James' response to the question about self-motivation in the interview. In terms of ideological expressions and references, James' excerpt is representative of the majority of respondents who frequently incorporated their ideological beliefs as the source of language learning motivation. James starts his response by expressing his belief that Allah is the Creator of the first human language. He expresses his belief that Allah has created every human being with the ability to learn languages, thus warranting his belief with the ideological justification that Allah created Adam and taught him language (i.e. the capacity to speak, reason, and name things). This ideological justification emerges from the Quranic verse that Allah taught Adam 'all the names' (i.e. the ability to name everything). He confirms his ideological belief as a source of his language learning motivation. Therefore, ideological belief is considered a psychological determinant (Bandura, 2001) that activates James' language learning self-efficacy. His perception of his weak academic background emerges as a personal factor that lowers his language learning confidence but the interaction between the psychological factor of the ideological belief and the personal factor of weak academic background results in his hope for better performance in language learning, as is obvious from his use of ideological expression *الله المستعان* (ALLAH is the best source of help).

James does not perceive his self-motivation enough for his successful language learning; rather he emphasises motivation from his teachers as a necessary factor along with his self-motivation to achieve desired language learning outcomes. His positive perception of external motivation from the teachers emerges from his use of ideological expression *لا خلى ولا عدم* (May ALLAH never deprive me of you) to show his best wishes for the teachers. Drawing upon motivation from the teachers, he has high hopes to overcome the difficulties in language learning. He ends his response by incorporating the third ideological expression *تزين ان شاء الله*, which means everything will be fine with the grace of ALLAH, which is also viewed as a psychological factor that activates James' language learning self-efficacy.

To conclude in the light of Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework, the analysis revealed learners' ideological belief as a psychological factor that interacts with learners' personal factors, such as weak academic background, less prior knowledge of English language, and hesitation in communication, and results into the activation of learners' self-efficacy. Learners' ideological belief as a psychological factor contributes towards strengthening the confidence of successful language learning and producing hope for achieving the learning outcomes.

Theme 2: Time Management and Utilisation Activates Learners' Self-Efficacy

Time management and utilisation entails the optimisation of time related aspects such as initiating tasks, maintaining concentration, and balancing various tasks. With respect to English language learning, the learners can benefit from both the skills of short-term and long-term time utilisation planning (Doughty & McPake, 2017). Short-term planning can help to have more effective time management strategies, while long-term planning can better equip the learners to handle unforeseen situations, leading to productive study routines. Better time management and utilisation strategies can enhance learners' academic outcomes by cultivating self-motivation, self-determination, and metacognition (Lehdonvirta, 2018). The learners' expressed different perceptions of their time management and its influence on their language learning process. The following extract is representative of learners' perception about their short-term time management strategies.

When I am under exam pressure, I believe I am a good time manager. On a normal day, I am unable to manage my time. I am easily distracted. My issue is that when I work, I do not play, and when I play, I do not work. I am terrible at managing my time. I can work for five to six hours straight, but if I do not study, I cannot for several days. I cannot study in bits and pieces. I enjoy studying for long periods but often I do not meet the assignment deadlines, which hurdles my language learning achievement.

[Tim/UQ18-11]

This excerpt presents Tim's perception of his time management, which is not a good time management strategy but still it seems to cast a positive effect on his language learning outcomes. Tim conditions his good time management with the pressure of exams when he says under the pressure of exams he is a good time manager whereas, during the semester, he cannot manage his time and gets distracted. He negatively perceives his habit of time management during the normal days by saying that when he works he does not play and when he plays

he does not work, but at the same time he perceives himself as a terrible time manager because he can study for long hours without a break and then he cannot study for several days. He concludes his perception by saying that he cannot study in bits and pieces. His perception of time management presents his personal habits and, therefore, in the light of Bandura (2001), his perception is considered a personal factor that reduces his overall language learning self-efficacy: under the examination pressure, his habit of time management changes, and improved time management as a personal factor interacts with the other psychological and environmental factors, producing a short-term reciprocal triadic determinism to achieve good results. But it lasts for a short period of time, i.e. till the examination ends. Such short-term reciprocal determinism can activate only weak self-efficacy among the learners (Kader & Eissa, 2015).

Most of the learners consider mobile phones as the biggest distraction for them which hurdled their time management for the language learning. The following extract presents Brad's perception about mobile phones being the biggest distraction.

The most distracting factor is mobile phones. When I don't use my phone, I can study. It's not easy for me to divide my time. This leads to poor time management and causes me to waste a lot of time. This has always been the most difficult obstacle for me.

[Brad/I38-Q15]

The way Brad perceives the habit of using mobile phones as the biggest hurdle to time management, makes it a personal factor in the light of Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework. According to Bandura (2001), learners' personal factors interact with psychological and environmental factors wherein they can enhance the resulting reciprocal determinism when they play positive role towards the learning process. On the contrary, when personal factors negatively affect the learning process, such as poor time management, they interact with other psychological and environmental factors and reduce the resulting reciprocal determinism (Astuti, 2022). Therefore, Brad's perceived distraction of mobile phones is considered a negative personal factor that causes weak language learning self-efficacy. Similarly, family time emerged as the second most frequent distraction which causes weak language learning self-efficacy. The learners who overcome the distractions of mobile phones and family time were found more self-efficacious. The following extract presents Kim's perception of good time management by avoiding distractions of family time and mobile phones.

I give three hours to my studies daily. During these three hours I don't use mobile phones. My family also spares me from doing any task during these three hours. That is why I am consistent in language learning and due to good time management and utilisation I complete the reading, writing, listening and speaking assignments timely.

[KimUQ13-40]

This extract presents Kim's strategy of good time management that he achieves by planning to avoid personal distraction of using mobile phones and giving time to the family. His strategy of utilising three hours daily for language learning enabled him to accomplish the assignments timely and achieve the language learning outcomes. Embarking on Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism, Kim's good time management is considered a strong personal factor that not only activates language learning self-efficacy but also interacts with other psychological and environmental factors to produce a strong reciprocal determinism of being proficient in English language.

To conclude this theme, time management emerged as a strong personal factor that had the potential to activate language learning self-efficacy among the Saudi language learners at King Khalid University. Poor time management was found connected to the distractions of mobile phones and family time, whereas good time management emerged from the learners' planning of avoiding these distractions and sparing some hours for study on a daily basis. In the light of Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework, the personal factor of good time management emerged as a Saudi learners' self-efficacy activation factor whereas the learners lacking time management skills or bad at time management demonstrated low level of self-efficacy towards achieving language learning outcomes.

Theme 3: Teaching Methods and Strategies Play a Crucial Role in the Language Learners' Achievement.

This theme emerged from the sub-categories such as: students' practical engagement in listening, speaking, reading and writing enhances the students' interest and confidence in language learning; learners enjoy the language practice sessions more than the long lectures on language skills; teacher's positive feedback motivates the learners to put more conscious efforts in language learning; more criticism and less appreciation of the learners' understanding of the language in the classroom reduce learners' confidence and interest in the learning process; and when teachers make the learners fully utilise Blackboard (LMS), the learners feel confident in language learning as well as about future jobs. All the sub-categories relate to some elements of the learning environment, such as teacher's interaction with the learners in the classroom, teaching strategy and use of technological resources in the learning process and thus, are considered environmental factors in the language learning process (see Bandura, 2001; Nayak, 2019).

The following excerpt presents John's expression in his self-efficacious discourse in relation to the influence of language learning environment on learner's self-efficacy.

My father is a teacher. He engages me in writing and reading practice and to improve my listening and speaking skills, he emphasises on real time communication. Though I cannot communicate well, due to regular practice, I have got confidence; and my increased interest in language learning wins teachers' appreciation in the classroom tasks. [John/I40-Q9]

A strong dimension of John's self-efficacious discourse emerged from his experience of practical engagement in communication using English language. Several participants perceived the English language practice sessions as more interesting and confidence building, but John's extract in this regard was identified unique due to its potential of offering interaction between his personal and environmental factors that inculcated in him a strong reciprocal determinism for language learning. His engagement in practicing reading, writing, listening and speaking away from the classroom-related academic course, emerges as a strong personal factor when it is considered as a habit or hobby (see Bandura, 1994). On the contrary, when a teacher engages him in language practice sessions, it becomes a teaching strategy which is considered as an *environmental factor* (Bandura, 2001) in the language learning process. His boosted confidence and increased interest in the language learning resulting from his personal factor is re-enforced by the environmental factor in the language learning process that eventually activates strong self-efficacy in him.

The finding in relation to this theme showed that the majority of the participants seemed concerned about the teachers' understanding of the learners' problems and efforts during the course of language learning. The learners believed that when a teacher acknowledges learners' effort in spite of errors, instead of criticising them, they feel encouraged and participate more actively in the language practicing sessions. Teachers' teaching methods and strategies may encourage or discourage the learners toward learning participation (Thoonen et al., 2011). Bandura (2001) proposed that the teaching methods and strategies are an environmental factor for the learners' self-efficacy, therefore participants' perception of teachers' encouraging strategy is considered an environmental factor for the English language learners' triadic reciprocal determinism at King Khalid University.

The findings revealed that participants' engagement in technology-assisted language learning contributed to their self-efficacious discourse. The participants believed KKKU Blackboard or Learning Management System (LMS) to be a powerful technology that supported the learners in many ways. They argued that teachers can provide learning materials and tutorials for the students and engage them in a systematic online learning process. In the participants' perception LMS is an interesting technology that attracts them because of its multi-dimensional benefits.

The following extract presents William's perception of the use of technology and its influence on language learners.

When I am engaged in blackboard, due to the deadline of assignments, I have to manage my time. Secondly, I practice several tools in the blackboard to improve my academic performance, and my skill of using computer. I hope that the skill of using computer technology will help me in searching a good job in the future. [William/UQ56-17]

William's experience of using online technology in the language learning process seems to boost his confidence, motivation and interest in learning the English language, as well as achieving computer related skills. Due to

their automatically closing deadlines, online assignments on the Blackboard have more influence on students' self-efficacy than manual assignments, for which William like many other participants has to manage time to accomplish the assignment timely. William's engagement in Blackboard and its influence on his language learning process is viewed as an environmental factor (Bandura, 2001). The strong influence of this environmental factor on the language learning process may reduce the negative effect of personal and psychological factors on the language learning process (Zimmerman, 2000). In the light of these propositions, the learners' use of Blackboard in the language learning process emerges as a strong environmental factor that causes a strong reciprocal determinism among the Saudi language learners at King Khalid University. This strong reciprocal determinism boosted William's confidence, increased his interest in the language learning, and also gave him hope for a better future.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study analysed Saudi English language learners' self-efficacious discourse to investigate the factors that activated their self-efficacy. The content analysis of participant self-efficacious discourse revealed three themes which are: ideological beliefs activated learners' self-efficacy; good management of time improved language learning outcomes; and teachers' active role boosted learners' self-efficacy beliefs. From analysis and discussion of the themes in the light of Bandura's (2001) triadic reciprocal determinism framework, Saudi English language learners' ideological beliefs emerged as the main influential psychological factor that contributed to their reciprocal determinism and activated their language learning self-efficacy. Secondly, Saudi language learners' good time management and the avidness of distractions of mobile phone and family time emerged as the main influential personal factor that contributed to their reciprocal determinism and activated their language learning self-efficacy. Finally, teachers' active role in engaging the students' language in practice sessions in LMS emerged as the main influential environmental factor that interacted with the participants' personal and psychological factors to constitute their triadic reciprocal determinism and thus, activated their language learning self-efficacy.

The analysis also revealed methodological utility of Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism framework as a powerful qualitative tool to analyse language learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Twofold analytical lens consisted of discursive thematic framework and triadic reciprocal determinism framework revealed ideological beliefs as a novel dimension of Saudi English language learners' self-efficacy activation factors. Future researchers may focus teachers' self-efficacious discourses and to incorporate multiple analytical frameworks to unfold the potential novel factors that can activate teachers' self-efficacy.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

Not applicable, as no human or animal studies have been conducted.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests to declare.

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Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request. The data are not publicly available due to [restrictions e.g. their containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants].

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