Research Square

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English Language Self-Efficacy and Gender Differences Among Omani Foundation Students

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Abstract

Self-efficacy wields an influence on EFL learning outcomes yet scholarly attention to gender-related disparities, in language-skill-specific self-efficacy among Gulf students remains unexplored. This study analyzed English language self-efficacy levels and gender-related variations, across the four domains, listening, speaking, reading and writing, among learners enrolled at the Omani Foundation. In this study a cross-sectional survey was administered to a sample of 176 foundation students (87 male, 80 female) in an Omani university. An adapted English Self-Efficacy questionnaire served as the data-gathering instrument and the resulting responses were subjected to statistics, independent-samples t-tests and repeated-measures ANOVA. The findings show that students' self-efficacy was moderately high, across all language skills with scores spanning 25.59 to 26.20. Gender comparisons yielded no distinctions, listening (p=.893) speaking (p=.887) reading (p=.996) and writing (p=.377) all fell short of significance and the associated Cohen's d values were negligible (–0.001 to –0.137). Moreover, the within-subjects ANOVA did not uncover any variation among the skill domains (F (3525) ==2.013, p=.111). Omani Foundation students showed a uniform self-efficacy across the areas of language skills untouched by gender differences and thereby suggesting an all-encompassing view of proficiency and confirming that educational opportunities are being afforded on an equitable basis.

Introduction

The idea of English language self-efficacy, the confidence in their ability to perform English-related skills that students have, has taken a central place in research into second and foreign language learning. Rooted in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is not only how much effort the learners pour into language activities but also their ability to resist adversity (Fan & Cui, 2024). Self-efficacy is particularly important in the context of EFL where learners have limited exposure to the target language beyond school. Enhancing achievements in EFL fields, such as in Oman, relies on revealing what the factors that affect students' self-efficacy are since English is a global lingua franca (Al-khresheh & Alkursheh, 2024).In English, students' motivation and achievement have been recently linked tremendously to language self-efficacy (Teng & Yang, 2023). Those students that have confidence in their English skills are likely to take part in class discussions more, cope with difficult language assignments, and even remove learning barriers. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is developed through classroom experiences, peer influences, and instructor feedback. For instance, Vellanki et al. (2024) pointed out that when student autonomy and collaboration among peers in classrooms are boosted, Omani students' confidence in English assignments grows remarkably.

The relationship of gender, a social construct, with self-efficacy is complex and varies by gender. The recent research has pointed out substantial differences between the sexes not only in self-perceived competencies in the different language skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening but also in the way these competencies are estimated (Huang, 2024). In general, it is seen that females tend to have more self-efficacy in reading and writing, while males, conversely, are the ones who assert their competence in oral and auditory skills (Rød, & Calafato, 2023). These dissimilarities can be suggestive of

the intermingling of cultural and educational patterns, including teacher behaviors in classrooms and parental expectations. The implications of gender on language learning concepts could well prove crucial given that learning environments can operate in a gender-divided manner (Liu et al., 2022). Moreover, Al Saadi's (2020) study also found that Oman's female university students outperformed their male counterparts in English self-efficacy tests related to composition and reading.

These results, however, are not isolated. Despite factors such as instructional methods and the type of English assessment, Liu et al. (2022) emphasized that there are existing differences in English efficacy belief for both males and females. The study also highlighted the importance of the different factors related to the sociocultural context, namely exposure to the English language, family background, and perceived value for English, which could also differ for both males and females.

Even though there is more research on this topic, there aren't many studies, especially in areas that don't get enough attention, like the Arabian Gulf. Most research so far has looked at secondary-level students, which means we don't know much about how university students think about their English skills. Also, cultural factors that are unique to Oman, like how Arabic is used in everyday conversation and how English classes are set up, may affect how students feel about their own abilities in a different way than in other countries. As Oman continues to invest in English language education in accordance with its Vision 2040 plan, comprehending these factors becomes increasingly crucial. As the need for communication around the world grows, it's not just an educational goal but also a national priority to make sure that all students, regardless of gender, believe they can learn and use English well.

This study fills this gap by looking at how confident Omani university students are in their English language skills, paying special attention to how men and women differ in the four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Knowing how students see their own skills in different areas can help teachers learn how to boost students' confidence and participation, improve classroom practices, and design better lessons. The study contributes to the broader field of applied linguistics and local educational policy, emphasizing the necessity for context-specific research to develop more inclusive and effective teaching strategies.

Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1.What are the self-efficacy levels of Omani Foundation students in the four English language skills?

2.Are there significant gender differences in students' self-efficacy beliefs in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

3.Which language skills do Omani students feel most and least confident in, and why?

4.What sociocultural or educational factors may explain differences in self-efficacy beliefs across gender?

Importance of the Study

The present study highlights the self-efficacy beliefs of Omani Foundation students in the context of English language learning. It offers insightful analysis for teachers, curriculum developers, and Omani policymakers by exploring students' confidence across the four fundamental language skills and an identification of gender-based disparities and sociocultural effects.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Self-Efficacy in Language Learning

Emerging from Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to the belief a person holds regarding their ability to complete tasks and achieve goals in certain domains. Students with low self-efficacy are likely to give up easily when encountering challenges (Chen, 2020; Graham, 2022). Cheng (2020) states that while those with low self-efficacy are more likely to worry and disengage, individuals with higher self-efficacy are more resilient in the face of language challenges. In language learning, the notion of task-specific self-efficacy becomes particularly salient (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020).

Self-efficacy is distinct from a general sense of self-confidence or self-concept. For language learners, this means believing they can engage in a classroom discussion, write a coherent paragraph or understand an academic lecture in English (Chen, 2020). As per Fidan and Tuncel (2021), EFL students tend to rely heavily on such self-perceptions due to a lack of experience in actual language use.

A meta-analysis by Goetze and Driver (2022) concluded that self-efficacy was significantly correlated with the second language performance in various educational contexts. They found that students with higher self-efficacy are more inclined to participate in conversations, take risks, and seek feedback. An et al. (2021) further assert that previous learning experiences and academic self-regulation techniques are strong indicators of self-efficacy in language-learning contexts. Thus, self-efficacy in EFL contexts is a rather dynamic belief system rather than a static trait. Bandura opined that mastery experiences, or successful application of a skill, are the surest way to instil beliefs in one's capability. Recent intervention studies have confirmed that targeted self-efficacy-based programs can make significant differences in boosting learners' confidence in English language learning, with carefully designed interventions showing measurable improvements in both self-efficacy beliefs and language performance (Li, 2024).

Self-Efficacy and English Language Proficiency

Self-efficacy is a strong indicator of the success of EFL learners in the macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Confidence is the ability to use English and to cope with difficult tasks (Li et al., 2024; Tang & Zhu, 2024). Among the four skills, reading and listening generally produce higher self-efficacy than speaking and writing (Kansızoğlu & Yıldız, 2022).

Milliner & Dimoski (2024) found that regardless of the teaching quality, students' self-efficacy for speaking and writing was less than for reading and listening. Many people think that the reason for this

imbalance is the risk associated with immediate active language use. Lu et al. (2022) state that students' self-assessment in speaking is highly determined by the performance feedback received, the degree of anxiety felt, and comparison with peers. Recent longitudinal research has demonstrated that task-specific self-efficacy and enjoyment play crucial roles in developing speaking complexity, accuracy, lexical diversity, and fluency among EFL learners, with both factors showing significant predictive effects over time (Chang et al., 2024).

Writing effectiveness is mostly evaluated negatively because of struggles with grammar, lack of proper vocabulary and organization. Graham (2022) pointed out that the application of writing models together with structured, scaffolded instruction is contributing to the establishment of writing self-efficacy. On the other hand, students may consider their reading self-efficacy to be very high because they can re-read which makes comprehension tasks seem very easy.

Ugwuany et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy is one of the main factors that determines the relationship between motivation and academic success. This process will be very crucial for curriculum developers and teachers in bridging the gap between their self-assessment and actual performance.

Gender Differences in Language Learning Self-Efficacy

Gender has consistently been one of the focal points of recent studies on self-efficacy in language learning; most studies identify females as being more self-confident and positively inclined toward the productive skills (Namaziandost, 2020; Liu et al., 2022). However, such discrepancy is often context-dependent, influenced by teacher-student interactions, sociocultural factors, and the level of language proficiency. According to Kutuk et al. (2022), gender stereotypes played a significant role in determining learners' self-efficacy. On the same note, Yu and Deng (2022) argue that female learners are more likely to engage in metacognitive strategies and reflective learning which are associated with higher self-efficacy. On the contrary, Namaziandost & Çakmak (2020) found no clear gap in overall self-efficacy. Yuehua & Qiumei (2023) also report that girls scored higher on self-regulated learning, but the two sexes showed almost identical language self-efficacy. More recently, research has explored how gender moderates the relationship between motivation, self-efficacy, emotions, and autonomous technology use in second language learning, revealing complex interaction patterns where gender influences the pathways through which these factors affect learning behaviors (Csizér & Albert, 2024).

Such mixed results hint that gender gaps appear only in certain skills or settings. In conservative or single sex schools for instance, girls often receive extra praise along with the added support that lifts their academic confidence (Kheder & Rouabhia, 2023). At the same time, boys in the same cultures hear that “real men” avoid language study and the stereotype erodes their effort in linguistic tasks.

Self-Efficacy in Gulf and Omani EFL Learners

The literature available regarding Oman is not populous. However, there are few studies done to understand how self-efficacy affects EFL students in the gulf area. In a study, Al-Abyadh and Azeem

(2022) found that Saudi students had the highest self-efficacy for reading while it was the lowest for speaking. Omani students were likely to experience the same patterns as they were in similar educational settings and followed similar norms. The culture of precision, high-stakes testing, and teacher-centered pedagogy may mean students are less likely to take a chance on a foreign language or a risk required for communicative competence. The findings of Al-Abyadh and Azeem (2022) further show that among Arab students' factors that relate to EFL self-efficacy include perceived control and self-management.

Additionally, the integration of technology is a changing factor affecting Omani students' self-efficacy. Recent research has shown that a blended learning environment can give students a greater sense of autonomy and control boosting their self-efficacy (Al-khresheh & Alkursheh 2024; Al-khresheh & Alruwaili, 2024). Emerging technologies, particularly generative AI tools integrated into mobile language applications, have demonstrated significant potential for enhancing learners' self-efficacy, with users showing measurable increases in confidence after AI-assisted practice (Kittredge et al., 2025).In Omani higher education, there are more female students than male students and female students do better than male students in the language-based classes. The events in the Gulf correlate with this and suggest that teaching methods should consider gender to fix differences in engagement, especially in speaking and writing.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive quantitative approach which is applied in similar self-efficacy studies. The study investigated and assessed the self-efficacy of the Omani Foundation students in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, based on gender differences and other sociocultural factors. This design assisted the researchers to gain a quick insight of the students' perspectives at the point of time in the academic year 2024–2025. This design is mainly adopted to compare students' claims on their self-efficacy beliefs without compromising the neutrality of the sampling method.

The research questions justify the application of such a research methodology involving the levels of self-efficacy in different groups and contexts (genders). It also allows for the results to be generalized to other English as a foreign language context in the Gulf area.

Participants and Sampling

A sample of 200 Arabic speaking Foundation Year students, 100 male and 100 female aged 18 and 20 years, from a private university in Oman was selected for the study. To ensure representation across all three groups, a random population stratified by gender, academic program, and English language competence was drawn. The sampling method is representative of the gender and demographic composition of higher education institutions in Oman. The inclusion of students from a diverse range of departments added depth to the research on self-efficacy across fields. The students had voluntarily

consented to participate at the last stage of survey. They were allowed to participate should they wish, and all their details were anonymous. Data was collected after the University research committee at Foundation department gave the ethical consent.

Instruments

To measure self-efficacy levels across the four language skills, the researchers made use of an adapted version of the English Self-Efficacy Questionnaire by Wang et al. (2013). The instrument comprised 32 items, evenly distributed across four sub-scales:

• Listening Efficacy (8 items)

• Speaking Efficacy (8 items)

• Reading Efficacy (8 items)

• Writing Efficacy (8 items)

Each question asked students how sure they were about their performance in certain English language tasks. A pilot study with 40 students was done to validate the reliability of the questionnaire. Feedback resulted in minor lexical and cultural modifications to align with Omani classroom conventions. The Cronbach's alpha scores for each sub-scale showed that they were very consistent within themselves: Listening (.87), Speaking (.89), Reading (.91), and Writing (.88). The instrument's overall reliability was .90.

Data Collection Procedures

Research data was obtained in the fall of 2024-2025 session. A questionnaire was communicated to the students in their classrooms using university emails of the students and WhatsApp. It was indicated that any information gathered in the study is confidential.
Researchers organized 15-minute sessions at the end of class to fill the questionnaire. All instructions were given in Arabic and English to suit all language levels. Protection of privacy was ensured, where the respondents did not have to mention their names or their student IDs.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 28. The analysis was conducted in three main stages:

Descriptive Statistics:
Overall levels of self-efficacy were determined by the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores in order of each skill. Based on these scores, self-efficacy levels were categorized as:

O Low (< 2.30)

O Moderate (2.30–3.29)

O High (3.30–4.29)

O Very High (≥ 4.30)

Inferential Statistics:
Research Question 2 was analyzed using independent samples t-tests examining the differences of gender across each language skill and overall self-efficacy. The p-value was less than. 05, and no correction (Bonferroni) was made for the exploratory sensitivity.

Qualitative Thematic Coding:
Open-ended responses on item four of the research questions were coded into themes of self-efficacy beliefs. Factors persisted within the recurring interrelated themes: previous education exposure, societal perceptions regarding gender and language acquisition, and pedagogical feedback mechanisms. With this kind of multi-tiered analysis, the research it undertook was positioned in such a way that it was able to identify.

Results

This research investigated 176 Omani Foundation students' English language self-efficacy in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and repeated measures ANOVA were performed to help address overall self-efficacy level, gender differences in self-efficacy levels, and confidence in one's skills on the different skill domains.

Overall Self-Efficacy Levels Across Language Skills

Descriptive analysis showed that Omani Foundation students possessed moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in all four English language skills with mean scores ranging from 25.59 (Writing) and 26.20 Speaking on a scale out-of-40 point, respectively. The two subcategories with the highest mean scores were speaking self-efficacy (M = 26.19, SD = 6.39) and writing self-efficacy (M = 26.20, SD=6 .22). However, reading self-efficacy had an M = 25.75 (S.D. --> 6.24), and listening the lowest mean in all skills (M=25.59; S.D.= 6 .11).

The means and standard deviations for the four skills across all the language domains were similar (Means ranging from 26.39 to 29.81; SDs: range = 6.11–6.39) suggesting a moderate but relatively consistent level of heterogeneity in students' self-efficacy beliefs within each target domain. The ranges showed similar variation with minimum values ranging from 7.13 to 8.13 and maximum values always at 35,63. The scores of Omani Foundation students on any individual domain do not vary significantly with mean scores less than 1.5 apart across all four domains.

Skill-Specific Patterns

The listening recorded mean scores of self-efficacity of the lowest 4 skills (M = 25.59; Min = 6.11). The measure of self-efficacy with the highest means (M = 26.19, SD = 6.39), indicated that students felt quite confident about their capabilities in oral communication (Chang et al., 2024). The mean reading self-efficacy score was 25.75 (SD = 6.24), which positioned it between listening and the productive skills. With a mean score of 26.20 and a standard deviation of 6.22, writing self-efficacy had the highest mean score among all types compared to speaking.

Gender Differences in English Language Self-Efficacy

T-values were calculated about whether there are gender diversity differences seen as significant that were four types of English proficiency: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There were 176 participants in the analysis, 87 of whom were male and 80 females who answered all the self-efficacy questionnaires. A test for the equality of variances yielded all statistics at a 57-presto level of p, indicating that each of the four competence valuations succeeded in meeting this assumption: listening (F = 0.936, p =. 335), speaking (F = 0.755, p =. 386), reading (F = 3.778, p =. 054), and writing (F = 0.439, p =. 509).

Conversely, the self-efficacy experienced by male students (M = 25.7, SD = 6.4) and female students (M = 25.6, SD = 5.82) had no significance difference according to the results of the independent analysis t-test on listening self-efficacy t (165) = -0.135 p >. 05. The effect size used by Cohen's d was d = 0.021 and was deemed entirely practical according to a 95% CI of -0.325, 0.283, with very minor, negligible differences found among groups. Similarly, no difference at all was seen in gender regarding self-efficacy speaking, wherein male students (M = 26.26; SD = 6.79) and female students (M = 26.12; SD = 5.91) reported nearly the same levels of self-assurance as their male classmates, t (165) = -0.143, p =. 887, Cohen's d = -0.022. The smallest gender difference for language skills was displayed in reading self-efficacy. Male students (M = 25.76, SD = 6.75) and female students (M = 25.76, SD = 5.66) scored nearly the same mean in readings, t (165) = -0.005, p =. 996, d = -0.001.

Major gender differences were observed in writing self-efficacy for each gender. Though statistically significant, male students, M = 26.61, SD = 6.56, prompted individualism in their performances in self-efficacy higher than those of their female peers, M = 25.77, SD = 5.77, t(165) = -0.885, p =. 377, Cohen's d = -0.137.

To support the inferential quantitative analysis, standard effects sizes were also laboured out through several indices. The effect sizes corrected by hedges were very much comparable to those of Cohen that concerned all language skills listening (Hedges' g = -0.021), speaking (Hedges' g = -0.022), reading (Hedges' g = -0.001), and writing (Hedges' g = -0.136). All confidence intervals for the standardized effect sizes include zero, so this further supports not rejecting the null hypotheses about the other three English language self-efficacy abilities examined in English.

English language self-efficacy tests applied to all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, presented no gender differences among Omani Foundation students. All p-values went high above the

specified significance threshold of. 05 for each of these skills: 996 (reading)>. 771 (listening)>. 428 (speaking) of the t-test and. 377 (writing). The smallest effect size is discovered in reading with an absolute Cohen's d score of 0.001, and the largest with writing at 0.137, but they were minuscule through all four macro-skills. Much like the English language proficiency, the foundation students, whether they were males or females, did not differ much in terms of the four perceived competences.

Within-Subjects Analysis: Comparative Self-Efficacy Across Language Skills

The repeated measure analysis was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in Omani Foundation students' self-efficacy between the four English language skills. Before interpreting the main effect aspects, an evaluation test of Mauchly on the sphericity assumption was conducted to determine the level of fit. From the analysis, as the results from the sphericity assumption were met (Mauchly's W =. 986, χ^2 = 2.453, df = 5, p =. 784). The Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon (ε =. 990) almost approached 1.0, meaning that the sphericity assumption was observed well minimal deviation, while Huynh's Feldt's epsilon (ε = 1.000) was in conformity with complete compliance with the assumptions of sphericity.

To explore differences in self-efficacy scores among the four language skills, a MANOVA was first performed. The results showed that none of the multivariate test statistics attains any level of significance. For example, Pillai's Trace yielded. 031 value along with F (3, 173) = 1.871, p =. 136, whereas Wilks' Lambda and Hotelling's trace values were. 969 and. 032, respectively (F (3, 173) = 1.871, p =. 136). Roy's Largest Root was. 032 (F (3, 173) = 1.871, p =. 136). These four major statistics led us back to the conclusion that there was no difference across the four-language skill sets at the level of change concerning self-efficacy.

Further to the multivariate analysis, a univariate repeated measures ANOVA analysis had been conducted to examine within-subjects effects more on language fluency specifically. The analysis showed under sphericity that the main effect of-language fluency over self-efficacy was not statistically significant (F (3, 525) = 2.013, p = 0.111, partial η^2 = 0.011). This result confirmed that self-efficacy was unchanged across all the domains of ability. Correction of results using Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment (F (2.971, 519.944) = 2.013, p = 0.112) and Huynh-Feldt adjustment (F (3.000, 525.000) = 2.013, p = 0.111) showed similar results, reflecting the robustness of the finding in purporting an absence of any effect.

Following patterns that existed in the way self-efficacy changed for the four language skills, we conducted polynomial contrasts. First, we found a non-significant linear contrast: The self-confidence of the speakers while listening to writing did not show a consistent trend over time (F (1, 175) = 1.854, p =. 175). Again, there was no significance found for the quadratic contrast (F (1, 175) =. 126, p =. 723), suggesting that the value of self-efficacy would not deviate due to the three skills. However, the cubic contrast showed statistically significant results (F (1, 175) = 4.150, p =. 043), highlighting that self-efficacy tended to switch level across skills in a subtle but statistically detectable pattern.

Among subjects, the intercept effect was highly significant (F (1, 175) = 3612.757, p <. 001) and attested to the fact that the mean self-efficacy across all skills in students was significantly more than would be conceivable as the lowest score on the scale of self-efficacy they employed. This proves that the sample in the experiment is sufficiently representative and determined to have measurable and meaningful levels of self-efficacy concerning language.

Discussion

This research examined 176 foundation-year Omani learners' English self-efficacy Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, focusing specially on gender differences and relative confidence patterns. It unveils many significant patterns, making them more intriguing to the interpretation carried out within the context of language learning EFL learning in Oman and beyond. This section discusses the results in relation to existing literature, suggests possible explanations for the patterns observed, and argues for implications for the teaching of Foundation Programmes.

Overall Self-Efficacy Levels: Moderate Confidence Across Skills

As observed with recent research findings on self-beliefs of EFL learners at university-level, Omani foundation students generally showed moderate-to-high self-efficacy levels in all four language skills in the English language, ranging from 25.59 to 26.20 points on a 40-point scale.

The authors argue that these results support those by Tang and Zhu (2024), who found the mean score of Chinese EFL students with respect to academic self-efficacy on a five-point scale was 3.16, which means moderate self-belief levels. The authors posited that the Foundation-level students do tend towards positive feelings about the self in English even though they are on transition programs and just contradicting a deficit model that has often been applied to remedial language programs (Kim et al. 2024). The alignment between students' perceived English for General Academic Purposes needs and their self-efficacy may be particularly important in Foundation contexts where students are transitioning to higher academic demands and developing discipline-specific language competencies (Wang et al., 2024).

The moderate self-efficacy levels in this study were generally found to result from the complex interplay of the English learning experiences among students in the Omani secondary institutions with that pertaining to what is regarded standard in learning English at university level. It has been brought to light in research that self-efficacy is the outcome of a multifaceted coming together of experiences of mastering, which could come from past experiences, learning by inferencing, persuasion from people-kind, and physiological state of being (Wang & Sun 2024). Most Foundation students in Oman end up enduring 12 years of instruction in English before entering university, which means they have had good exposure to English, however unhesitating their language proficiency may have been when they had not met university entrance requirements. According to Liu and Wen (2014), Grossman (1996), Riner et al. (1994), and Wang and Sun (2024), it is assumed that students can accumulate successes and failures in their learning histories in English, thus putting them at a moderate level of self-assurance.

Further, the consistency of self-efficacy levels across the four competencies is note-worthy. The results show a narrow spread in the mean scores which suggests that, in the minds of AOF students, the four skills are considered as one single holistic entity rather than being conceived of separately as linguistic systems. It also corresponds with the prevailing pedagogical practices in the Foundation programs during which the integrated skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all taught in combination rather than in isolation (Pardede, 2020). Azis (2023) insists that students in integrated language skill classes grow in linguistic fluency and communicative competence, manifesting the idea that balanced self-efficacy for skills can be encouraged through integrated instruction.

The self-efficacy profile balances on both sides or the act of the teachers could affect the further progress of the transitional nature of foundation programs. The establishment of the programs is like training wheels because foundation students have not hit other benchmarks as some other students might have in their regular degree programs; the fact that a foundation program is designed to instruct doesn't support the whole notion of language education as an accepted norm. In that light then self-efficacy beliefs across domains could be identified as more stable than others due to the disassociation of these with any stigma that could have accompanied learning challenges in the language (Johnson, 2024).

Skill-Specific Patterns: Productive vs. Receptive Skills

Productive skills (speaking and writing) generated slightly higher self-efficacy than receptive skills (listening and reading). Speaking and writing appeared the highest in mean scores. This is an unusual result from conventional assumptions in EFL literature that give receptive skills a greater confidence level with low performativity anxiety and reduced communicative pressures. In academic English contexts, research has established significant relationships between learners' target needs and their self-efficacy beliefs, suggesting that understanding students' perceived academic requirements and aligning them with instructional goals is crucial for developing appropriate confidence levels (Wang et al., 2024).

It's plausible to think that there might be high levels of self-belief in speech (i.e., M = 26.19) existing in students of the Foundation in Oman regarding the changes in recent pedagogical patterns that have led to shifts toward more of communicative approaches in teaching and learning. Self-efficacy regarding oral presentations is not cheap; it first must be given to students in a suitable setting. After practicing so much in friendly environments, he/she begins to display profound difference (Wu & Rose, 2025). The research of Wang and Sun (2024) has identified mastery experiences, which include positive experiences in accomplishing oral presentation tasks, as the dominant sources of higher speaking self-efficacy in EFL students. Because of increasingly increasing socialization into speaking together with Foundation programs and secondaries, the self-efficacy of such students within the domain might be taking on strength with experiences that have been successful repeatedly.

As explained earlier, one can suggest that the higher mean rating of writing self-efficacy of M = 26.20 could be due to the great stress laid on writing in the educational system of Oman. Revision, editing, and

teacher feedback after all contribute to the net effect of somewhat reducing the immediacy of performance stress as it is in speaking tests (Sun & Wang, 2020). On the other hand, the discovery of the significant effect of writing self-efficacy on SR writing ability suggests the presence of a positive feedback loop (Sun & Wang, 2020).

Conversely, on listening, recorded the lowest mean self-efficacy (M = 25.59), whereas the difference from other skills was quite minimal (Al-khresheh & Alruwaili, 2024). It contributes to previous studies, mentioning that this finding brings out the fact that learners in EFL often struggle with their comprehension of listening. In this study by Canaran et al. (2024), the anxiety from listening and the proficiency in a foreign language are negatively correlated. Because listening is in real time, often spoken with an accent, and is rapidly articulated, there is not that much chance to clear saying, hence the insignificant self-efficacy level in this regard.

The study of Milliner and Dimoski (2024) is very important in showing how direct instruction of listening strategies has the potential to bring small group of EFL beginners. Hence, it can be suggested that perhaps Foundation programs might incorporate some metacognitive strategy instruction for listening as a little whole that students would raise their confidence level in this area.

Gender Differences: Comparable Confidence Across Sexes

One of this study's most significant findings found that there were no gender differences significantly among the English language skills in English self-efficacy for all four skills. The p-values were all well over the threshold of 0.05, ranging from. 377 through. 996 in value, with effect sizes negligible to small, using the following respective Cohen's d statistics: 0.001 through 0.137.

This finding distinguishes itself from some prior findings asserting gender differences in language learning efficacy. In this inadequate searching site, Cheng et al. (2024) identified gender stereotypes in language learning to alter motivational beliefs and emotional aspects. Also, some recent studies have found advantages for female learners in a few domains of language; however, modern research supports the reduction of these differences in unique and complex educational settings.

However, Leeming and Praver (2025) found that gender did not have as significant an impact on teacher self-efficacy in foreign-language instruction, since their studies showed that gender tests in this regard are not particularly different. Likewise, Namaziandost and Çakmak (2020) concluded that there are no significant differences in overall self-confidence between male and female students studying in an English for Specific Purposes course. Therefore, it can be argued that there is more to gender and language self-efficacy than can be depicted by just binary distinctions.

There are various reasons why there are no gender differences in the Omani Foundation context. It is found that male and female students who enter Foundation programs come from the same educational backgrounds in that they have completed the same national curriculum in Omani secondary schools. Due to this common experience in education, the expectations are the same, which is presumed to

provide a level playing field as far as language learning opportunities and experiences are concerned, and further, it is believed they would have developed similar self-efficacy levels across genders.

Secondly, it is probable that the structure of the Foundation program circumstances means at least a minimum decrease in gender distinctions. Liu et al. (2022) explained that the learning environment is a crucial part in the mediation between gender and self-efficacy in academic success. A foundation program often utilizes a fixed curriculum, similar assessments, and such teaching techniques for all students, the structured curricula and "mechanical" assessments creating an environment that should purge some of the troublesome aspects of the more strenuous self-efficacy, no matter what gender.

The gender attitudes toward education are shifting to each new generation, perhaps yielding better results. In a study by Pavez et al. (2025), males occasionally reported higher domains in personal efficacy beliefs compared to females, but not in situational efficacy beliefs. Educational achievements are stressed more strictly by the Omani society that conjointly enhances educational importance for both genders, while the female university share is visibly increasing; it is expected that this will keep the old gender differences in academic confidence in decline.

Greater diversity was apparent in male students than in female students. There was a slight increase in heterogeneity of belief within the gender compared to confidence in the center of both tendencies, favoring male students. Such variation requires more in-depth study because it may indicate the presence of different subgroups among the male learners who have different levels of readiness or being engaged.

Within-Subjects Analysis: Stable Confidence Across Skill Domains

Analysing self-confidence levels, as the initial preliminary test, showed that there is no one significant difference between any of the four types of capability sciences when tested individually by subject’s self-efficacy by method of F test statistic (F (3, 525) = 2.013, p =. 111). It provides evidence repeatedly tested through multi-statistical methods, then goes to multivariate tests of sphericity corrections and to many other analyses that students agreed on their confidence within all four language domains.

Omnibus significant effects could not be detected when multiple analytic approaches were employed to analyze the data, serving to strengthen confidence in this regard. None of the four multivariate test statistics, Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root, approached significance (all p =. 136), with corrected univariate tests producing virtually identical results to noncorrected analyses. This cohesion across multiple statistical methods suggests the absence of significant differences was not a function of one analytic approach, but instead due to genuine stability in students' self-efficacy perceptions across skills.

The maintenance of self-efficacy from one skill area to another has significant theoretical implications, suggesting that students under the Omani Foundation may see their ability in English as involving only one undifferentiated general competence as opposed to underpinning separate language-specific sub-

skills. That is a holistic self-notion that matches recent theoretical developments, which emphasize the connectivity of language skills linked to use in actual communicative contexts (Pardede, 2020).

Research on combinations of abilities integration provided a possible explanation. Yimwilai (2015) showed that teaching English via integrated language skills could increase learners' overall proficiency while also building a responsibly holistic view of proficiency in language. If Language Foundation programs in Oman implemented integrated instructional approach where listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities are combined within single lessons or tasks, students can bridle to develop incorrigibly integrated self-efficacy beliefs correspondent yet seemingly less discriminating among separate skills.

Moreover, according to this, it is showing that the overall self-efficacies of students (regarding the average of the skills), overall, was significantly above zero ($F(1, 175) = 3612.757$, $p < .001$). This validates that the total sample had tangible and meaningful confidence for their English abilities. It clearly points out that Foundation students have generally high genuine self-efficacy, not just neutral or negative towards the survey items, which confirms the credibility of interpretation drawn from the within-subjects.

Implications for Foundation Program Instruction

The findings of this study have indeed huge implications. On the first level, the message that may emerge from this is that students enter Foundation programs within moderate self-efficacy levels for all skills. This reveals that the attitudes of students starting their Foundation programs are good, hopefully for educators who take them away from disadvantage unto an asset-strengthening. Rather than merely formulating such as (Kim et al., 2024) in skill deficits context, Foundation might also formulate asset-based models that bridge existing self-efficacy beliefs and necessary skill sets. Given the moderate self-efficacy levels observed in this study, Foundation programs should consider implementing evidence-based self-efficacy interventions that have proven effective in enhancing learners' confidence and supporting their language development (Li, 2024).

Secondly, the better-distributed self-efficacy profile across the skills is a further signal of the applicability of integrated skills teaching practices already prevalent in a good number of foundation programs. This could indeed ascribe to the students' holistic self-perceptions of their English ability. Good educational interventions may ensure that listening, speaking, reading, and writing continue to occur together. Meanwhile, perhaps it can be said that these methods might potentially work remarkably well in the development of well-rounded confidence.

Thirdly, the absence of the gender disparity in self-efficacy suggests that Foundation programs are effectively inducing gender inequality in the learning environments of both male and female students. This should not necessitate gender-specific intervention for the Omani Foundation context, but, rather, resources could be focused on other sources of individual difference, such as language background or level, learning strategies, motivational profiles.

Amongst the skills, listening had the lowest self-efficacy composite (although not significantly), and it is the best area for teachers to focus on improvement with listening strategy instruction. In this respect, Millay (2017) and Dimoski (2022) suggest that metacognitive interventions can be helpful in training students in improving their listening comprehension and self-efficacy by enabling explicit instruction of listening strategies as well to increase student confidence.

Conclusion

The study presents evidence that Foundation students from Oman show moderate self-efficacy across all four English language skills with no significant differences noted as to gender, such as in skill domain. Thus, this suggests that students see the language proficiency rather than fragmented parts, and Foundation programs are providing almost equal learning experiences. Lesser attention is given to narrow teaching strategies, such as for listening. Moreover, the current findings affirm the continued provision of integrated skills teaching and point to additional teaching strategies targeted at various skills, especially in listening. The future study should examine the relationship between self-efficacy and actual language performance, as well as the evolution and changes of self-confidence over time through the Foundation program. Moreover, these studies need also to focus on identifying specific skills translating into self-efficacy at the EFL stage.

Declarations

Human Ethics and Consent to Participate declarations:

This study was reviewed and approved by *UoB Research & Ethics Policy Committee @ CFS* with the approval number: *UoBERA-25@CFS /Summer 2024-2025, dated 02/06/2025*. All methods were performed in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations of the CFS Research Committee. This research followed strict ethical rules. Every student gave informed consent before data collection. Students were informed that their participation is voluntary and that the data will be used only for academic and research purposes. No data was collected in terms of names, student ID numbers, or personal information.

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