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Chapter 73: How Can English Teachers Motivate Secondary Students to Learn English Through Collaborative Project Work?

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The improvement of the education system is one of the most important aspects of the 2030 Saudi Vision and the success of the Vision depends in large measure on reforming the education system. The Saudi Ministry of Education is trying to improve education outcomes at all stages. It aims to enhance the efficiency of human capital in line with the Saudi Vision and the demands of the local and global labour markets. The Ministry of Education is seeking to develop policies and programs that focus on learners, concentrating on personality development, improving confidence, and promoting 21st-century skills (Education n.d.).

The development of Education in Saudi Arabian schools is strongly associated with the development of English Language learning. English is considered the language of international communication and is a compulsory subject at all levels above year three. English teachers in Saudi Arabia have been working to improve outcomes and help students acquire the skills needed to achieve the Saudi Vision goals. While the Ministry of Education has dedicated a lot of spending and resources to enhance the classroom environment, curriculum development, and training teachers in the current teaching methodologies until now there is still a gap between the expected results and actual performance. Thus, many of the outcomes that are being sought are achievable only through interdependent efforts by the students themselves.

It is important for students to be active participants in the learning process to achieve the desired results. As a student of the Saudi Education system and as a current teacher in Saudi schools, I can say from my experience when compared to the New Zealand classrooms I have observed, English language learners in Saudi schools are much more passive participants in the classroom. They are highly dependent on the teacher and become unmotivated easily during lessons. This is one of the current challenges facing education in Saudi Arabia. The main objective of this research paper is to investigate the significant contributing factors to the lack of active student participation that Saudi educators face, to propose feasible and evidence-based solutions.

Mohammad (2015) found that the main obstacle faced by Saudi students is their lack of motivation to learn the English Language. Educators and psychologists recognize the importance of self-efficacy in school achievement and motivation (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Dweck and Master (2009) suggest that modifying one’s beliefs about their own abilities can increase motivation and achievement. There is evidence (Bandura, 1997) that a student's performance relies on a certain level of self-belief in one's ability to perform a certain set of tasks and in one's sense of self-efficacy.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), students' need to feel safe and comfortable must be met to increase their motivation. There needs to be a trusting environment where students feel confident enough to take intellectual risks. This goes hand in hand with Krashen's second language acquisition theory (1982) which emphasizes that students with low levels of anxiety are more motivated and better second language learners.

This study will be built on the idea that students need an obvious awareness of self-efficacy in their learning and safe learning environments where they can feel comfortable to take risks. To limit the scope and context of the literature review, the following questions will be addressed throughout this research:

1-How is self-efficacy related to academic performance?

2-What are the other factors related to self-efficacy and performance?

3-What can teachers do to help students to develop the persistence to achieve learning goals?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

1-Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy in academic settings is defined as students' beliefs in their ability to achieve goals, and complete challenging tasks successfully. (Bandura, 1986; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). To achieve academic success, students need to be motivated to perform well and persist longer in a task and this can only happen when they believe in their own ability to perform well on the academic task (Bandura, 1997)

There are a host of studies that have examined the positive influence of student self-efficacy on learning, achievement, and motivation (Wirawan and Bandu 2016; Pajares 2003; Linnenbrink and Pintrich 2003; Graham 2006). Self-efficacy has been found to be associated with increased resilience (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Parjas,1996). Idrus and Sivapalan (2010) suggested that overall performance can be improved when teachers make it important to be aware of the self-efficacy level of their students. For students to take more responsibility for their learning process and view themselves as proactive learners, students must have a high level of self-efficacy beliefs (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005).

Significant relationships between self-efficacy beliefs and language learning strategies were found amongst elementary, secondary, and college students (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007; Diseth,2011). What they noticed was that the use of certain language learning strategies (cognitive and compensatory strategies) increased levels of self-efficacy language proficiency. Strategy training can help students to be independent learners and enhance self-efficacy (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007). Thus, enhancing students' self-efficacy beliefs is crucial to the language learning process and needs to be included in the classroom the teaching-approach (Wang, Schwab, Fenn& Chang 2013).

It is clear that self-efficacy plays a vital role in motivating students. However, focusing solely on increasing self-efficacy may not be the only way to increase the motivation levels of our students. We need to discover the root of why students display low/high self-efficacy in learning English. Can this change? Do students possess the mindset to address their barriers to learning English, to try to improve their performance?

Mindset, therefore, is another critical factor related to self-motivation and performance that we need to examine. This paper will examine some aspects of Mindset Theory, which has been

defined as a belief pattern held about one's own intelligence and capacity for learning (Dweck,1986) and shed greater light on the Growth Mindset.

2-Growth Mindset

A Growth Mindset is a dynamic state where one believes that abilities can always be improved and that mistakes are learning opportunities to become better (Dweck, 2006). Dweck (1986) suggests that differences in levels of motivation and achievement may be due to the individuals' mindsets about their intellectual qualities.

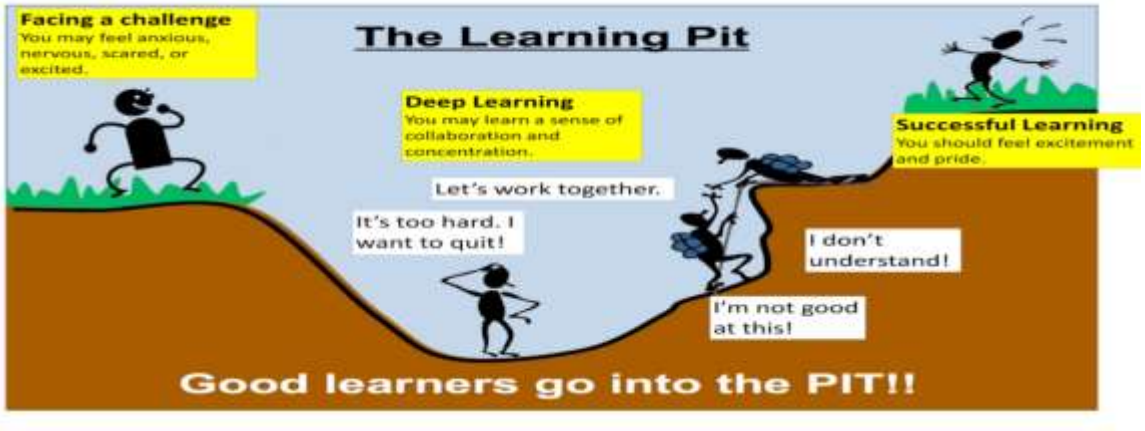
In the case of Saudi language learners, there is a sense that English as a difficult subject that seems beyond their reach. Bandura and Woods' (1989) model suggests that a high level of self-efficacy is connected to an incremental theory of intelligence and that a low level of self-efficacy is connected to a fixed theory of intelligence. A growth mindset is changing a student's belief from thinking that their intelligence level is fixed to believing that it can change.

Self-efficacy and Mindset are theories based on intrinsic beliefs (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy is how one can overcome obstacles and challenges to complete a task successfully and a Growth Mindset develops when teachers show students how to persist. (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015).

Academic success requires more than self-belief. It also requires the belief in one's own ability through sustained hard work. In New Zealand classrooms, learning is student-centered. Students interact with each other and make meaning from their own learning. The majority of activities in the classroom promote deep thinking and overcoming challenges. According to Interactionism (1994), Language acquisition is an example of the human ability to learn from experience and interaction with others around them. The focus is on building social skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-regulation. Communication is the core strand of the foreign language curriculum in New Zealand and one of the models that are used in the classroom is "the Learning Pit "model.

3-The Learning Pit

The learning pit was created by James Nottingham (2007) to support the culture of curiosity, reflection, resilience, and perseverance. It encourages a deeper level of inquiry "that moves learners from surface-level knowledge to deep understanding" (Nottingham,2017, p7). Students with deep thinking demonstrate better academic achievement, knowledge acquisition, and decision-making (Joshua,2017). The Learning Pit provides a useful model to enhance deep learning.



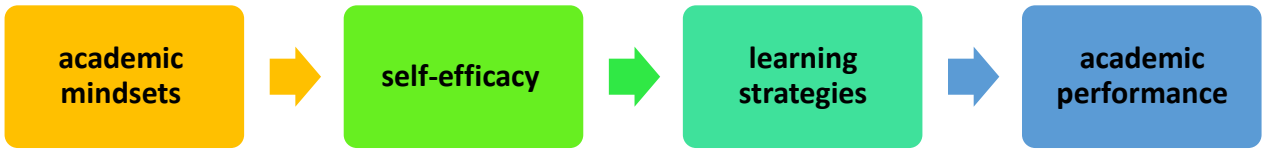
The Learning Pit shares the same concept as Vygotsky's description of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Nottingham,2010). Vygotsky's concept of ZDP (1987) explains how doing a task that is challenging, but not too difficult, with the support of a more experienced partner can benefit student learning. Similarly, Krashen (1982) states that comprehensible language input that is slightly beyond the student's current linguistic competence promotes language learning.

Collaboration is a pedagogical method currently used to facilitate learning in classrooms. It is a common occurrence in classrooms that students are asked to work together to perform a particular task. Several theories acknowledge the need to engage learners in collaborative communicative activities to develop an implicit knowledge and a growing base of research supports peer tutoring as an effective instructional intervention in which second-language acquisition (Arreaga-Mayer, 1998). However, is all collaboration between students productive collaboration? Here, the learning pit could be an effective way to support collaborative learning where all the students are active participants in their individual roles within the collaborative activities. Students have to work together to achieve the goals of a task and there will be no success without collaboration. Classrooms that emphasize cooperation and a sense that everyone can achieve the learning goals are much more supportive of self-efficacy and a valuing of academic work than classrooms that emphasize competition and a zero-sum environment where only a limited number of students will earn good grades (Carr & Walton, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

It may be useful to apply this model to collaborative student project work. Students can take risks when doing project work as all the ideas and points of view are accepted. Students can choose the topic according to their area of interest. Students engage in the project with peers who may provide support or scaffolding. In this way, students will be active participants in their learning and engage in the design of their experiences with the realization of their learning outcomes in ways appropriate for their developmental level. As such, learners have the choice and a voice in their educational experiences. During project work, students can participate in language-related activities beyond their proficiency have opportunities for output, which are necessary for successful learning. When applied to collaborative project work the Learning Pit model allows educators to combine and use both task-based language teaching and communicative language teaching approaches effectively.

It may be true to say self-efficacy and the learning pit are two sides of one coin. The learning pit is focused on building students' self-efficacy by showing the students that they can change the outcomes of their learning with the right effort, strategy, and focus. Goal setting is important to self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2001). In the learning pit, the students set goals and this leads to higher self-efficacy. When students perceive satisfactory goal progress, they feel capable of improving their skills. The Learning Pit model also allows students to witness and evaluate their progress. Students usually need evidence that they are mastering knowledge and skills, especially when working on complex tasks (Schunk, 1985). This awareness can enhance self-efficacy.

Throughout this review, we have found that performance, motivation, and achievements improve as self-efficacy is enhanced. Having a Growth Mindset creates a passion for learning, allowing students to discover potential they never knew they possessed and to equip them with the tools necessary to fulfill this potential. To achieve this objective, it is imperative that the teacher makes the students' learning activities challenging and creates opportunities for collaboration. This could be achieved successfully through the Learning Pit Model.



Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology used in examining students' beliefs in their ability to manage challenges and enhance academic performance. The data was collected using two types of research methods: a survey, used to collect quantitative data, and an interview, used to collect qualitative data. The survey and the interviews were conducted in June 2020.

The survey consisted of two sections. The first section was to get information about the participants, such as student gender and their favourite school subject. The second part included closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions asked students to rate the strength of their belief in their abilities, from the scale provided. The open-ended question elicited whether students had any other comments to add.

Five participants were selected from the original sample to participate in the interview. The main goal of the interview was to provide more details and get a depth understanding of students' responses to the survey. The interview was made up of four questions:

1- What does the teacher do to help you get better at learning and doing classwork by yourself?

2-What do you do when you find that a task or activity is too difficult to do?

3- What do you do when you make mistakes?

4-What kind of classroom tasks and activities help you to keep interested and motivated to learn?

Participants

The survey participants consisted of 45 students from Victoria Primary School in New Zealand. They were in year 6 and their age range was 10-11 years old. The participants were of different language backgrounds (native and non-native English speakers).

Chapter 4: Findings

Participant information

1-Student gender

	Gender	Number	Percentage
1	Boy	16	35%
2	Girl	30	65%
	Total	46	100%

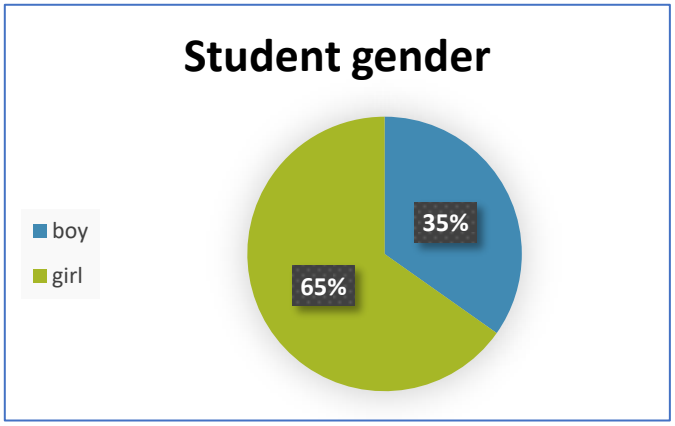


Figure 1: student gender.

2- Favourite Subject

Subject	**English**	**Math**	**Science**
Percentage	59%	19%	22%
Total	100%		

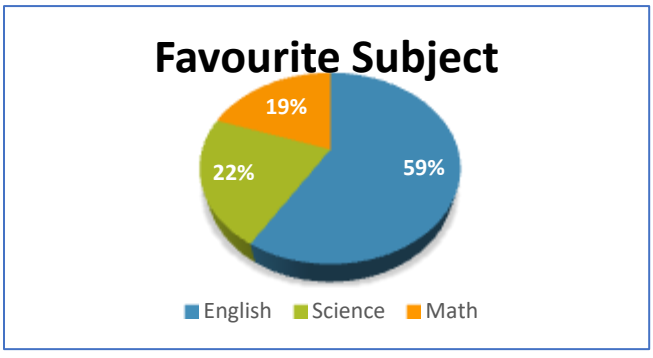


Figure 2: Favourit subject.

Of those surveyed, around 65% were female, and 35% were male students. English is the favourite subject for the majority of participants with 59%, followed by science (22%) and finally Math with 19%.

Student self-efficacy survey results

1-Students' self-efficacy in achieving goals

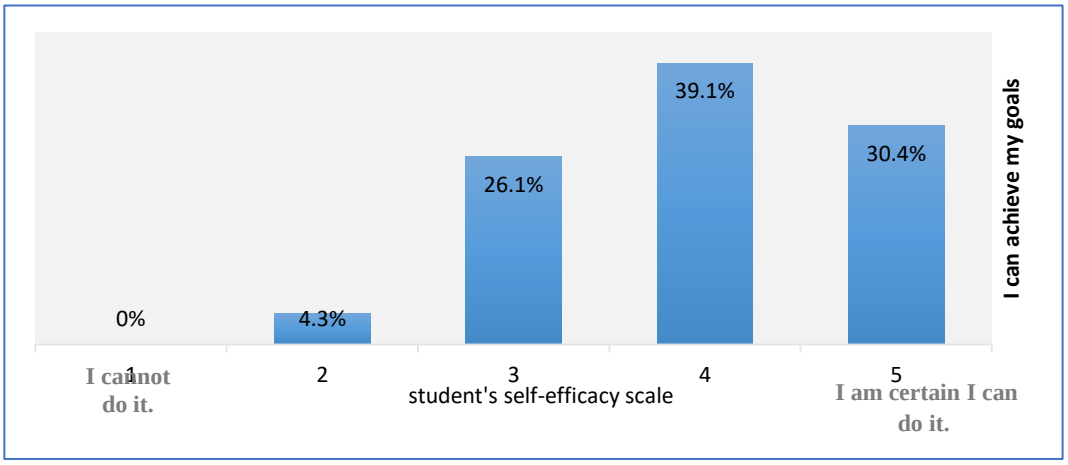


Figure 3

As can be seen in figure (3), around 69.5% of participants had a strong sense of their capacity to achieve their goals.

2-Students' self-efficacy in developing skills.

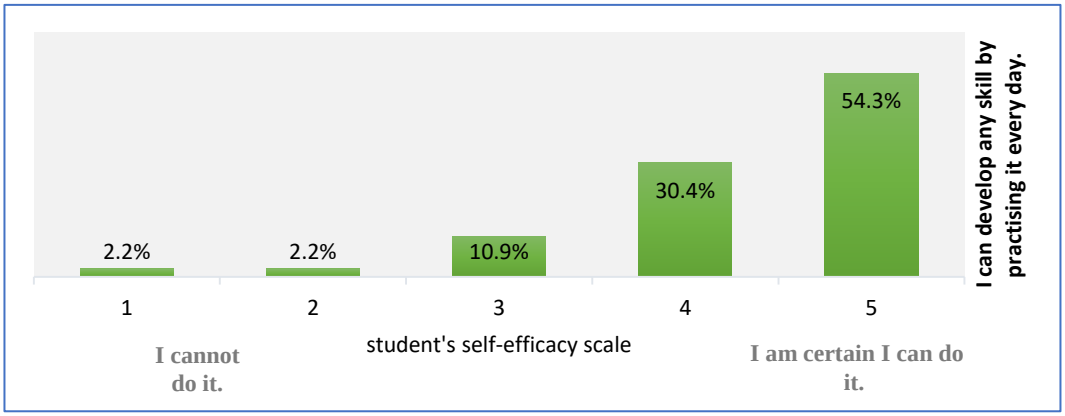


Figure 4

Over half of those questioned reported that they were confident in their ability to develop any skill through daily practice.

3- Students' self-efficacy in solving problems in different ways.

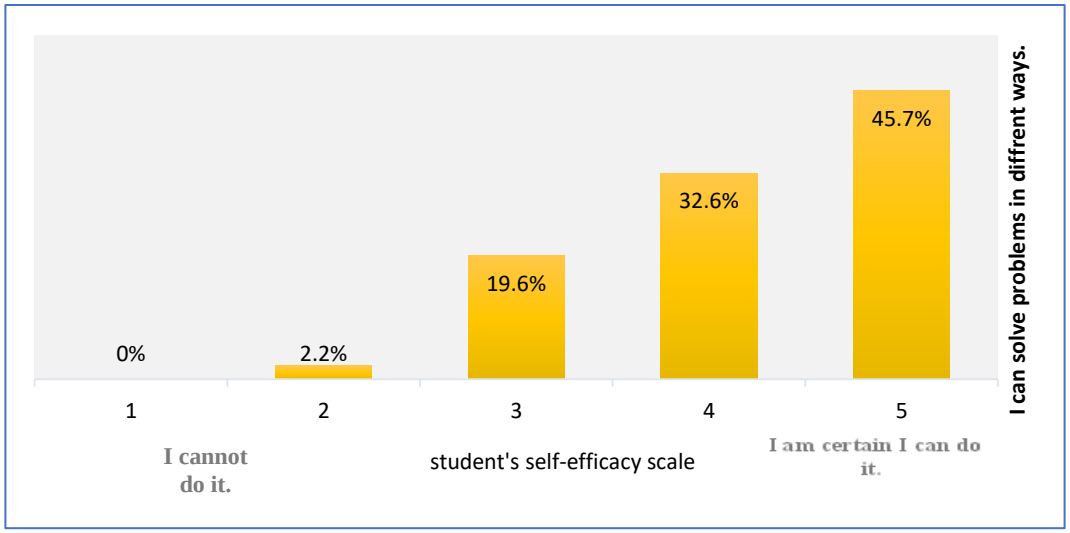


Figure 5

Approximately 78 % of the students were confident that in their ability to solve any problem if they tried hard enough.

4- **Students' self-efficacy in asking for help when they face difficulties.**

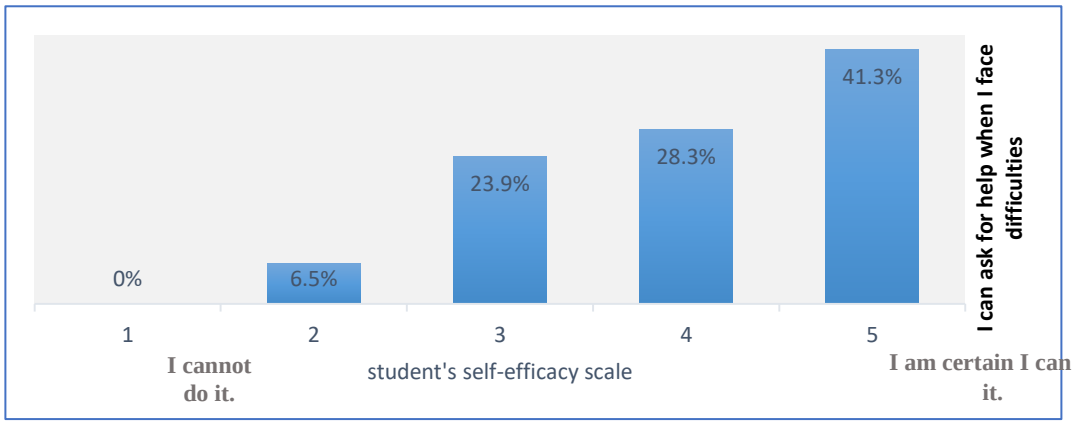


Figure 4

Figure (6) shows that 69.6% of participants are confident in seeking help when they face difficulties.

5- Students' self-efficacy in doing almost all the work in the class.

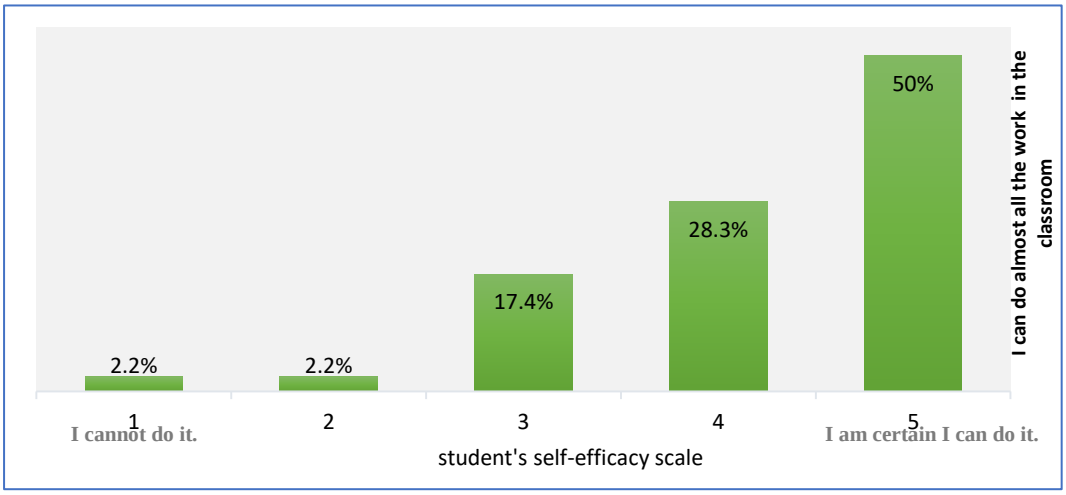


Figure 5

Around 78% of the participants were very confident that they could do their work in the class if they did not give up.

6- Students' self-efficacy in overcoming challenges.

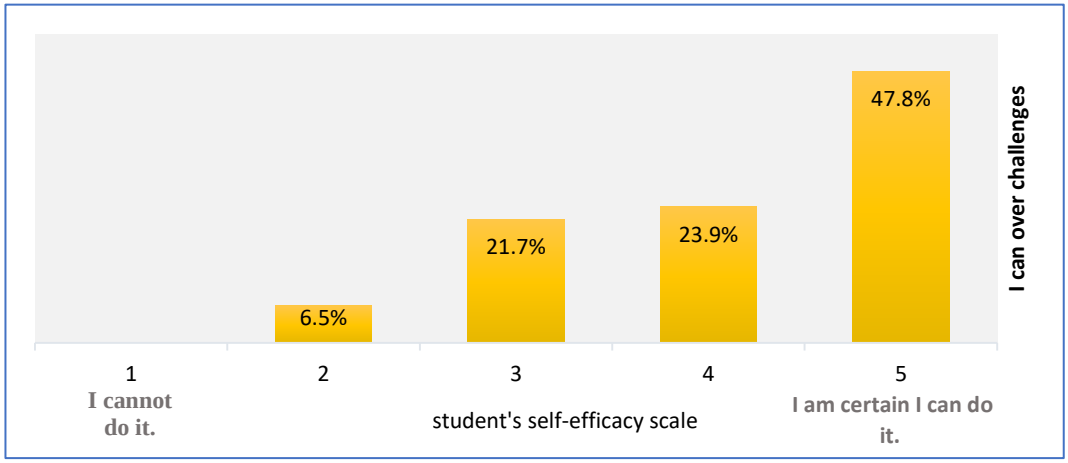


Figure 8

Approximately (70%) of the participants indicated that they can overcome challenges.

7- Students' self-efficacy in solving problems in different ways.

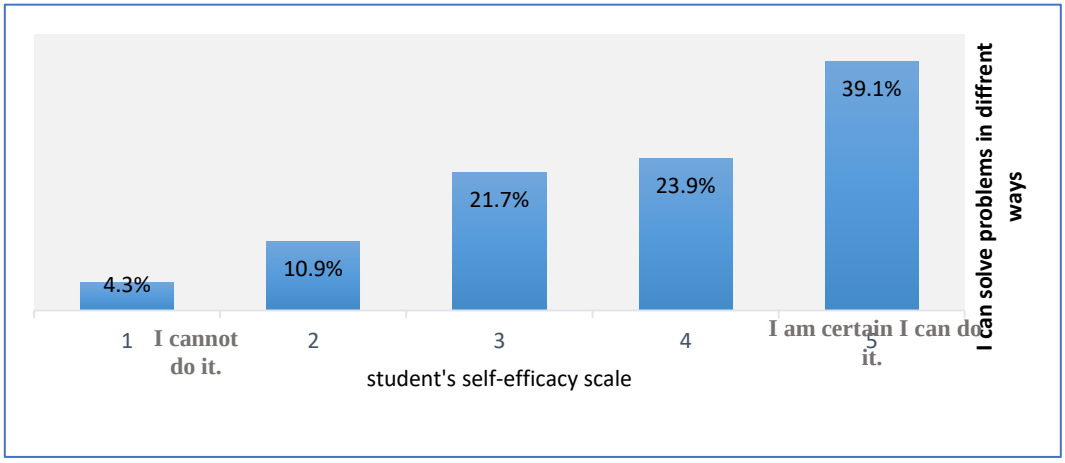


Figure 9

Approximately two-thirds (63%) of the sample had a high self-efficacy in their ability to solve problems in different ways.

8- Students' self-efficacy in learning from mistakes.

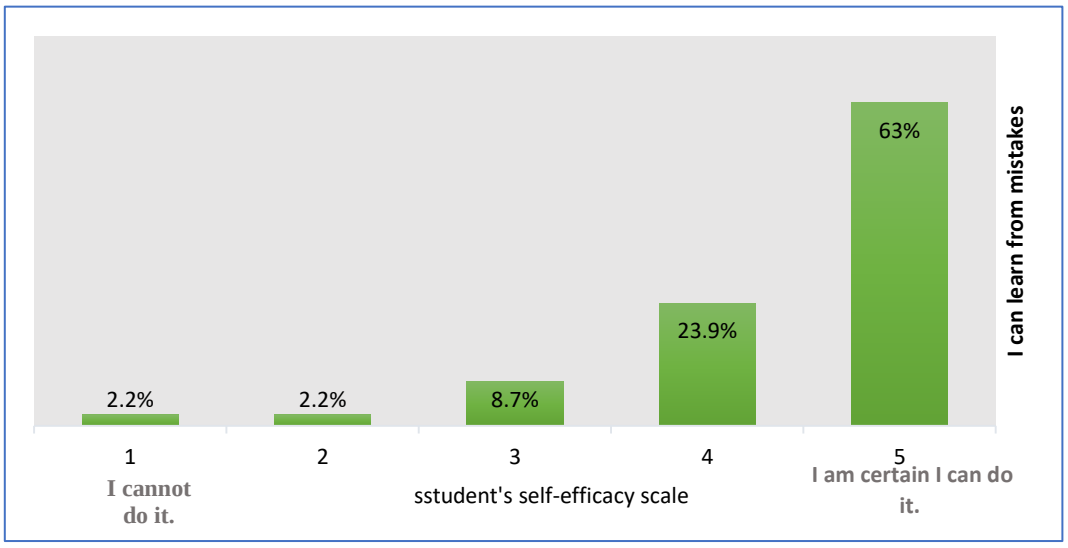


Figure 6

The majority of the participants (86.9%) indicated that they can learn from their mistakes.

9- Students' self-efficacy in learning more than one language.

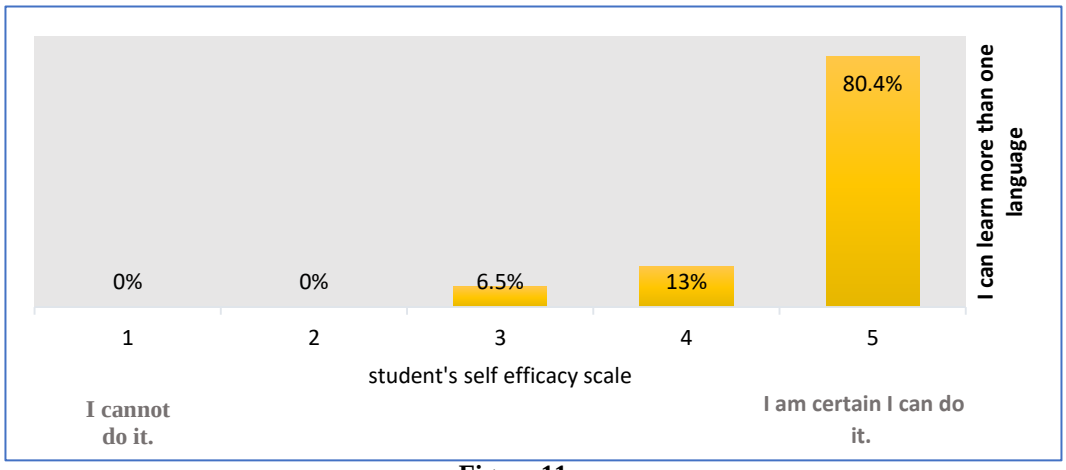


Figure 11

When the subjects were asked about their ability to learn more than one language, the majority (80%) answered that they were certain they could.

Interview findings

Questions	1-What does the teacher do to help you get better at learning and doing classwork by yourself?	2-What do you do when you find that a task or activity is too difficult to do?	3-What do you do when you make mistakes?	4-What kind of classroom tasks and activities help you to keep interested and motivated to learn?
Findings	▪ Uses different strategies. ▪ Gives feedback ▪ Gives Encouragement ▪ Does Workshop ▪ Makes the environment safe ▪ Gives Checklist ▪ Let's me work with my partner ▪ Gives Examples. ▪ Gives clear instructions ▪ Gives clear goals.	▪ Ask a friend for help ▪ try something easier first ▪ think about it many times.	▪ find out what is wrong ▪ learn from mistakes. ▪ Ask for help	▪ Problem-solving tasks ▪ Project work ▪ Challenging activities ▪ Sketching

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter interprets the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The sample from Victoria primary school, with 65% female participants and the majority who chose English as their favourite subject, reflects the demographic of the students I currently teach as an English language teacher at a female-only school.

When investigating why such a large majority of students (69. 6%) students felt confident in asking for help when facing difficulties, the majority responded that they were confident in discussing ideas with their partner or group members before asking the teacher. The strategy implemented by the classroom teacher was “Ask three before me” where students had to first ask three other students before asking the teacher. This is an example of peer tutoring, as mentioned by Arreaga-Mayer (1998). The theory of Interactionism (1994) emphasises that the support and help that students receive from teachers or peers can affect the success of the students.

When looking at the results of how students felt about their ability to solve problems and overcome challenges without giving up, again a large percentage (63%-70%) felt certain in their abilities. The interviewees said that when they faced a difficult task, they first tried doing something similar which was slightly easier and then returned to work on the difficult task. They tried completing the difficult tasks a number of times and did not give up. One of the strategies the classroom teacher employed was to provide the students with the same activity but with different levels of difficulty (labeled with one star for easy and three stars for difficult) and the students could choose which they wanted to try first. If they wanted to challenge themselves, they started with the more difficult one but could do an easier one if the first one was too difficult. This is connected to Dweck's theory (1999) that individuals with growth mindsets can develop their abilities and skills through persistence.

In Saudi Arabia students often avoid mistakes and focus more on achieving perfect grades which is a big contrast to the results from the survey of students at Victoria Primary school, where 86.9% of the students said that they learned from their mistakes. The responses of the interviewees around this question indicate that though sometimes feel frustrated when mistakes are made, they see them as positive experiences for future learning. For example, after writing tasks were completed, the teacher did not make explicit corrections of any errors. Instead, she highlighted the mistakes and the students had a chance to correct their writing themselves. A Growth Mindset is a dynamic state where mistakes are learning opportunities to become better (Dweck, 2006).

When students know what they can do and what they will do, this will affect their performance and improve the outcomes as well. While in Saudi Arabia students are instructed clearly on the task and activity goals, constant follow-up is required by teachers to ensure students remain confident in their ability to complete them successfully. In the New Zealand classroom, about 70% of students rate themselves highly in their ability to complete tasks and achieve their learning goals. An effective way the teacher achieves this is by providing students with a check-list of their daily class goals at the beginning of the day. Students are required to check off the tasks as they complete them. Classrooms that focus on the sense that everyone can achieve the learning goals support self-efficacy and increase their motivation

more than classrooms which focus on competitiveness (Carr & Walton, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

In the Interview, the participants said they were interested and motivated in activities such as projects, working in groups, and problem- solving tasks. These types of activities build self-efficacy. when we asked the participants in the Interview about what the teacher did to help them get better at learning, all of them strongly agree that encouragement, immediate feedback, feeling safe, and using different strategies motivate them to learn. This is what Maslow (1943) and Krashen (1982) asserted.

Conclusion

The findings show that students had high levels of self-efficacy. This is in line with The New Zealand Ministry of Education's vision for young people to be 'confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners' (Ministry of education, 2017). There is no doubt that students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be engaged in the learning process. High levels of self-efficacy support students to be more confident in seeking help, encourage students to work independently, increases resilience, and achieving goals. Students with a growth mindset consider mistakes to be learning opportunities and have a greater willingness to persist with challenging tasks.

Self-efficacy and the growth mindset are crucial factors of success and achievement (Diseth,2011). To develop a sense of learning efficacy, teachers need to ensure that the classroom environment, task design which includes teaching strategies, and learning opportunities enable students to be motivated to achieve their goals. These factors all have a strong influence on student performance. Therefore, it is important that teachers continue to raise students' awareness about self- efficacy and how this can improve learning.

Recommendations for Implementation

❖ In my classroom in Saudi Arabia, I will:

- Develop classroom activities and tasks that students find challenging but can accomplish with a reasonable amount of effort, using the Learning Pit model as a guide
- Enhance the role of collaboration in the classroom through project work to shift the learning process from being teacher-focused to student-centered.
- Employ the following strategies to encourage self-efficacy, growth mindset, and awareness of their own learning process:

✓ Students can build their ability to solve problems independently and collaboratively by asking their peers for support before asking their teachers (Ask three before me).

✓ I can help students learn from their mistakes by using self-correction strategies.

✓ Use tasks with differentiated levels of difficulty in the classroom to help students complete a task without giving up.

❖ Within my school, I will:

- Run workshops that explore the theories that enhance self-efficacy and growth mindset amongst students

- Invite fellow teachers to observe my classes where I apply the strategies observed in the New Zealand classroom.

It is hoped that the findings of this research project can be used as evidence to support the 2030 Saudi Educational vision to improve student outcomes.

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