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A Study of Language Self-Efficacy of Upper Secondary School Students: A Case Study of Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni)

Tanata Peerakuntrakorn [1], Yanika Lunrasri [2]*, Supakorn Ounsiri [2]

[1] Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni)
[2] Faculty of Education, Burapha University, Chonburi, Thailand

*Corresponding author, E-mail: Yanika.lu@go.buu.ac.th

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Abstract

Self-efficacy is often a strong predictor of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) success. This research profiled language self-efficacy among upper secondary students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School, Thailand. The study relied on stratified random sampling to select 288 students from Grades 10 to 12. Using a 32-item scale based on Wang et al. (2013), the assessment showed high reliability (α=0.96). On average, students reported moderate self-efficacy (M=4.18, SD=1.66). A closer look, however, revealed a gap between skills. Students felt safer with receptive tasks such as listening (M=4.29) and reading (M=4.24) than with productive ones like speaking (M=4.15) and writing (M=4.02). While gender and grade level had no significant impact ($p>.05$), the study track changed everything ($F(2,285) = 18.28$, $p<.001$). Science-Mathematics students (M=4.62) were far more confident than their peers in Language-Arts (M=3.55) and Math-Arts (M=3.35). These findings highlighted how the academic environment shaped learner beliefs. To solve the issue, schools needed specific interventions for speaking and writing, along with better support for students in non-science programs.

Keywords*: Self-efficacy, English language, Upper-secondary school students*

1. Introduction

With diverse cultures and context, language learning are essential skills in this interconnected world. Within the educational context, it is necessary for students to perceive their own abilities to learn and use language. Language self-efficacy, as conceptualized by Bandura (1977), is defined as an individual's belief in their capabilities to perform language-related tasks and achieve desired learning outcomes. The construct encompasses the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in language, as well as the confidence in communicating effectively in real-world situations. It plays a significant role in language acquisition. High levels of language self-efficacy have been shown to enhance students' motivation, persistence, and overall achievement in language acquisition (Wang et al., 2013; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007).

Language self-efficacy has been widely recognized as a key factor in second language acquisition. Learners with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to engage actively in classroom activities, apply effective learning strategies, and overcome language-related anxiety (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007). Conversely, students with lower self-

efficacy often avoid challenging tasks and show limited progress. Previous studies have confirmed that self-efficacy positively influences language skills across reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Wang et al., 2013). Moreover, it affects learners' willingness to communicate in authentic contexts (Woodrow, 2006). Therefore, understanding language self-efficacy is essential not only for explaining students' language performance but also for guiding teachers and policymakers in creating interventions that foster learner confidence and autonomy.

Recent studies published after 2020 have continued to emphasize the important role of language self-efficacy in second and foreign language learning. Graham (2022) explained that self-efficacy is strongly associated with learners' confidence, persistence, and willingness to engage in language tasks, especially in challenging communicative situations. The study also highlighted that learners with higher self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate resilience and active participation in language learning activities. Similarly, Teng and Wu (2023) found that self-efficacy beliefs significantly influenced learners' motivation, metacognitive strategies, and academic performance in English learning contexts. The study suggested that students with stronger self-efficacy beliefs tended to apply more effective learning strategies and showed greater self-regulation in language learning.

Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated that language self-efficacy is closely related to the use of language learning strategies and learners' engagement. Saez-Zevallos et al. (2025) reported that English self-efficacy positively affected students' use of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies, including critical thinking, self-regulation, and time management. Likewise, Istikharoh (2024) emphasized that self-efficacy became increasingly important in technology-assisted language learning environments, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, as students' confidence in using technology for English learning directly influenced their academic performance and learning effectiveness. These findings suggest that language self-efficacy remains a significant construct in contemporary language education and continues to influence learners' achievement, motivation, and strategic learning behaviors across different educational contexts.

Understanding language self-efficacy among upper secondary school students is important for educators and policymakers to design effective language teaching strategies. This study focuses on investigating the language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students, with a case of Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School in Bangkok, Thailand – a school widely recognized for its rigorous academic standards and diverse student population. The school's vision for English language teaching and learning is to provide a place of excellence where students can achieve full potential in their academic, creative, personal, physical and moral development to become the effective citizenship in a global community and to create morally well-educated graduates for the Thai society. Furthermore, school is running under the core policy with the motto, "Smart and Well-behaved", which aims to prepare students for higher education study as well as make them ready as both local and international workforce in alignment with the plan to help students to be equipped with what are needed as 21st century workforce skills such as learning skills, literacy skills, and life skills. The school serves approximately 4,800 students from its local

district or community and the other districts in Bangkok. The class size is rather big ranging from 40-45 students. Despite this challenge, the school provides abundant opportunities for English language learning, supported by both Thai and native English-speaking teachers. Consequently, Bodindecha has cultivated a positive English learning environment with high levels of student engagement.

In response to school English language learning and teaching, teachers try to develop teaching materials that help students learn to their highest proficiency. Nevertheless, a key challenge remains whether students can accurately perceive and affirm their own abilities in language learning. The concept of language self-efficacy becomes critical in this context, as students who recognize and believe in their capacity to learn English are more likely to achieve higher proficiency and sustained success.

Numerous studies have explored language self-efficacy in educational contexts. There remains a gap in investigating language self-efficacy among upper secondary school students within Thai educational system. Thus, this study aims to shed light on the language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha School. The findings are expected to provide insights into students' perceived competence in English learning and to inform curriculum development, teacher training, and educational policy aimed at fostering supportive and empowering environments for language learners.

2. Research Objectives

1) To study language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni)

2) To compare language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) across gender, grade level, and study program

3. Research Methodology

This research employed a cross-sectional study design allowed for the collection of data at a single point in time, providing insights into the current state of language self-efficacy among upper secondary school students.

3.1 Population and sample

Population

The target population in this study was upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) in the academic year 2023.

Sample

The sample consisted of 288 upper secondary school students enrolled at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School in the academic year 2023. Sample was selected using stratified random sampling according to grade levels (Grade 10, Grade 11, Grade 12). The number of students from each grade level was selected using a random method. The

sample size was calculated using G*power with a 95% confidence level and a 5% of precision level. The number of sample sizes was 280 students.

3.2 Research Instrument

Research instrument was language self-efficacy questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Wang et al. (2013). There were divided into three sections with the total of 36 items as follows:

Section One: Demographic information about gender, grade level, and study program

Section Two: Language self-efficacy consisted of four dimensions including speaking, listening, writing and reading, with the total of 32 items. A seven-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of language self-efficacy as follows:

7 = I am totally unable to do this

6 = I am able to do this

5 = I am basically and in principle able to do this

4 = I am possibly able to do this

3 = I am possibly unable to do this

2 = I am unable to do this

1 = I am totally unable to do this

These items were translated using back-translator technique and were validated by three experts in the field of English language teaching using the index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). All items had the index of IOC higher than 0.5. The items were tried out to check its consistency with 30 upper secondary students who were not selected as sample. The reliability of these items using Cronbach's coefficient alpha was 0.96. The item discrimination was between 0.73 and 0.93.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was carried out in the first semester in the academic year 2023. The questionnaire was administered to participants online via Google Form. They were provided with clear instructions for completing the questionnaire.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and One-way ANOVA. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics, including independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were analyzed to determine statistically significant differences in self-efficacy across gender,

grade level, study program, and perceived language competence. Post-hoc analysis was conducted to identify significant differences between specific groups.
The interpretation of mean score to analyze self-efficacy of students were as follows:

1.00 – 1.49 Very low self-efficacy

1.50 – 2.49 Low self-efficacy

2.50 – 3.49 Moderately low self-efficacy

3.50 – 4.49 Moderate self-efficacy

4.50 – 5.49 Moderately high self-efficacy

5.50 – 6.49 High self-efficacy

6.50 – 7.00 Very high self-efficacy

4. Result

4.1 The study of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students

The results showed that the overall language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School was at moderate level (M = 4.18, SD = 1.66). When considering each skill, the highest mean score was listening (M = 4.29, SD = 1.69), followed by reading (M = 4.24, SD = 1.71), speaking (M = 4.15, SD = 1.68), and writing (M = 4.02, SD = 1.66) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School

Language self-efficacy	Mean	SD	Level
Listening	4.29	1.69	Moderate
Speaking	4.15	1.68	Moderate
Reading	4.24	1.71	Moderate
Writing	4.02	1.66	Moderate
Total	4.18	1.66	Moderate

4.2 The comparison of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across gender, grade level, and study program

4.2.1 Gender

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare students' self-efficacy across gender. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in overall language self-efficacy between male (M = 4.11, SD = 1.66) and female (M = 4.23, SD = 1.66) students, $t(285) = -0.632$, $p = .528$. Additionally, no significant differences in terms of listening ($p = .636$), speaking ($p = .446$), reading ($p = .610$), and writing ($p = .458$).

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across gender

Language self-efficacy	Male		Female		*t*	*p*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***		
Listening	4.24	1.69	4.33	1.69	-.474	.636
Speaking	4.07	1.70	4.22	1.67	-.763	.446
Reading	4.18	1.74	4.29	1.69	-.510	.610
Writing	3.94	1.66	4.09	1.67	-.743	.458
Total	4.11	1.66	4.23	1.66	-.632	.528

4.2.2 Grade level

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in language self-efficacy across grade levels. The results showed that Grade 11 students showed higher mean scores ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.65$) compared to Grade 10 ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.62$) and Grade 12 ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.66$). However, there were no statistically significant differences in students' overall self-efficacy, F (2, 285) = 1.887, $p = .153$. Additionally, no significant differences in terms of listening ($p = .108$), speaking ($p = .164$), reading ($p = .183$), and writing ($p = .181$).

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across grade level

Language self-efficacy	Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Listening	4.07	1.64	4.59	1.63	4.15	1.71
Speaking	4.18	1.64	4.42	1.71	4.01	1.66
Reading	4.27	1.74	4.50	1.69	4.10	1.72
Writing	4.09	1.61	4.27	1.67	3.88	1.65
Total	4.15	1.62	4.45	1.65	4.04	1.66

Table 4: Analysis of variance of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across grade level

Language self-efficacy	Source of variation	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Listening	Between group	2	12.72	6.36	2.24	.108
	Within-group	285	808.19	2.83		
	Total	287	820.91			
Speaking	Between group	2	10.24	5.12	1.817	.164
	Within-group	285	803.48	2.81		
	Total	287	813.72			
Reading	Between group	2	10.03	5.01	1.709	.183

Language self-efficacy	Source of variation	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
	Within-group	285	836.89	2.93		
	Total	287	846.93			
Writing	Between group	2	9.51	4.75	1.721	.181
	Within-group	285	788.23	2.76		
	Total	287	797.75			
Total	Between group	2	10.37	5.18	1.887	.153
	Within-group	285	783.58	2.74		
	Total	287	793.96			

4.2.3 Study programs

There were significant differences in students' language self-efficacy across study programs. The one-way ANOVA results indicated statistically significant differences in overall self-efficacy, $F(2, 285) = 18.28$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons using Scheffe's test revealed that students in the Science-Mathematics program reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.54$) compared to students in both the Language-Arts ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.59$) and Math-Arts ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.64$). Additionally, significant differences were found across all four language skills, with Science-Mathematics students consistently reporting higher self-efficacy than the other two groups.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across study programs

Language self-efficacy	Science-Mathematics		Language-Arts		Math-Arts	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Listening	4.73	1.58	3.68	1.62	3.47	1.62
Speaking	4.61	1.56	3.50	1.61	3.30	1.62
Reading	4.69	1.59	3.59	1.62	3.41	1.75
Writing	4.45	1.55	3.42	1.58	3.21	1.69
Total	4.62	1.54	3.55	1.59	3.35	1.64

Table 6: Analysis of variance of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across study programs

Language self-efficacy	Source of variation	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Listening	Between group	2	87.27	43.63	16.95*	.000
	Within-group	285	733.63	2.57		
	Total	287	820.91			

Language self-efficacy	Source of variation	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Speaking	Between group	2	95.89	47.94	19.03*	.000
	Within-group	285	717.82	2.51		
	Total	287	813.72			
Reading	Between group	2	94.18	47.09	17.83*	.000
	Within-group	285	752.74	2.64		
	Total	287	846.93			
Writing	Between group	2	84.02	42.01	16.77*	.000
	Within-group	285	713.73	2.50		
	Total	287	797.75			
Total	Between group	2	90.27	45.13	18.28*	.000
	Within-group	285	703.69	2.46		
	Total	287	793.96			

Table 7: Pairwise comparison of language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students across study programs

Language self-efficacy	Group	Mean	Study Program	
			Group 2	Group 3
Listening	Group 1	4.73	1.050*	1.257*
	Group 2	3.68		.207
	Group 3	3.47		
Speaking	Group 1	4.61	1.109*	1.305*
	Group 2	3.50		.195
	Group 3	3.30		
Reading	Group 1	4.69	1.102*	1.288*
	Group 2	3.59		.185
	Group 3	3.41		
Writing	Group 1	4.45	1.026*	1.238*
	Group 2	3.42		.211
	Group 3	3.21		
Total	Group 1	4.62	1.072*	1.272*
	Group 2	3.55		.200
	Group 3	3.35		

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the language self-efficacy of upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School. Overall, students demonstrated a moderate level of self-efficacy across all four language skills, with

the highest confidence in listening and the lowest in writing. This result suggests that while students perceive themselves as moderately competent in English, challenges remain, particularly in productive skills such as writing. This is consistent with previous studies indicating that learners often rate their receptive skills (listening and reading) higher than their productive skills (speaking and writing), as the latter require more complex language production and greater confidence (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007; Wang et al., 2013).

The analysis of gender differences revealed no significant variations in language self-efficacy between male and female students. This finding aligns with studies such as Tilfarlıoğlu and Ciftci (2011), which reported no substantial gender-based differences in English self-efficacy, suggesting that both male and female students at the upper secondary level have comparable perceptions of their English learning abilities. This may be attributed to the school's emphasis on equal access to quality English instruction, including classes taught by both Thai and native English-speaking teachers, thereby reducing gender disparities in learning experiences.

When comparing across grade levels, the results showed no statistically significant differences among Grade 10, 11, and 12 students, although Grade 11 students reported slightly higher mean scores. This pattern may reflect the fact that students in Grade 11 have already adapted to the academic demands of secondary education and are preparing for university entrance, which may enhance their confidence. However, the lack of significant differences suggests that language self-efficacy is relatively stable across upper secondary school years, consistent with the notion that self-efficacy beliefs are more strongly shaped by cumulative learning experiences and personal mastery than by grade level alone (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016).

The most notable finding was the significant differences in language self-efficacy across study programs. Students in the Science-Mathematics program reported significantly higher self-efficacy than those in the Language-Arts and Math-Arts programs. This result may be explained by the selective nature of the Science-Mathematics program, which often attracts high-achieving students with strong academic backgrounds and greater access to supplementary resources such as tutorial schools. These students may also benefit from higher parental expectations and support, which can positively reinforce their self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 2002). In contrast, students in the Language-Arts and Math-Arts tracks may experience lower academic demands or perceive fewer opportunities to apply English in meaningful contexts, leading to lower self-efficacy scores.

Overall, the findings highlight the crucial role of contextual and programmatic factors in shaping students' language self-efficacy. For educators, these results underscore the need to provide targeted support in developing productive skills such as writing, as well as to ensure that students across all study programs have equal opportunities to build confidence in their English learning. Teacher training programs should also emphasize strategies that foster students' self-efficacy, such as providing mastery experiences, constructive feedback, and opportunities for authentic language use (Bandura, 1997).

6. Suggestions

6.1 Educational Practice implications

The data points to one clear area for improvement: Students feel less secure in their writing and speaking skills. In order to counteract this, English teaching should expand beyond just input to actively address output skills. Through structured success opportunities, teachers can support students in finding mastery experiences they otherwise would not have. Yet another fundamental lesson is the size gap across study programs. The lower scores in Language–Arts and Math–Arts groups indicate that these students are missing the psychological lift provided by the Science track. To mitigate this inequality, one must be resolute in developing more fair supportive strategies. Ultimately, we must implement methods that build confidence in and beyond a student's gender and grade in everyday lessons as a means to improve the whole student approach.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

Although this study serves as a reference point, longitudinal studies investigating students over time could give a more holistic understanding of developmental trends. Similarly, qualitative analysis methods have a key role in the identification of the root causes of the differences between study tracks, which we propose to exploit. Furthermore, if a more thorough analysis was to be added on how anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, and actual test scores interacted with self-efficacy, we would develop a more comprehensive picture of EFL learner.

7. Conclusions

This research examined language self-efficacy in upper secondary school students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School as it relates to gender, grade, and study program. Results indicate that students' language self-efficacy as a whole in the study group was moderate in general, with high perceived competence in receptive and lower perceived competence in productive language, such as writing. This distribution of students' self-perceptions across language domains also indicates a discrepancy and that tasks that contain active language production remain at moderate to high levels of difficulty. The lack of a similar significance between gender and grade level indicates that language self-efficacy of high school students remains similar and not heavily differentiated by those demographics. This result is consistent with the interpretation that beliefs in self-efficacy are more in line with accumulated instructional experiences and less based on demographic profile and grade-level progression. Statistical comparison between the different study programs, however, shows such differences are statistically significant. In comparison, students involved in a Science–Mathematics program showed consistently greater levels of linguistic self-efficacy across all four language skills than students in a Language–Arts and a Math–Arts program. This finding emphasizes the importance of academic context and program-specific learning environments, as well as the role of instruction/instructional expectations and learning context on the self-efficacy beliefs of students and their perception of language competence. Collectively, the results indicate that language self-efficacy

of upper secondary school students is not consistent, but rather is a systematic domain that is intricately linked to both instruction and program. Through an empirical study at a Thai secondary school, this study adds to the literature of language self-efficacy in English as a foreign language context and reiterates the significance of the context for analysis of students' self-beliefs in language acquisition.

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