



**DISCOVERING SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS OF EFL LEARNERS AND THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-EFFICACY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to investigate a) the self-efficacy level of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the process of learning English, b) whether their self-efficacy levels differ according to variables, such as proficiency levels and gender. It also targets c) to explore how self-efficient EFL learners are in terms of listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition, the study also aims at d) investigating whether there is a relationship between the self-efficacy level of Turkish EFL learners and their academic achievement. The setting of the study is a preparatory program. This study was implemented with 525 students enrolled at a state university in Turkey and carried out during the spring semester of the 2016- 2017 academic year. The study followed a mixed-method design; first, quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire, "Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy", developed by Açık (2011) and adapted by the researcher. The results of the questionnaire were analysed via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0. Secondly, semi-structured interviews, whose protocol was developed by the researcher, with randomly selected 24 participants were carried out to assist the quantitative data with the qualitative one.

Keywords: Self-efficacy in English, second/ foreign language learning, academic achievement, EFL learners

**İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN TÜRK ÖĞRENCİLERİN ÖZ YETERLİK
İNANÇLARI VE ÖZ-YETERLİK İLE AKADEMİK BAŞARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ
ÖZ**

Bu çalışmanın ana amacı a) İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin, İngilizce öğrenme sürecindeki öz yeterlik seviyeleri ve b) bu inançların İngilizce yeterlik düzeyi ve cinsiyet gibi farklı değişkenlere göre değişip değişmediğini araştırmaktır. Çalışma ayrıca İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin, c) dinleme, okuma, yazma ve konuşma becerilerinde kendilerini ne kadar öz yeterli hissettiklerini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bunlara ek olarak, işbu çalışma d) İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin öz yeterlik seviyeleri ile akademik başarıları arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını incelemeyi de hedeflemektedir. Çalışma bir hazırlık programında uygulanmıştır. Pamukkale Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda eğitim gören 525 öğrenci ile 2016-2017 akademik yılının bahar döneminde yapılan çalışmadan edinilen veriler anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığı ile toplanmış ve hem nicel hem de nitel olarak incelenmiştir. Çalışmada, öğrencilere Açık (2011) tarafından geliştirilen ve araştırmacı tarafından adapte edilen "İngilizce Öz Yeterlik Ölçeği" uygulanmıştır. Ölçek sonuçları Sosyal Bilimler İçin İstatistik Programı (SPSS) 22.0 aracılığı ile analiz edilmiştir.

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Ayrıca, nicel verileri nitel yönden de desteklemek amacıyla rastgele seçilmiş 24 öğrenci ile protokolü araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce öz yeterlik, ikinci/yabancı dil öğrenimi, akademik başarı, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler

1.Introduction

Studies carried out on self-efficacy indicate that people holding positive perceptions about themselves are eager to accomplish the objectives and to surmount the difficulties on the way to success. However, the ones with negative or low perceptions of self are likely to be unsuccessful to achieve their goals and fall behind with their potential (Bong and Clark, 1999). Another study carried out by Mahyuddin, Elias, Cheong, Muhamad, Noordin and Abdullah (2006) investigates the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their English language achievement in Malaysia. They conclude that if students hold high self-efficacy in English, their achievements increase (p. 61). Bandura (1997) suggested that self-efficacy is a factor that either can help or hinder the learner's progress.

Learning a second/ foreign language is of great importance in today's global world. Especially for university students to have a better higher education or have better job opportunities after graduation, it is a main requisite to be proficient, especially in English. Thus, there are a great number of studies in language learning conducted to find out the underlying reasons that make learners better or worse in the process of learning English. As a result of these studies, language teaching and learning has changed a lot and has had several changes of paradigm in teaching methodology and pedagogic aims. For instance, instead of teacher-centered instruction, student-centered approach in teaching English has come into prominence. Hence, learner characteristics, beliefs, motivation, and anxiety has also gained importance.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Since the introduction of self-efficacy in 1977 by Bandura, a growing number of studies by the scholars have been carried out to find out the role of self-efficacy in learning (Huang and Shanmao, 1996; Linnenbrick and Pintrich, 2003; Mills, Pajares, and Herron, 2007; Pajares, 2002a; Schunk and Pajares, 2001). In the light of these studies, the purpose of the current study emerged as self-efficacy is a requisite in learning besides being a reasonable predictor for the performance of learners. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the self-efficacy levels of EFL learners in the process of learning English, whether their self-efficacy level differ according to different variables, such as proficiency levels and gender. It also targets to explore how self-efficient they are in terms of listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition to these, the study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners. This research intends to provide a clear insight into the relationship between the EFL learners' sense of self-efficacy and their academic performance with the help of the following research questions:

1.2 Research Questions

1. **What are the self-efficacy levels of Turkish EFL learners in learning English?**
2. **Do participants' self-efficacy levels show any differences according to proficiency level and gender?**
3. **How self-efficient are Turkish EFL learners in listening, reading, writing, speaking skills?**
4. **Is there a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners?**

2. Literature Review

2.1. Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) aimed to clarify the notion of self-efficacy by referring to it as individual's self-belief in accomplishing tasks according to given standards (Bandura, 1997). While trying to establish a new definition for this term, different researchers came up with similar perspectives. McCombs (2001), for instance, refers to the definition of Bandura (1997) and defines the terms self-efficacy as learner's opinion of his/her own sufficiency to be able to carry out a task. Similarly, according to the definition of Schunk (2001), self-efficacy is "beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviours at designated levels" (p. 126). With reference to Bandura (1986), Pintrich and Schunk (1996) highlighted another definition "self-efficacy is people's judgments of their abilities to arrange and carry out plans and strategies needed to reach scheduled assignments" (p. 88). Huang and Shanmao (1996), in a very similar way, drew attention to the term self-efficacy by suggesting that it is one's perception of his own abilities in conducting an assigned task.

2.2. Sources of Self-Efficacy

When it comes to how self-efficacy beliefs are formed, they begin to prosper in early childhood. And it continues developing throughout one's life by gaining new experiences, knowledge and understanding (Bandura, 1992). Self-efficacy belief is the product of a complicated series of actions of self-persuasion that depends on cognitive processing of different sources of efficacy information that Bandura (1992) called self-efficacy appraisals. Bandura identified four main sources of self-efficacy: 1. enactive mastery experiences, 2. vicarious experiences, 3. verbal (social) persuasion, and 4. physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). The first and the most influential source of all, enactive mastery experiences, refers to the student's personal assessment of his or her former practice regarding a particular task or skill and is related to the previous experiences of either success or failure (Bandura, 1977; Usher and Pajares, 2009; Phan, 2012). The second source, vicarious experiences, is related to the comparison of a person's performance on a task with another person that has similar abilities (Palabıyık-Yeni, 2013). In other words, it is observation of others while they are performing a task. Bandura (1986) explains this as "...observing other people who have been once perceived as competent are unsuccessful in spite of hard work lessens observers' perception of their own capabilities and weakens their efforts" (p.99). Bandura (1994) states this as "the impact of modeling on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by perceived similarity to the models" (p. 72). The third source, the comments made by the ones who are accepted as important by the person, is

verbal persuasions or verbal judgments, and this source can also develop beliefs in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Alderman, 1999). It is possible to increase the self-efficacy of an individual by encouraging or persuading him/her that s/he can be successful in carrying out a task. This increase leads the individual to be able to face the challenges that s/he might face while carrying out the task. Verbal persuasion makes people put more effort and develop skills required to reach goals, which make them more confident (Bandura, 1994). Thus, Schunk (1987) points out that giving feedback should be for enhancing students' self-efficacy beliefs because their self-beliefs are being formed accordingly. However, verbal persuasion does not foster self-efficacy beliefs as much as other sources because its results are just described rather than observed. The fourth and the last source is psychological and affective states affect self-efficacy; and Bandura (1995) stated that "physiological, affective, and mood states like increased heart rate, profuse sweating, fast breathing, high anxiety, nervousness, and tiredness can have considerable effects on self-efficacy" (p. 4). People's emotional stimulations affect their self-efficacy either in a positively or a negatively. A learner's psychological condition can also affect and interfere with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). To sum up, people can heighten their sense of self-efficacy by learning how to lower stress and alter their frame of mind when they are in difficulties or on tough tasks (Bandura, 1994).

2.3. Effects of Self-Efficacy on Success and Academic Self-Efficacy

According to Pintrich and Schunk (1996), self-efficacy beliefs not only affect mental and physical health but are also important determinants in one's decision making process, career planning and academic success. An important notion specifically academic self-efficacy can be regarded as a learner's conviction in his/her own potential of performing various academic tasks successfully (Bandura, 1997; Bandura and Barbaranelli, 1996). It is also suggested by Bandura and Locke (2003) that the level of self-efficacy beliefs may vary depending on the tasks or individuals. According to Bandura (1997), low self-efficacy beliefs can play a role in one's low academic success. On the other hand, he maintains that high self-efficacy beliefs motivate students to handle challenging tasks, which leads them to feel more self-efficacious; but if they can't manage the task, they do not put the blame on the external reasons. Rather, by questioning the effort they spend while conducting the task, they attribute the failure to the insufficiency in the amount of their endeavour and set more challenging objectives for the next times. On the other hand, for those having less self-efficacy beliefs, challenging responsibilities pose a great danger and a source of worry due to their lack of trust in their capabilities, which results in not striving enough, as it should be, but giving up (Bandura, 1995; Bandura, 1997). Likewise, Ekizoglu and Özçınar (2010) assert that a high level of self-efficacy stimulates an individual more to do his/her best. In other words, "students with high self-efficacy tend to be more successful and successful students tend to have higher self-efficacy beliefs" (Tılfarlıoğlu and Cinkara, 2009, p.136). On the other hand, Bandura (1977) defines academic self-efficacy as personal judgments of the ability to organize and conduct action courses to achieve specified types of training performance (p.203). Whorton (2009) also maintained its academic self-efficacy as a level of confidence in the student's ability to carry out certain academic tasks successfully (p.12). In addition,

Lent, Brown, and Gore (1997) argued that academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept are not equal concepts, that the academic self-concept is related and highly correlated with self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) emphasized that students' self-efficacy has a strong impact on academic achievement. Factors such as cognitive ability level, prior education, achievement, gender, and perceived self-efficacy, such as attitudes towards academic activities, affect academic achievement (p. 216).

2.4. Studies on Self-Efficacy and Second / Foreign Language Learning

Although self-efficacy is acknowledged as significant in learning, it is not widely researched in second and foreign language learning. Most studies have aimed at discovering the variables that differentiate successful language learners from unsuccessful ones, and most of them revealed that students with high English self-efficacy were better learners of English. That is to say, studies conducted so far revealed that people with high self-efficacy are high achievers in foreign and second language learning.

When the literature is reviewed, there are a number of studies conducted in foreign contexts in regard to self-efficacy and language learning. For instance, there are several studies (Schunk, 1981, 1984; Hackett, 1985; Pajares and Miller, 1994; Lent, Brown, and Larkin, 1984, 1987; Chemers, Hu, and Garcia, 2001; Jeng and Shin, 2008; and Cheng and Chiou, 2010) suggesting that self-efficacy is of great importance in predicting success of the students. The study conducted by Huang and Shanmao (1996) investigated four students studying at reading and writing class at a university. They concluded that the students' self-efficacy level and their reading and writing scores in TOEFL had a significant relationship. Templin (1999) conducted a study with Japanese EFL students holding low-efficacy and high-efficacy. To check the difference between these two groups, t-test was implemented, and the findings showed a significant difference between the grades of two groups. However, some other researchers (Graham 2006; Schunk, 2003; Wilhite, 1990) found no significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. In addition, another study conducted by Templin, Guile and Okuma (2001) aimed to find out the effect of self-efficacy course on increasing the English ability of Japanese college students taking English-I course. Their empirical study revealed that self-efficacy instruction increased the level of participants' self-efficacy significantly (as cited by Gahungu, 2007, p.89). On the other hand, Mills et al. (2006) investigated the relationship among self-efficacy, anxiety and French proficiency in reading and listening skills. Their findings revealed that students' reading self-efficacy and reading proficiency are positively related while listening self-efficacy was positively correlated with listening proficiency only for the females, and listening anxiety was positively correlated with listening proficiency of both genders. Some researchers addressed the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and language skills. For example, Rahimi and Abedini (2009) examined the relationship between learners' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their listening comprehension and listening proficiency. The results showed that students' self-efficacy beliefs in language learning and their listening proficiency were highly correlated. Similarly, Chen (2007) investigated the influence of English listening self-efficacy, English anxiety, and perceived value of English language and culture on EFL learners' English listening performance. The study concluded that English listening self-

efficacy was the best predictor of English listening performance of all. In addition, Huang and Shanmao (1996) investigated the relationship between reading and writing self-efficacy and achievement with four students who are learning English as a second language from the highest-level reading and writing classes and concluded that students have higher self-efficacy levels than their learning achievements. Also, their study revealed that self-efficacy was affected by the participants' interest and the teacher's support. In another study, Schunk and Rice (1993) examined self-efficacy in reading and reading comprehension. Their experimental study concluded that the students who got training to increase their self-efficacy boosted not only their self-efficacy but also their reading comprehension.

There are several studies conducted in Turkish context investigating self-efficacy with regard to the language learning. To illustrate, a study carried out by Tilfarlioğlu and Ciftci (2011) in Turkey revealed that there was a highly positive relationship between the participant students' academic performance and self-efficacy. Özkasap (2009) tried to find out the extent to which Turkish university EFL students feel efficient in regulating their English learning and the extent to which they feel responsibility for their English learning processes, and how these two constructs relate to each other. Findings of the study revealed that Turkish university EFL students had moderate level of self-efficacy in regulating their English learning and perceived themselves to be slightly more responsible than their teachers for their English learning processes. She also found out that these two constructs were positively correlated. In addition, Sarıçoban (2010) also searched for the views of both teachers and their students on teacher self-efficacy for classroom management in foreign language learning/teaching process. He found out that novice teachers had a moderately higher sense of teachers' self-efficacy in (a) helping students to think critically, (b) giving instructions, (c) classroom management issues and (d) evaluation and assessment, whereas students had a moderately higher sense of their teachers' self-efficacy only in teacher-student interaction. Another study carried out by Sarıçoban and Serbez (2013) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and being field-dependent or field-independent. As a result of their findings, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between the FI (Field Independent) and FD (Field Dependent) learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Another study conducted by Çubukçu (2008) revealed that students' self-efficacy and language anxiety were not related.

3.Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is a) to investigate the self-efficacy beliefs of EFL learners in the process of learning English, b) whether their self-efficacy level differ according to variables, such as proficiency levels and gender. It also targets c) to explore how self-efficient EFL learners are in listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition, d) the study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners. To reveal and answer the abovementioned research questions in the present study, mixed methods research is utilized.

The current study was conducted at an English preparatory program at a state university in Turkey. This setting was chosen because of some reasons. Firstly, the number of preparatory classes has been growing in recent years and during their education, students take 20 hours of English, which includes listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, speaking skills and core language classes, which can be classified as an intense program and it is hypothesized that this can yield more valid and reliable findings for the researcher. Secondly, the setting is the teaching environment for the researcher, so it was assumed that this would save time and enable the researcher to implement the study in a more efficient way. As the third reason why, this setting was chosen is that SFL provides us a great number of learners who are at different levels of English and who are following the same curriculum. This was important for the study and its results to be more reliable and valid.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The study was carried out with a group of 525 preparatory class students enrolled at different departments in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University, Turkey. The participants in the study were selected randomly and all the participants were native speakers of Turkish. Out of 525 students, 24 participants were also interviewed for collecting qualitative data and for obtaining a deeper understanding of the participants in terms of their self-efficacy. The sampling size in the interviews was 24.

3.3 Instruments and Procedures for Data Collection

In order to collect data, a questionnaire including two parts was applied to the participants. In the first part, demographic data was gathered to get information about participants' proficiency level of English and gender as they were related to first research question. In demographic part, the participants were required to write down their student numbers, which will help the researcher to reach the achievement scores of respondents to reveal the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. In addition to demographic form, the questionnaire for the main study was administered to the participants called "Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy". In addition, participants were interviewed about their English learning. The questionnaire included 32 items and aimed to find out the perceptions of the participants' self-efficacy about learning English. As the final step, the scores of the participants were obtained from the End-of-module Exam, which was held at the end of the module, through their student number from Testing Office of the SFL. In addition to quantitative data instruments, qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews by the researcher. The aim of the interviews was to collect any missing data, if any, to gain more insights and also to check and validate the answers given in the questionnaire. All data collection instruments were translated into Turkish to prevent participants from misunderstanding and any kinds of language anxiety they may experience during the data collection procedure.

The self-efficacy perceptions of participants were examined through the questionnaire of English Self-efficacy adapted from Açikel's study (2011). Some items in the original version of the questionnaire were edited because of wording with the views and suggestions of the experts in the field and the final version of the

questionnaire was translated into Turkish language in order to overcome any problems for the participants to understand the English version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire included 32 items like the original version of it.

In order to reveal the opinions of Turkish EFL learners about their self-efficacy and reach and gather the data that may not be mentioned in the qualitative part of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The researcher also aimed to check and confirm the answers given by the participants in the questionnaire. In total there were 17 questions in the interview protocol, and there were also sub-questions (follow-up questions) in some of them. There were five dimensions in the interview protocol: Background, Experiences in Learning/ Using English and self-efficacy, English learning environment, Affective and Psychological Response towards English, and Sources of self-efficacy in English. The number of the questions was respectively 3, 6, 4, 2, and 2. Affective and Psychological Response towards English shows the distribution of the items in each category in the interview protocol.

3.Results and Discussion

The findings are presented according to and in the order of the research questions of the study. In the current study, it is aimed to investigate the self-efficacy beliefs of EFL learners in the process of learning English, whether their self-efficacy level differ according to variables such as proficiency levels and gender. It also targets to explore how self-efficient EFL learners are in listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition to these, the study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners.

4.1 Findings for the Research Question 1

RQ1: What are the self-efficacy levels of Turkish EFL learners in learning English?

The first research question of the study aimed to find out the self-efficacy levels of Turkish EFL learners in learning English. The result of the quantitative data for the first research question revealed that the participants have moderate level of self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language. The findings of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) in terms of preparatory class students' perceptions of English self-efficacy were displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Self-efficacy level of the participants (quantitative data).

Variables	\bar{x}	<i>sd</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-efficacy	3.22	0.42	-0.08	1.51
Levels of English				

As seen Table 4.1., the participants' self-efficacy level of English were moderate (= 3.22). In normal distribution, the value of skewness and kurtosis are expected to be between +3 and -3 (Kalaycı, 2017). In table 3, the value of skewness was -0.08, and

the value of kurtosis was 1.51. In this context, the data obtained from the sampling can be concluded to be normally distributed.

To support the quantitative data, the data gathered through interviews were also analysed. It was found that the findings of the qualitative data were in consistent with the quantitative one. The findings of the qualitative data regarding the percentage of the participants according to their “stated” self-efficacy levels were shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Self-efficacy levels of participants (qualitative data).

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
High	8	33.3
Moderate	10	41.7
Low	6	25
TOTAL	24	100.0

As seen in Table 4.2., out of 24 participants who were interviewed, 41,7% (N=10) stated that they have moderate level of self-efficacy in English. That was followed by 33.3 % (N=8) of participants with high self-efficacy level in English, and by 25% (N=6) with low self-efficacy in English. As those were considered, we can say that most of the participants have moderate level of self-efficacy. The following are stated by the participants during the semi-structured interviews:

... out of 10, I would give myself 5 in English if I were to grade my success in English because I have difficulty in understanding some subjects in the lessons (Int. P1)

I would grade my English as 6 out of 10. ... I say so because I have never been able to do well in English lessons so far (Int. P4)

My success in English would be 6 out of 10 if I evaluated myself because I don't like English and I get bored in the lessons. That's why, I don't like studying English (Int. P5)

My English is not very good. Out of 10, it would be 4 or 5 because when I get low marks, I don't want to study. And when I don't study, I get low marks. This is kind of a vicious circle for me. (Int. P10)

4.2 Findings for the Research Question 2

RQ2: Do participants' self-efficacy levels show any differences according to their

a) proficiency level and b) gender?

a. proficiency level,

Firstly, to find out the relationship between the participants' self-efficacy level and proficiency level, Kruskal-Wallis Test was employed. The test revealed that there

was a significant difference in terms of participants' English self-efficacy level according to the variable, "their English level" [$X^2(4) = 40.563, 6.71; p < .05$]. Upon that, to identify between which groups there was a significant difference, Mann-Whitney U test was applied. The findings of Kruskal-Wallis Test and Mann-Whitney U test regarding the perceptions of participants about their English self-efficacy according to their English level were shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test results in terms of their English proficiency level.

Proficiency Level	N	X	sd	Mean Rank	sd	X^2	p	Significant Difference
A2	72	2.98	.33	176.40	4	40.563		
A2 Repeat	36	3.40	.41	327.53				
B1	60	3.12	.43	223.20				Between A2RPT and A2 and B1; between B1 and B2
B1 Repeat	22	3.17	.33	241.11				
B2	335	3.27	.41	283.24				

As seen in table 4.3., it was concluded that there is a significant difference in terms of participants' English self-efficacy level according to the variable, their English 'level' [$X^2(4)= 40.563, 6.71; p < .05$]. When the mean ranks of self-efficacy level of the participants according to their proficiency level were examined, the students in A2 Repeat level (mean rank=3.40) and in B2 level (mean rank=3.27) have higher perceptions of self-efficacy than those in A2 level (mean rank=2.98). Likewise, the level of self-efficacy perceptions of B2 level students (mean rank=3.27) is, too, higher than B1 level students' (mean rank=3.12). These findings showed that between A2R level students' self-efficacy is the highest of all, which is surprising as those students had failed in A2 level and were taking repeat classes. A2 repeat level students were followed by B2, B1 repeat, B1 and A2 level students in terms of self-efficacy level.

To gather a more reliable and more valid data, an interview protocol was applied to 24 students to reveal the relationship between self-efficacy level and proficiency level of the participants. Table 4.4. shows the distribution of the participants of the interviews according to their proficiency level and stated self-efficacy levels.

Table 4.4. Self-efficacy level of the participants in terms of their English proficiency level.

Level	N	High level of self-efficacy	Moderate level of self-efficacy	Low level of self-efficacy

A2	3	3	-	-
A2 Repeat	5	-	2	3
B1	8	2	5	1
B1 Repeat	4	1	2	1
B2	4	2	1	1
TOTAL	24	8	10	6

As seen in Table 4.4., the number of A2 level participants in the interviews was 3, and all of them stated their self-efficacy level as high, and none of A2 repeat participants stated holding high self-efficacy in English. While there were two B1 and B2 level participants perceived their self-efficacy in English as high, there was only one participant to have stated having high self-efficacy in English. When it comes to the moderate level of self-efficacy, B1 level participants (N=5) outnumbered participants who are at the other levels. In addition, interview findings revealed that A2 Repeat level participants had the lowest level of self-efficacy of all with the number 3 participants stating so. Whereas in A2 level, there were none having low self-efficacy, in B1, B1R, and B2 levels there was only one participant stating low-self-efficacy in English for each level. In the present study, A2 repeat level students, surprisingly, had the highest self-efficacy level of all levels. The reason why A2 Repeat level EFL learners' self-efficacy level outnumbered the others, contrary to the literature, could be because those students were re-taking the same level, they might have felt that they were revising and learning better this time. They might have thought that in their regular A2 classes they had missed some important points to prevent them to be successful. Yet, this time with the awareness they had after they had failed in A2, they might have believed that they would do better in the End-of-Module Exam. On the other hand, students' self-efficacy in other levels were in line with the literature as follows from high to low: B2, B1 repeat, B1 and A2 level, and this finding was in line with the literature. To sum up, A2 level participants had the highest level of self-efficacy; B1 level participants had the moderate level of self-efficacy; and participants at A2 Repeat level had the lowest level of self-efficacy according to the data obtained through semi-structured interviews.

gender,

To find out whether the perceptions of participants' self-efficacy level in English shows any meaningful difference according to gender, Independent t-test was applied. The result of the quantitative data revealed that there was no difference in terms of level of participants' perception of English self-efficacy according to 'gender' variable [$t(-0.21) = 0.83, p > 0.05$].

The responses of female participants ($F = 3.22$) and male participants ($M = 3.23$) were almost the same. The findings were shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Self-efficacy levels of participants in terms of gender (quantitative data).

Variable	Gender	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-efficacy Levels of English	Female	254	3.22	0.41	-0.21	523	0.83
	Male	271	3.23	0.44			

When Table 4.5. was examined, it was seen that there is no difference in terms of level of participants' perception of English self-efficacy according to 'gender' variable [$t (-0.21) = 0.83, p > 0.05$]. The responses of female participants ($F = 3.22$) and male participants ($M = 3.23$) were almost the same. According to these results, it can be inferred that gender does not have a significant effect on the differentiation of the participants' perceptions of English self-efficacy.

To check the level of participants' perception of English self-efficacy according to 'gender' variable qualitatively, 24 students were interviewed. Qualitative data obtained via the questionnaires also supported the findings of the quantitative data regarding the level of participants' perception of English self-efficacy according to 'gender' variable. The findings of the interviews were shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Self-efficacy levels of participants in terms of gender (qualitative data).

Gender	<i>N</i>	High level of self-efficacy	Moderate level of self-efficacy	Low level of self-efficacy
Female	13	5	4	4
Male	11	2	5	4
TOTAL	24	7	9	8

As seen in Table 4.6., out of 24 participants who were interviewed, 45.8% ($N=11$) were male while 54.2 % ($N=13$) of participants were female. As seen in the table, the gender of the participants was approximately even. The data revealed that female participants had higher self-efficacy in English than male participants while the number of the participants from both genders stating low level of self-efficacy in English was even. However, more male participants stated to have moderate level of self-efficacy than did female participants.

According to these findings, it can be inferred that gender does not have a significant effect on the differentiation of the participants' perceptions of English self-efficacy.

Although the literature suggested contradictory results, Heinzmann (2009); on the one hand, stated that females believed to be better at language learning, and Noran, Elias and Mahyuddin (1993); on the other hand, claimed that girls own higher positive attitude towards the language; the present study revealed that gender did not affect self-efficacy in language learning. This finding might stem from changing role of males and females in the society in Turkey. The beliefs about female or male dominant jobs, for example, is changing nowadays. There are men working as nurse, and there were women being a soldier or a surgeon. This ongoing change contributes to the gender-oriented beliefs. The phenomenon which is in favour of woman in learning a language may also be diminishing and leaving a gender-neutral learning environment behind. On the other hand, as the participants of the current study are limited in number, it could be because of just personal differences. The participants in this specific study revealed no difference in self-efficacy in learning English. Yet, this does not mean that using the same instruments in a different context would provide the same result.

4.3 Findings for the Research Question 3

RQ3: How self-efficient are Turkish EFL learners in listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills?

The third research question of the present study aimed at finding how self-efficient EFL learners are in four skills including listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. The findings of the qualitative data revealed that the participants of the study feel a) most self-efficient in writing skills, and b) they feel least self-efficient in speaking skills. The findings regarding the skill that participants feel most efficient were shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. The distribution of the participants according to the skill they feel most self-efficient.

Skill	<i>f</i>	%
Writing	13	54,2
Listening	7	29,1
Reading	4	16,7
Speaking	0	0
TOTAL	24	100

As seen in Table 4.7., out of 24 participants who were interviewed, 54.2% (N=13) stated that they feel themselves most self-efficient in writing skills. That was followed by 29.1% (N=7) of participants expressing themselves self-efficient in listening skills, and by 16,7% (N=4) suggesting that they are self-efficient in reading. Out of 24 participants, none of the participants stated they are self-efficient in speaking skills. The following are some statements by the participants of the interviews:

My teachers say that I am good at writing, and I agree with them..... This is because I have time to think before I write. I am the least successful in speaking as I should answer at once. ...if I had to grade myself in writing, I would give 80 (Int. P1)

The most successful lesson of mine is writing. I generally like writing because I somehow feel that I have a talent for it. When I learn the organization rules, I can easily apply them into my writing (Int. P4)

As I love writing and be able to write, I am good at it (Int. P7)

My grammar knowledge is good so that I could write, so I am good at writing (Int. P11)

Participants also stated the skill/s that they feel least efficient in the interviews. The findings regarding the skill that participants feel least efficient were shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. The distribution of the participants according to the skill they feel least self-efficient.

Skill	f	%
Speaking	12	50
Listening	6	25
Writing	4	16.7
Reading	2	8.3
TOTAL	24	100

As seen in Table 4.8., out of 24 participants who were interviewed, 50% (N=12) stated that they feel themselves least self-efficient in speaking skills. That was followed by 25% (N=5) of participants expressing themselves least self-efficient in listening skills, and by 16.7% (N=4) suggesting that they are least self-efficient in writing skills. Out of 24 participants, 8.3% (N=2) expressed that they are least self-efficient in reading skills. These findings imply that most participants feel inefficient in speaking skills. This finding also correlates the abovementioned data, which is that none of the participants stated they are self-efficient in speaking skills. When it comes to the skill which ranks the least in terms of participants' answers, it is reading skills. This is somehow surprising as they did not mention it as their "most" efficient skill in the previous question. It was writing skills which they find most self-efficient. The following are some statements by the participants of the interviews:

We do not speak English much; that's why we cannot speak. The teacher asks something, and we are dumbfounded and cannot say anything (Int. P9)

I don't know but I think I feel shy. So, I can't speak English. I also think that I am not capable of learning a new language (Int. P10)

As I feel very nervous when I speak English, I can't speak even if I have something to say in my mind. Moreover, I am not interested enough in the lessons; I have never liked English classes in my life (Int. P14)

These findings imply that although the majority of the participants feel self-efficient in writing skills whereas none goes for speaking skills. It can be considered that participants have the highest self-efficacy level in writing because learning process still goes on and they feel more secure in writing skills compared to speaking skills as they have time to think, plan and implement in writing; however, it is not possible in speaking skills. As the second reason, it can be concluded that they have less experience in speaking compared to writing in their previous institutions and speaking skill is mostly neglected in lower and higher secondary schools in Turkey.

When the participants' responses to the question that how self-efficient they are in terms of four language skills were analysed, it was concluded that they feel most efficient in (1) writing. It was followed by (2) listening, (3) reading and they stated that they have the lowest self-efficacy in (4) speaking. It could be concluded that while writing is the skill that the participants feel most efficient, listening and reading self-efficacy of the participants could be inferred as moderate, and speaking skill is the skill in which they have the lowest self-efficacy in the current study. This study is also the first one that tries to discover the self-efficacy perceptions of EFL learners in terms of four skills. Although there was no study examining the level of EFL learners' self-efficacy in all skills, there are several studies focusing on one of the four skills in language learning. The findings of the present study regarding the speaking skill is in line with the study of Paker and Höl (2012). They investigated the attitudes and perceptions of the students and instructors towards the speaking test at a School of Foreign Languages and concluded that majority of the students had no previous experience of any speaking test, and therefore, they feel more anxious during the speaking test. In addition, the speaking test was perceived as the most difficult test by the students when compared to the testing of other language skills. Another study conducted by Dinçer and Yeşilyurt (2013) aimed to find out the perceptions of pre-service English teachers about teaching speaking in Turkey, the importance they give to this language skill, and their self-evaluation of their speaking competence. They concluded that the participants had negative opinions on speaking classes in Turkey despite the fact that they all agreed that it was the most important language skill. They also found out that although the participants had different motivational orientations about speaking English. The participants felt incompetent in oral communication. In another study, Zare and Mobarakeh (2011) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and use of reading strategies among senior high school students in Iran. Their study concluded that the participants in that study had an average level of self-efficacy in reading, as well with the mean score of 47 out of 70. As the present study suggested, participants had a moderate level of reading self-efficacy, this finding is consistent with the findings of Zare and Mobarakeh (2011). With regard to reading self-efficacy, Yılmaz (2010) aimed to explore pre-service teacher candidates' attitudes towards reading habit according to some variables and found out that the mean score of pre-service teachers' reading attitude was ($X=3.14$), which could be stated as moderate. On the other hand, there are some other studies concluding that learners have high level of reading self-efficacy. In addition, Heidari, Izadi, and VahedAhmadian (2012) targeted to find out the relationship between Iranian EFL Learners' self-efficacy

beliefs and use of vocabulary learning strategies and reported that learners in their study held quite high self-efficacy beliefs.

4.4 Findings for the Research Question 4

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners?

The fourth research question of the current study was: Is there a relationship between the self-efficacy level and the academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners? In order to investigate and answer this question, Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted. The results were shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. The relationship between self-efficacy in English and academic performance.

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-efficacy in English & Academic performance	525	-.03	.12

When Table 4.9. was examined, it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between the participants' perceptions of English self-efficacy and their academic performance in English ($r=-.03$; $p>.05$). Instead, although statistically insignificant, there was negative correlation between two variables.

The finding of the current study is contradicting with the previous studies. When the literature was examined, there were loads of studies revealing a positive correlation between the self-efficacy and academic performance. However, in the present study there was no significant relationship between the participants' self-efficacy and their academic performance in English. In other words, when the academic performance increased, the self-efficacy level of the participants decreased. This might stem from the fact that preparatory students realize that when the level increases, there comes more details to make it difficult to be successful in that level. In addition, students comprehend that learning English has no end; there is always more to learn. This awareness of high proficient learners might have caused them to lose their self-efficacy. In addition, unlike lower levels, students at higher level of English have to achieve more. To illustrate, they have to cover a lot more subjects in grammar, know less frequently-used vocabulary, be better in note-taking in listening, be able to make inferences in reading, use compensation strategies in speaking and write a five-paragraph-essay in writing and use and be proficient in four skills equally. Having to be more productive in higher levels might have caused the participants to be anxious and accordingly might have lowered the self-efficacy level of them. This proves Bandura (1992) right, who stated that low self-efficacy perceptions increase the anxiety and affect academic performance negatively.

3.Conclusion

The overall aim of the study was to find out the self-efficacy beliefs of EFL learners and the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. The study targeted to provide some implications for the educators and teachers of English

as a foreign/ second language. To achieve this, the researcher presented the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data from the current study and their links to the relevant literature.

Analyses of the current study provide evidence in terms of self-efficacy beliefs of EFL learners and the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in English and it can be concluded from the present study that proficiency level of the participants had an effect on their self-efficacy level although a slight difference was found between the levels. Most surprisingly, being one of the lowest levels of all, A2 Repeat students had the highest self-efficacy score on the questionnaire. This result was unexpected and contradictory to the previous assumptions of the researcher. However, none of the A2 Repeat participants stated their self-efficacy level in English as high in the interviews. Therefore, it was concluded that quantitative data should be merged with qualitative one to validate the obtained data and to have a better understanding of the opinions of the participants. The implication to be drawn from these findings, EFL teachers should create a learning environment in which their students can express their opinions about their learning process freely.

Additionally, when the findings related to the language skills indicated that participants' perception of self-efficacy is at its highest in writing skills while it is at the lowest in speaking skills. The data obtained from semi-structured interviews also provided detailed reasons for that. For speaking, most of the participants stated that they have anxiety and feel incapable of speaking English. It is strikingly notable that not even one participant stated that s/he feels self-efficient in speaking skill among the students who were interviewed even if there were some participants who stated to hold high level of self-efficacy in learning English. English teachers should really take this into consideration to de-suggest negative attitudes of their students towards speaking English. Teachers and instructors should also encourage their students to participate more in speaking activities by ensuring them that they have right to make mistakes before they become fluent speakers of English. To achieve this, teachers of English should prepare activities considering the different learner types in their class, and they should also create a learning environment in which students somehow feel obliged to speak English with the activities such as information gap or games.

In addition, the interview participants of this present study mostly remarked that they feel efficient in writing skills. And for the underlying reason for that, they explained that knowing and being able to apply the rules of writing give them sense of success. Following this, they become more eager in writing activities. This finding is already good for writing classes, still EFL teachers use the given responses as a clue to be utilized in needed classes, especially in speaking skills which is mentioned above. Bringing activities that both appeal to the learners' interest and give them the message that it is within the boundaries of their capacity can make a difference in their opinions on the skills they feel insufficient.

Finally, it was also concluded that there is no significant relationship between the preparatory class participants' perceptions of English self-efficacy and their academic performance in English. In other words, unlike most of the studies in the literature, this can be interpreted that when the self-efficacy increases, academic

performance of the learners' decreases. There can be several reasons for that, but the dominant one is people who think that they are somehow accomplish a task successfully do not make the most use of their potential. In this setting, it was some of the learners who had thought that they were already good at English and had not studied enough for the exam failed in the End-of-Module Exam.

Based on the findings of this present study, several suggestions can be suggested for future studies. The main aim of the study was to find out the EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs in learning English. The current study investigated the self-efficacy level of EFL learners in the process of learning English, whether their self-efficacy levels differ according to their proficiency levels and gender, how self-efficient EFL learners are in terms of four skills and whether there is a relationship between the self-efficacy level of Turkish EFL learners and their academic achievement. However, in different contexts the same study could reveal different findings because of the learning environment and the learners in it. In addition, studies on self-efficacy mostly focuses on one language skill. Thus, further studies could be implemented to discover the self-efficacy of EFL learners on four skills and the achievement of the participants could also be evaluated separately and be compared with the level of self-efficacy in each one. Additionally, researchers could design an experimental study and implement it to improve the self-efficacy of EFL learners. The participants could be given either strategy training or self-efficacy instruction or both to boost their self-efficacy in learning English.

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