# Self-Efficacy of English Preparatory Students According to Their English Levels and VAK Learning Modalities: A study in Hybrid Education Context

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| Abstract | Keywords |
|---|---|

This study examines whether English preparatory school students' self-efficacy beliefs differ according to their English levels and VAK learning modalities when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled. The research was designed as a correlational survey design consisting of 159 students studying in English preparatory schools at two foundation universities in Istanbul. Motivational Strategies for Learning Scale Turkish adaptation was done by Altun and Erden (2006) and BIG16 inventory developed by Şimşek (2002), were used as data collection tools in the research. Since metacognitive self-regulation was the control variable and there was a dependent variable and two independent variables, the data were analyzed with the factorial covariance analysis (ANCOVA) test. As a result of the research, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students were controlled, it was revealed there was no significant difference between their English level and self-efficacy beliefs. There was a significant difference in terms of VAK learning styles, and no significant difference was detected depending on the common effect of both. According to VAK learning styles, it was concluded that the group with the highest self-efficacy belief was kinesthetic learners, and the lowest group was visual learners in a hybrid education context.

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# İngilizce Hazırlık Öğrencilerinin İngilizce Düzeylerine ve VAK Öğrenme Biçemlerine Göre Öz Yeterlikleri: Hibrit Eğitim Bağlamında Bir Araştırma

**Özet**

Bu araştırma, üstbilişsel öz-düzenleme becerileri test puanları kontrol edildiğinde, İngilizce hazırlık okulu öğrencilerinin öz-yeterlik inançlarının İngilizce düzeylerine ve VAK öğrenme biçimlerine göre farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığını incelemektedir. Araştırma, İstanbul'da bulunan iki vakıf üniversitesinde İngilizce hazırlık sınıfında öğrenim gören 159 öğrenciden oluşan ilişkisel tarama deseninde tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Öğrenmede Motivasyonel Stratejiler Ölçeği Türkçe uyarlaması Altun ve Erden (2006) tarafından yapılmış ve Şimşek (2002) tarafından geliştirilen BIG16 envanteri kullanılmıştır. Üstbilişsel öz düzenlemenin kontrol değişkeni olması ve bir bağımlı değişken ile iki bağımsız değişkenin olması nedeniyle veriler faktöriyel kovaryans analizi (ANCOVA) testi ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, üniversite İngilizce hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin üstbilişsel öz-düzenleme becerileri testi puanları kontrol edildiğinde, İngilizce öz-yeterlik inançlarında İngilizce seviyelerine göre anlamlı bir farklılık olmadığı ortaya çıkmış; VAK öğrenme biçemlerine göre ise anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu tespit edilmiştir. İngilizce seviyeleri ve VAK öğrenme biçemlerinin ortak etkisine bağlı olarak anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmemiştir. VAK öğrenme biçemlerine göre hibrit eğitim bağlamında öz yeterlik inancı en yüksek grubun kinestetik öğrenenler, en düşük grubun ise görsel öğrenenler olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Kaynakça**

Nayman, H. & Yılmaz, A. S. (2023). İngilizce hazırlık öğrencilerinin İngilizce düzeylerine ve VAK öğrenme biçemlerine göre öz yeterlikleri: hibrit eğitim bağlamında bir araştırma. *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*, 11(1), 99-110.

## Introduction

The terms self-efficacy and self-regulation are two concepts of social cognitive learning which are put forth by Albert Bandura (Schunk, 2012). Self-efficacy refers to "the belief in a person's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, s.2.). Another definition can be "an individual's thoughts of their ability in any field and its effectiveness" (Woolfolk, 2016, s. 444). Self-efficacy is highly valued in an individual's life since it determines their choices in life, their motivation, the goals they set, how hard they will try, how much they will tolerate difficulties (Bandura, 1999). In this sense, it is an indispensable concept in education. Students with high self-efficacy beliefs set self-motivating goals and show continuing determination for this. They have higher academic achievement. Those who have lower self-efficacy beliefs see difficult tasks as threats and avoid them. Their dedication toward their goal is low and in the face of difficulties, they reduce their effort or give up immediately (Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 1994). As a result, they achieve less academically. Self-regulation, on the other hand, is setting goals and regulating the endeavor and resources to reach those goals (Bandura, 1977). In its most general definition, self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to control their emotions, thoughts and behaviors; a full-engagement activity that involves multiple parts of the brain (Nilson, 2013, s.4; Schunk, 2012; Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 1996). Although the term self-regulation was mentioned previously to Bandura by Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, William James and early findings were uttered in Skinner's work, the term gained popularity with Bandura's work in a social cognitive theory frame (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Schunk, 2012). Self-regulation can be taught and developed (Slavin, 2006). It can be improved using an individual's knowing oneself, motivation and volition (Woolfolk, 2016). Individuals can be motivated and have the will to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviors easily when their self-efficacy is high (Bandura, 1997; Nilson, 2013). In this case, self-regulation and self-efficacy are bound to each other (Zimmerman et al.,1996). In an academic context, self-regulation and self-efficacy affect learners' success and their perceptions of academic success (Bandura, 1977; Woolfolk, 2016). Therefore, self-regulation and self-efficacy issues have always been among the leading topics of educational research.

While the concepts of self-regulation and self-efficacy are important in every field of education, they are also concepts that should be emphasized in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching. In EFL or language learning in general, learners should be autonomous, responsible, motivated and stress-free to be high achievers and independent users of that target language (Harmer, 2007; Prabhu, 1987; Savignon, 2002). As many linguists and language experts mention, in language learning both cognitive and affective aspects should be taken into consideration (Krashen, 1982; Prabhu, 1987; Richards & Rogders, 1986); as self-regulation skills and self-efficacy beliefs are parts of individuals' both cognitive and affective state in learning (Zimmerman et al., 1996), these terms are significant in language learning. As studies show, students with high self-regulation and self-efficacy concepts are likely to be high achievers in language learning (Angel, 2019; Alzubaidi et al., 2014; Bai et al., 2020; Nami et al, 2012).

Since the nature of language learning is so complex, there are other elements that can affect the learning process apart from self-regulation skills and self-efficacy beliefs. As Castro (2005) states that differences in learning styles in EFL classes affect the level of success. Learning styles can be defined as a set of effective ways chosen to provide meaningful learning, which gives clues about the innate or acquired preferences of individuals, in receiving and perceiving information (Guven, 2004).

It can also be defined as a higher tendency to one particular learning modality (Castro, 2005). Learning modalities also can be identified as the perceptual preferences of individuals and their preferences for processing information (Keefe, 1985). It is widely accepted that there are three learning modalities: visual, auditory and kinesthetic (Simsek, 2002). In English language education, due to the very structure of language learning, auditory and visual elements are at the forefront (Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1982), therefore, examining the self-efficacy beliefs of students who have different learning styles is important in terms of the literature.

The complex nature of learning also has led educators to question the learning environments. Through the advancement of technology, the drawbacks of the traditional way of learning have been noticed and educators have started to embrace the hybrid education model to make the learning process more effective. A hybrid course combines features of face-to-face teaching and distance learning (Lorenzetti, 2004). This way, technological developments allow students to learn new information and phenomena outside the classroom before coming to it (El Mansour & Mupinga, 2007). It has been widely embraced these days as it makes the courses more accessible to students and decreases their travel time and expenses of them (Hall & Villareal, 2015). Hybrid education was not commonly embraced before the Covid-19 outbreak in Turkey. For this reason, literature on self-regulation and self-efficacy are mostly centered before the Covid-19 pandemic. According to some studies that were conducted before covid-19 outbreak in Turkey, there is a significant difference between students' English levels and self-efficacy beliefs (İlbeği & Çeliköz, 2020; Jenks, 2004; Tılfaroğlu & Cinkaya, 2008; Yurtseven et al., 2015). However, there aren't many studies about the relationship between self-regulation and the English level before covid-19 outbreak in Turkey. There is only one study that shows no significant difference was found between English levels and self-regulation (Eken, 2017).

English teaching has always been a problematic area in Turkey. This is the reason why the expected achievement in English teaching and learning is examined in several aspects. First of all, it is reported that English is not taught as a means of communication but as a discipline such as Mathematics, Social Sciences or Sciences (British Council & Turkey Economic Policies Research Foundation TEPAV, 2014). Another issue is that the teaching context is not proper for students to be motivated and not get anxious, there is no certain approach or flexibility with the curriculum (Aslan & Şahin, 2020; Demirpolat, 2015; Karcı Aktaş & Gündoğdu, 2020). There are studies on English teaching and learning during and after Covid-19, and in a hybrid context that reveal the problems. These problems are mostly low student participation, students' not turning their cameras on, unpreparedness to online and hybrid education, connection problems and low interaction (Ekizer, 2021; Nayman & Bavlı, 2022; Şendoğan 2020). This situation hints obscurity on how the hybrid education context has affected English preparatory students' self-regulation skills and self-efficacy beliefs. As for the context of this research, English preparatory schools have special importance since they offer a 1-year intensive English program for the students whose departments offer courses through the medium of English. They prepare students for both academic and work life.

In the present study, it is investigated whether English preparatory school students' self-efficacy beliefs differ according to their English levels and VAK learning styles when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled. Questions of the study are presented as follows:

1.      When the English preparatory school students' metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled, is there a significant difference in the self-efficacy test scores according to their English levels?

2.      When the English preparatory school students' metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled, is there a significant difference in the self-efficacy test scores according to VAK learning styles?

3.      When the English preparatory school students' metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled, is there a significant difference in the self-efficacy test scores depending on the joint effect of English levels and VAK learning styles?

# Method

### Research Design

The current study was designed based on a correlational survey model. Survey designs are used to predict test scores and explain the type of relationship among the variables (Creswell, 2012). In this study, it is investigated whether English preparatory school students' self-efficacy beliefs differ according to their English levels and VAK learning styles when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores are controlled. Accordingly, the correlational survey design is deemed proper. Metacognitive self-regulation was chosen as a covariance in this study supported by its theoretical connection to self-efficacy. The purpose of choosing metacognitive self-regulation as a covariance is to control and fix its effect on self-regulation scores.

### Study Group

In the study, 159 students were involved who study English at preparatory schools of two foundation universities in İstanbul, Turkey during the spring term of the 2021-2022 academic year. Participants were chosen by convenience sampling since the researchers sent the survey to reachable students (Bryman, 2016). The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Demographics of the Study Group*

| Variables | Groups | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 97 | 61,0 |
| | Male | 62 | 39,0 |
| | A1 | 9 | 5,7 |
| Language Levels | A2 | 40 | 25,2 |
| | B1 | 70 | 44,0 |
| | B2 | 40 | 25,2 |
| Dominant Learning | Kinesthetic | 87 | 54,7 |
| Modality | Audial | 56 | 35,2 |
| | Visual | 16 | 10,1 |

### Research Instruments

While collecting the data, the Motivational Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and BIG16 Inventory were implemented with a short demographic information part. MSLQ was put forth by Pintrich and De Groot (1990) and one of the Turkish adaptation versions was formed by Altun and

Erden (2006). It has 81 items and a seven-point scoring system ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It consists of three dimensions: motivational beliefs, cognitive and metacognitive self-regulation strategies and resource management strategies. In this study, "self-efficacy" and "cognitive self-regulation" subdimensions of the scale were employed. The scale is designed to be used as a holistic or singly by dimensions (Pintrich 1991). As Altun and Erden (2006) report, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for self-efficacy is $\alpha$=.89 and for cognitive self-regulation is $\alpha$=.85, which means that these subdimensions show a high level of reliability. Another data collection tool, BIG 16 Inventory, is used to measure the VAK learning modalities. The inventory, developed by Şimşek (2002), consists of 48 items with tests three learning modalities which are visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK). The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was .68 for kinesthetic learners, .77 for auditory learners, .79 for visual learners and .84 for the entire inventory, it was stated that the reliability of the inventory was ensured. The measurement tools used in the present study are studies whose validity and reliability analysis have been carried out and published as scientific research. Before implementing the instruments, necessary permissions were obtained from the adapters and developers to use them.

**Procedure**

Research ethics committee approval has been received from Beykent University. Moreover, official approval to implement the surveys has been received from the principals of the prep schools at both Universities. Students participate in this study voluntarily. The surveys are completed between 8-9 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

In the study, factorial analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) test was chosen as data analysis technique. Covariance analysis is an analysis in which statistical operations are performed by controlling the variable or more than one variable that are related to the dependent variable, apart from the factor or factors tested in research (Tabachnick and Fidell 2014). In the present study, the concepts of self-efficacy and self-regulation were chosen as dependent and covariant variables that have theoretical relations with each other. SPSS 26.0 package program was used to perform descriptive and inferential analysis of the data. Demographic information and scale results were transferred to the SPSS program, and descriptive analysis were carried out primarily for the study group. Before the analysis of covariance, the assumptions of the analysis were checked. In the present study, self-efficacy, which is the dependent variable, and metacognitive self-regulation, which is the covariate variable, are scale variables (Büyüköztürk 2018), thus the first assumption of covariance analysis was provided. Secondly, it was tested if a linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variables could be found. A linear relationship was found between metacognitive self-regulation, which is the co-variable, and self-efficacy, which is the dependent variable, and scatter plots were controlled. The linear relation among the covariate and the dependent variable was checked and the linear relationship slopes were equal.

There are three different research questions in this research. Accordingly, the linear relationship slope values between the variables in the 3 research questions were examined. Linear relationship slope in metacognitive self-regulation and language level variables ($F_{(2, 140)}$=.211; $p > .05$) was provided. Likewise, the assumption of linear relationship slope was provided for metacognitive self-regulation and dominant learning modalities variables ($F_{(2, 140)}$= 2.938; $p > .05$). Normality tests were performed within the groups and the skewness- kurtosis values resulted to be between -1.5 and

+1.5 (Thompson, 2006), therefore, it was found that no significant difference in the values was found and the data were normally distributed.

**The Researchers' Role in the Study**

There were two researchers involved in this study. Both of the researchers were English instructors at different foundation universities in Turkey. They are educational specialists. Both of them took part in data collection, data analysis and writing of the manuscript equally. There was no conflict of interest between them. The whole process was performed with equal distribution of roles.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics committee approval was provided by Beykent University. Secondly, all the participants were notified that they could quit the research if they feel any inconvenience, they were in this study voluntarily. Participants were assured that their personal information was not to be shared with third parties, their identities were not to be revealed and they were to stay in confidence.

# Findings

The results related to all three sub-questions of the research were revealed in the factorial ANCOVA test results. The results are shown in Table 2. For each sub-question, the results were expressed in order, related formulas were given and interpreted.

**Table 2.** *Factorial ANCOVA Results*

| Variable | df | Mean Square | F | P | n² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Language Level | 3 | 171,412 | 2,486 | ,063 | ,048 |
| Dominant Learning Modality | 2 | 530,885 | 7,700 | ,001 | ,095 |
| Language Level* Dominant Learning Modality | 5 | 111,078 | 1,611 | ,161 | ,052 |
| Error | 147 | 68,943 | | | |

As seen in Table 2, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of the students were controlled, their self-efficacy beliefs were not found to be differentiated significantly according to their levels (F(2,147)=2.486; p> .05). As it can be understood from here, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students are controlled, no difference can be found in their self-efficacy beliefs according to whether they are at the A1, A2, B1 or B2 level.

Looking at Table 2 in line with the second research question, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of the English preparatory school students were controlled, their self-efficacy beliefs were found to be differentiated significantly according to their learning modalities (F(2,147)=7.700; p < .05). According to this result, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students are controlled, there is a significant difference in their self-efficacy beliefs according to whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. The effect size, on the other hand, was found to be high, although the value of .238 was higher than .14.

Looking at Table 2 in line with the last research question, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of the English preparatory school students were controlled, their self-efficacy beliefs were not found to be differentiated significantly according to their levels and learning

modalities in common effect (F(2,147)=1.611; p> .05).In other words, the fact that their English level being A1, A2, B1, B2 and their being visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner characteristics do not have a significant effect on self-efficacy beliefs when metacognitive self-regulation test scores are controlled.

**Table 3.** *The Self-Efficacy Means of Variances*

| Variable | | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Language Level | A1 | 30,723 | 9 |
| | A2 | 41,238 | 40 |
| | B1 | 40,263 | 70 |
| | B2 | 41,456 | 40 |
| Dominant | Kinesthetic | 42,840 | 87 |
| Learning | Audial | 42,274 | 56 |
| Modality | Visual | 33,033 | 16 |

In Table 3, the average scores of language level and dominant learning style are given. When the averages of A1 level ($\bar{x}$ = 30,723), A2 level ($\bar{x}$ = 41,238), B1 level ($\bar{x}$= 40,263) and B2 level ($\bar{x}$= 41,456) are examined, it is seen that self-efficacy belief is highest at B2 level and lowest at A1 level with a very small difference, but this is not enough to cause a significant difference.

When the averages obtained according to VAK learning styles are examined, the self-efficacy beliefs of the kinesthetic learners ($\bar{x}$= 42,840) are the highest, the self-efficacy beliefs of the auditory learners are the second ($\bar{x}$= 42,274), and the self-efficacy beliefs of the visual learners are the lowest ($\bar{x}$= 33,033).

Post hoc analyzes were performed on VAK learning styles, which is the only variable in which a significant difference was determined according to the results at hand, and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Post Hoc Results*

| Dominant Learning Modality | | Mean Difference | Std. Error | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kinesthetic | Audial | ,566 | 1,611 | ,189 |
| | Visual | 9,806 | 2,505 | ,000 |
| Audial | Kinesthetic | -,566[c] | 1,611 | ,189 |
| | Visual | 9,24 | 2,568 | ,001 |
| Visual | Kinesthetic | -9,806 | 2,505 | ,000 |
| | Audial | -9,241 | 2,568 | ,001 |

As seen in Table 4, while the score of self-efficacy beliefs of kinesthetic learners differ significantly compared to visual learners, it does not differ significantly from auditory learners. When auditory learners are examined, there is no significant difference between auditory and kinesthetic learners, but a significant difference is observed with visual learners. When visual learners are examined, there is a significant difference between the kinesthetic learners and the auditory learners.

Considering all these results, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students are controlled, there is no significant difference in their English self-efficacy beliefs, a significant difference was found according to VAK learning styles, and no significant difference was found due to the common effect of both. According to VAK learning styles,

it was concluded that the group with the highest self-efficacy belief was kinesthetic learners, and the lowest group was visual learners in hybrid education context.

## Conclusion and Discussion

All in all, in accordance with the first question of the present study, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students were controlled, it was revealed there was no significant difference between their English level and self-efficacy beliefs. According to the studies in the literature on English preparatory students and their self-efficacy beliefs, there are studies showing that there is a significant difference between self-efficacy and English level and this significant difference stems from B level students who have the highest score (İlbeği & Çeliköz, 2020; Jenks 2004; Tılfaroğlu & Cinkaya, 2008; Yurtseven et al. 2015). As the related literature suggests, the higher self-efficacy score of B-level students can be explained by students' feeling more confident as they acquire higher skills in the target language. The present study presents a different result from the studies conducted in face-to-face education in Turkey. This study was conducted in a hybrid education context which was adopted with the outbreak of covid-19. When the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of English preparatory school students are controlled, no difference can be found in their self-efficacy beliefs according to their proficiency level. When the related literature is reviewed, there is no study found to oppose or support this finding. Actually, this finding is quite surprising, since it is expected that higher proficiency level students get higher self-efficacy scores. This situation can be explained by the challenge of hybrid education. As Raes, Detienne, Windey and Depaepe (2020) assert that during the implementation of synchronous hybrid learning, it is getting more difficult to stir and involve the students remotely to the same degree as the students present face-to-face. Students being passive during the classes may have caused them to feel less self-efficacious regardless of their proficiency level.

As a result of the second question of the research, when the metacognitive self-regulation skills test scores of the English preparatory school students were controlled, a significant difference was found according to their self-efficacy beliefs and VAK learning styles. That is, kinesthetic and auditory learners have higher self-efficacy scores compared to visual learners. The direction of this difference was observed as kinesthetic learners, auditory learners and visual learners, respectively, from highest to lowest. When we look at the literature, there are no studies directly related to the self-efficacy beliefs of the preparatory school students and the VAK learning style. There are studies on the learning styles and achievements of English preparatory school students. In one study, unlike the present study, a result was obtained in the form of an auditory learning style, which has a positive effect on success (Cesur, 2008), while in another study, kinesthetic learning was concluded, similar to the present study. Despite the fact that prioritizing auditory and visual elements in accordance with the nature of language learning increases students' academic achievement and indirectly their self-efficacy beliefs (Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1982), it is seen that different results are obtained in this study. Hybrid education context, especially synchronous parts of the classes, includes elements, especially for auditory and visual learners. Kinesthetic learners' obtaining the highest self-efficacy scores during hybrid education is another surprising finding of this research, as they prefer learning by doing (Vaisnav, 2013). They like being involved in physical activities and bodily movement. In hybrid education, it becomes more difficult to create a learning environment to support their needs compared to other learning modalities.

**Implications of the Study**

In light of all these explanations, it is suggested that the reasons for the high self-efficacy beliefs of kinesthetic learners within the scope of the present study should be obtained through interviews with the students participating in the mixed research. The reason why kinesthetic students' self-efficacy beliefs are higher than other groups may be due to reasons such as the lesson plans or the in-class activities of the lecturer appealing to kinesthetic learners. In order to confirm the assumptions in question and to determine the reasons underlying the result, a mixed research design in which one-to-one opinions can be obtained from the students and holistic comments can be made on the qualitative data would be appropriate. As in the current study a significant difference could not be found according to their levels and there are some studies showing just the opposite before the covid-19 pandemic, this result may stem from the change in the education model. Before covid-19, online or hybrid education practices were hardly come by, this result can be related to the hybrid education model. To clarify this, interviews with students and even teachers can be required for further research.

**Limitations of the Study**

The current study is limited to 159 students studying in English preparatory schools at two foundation universities in Istanbul and researchers reached the findings via only quantitative data. In this sense, further studies can be conducted with a wide range of students including qualitative data analysis such as conducting interviews, observation and document analysis. As the hybrid education context is a new context in Turkey, not being able to find relevant studies is another limitation of the study.

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