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Research Article

Investigating Self-Efficacy of English Student Teachers' Intercultural Communication

İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Kültürlerarası İletişim Öz-Yeterliklerinin İncelenmesi

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Abstract

Purpose: *Psychological, characteristic and socio-cultural factors are effective in shaping perceptions of self-efficacy in communicating in intercultural encounters. Therefore, using an explanatory study, the present research investigates the self-efficacy of 194 (CFA and main study sample) and 133 (EFA sample) student teachers of English in intercultural communication.* ***Method:*** *In the study, quantitative data were collected with the adopted version of the Self-Efficacy in Communication Scale (SEFFICAC) to investigate the participants' characteristics in intercultural communication. Qualitative data were collected with an interview form consisting of written, structured questions. The extent to which student teachers of English find themselves competent in intercultural communication was analysed in depth.* ***Findings:*** *The qualitative data obtained in the study showed that the student teachers of English who participated in the study rarely experienced intercultural encounters, found themselves competent in intercultural communication situations, and were open and willing to intercultural communication.* ***Conclusion:*** *The results of this study provide valuable insights into how pre-service EFL teachers perceive their self-efficacy within intercultural communication contexts. Recommendations were made in light of the findings of the current study.*

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Öz

Amaç: *Psikolojik, karakteristik ve sosyo-kültürel faktörler kültürlerarası iletişimde öz yeterlilik algısının şekillenmesinde etkilidir. Bu nedenle açıklayıcı bir model kullanılan bu çalışma 194 (CFA ve ana çalışma örneği) ve 133 (EFA örneği) İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının kültürlerarası iletişimdeki öz yeterliliklerini araştırmaktadır.* ***Yöntem:*** *Çalışmada, katılımcıların kültürlerarası iletişimdeki özelliklerini araştırmak için İletişimde Öz Yeterlilik Ölçeği'nin (SEFFICAC) uyarlanan versiyonu ile nicel veriler toplanmıştır. Nitel veriler, yazılı yapılandırılmış sorulardan oluşan bir görüşme formu ile toplanmıştır. İngilizce öğretmenliği öğrencilerinin kültürlerarası iletişimde kendilerini ne derece yetkin buldukları derinlemesine analiz edilmiştir.* ***Bulgular****: Çalışmada elde edilen nitel veriler, çalışmaya katılan İngilizce öğretmenliği öğrencilerinin kültürlerarası karşılaşmaları nadiren deneyimledikleri, kültürlerarası iletişim durumlarında kendilerini yetkin bulduklarını ve kültürlerarası iletişime açık ve istekli olduklarını göstermiştir.* ***Sonuç:*** *Bu çalışmanın bulguları, hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının kültürlerarası iletişim bağlamında öz-yeterlik algılarını nasıl değerlendirdiklerine dair değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Mevcut çalışmanın bulguları ışığında önerilerde bulunulmuştur.*

Introduction

With the advancement of globalization, classroom practices that integrate the topic of diversity and inclusion have become prevalent. These intercultural practices are essential for developing a classroom environment that ensures equitable learning opportunities regardless of their cultural and linguistic background (Richards et al., 2007). The term 'intercultural communication' appears as a substantial aspect of modern education, which also highlights social justice and equality in educational settings where learners from diverse cultural backgrounds come together (Baker, 2011; Makhmudov, 2023). Sercu (2005) directly links foreign language education to being naturally intercultural. Furthermore, Tennekoon (2015) emphasizes that learning a second language in a classroom setting inherently connects students to a different culture and argues that teachers should enhance students' intercultural communication skills in this context. Relatedly, effective communication across cultural boundaries is crucial to provide understanding, collaboration, and global competence (Baker, 2011; Tennekoon, 2015; Yüce, 2019). However, it can be challenging to handle cultural and linguistic diversity in terms of both teachers and learners, specifically in ethnically diverse classrooms (Yıldırım, 2019). This gap highlights the importance of providing support for teachers (Akça et al., 2028; Romijn et al., 2020; Sercu, 2005) and learners (Mutar et al., 2020; Schwarzer & Luszczynka, 2008) to strengthen their intercultural competencies. In the educational context, self-efficacy plays a significant role in intercultural communication, as it helps individuals engage successfully in terms of adjustment and adaptation in cross-cultural interactions (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023; Sercu, 2005). According to Mutar et al. (2020), self-efficacy refers to an individual's ability to evaluate not only their own

accomplishments but also their potential for future achievements. It directs attention and effort toward learning (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023). Self-efficacy is seen as a factor that helps people set realistic goals, keep trying even when faced with big challenges, and bounce back from failures. Within this scope, self-efficacy reflects one's belief in their ability to accomplish specific tasks and plays a significant role in shaping individuals' performance and confidence necessary for intercultural interactions (Kabir & Sponseller, 2020).

The concept of self-efficacy was initially highlighted by Bandura (1997) to emphasize the role of self-efficacy in improving learner motivation and success in learning. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to a learner's belief in their competence to perform particular tasks and achieve goals. In the context of language learning, self-efficacy deals with learners' confidence in their ability to develop language skills, structural proficiency, and vocabulary gain. One important aspect that needs consideration is that high levels of self-efficacy will increase learners' persistence and effort to overcome potential challenges during language learning (Bandura, 1997). Based on the given descriptions, this study aims to investigate student teachers of English beliefs in improving self-efficacy in intercultural communication. The study hypothesizes that student teachers of English with higher self-efficacy in communication will demonstrate greater confidence and success in intercultural interactions. These results can also tend to reflect a positive correlation between self-efficacy in communication and the frequency of intercultural engagement among teacher candidates. In alignment with these hypotheses, the study contributes to the field by highlighting the correlation between self-efficacy and intercultural communication experienced by EFL teacher candidates. The study emphasizes the necessity of fostering the beliefs of teacher candidates to navigate cross-cultural environments, thereby enriching their overall language learning experience in today's interconnected world. This understanding anchors the focus of this study, which culminates in the following research questions:

1- What is the level of self-efficacy in intercultural communication among student teachers of English?

2- How do Bandura's sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological/emotional states) explain the intercultural communication self-efficacy beliefs of student teachers of English participating in interviews?

Self-efficacy

Conceptually, self-efficacy deals with the self-belief of an individual to perform challenging tasks or exercise control over these tasks (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008). According to Bandura (1986; 1997), an individual's motivation and action can be affected by self-efficacy operations. Self-efficacy centers on the subjective perception of the individual and their capability to navigate complex situational challenges rather than focusing on what they possess (Bandura, 1997). It serves as a guide to empower

individuals to adjust their potential to attain their goals (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008). Fundamentally, self-efficacy relates to adaptive functioning in professional domains that incorporate mediated personal agency and motivational dynamics (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008). To illustrate, if an individual has a strong belief that they can master an upcoming task, then they are more likely to go through it and feel confident that they can navigate the potential threats or challenges rather than refrain from struggling (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008). Otherwise, if they feel low self-efficacy, they may hold back from taking proactive steps (Mutar et al., 2020). Hence, self-efficacy reflects the amount of effort one makes to modify a certain behavior for achieving a specific goal in case they face barriers and setbacks that might affect their motivation (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008).

In his social cognitive theory, Bandura (1997) outlined four key factors that improve and enhance self-efficacy. These are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal and social persuasion, and physiological states (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Mastery experiences help individuals develop a positive sense of achievement when they accomplish a challenging task or course of action. When students achieve difficult goals through perseverance and hard work, they grow to believe in their abilities. Secondly, vicarious experience deals with modeling an individual. When learners see that someone has accomplished a specific goal, they believe the task is attainable and that they can also succeed in it and engage in similar tasks. This effect occurs especially when the observer models someone of a similar age, comprehension, or competence level. Next, social persuasion also has a positive impact on self-efficacy, particularly when an individual is praised by a significant figure in their perception. Learners' beliefs in their ability to perform a certain task can be strengthened by positive appraisals or feedback, or constructive persuasion that they can accomplish it well. Finally, physiological and emotional states affect an individual's self-efficacy in performing a task or course of action. Individuals' positive emotional perception toward a specific task can boost self-efficacy, while negative emotions such as fear, stress, or anxiety diminish learner self-efficacy. Management of these states will lead individuals to gain confidence in their abilities under pressure.

Studies in Self-Efficacy

An extensive body of research has also explored the constructive framework of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) with numerous authentic situations such as immigration (Gebauer et al., 2021), health, education (Cheng & Hu, 2017), sociocultural domains (Gebregergis, 2020; Wawrosz & Jurásek, 2023), and emotion regulation (Arabmofrad & Shakki, 2025; Wang et al., 2025) to examine an individual's belief in their abilities to accomplish challenging tasks or goals. Studies on self-efficacy in the educational context revolve around its relation to other factors such as emotional intelligence (Chang & Hu, 2017; Sun, 2022); academic adjustment (Mutar et al., 2020); foreign language proficiency (Mills et al., 2003; Yüce et al, 2024); L2 writing anxiety (Aydın & Yüce, 2025), intercultural

communication (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023; Kabir & Sponseller, 2020); and teacher self-efficacy (Romijn et al., 2020; Tschannen-Morana & Woolfolk Hoyb, 2001; Zhi et al., 2023).

When it comes to its relation to intercultural communication, Jurasek & Wawrosz (2023) explain that self-efficacy is regarded as a predictor of intercultural adaptation in a culturally diverse environment. Individuals with low self-efficacy may refrain from social contact in an unfamiliar context and may have problems in adaptation. On the other hand, high self-efficacy seems more profitable in terms of socio-cultural adaptation (Lee & Çiftçi, 2015), career opportunities (Arghode et al., 2021; Han & Wang, 2021), and even academic achievement (Alibakhshi et al., 2020). According to Jurasek & Wawrosz (2023), high self-efficacy may be an indication of better adaptation to align with cultural norms, ultimately fostering improved intercultural adjustment. Individuals with higher self-efficacy usually exhibit better self-regulation, enhanced well-being, and better overall health during international experiences. Moreover, students who have experience studying abroad have promising career prospects due to their increased empathy, patience, and confidence. Furthermore, an individual with high self-efficacy will cope well with problems and engage in social interactions, considering them as valuable learning experiences (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023).

In a comparative study that addressed the similarities and differences within the distinctive tertiary-level educational contexts of China and the United Kingdom, Sun (2022) analyzed Chinese college students' experiences and perceptions of how their self-efficacy, cultural responsiveness, and emotional intelligence are improved for their academic performance and lifelong learning. The study also described the significance and relationship between emotional intelligence and student achievement for building a supportive and inclusive social connection linked to multicultural contexts. The results suggest that college education disregards improving self-efficacy among the learners; they need to develop their self-efficacy, intercultural communication competence, and emotional intelligence at a higher education level in both contexts.

Mutar et al., (2020) aimed to investigate whether EFL learners at the university level have self-efficacy and academic adjustments and the significance of self-efficacy and academic adjustment for high or low achievers. The study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and academic adjustment among a total of 100 female EFL learners at two Iraqi universities. The study validates that higher achievers possess more robust self-efficacy beliefs; however, it indicates a negative correlation between self-efficacy and academic adjustment. These results indicate that self-efficacy may exert varying effects across cultural or social contexts, or that academic adjustment encompasses aspects not solely reflected by efficacy beliefs. As a result, the study calls for more nuanced investigations into how self-efficacy interacts with contextual and performance-related variables in foreign language learning environments.

More recently, Guo (2025) investigated the relationships among metacognitive knowledge, personality traits, openness to diversity, self-efficacy, and emotions among a

large number of EFL teachers in China. The results revealed a positive connection between high levels of self-efficacy and possessing greater metacognitive knowledge. Moreover, the study demonstrated that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more engaged and responsive to diversity, whereas they underperform with negative emotions. Another important implication of the study is that specific personality traits such as openness, agreeableness, and adaptability tend to be more receptive to new ideas and diversities, furnishing their teaching environments for students from intercultural backgrounds. These findings highlight the significance of improving metacognitive skills, emotional well-being, and positive personality traits to improve EFL instruction in diverse classrooms.

These studies generally emphasize that students with higher self-efficacy tend to be more advantageous in social and academic contexts (domains) (Gebregergis, 2020; Kabir & Sponseller, 2020; Wawrosz & Jurásek, 2023), notwithstanding certain exceptions (Mutar et al., 2020). Gaining individuals greater persistence against challenges, high self-efficacy has been associated with improved academic achievement in foreign language learning (Mills et al., 2003) and intercultural communication (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023; Kabir & Sponseller, 2020). The studies on the impacts of high self-efficacy demonstrate that it facilitates adaptive engagement, openness to diverse norms, and greater sociocultural sensitivity.

Intercultural communication

Communicative competence is a crucial field in language learning. Numerous theories have been put forward to explain its instructional and developmental processes; however, more focus is required to reveal that communicative competence can be improved by utilizing tools for applications (Kabir & Sponseller, 2020). Intercultural communication has gained significant attention recently in a number of studies (Gebauer et al., 2021; Kabir & Sponseller, 2020; Khukhlaev et al., 2022; Peterson et al., 2011; Tennekoon, 2015) due to the increasing interconnectedness of the globalized world. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is defined as a set of abilities needed to interact effectively and appropriately with other individuals that share diverse linguistic and cultural values (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). A more comprehensive definition provided by Heppner et al. (2012) reflects culture as "shared learned behavior and meanings that are socially transferred in various life-activity settings for purposes of individual and collective adjustment and adaptation" (p. 3). This definition offers a nuanced framework for comprehending the role of culture in intercultural communication and emphasizes the evolution of intercultural competence by showcasing the dynamic and adaptive characteristics of culture. According to Kabir and Sponseller (2020), evaluating language and intercultural competence involves confidence in one's capability to communicate effectively (p. 4). Kabir & Sponseller (2020) approach intercultural competence as an interplay of a set of skills rather than the skills functioning independently.

The examination of self-efficacy has been pinpointed as a focal point for studying communicative competence (Yüce, 2023) that connects associated cross-cultural disciplines (Peterson et al., 2011). Self-efficacy integrates a variety of psychosocial components that accommodate progressive goal achievement and is rooted in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory of learning from the 1970s. The first component concerns modelling and gaining mastery through direct task engagement or indirect observation. The second relates to the impact of feedback from people in interpersonal interactions, which often emphasizes social persuasion about related competence. The final component involves the process of evaluating and regulating internal or physiological responses once performing the skill or the behaviors (Bandura, 1997).

Intercultural learning enhances the language competency of the learners, bestowing them with multiple perspectives and lifelong personal growth (Kabir & Sponseller, 2020). Language proficiency is a key variable in this context; language skills are positively correlated with overall satisfaction and the dynamic felt in multicultural environments (Cramer, 2018). Experiential learning can lead to positive outcomes in terms of self-efficacy in communication and language (Kabir & Sponseller, 2020). As underlined by Kabir & Sponseller (2020), individuals with higher self-awareness tend to be conscious of their potential, which drives them to gain more continuous and strategic skills. Finally, the methods, approaches, or datasets the study aims to use to address the identified gap should be clearly stated. In this way, the purpose, scope, and original contribution of the research are explicitly articulated at the end of the Introduction section.

Methodology

Research Design

In the current study, an explanatory sequential design was used to answer the research questions. The explanatory sequential design starts with quantitative research. Then, qualitative research is conducted to explain the results obtained through quantitative research (Creswell, 2021). In this context, prospective English teachers' self-efficacy levels were determined with the quantitative data collected in the study. In the quantitative research, the scale developed by the researchers was used. Then, qualitative research was conducted with prospective English teachers to explain the quantitative data results. Qualitative research data were collected through an interview, including questions prepared based on Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory. Thus, using qualitative data based on Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory, the overall conclusion drawn from quantitative data was explained. The current study collected the quantitative data using the adopted version of the Self-Efficacy in Communication Scale (SEFFICAC), which consists of 7 items. The qualitative data of the study were collected with a written structured interview form consisting of 4 questions. The interview questions were shaped according to the four basic factors in Bandura that affect self-efficacy.

Sample

The study consists of two separate samples collected for exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The number of samples obtained in the exploratory factor analysis (n=133) was sufficient according to the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin test (KMO=0.825). The minimum required sample size for CFA was calculated with Danial Soper'online software. The sample size for a single latent variable and 7 observed variables of 87 was enough to detect an expected effect size of 0.1 (a small effect size) at 5% alpha error and 80% power of the study (Soper, 2025). According to the results of the analysis, the number of samples (n=194) reached for CFA is sufficient. Of the students participating in the EFA sample, 90 (67.7%) were female, and 43 (32.8%) were male. The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 25 (Mean age±standard deviation: 20.08±1.48). Of the undergraduate students in the CFA sample, 139 (71.6%) were female, and 55 (28.4%) were male. The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 33 (Mean age±standard deviation: 20.00±2.04). All of the participants were undergraduate students of state universities.

Data collection process

The data collection process took place in two phases. The first phase involved collecting quantitative data from the participants. Quantitative data collection leads to the second phase, namely, qualitative data collection. In the first phase, the Self-Efficacy in Communication Scale (SEFFICAC)'s adopted version was administered to the study's participants. Before administration, necessary permissions were obtained from the related institutions, and participants were informed about the aim of the study. All of the participants were informed about confidentiality issues, and they participated in the study voluntarily. The scale is administered in a classroom setting for an academic term. The data was collected anonymously. After the first phase was completed, the second phase was initiated to have a deeper understanding of the topic. Based on the preliminary findings of quantitative data, a written structured interview was developed and administered to voluntary participants. To enhance content validity, the interview questions were reviewed for theoretical alignment and clarity before implementation. The sequential data collection process enabled researchers to identify self-efficacy in intercultural communication and find out the underlying mechanisms of their beliefs.

Data analysis procedure

In the study, univariate and multivariate normality of the EFA and CFA samples were tested. The skewness values of the items in the EFA sample are between -0.534 and 0.138; kurtosis values are between -0.395 and 0.224. Values ranging between -2.0 and +2.0 satisfy the univariate normality assumption (Geroge & Mallery, 2010). In the EFA analysis, according to Bartlett's test result [$\chi 2=204.926$; $p=0.000 <0.001$]. EFA data met the assumption of multiple normality/multivariate normality (Seçer, 2015). The results

regarding univariate and multivariate normality for the CFA sample are presented in the table below.

Table 1. *Univariate and Multivariate Normality for the CFA Sample*

Variable/item	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	c.r.	Kurtosis	c.r.
item7	1.000	5.000	0.054	0.309	-0.007	-0.020
item6	1.000	5.000	0.005	0.030	-0.302	-0.858
item5	2.000	5.000	0.184	1.046	-0.675	-1.919
item4	2.000	5.000	0.002	0.009	-0.903	-2.566
item3	2.000	5.000	0.128	0.725	-0.769	-2.187
item2	1.000	5.000	0.247	1.406	-0.221	-0.630
item1	1.000	5.000	-0.333	-1.891	0.050	0.141
Multivariate					4.672	2.899

Considering the values in the table, skewness values vary between -0.333 and 0.247; kurtosis values vary between -0.769 and 0.050. Since these values are between -2.0 and +2.0, it can be said that the data set meets the univariate normality assumption (Geroge & Mallery. 2010). Table 1 shows that the assumption of multivariate normality/multivariate normality is met (multivariate kurtosis and multivariate critical ratio<5 Bentler, 2005).

In the study, arithmetic mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) were used to analyze the data obtained to determine the self-efficacy levels of undergraduate students. In the evaluations made according to arithmetic averages, a difference interval of 4/5=0.80 was taken as a basis since the scales used in the study have five options and four difference intervals based on a 5-point Likert scale (Kanjanarach, et al., 2014; Leochico et al., 2022). The difference intervals are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Difference Intervals Used for Interpreting Self-Efficacy Levels*

Range	Refer in Questionnaire	Evaluation
1.00–1.80	Totally Agree	Very low
1.81–2.60	Not Agree	Low
2.61–3.40	Undecided	Middle
3.41–4.20	Agree	High
4.21–5.00	Totally Disagree	Very High

Table 2 shows the difference intervals, the questionnaire equivalents corresponding to the difference intervals and the evaluation levels. The mean scores of the students participating in the study were evaluated using the difference intervals in the table.

Measures

English communication self-efficacy scale

In order to measure the participants' English communication self-efficacy, the 8-item unidimensional scale developed by the researcher was adopted. The adapted items are presented in the appendix. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for the items. In the first analysis, the 8th item alone formed a separate factor. The 8th item was removed from the analysis, and the analysis was repeated. As a result of the analysis, a single-factor model with an eigenvalue of 3.067 was obtained. The total variance/total variance ratio

explained by the single-factor structure consisting of 7 items is 43.812%. (See Appendix). The communality values of the items in the scale, ranging between 0.329 and 0.503 >0.10 are at an adequate level. In addition, the factor loadings/factor loadings ranging between 0.573 and 0.709>0.32 are at an adequate level (Seçer, 2015). The 7-item single-factor scale was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis in a different sample (n=194). The path diagram of the CFA analysis is presented in the figure.

Figure 1. *Path Diagram for the Scale*

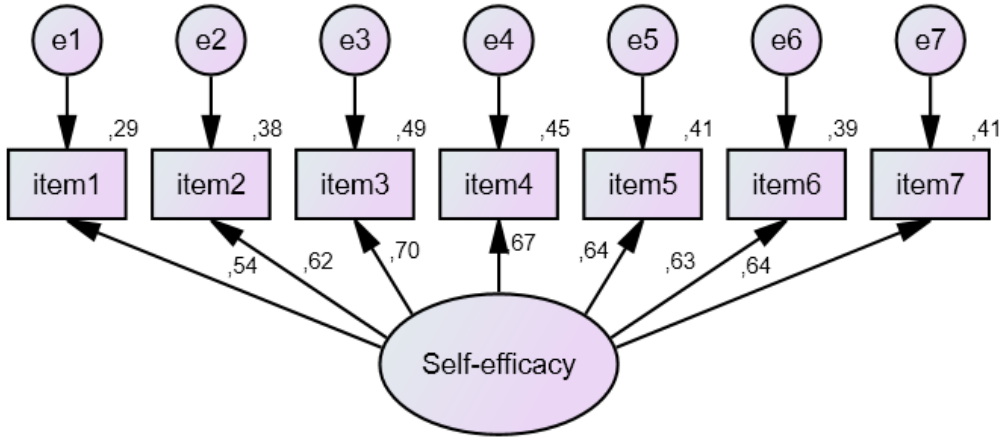


Figure 1. shows the single-factor structure of the scale. In confirmatory factor analysis, the majority of the goodness of fit values [χ2/df=1.622; CFI=.098; IFI=0.98; NFI=0.94; NNFI/TLI=0.96; AGFI=.94; GFI=0.97; RMSEA=.06; SRMR=0.04] of the single-factor measurement model were excellent (Karagöz, 2016; Kline, 2015; Schumacker & Lomax, 2016). Information on the internal consistency reliability/internal consistency realiability of the scale is presented in the table below.

Tablo 3. *Factor Loadings/Standardized Regression Weights, Cronbach's Alpha, and CR Coefficients*

Factor	Items	Standardized Regression Weights	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Self-efficacy	Item1	0.54	0.82	0.40	0.82
	Item2	0.62			
	Item3	0.70			
	Item4	0.67			
	Item5	0.64			
	Item6	0.63			
	Item7	0.64			

The factor loadings/standardized regression weights (>0.40) of the items in the scale are sufficient in terms of CFA analysis results (Stevens. 2002). The Table 2. shows that the average variance extracted (AVE) values are less than 0.5. However, the fact that the composite reliability (CR=0.82) value is greater than 0.60 indicates that the convergent validity of the construct is still sufficient (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha value for the internal consistency coefficient was 0.82.

These values indicate that the scale is highly reliable (Janssens et al., 2008; Kartal & Bardakçı, 2019).

Findings

Quantitative Findings Related to Self-Efficacy Level

The findings concerning undergraduate students' self-efficacy levels are presented in Table 4.

Tablo 4. *Self-Efficacy Level of Undergraduate Students*

Variables	n	Minimum	Maximum	$\overline{X}$	Sd	Self-efficacy level
Item1	194	1.00	5.00	3.56	0.90	High
Item2	194	1.00	5.00	3.34	0.84	Middle
Item3	194	2.00	5.00	3.63	0.85	High
Item4	194	2.00	5.00	3.86	0.79	High
Item5	194	2.00	5.00	3.66	0.79	High
Item6	194	1.00	5.00	3.52	0.88	High
Item7	194	1.00	5.00	3.55	0.76	High
Total score avrg.	194	2.43	5.00	3.59	0.58	High

According to Table 4. the mean score of the undergraduate students' self-efficacy scale was found to be ($\overline{X}$ =3.59). From this point of view, it can be said that students' self-efficacy levels are high.

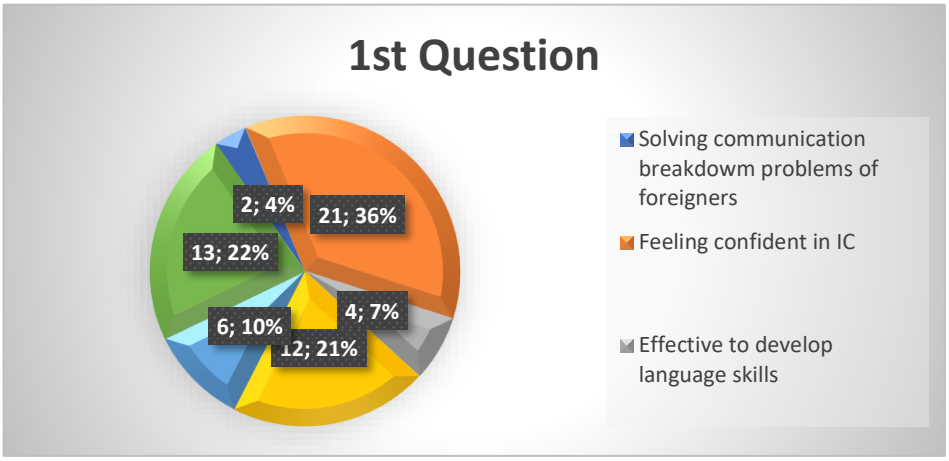
Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data were collected from 54 student teachers of English. Four questions were asked in a written, structured interview form. The questions were prepared in accordance with Bandura's theory of factors determining self-efficacy. One question was prepared for each of the factors: performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, observed experiences (indirect), and physiological feedback. The first question of the written structured interview form was asked in accordance with the performance outcomes factor, as follows:

1.Qualitative Findings on the Dimension of Mastery Experiences

1. How have your previous intercultural interactions affected your perceived competence in communication? (Situations and experiences of communicating in your foreign language)

Figure 2. *Distribution of codes for the first question.*



For the answers given to the first written structured interview questions, 6 codes were formed: 'solving communication breakdown problems of foreigners', 'feeling confident in IC', 'effective to develop language skills', 'awareness of lacking sufficiency for IC', 'difficulty to communicate with native speakers', lack of experience or limited experience'. In this question, in which the effect of the participants' performance outcomes on their self-efficacy in intercultural communication was investigated, it was found that the participants were confident in intercultural communication and found themselves sufficient. The theme 'feeling confident in IC' was repeated 21 times among all answers. The participants stated that they feel confident and competent when communicating with people from other cultures in their foreign language. They also stated that their perception of self-efficacy increased when they solved the communication problems that foreigners experience when communicating with others. Participants think that intercultural communication also contributes to the development of language skills. The theme 'effective to develop language skills' was repeated 4 times in all answers. 1. Another important finding from the written interview question is that participants who communicate interculturally perceive themselves as lacking sufficiency in the areas of pronunciation, speaking skills and fluency. The theme 'Awareness of lacking sufficiency for IC' was the second-highest theme with 12 repetitions among all answers. Participants also stated that they have problems in intercultural communication with native speakers of English due to their accents and fast speech, and that they experience confusion in terms of meaning. Another important finding revealed by the data is that a significant number of the participants had no or very limited intercultural communication experience. Selected students' responses are provided below.

S. R: Since I solved the problem, I felt very confident and competent in intercultural communication.

S. R: This situation increased my self-confidence, and I was happy to communicate with different cultures.

S. R: It affected my perception of proficiency positively. Because I did not have any problems while speaking with my foreign friend in the target language, my confidence in my speaking and my perception of competence increased significantly.

S. R: In some of my interactions, I felt that my level was sufficient, in others I realised that I was not sufficient and that I needed to improve myself, that I needed to communicate with more strangers.

S. R: When it was positive, I felt more confident, but when it was negative, I lacked motivation because I had to work harder. There is no such thing as sweaty. I learned that it can always get better.

S. R: I realised that my communication was lacking. I had an American friend, and she would correct my mistakes sarcastically. He would say that the language barrier was funny. But overall, he said, I had good English.

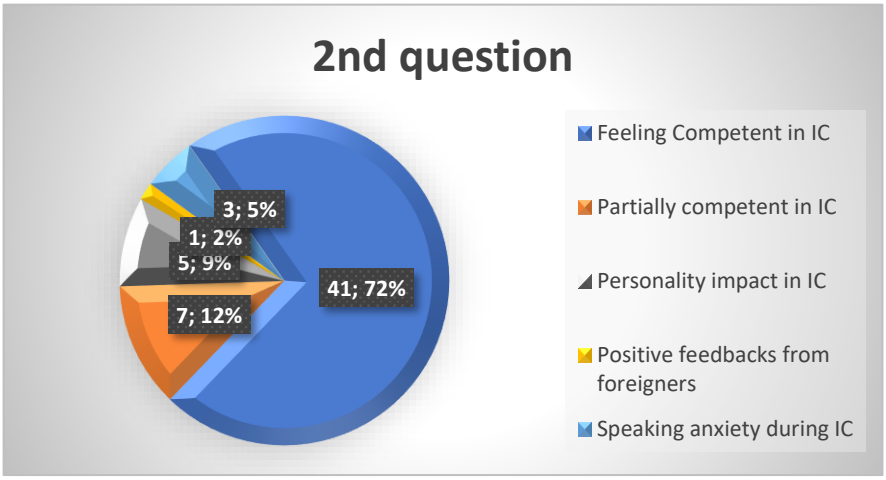
It is obvious from participants' statements that self-efficacy in intercultural communication is dynamic and experience-based. Specifically, expressions such as "I felt very competent because I solved the problem" and "I was happy to communicate with different cultures" demonstrate how mastery experiences, as conceptualised by Bandura, strengthen self-efficacy beliefs. Participants' positive outcomes in terms of communication foster their self-efficacy beliefs. Statements such as 'in some interactions I realised I was not sufficient' and "I needed to communicate with more strangers" indicate that self-efficacy is not a fixed belief but rather a developmental one. However, sarcastic corrections decrease the motivation of the participants temporarily. Participants' statements show that self-efficacy in intercultural communication is continuously restructured through experiences, feedback and self- assessment of the individual.

2. Qualitative Findings on the Dimension of Verbal Persuasion

The second question of the written structured interview form was asked as follows, depending on the verbal persuasion factor;

2. Do you feel confident in your skills and abilities to communicate interculturally? Do you think you can use your foreign language effectively to express yourself?

Figure 3. *Distribution of themes for the second question.*



For the analysis of the answers given to the second written structured interview questions, 5 themes were formed: 'feeling competent in IC', 'partially competent in IC', 'personality impact in IC', 'positive feedback from foreigners', and 'speaking anxiety during IC'. The data obtained revealed that the participants were mostly confident in their skills and abilities in intercultural communication. The theme 'feeling competent in IC' was a recurring theme 41 times in the participants' responses. A small number of the participants consider themselves partially competent in intercultural communication. The theme 'partially competent in IC' was repeated 7 times in the participants' responses. Another important finding is that the participants stated that their characteristics and speech anxiety negatively affected them in intercultural communication. Some participants stated that they experienced speech anxiety at the moment of communication, while others reported excitement and a general state of anxiety. Selected students' responses are provided below.

S. R: Yes, I am confident. I am shyer when I speak in classes, but I am more relaxed and have fun when I speak in daily life. I have helped many tourists by speaking English, and I have been able to express myself.

S. R: I am confident in communicating, and I am happy when I see my skills and abilities. For example, I spoke to a foreign man on the phone, and our conversation was very comprehensive. He was Spanish, and I learned a lot about his culture.

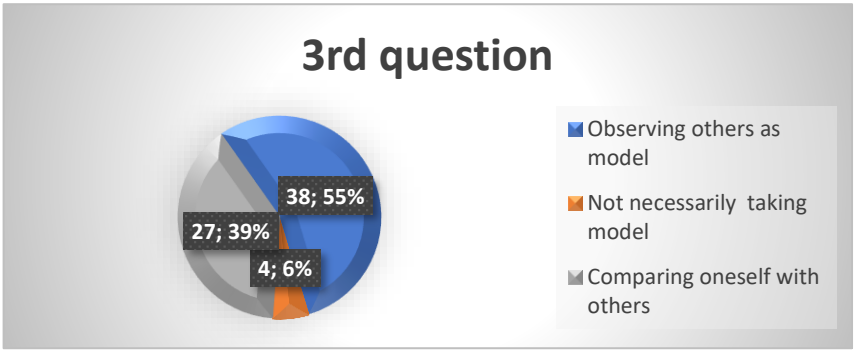
Participants' statements indicate that they generally have a high level of confidence in intercultural communication. Specifically, feeling more relaxed in daily life and being able to help tourists suggests that they can use the language functionally and effectively. They state that they feel shy in classroom settings. This can be interpreted as a context-related issue rather than a lack of communicative competence. Overall, the statements indicate that participants have self-confidence in terms of intercultural communication.

3. Qualitative Findings on the Dimension of Vicarious Experiences

The third question of the written structured interview form was asked as follows in accordance with the vicarious experience factor.

3. When you see people communicating interculturally using a foreign language, do you compare your skills with their skills? Or do you take it as a model?

Figure 4. *Distribution of themes for the third question.*



In order to analyse the answers given to the third written structured interview question, three themes were formed: 'observing others as a model', 'not necessarily taking a model', and 'comparing oneself with others'. The theme 'observing others as models' has the highest rate with 38 repetitions. Participants stated that they observe and model other people who communicate with someone from another culture using their foreign language. Especially if these people communicate effectively and are fluent in their foreign language, they become models for the participants. Another important finding from the written structured interview question is that the participants compare themselves with effective intercultural communicators. Participants tend to compare their skills and abilities with the skills and abilities of the people they observe. The theme 'comparing oneself with others' has the second-highest rate with 27 repetitions. Only 4 of the participants stated that they do not model on other people. Selected students' responses are provided below.

S. R: I make comparisons, but I am not clear about my role models. Because I compare myself with people who communicate better than me and people who do not, so I pay attention to the people I take as an example.

S. R: Yes, when someone communicates interculturally using their language, I observe how they express themselves, I look at what techniques they use, and if it makes sense, I take it as an example and apply it in my life.

S. R: I have spoken to a French person in English. I was impressed by his polite and effective speech and took him as an example.

S. R: I take an example instead of comparing. If he/she is better than me, I am pleased and I watch him/her in detail and reflect this in my behaviour.

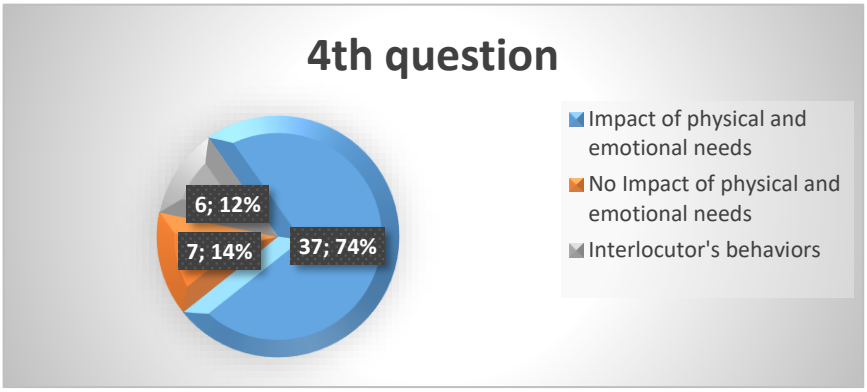
Participants' statements indicate that vicarious experiences play a significant role in shaping their self-efficacy in intercultural communication. They do not purely evaluate themselves with others' abilities but observe effective communicators reflectively and adopt new communication strategies. Active modelling takes place during this reflective and adaptive process. It can be said that participants construct their intercultural communication self-efficacy through observational learning.

4. Qualitative Findings on the Dimension of Physiological and Affective States

The fourth question of the written structured interview form was asked to investigate how the physical and emotional needs of individuals affect their perceptions of self-efficacy in intercultural communication. This question is related to the physiological feedback factor of Bandura. Question 5 is presented below.

4. Do your physical and emotional needs affect your communication and perception of communication when communicating interculturally?

Figure 5. *Distribution of themes for the fourth question.*



In order to analyse the answers given to the fourth written structured interview question, 3 themes were created: 'Impact of physical and emotional needs', 'No Impact of physical and emotional needs', and 'Interlocutor's behaviours'. Most of the participants had the view that their physical and emotional needs positively or negatively affected their intercultural communication. The theme 'Impact of physical and emotional needs' was repeated 37 times in the participant responses. Some participants thought that their physical and emotional needs had no impact on their intercultural communication. However, the theme 'No Impact of Physical and Emotional Needs' was repeated only 7 times in the participant responses. In addition, another important finding is that, according to the participants of the study, the behaviour of the communicator in intercultural communication is very important in maintaining or terminating communication. Selected students' responses are provided below.

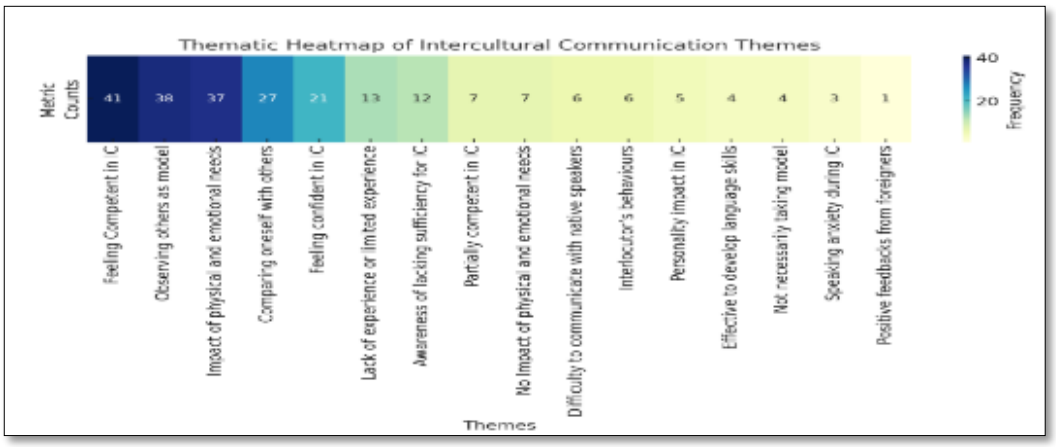
S. R: Of course it does, a person's emotions have always been a big factor in communication. Finally, I don't think it is as important as an emotion. Lack or excess of emotion affects communication both positively and negatively.

S. R: No, it doesn't, because I only communicate. I don't mix my physical or emotional needs.

S. R: Yes, it does. If I am not feeling well at that moment, I don't want to communicate, or if I am in physical pain, I cannot communicate effectively.

According to some participants, communication is affected by emotional state, while others think that it is independent of emotions. These findings align with Bandura's argument that physiological and emotional states can shape self-efficacy beliefs by influencing perceived competence in performance situations.

Figure 6. *Thematic heatmap of intercultural communication themes*



When the qualitative data collected are analysed, it is seen that the participants think that they are competent in intercultural communication. In addition, it was concluded that EFL students observe and emulate individuals who have intercultural communicative competence when they communicate using English as a foreign language. The study also found that the participants' physical and emotional needs had a significant impact on their ability to establish and maintain intercultural communication. While the participants were confident in their intercultural communication abilities and skills, they gained awareness about the areas and skills they lacked or were inadequate in their intercultural communication experiences. Another important finding was that the participants reported that they had difficulty communicating with native speakers of English.

Discussion

Summary of Results

This study was conducted to determine student teachers of English self-efficacy levels in intercultural communication and the basis of their perceptions of self-efficacy in intercultural communication. In the study, quantitative data were collected to determine student teachers of English self-efficacy levels in intercultural communication. The study adopted a 7-item version of the self-efficacy in communication scale (SEFFICAC). Necessary tests were applied to the adapted scale, and an additional factorial model was obtained. When the results obtained from the adapted version were evaluated, it was found that pre-service English language Teachers had high levels of self-efficacy in intercultural communication. To examine the basis of pre-service English language teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy in intercultural communication, an interview form consisting of 4 written, structured questions was used. When the results obtained from the written structured interview form were evaluated, it was concluded that pre-service English language teachers had a very high perception of self-efficacy and were open and ready for intercultural communication. The pre-service English teachers based their level of self-efficacy in intercultural communication on their personal needs and the influence

of their past experiences, which included observing English language teachers or those who communicated similarly. Another important result obtained from the qualitative data is that the participants do not have enough opportunities for intercultural communication. The use of English as a foreign language in Türkiye explains this result. In addition, the participants stated that they had difficulty communicating with native speakers of English and avoided this type of communication. This result shows that the participants do not trust their language proficiency.

Overall, the findings offer interesting perspectives on the importance of self-efficacy in intercultural communication environments for pre-service EFL teachers, who need to be familiar with these environments due to their professional area. The findings not only emphasize the relationship between self-efficacy and its social and academic effects on the individual but also underscore the necessity of formulating strategies to address challenges arising from diminished self-efficacy.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study provides important recommendations based on the interplay between self-efficacy and intercultural communication relating to EFL teacher candidates. Previous studies have shown that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to adapt to culturally different environments more easily and have the ability to cope with situations that challenge them (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023). The high levels of self-efficacy among pre-service English teachers in this study indicate that they will possess confidence in intercultural communication and in contexts where English is utilized as a foreign language, enabling them to effectively manage challenging situations and tasks. In addition, as addressed by Jurasek & Wawrosz (2023), individuals with high self-efficacy in social interaction have high levels of patience, empathy, and trust. The data obtained in the present study emphasize that pre-service English teachers are willing to engage in intercultural communication. Jurasek & Wawrosz (2023) also address the crucial issue of considering self-efficacy as a predictor of intercultural adaptation in a culturally diverse environment. Based on this explanation, it can be predicted that EFL teachers with high self-efficacy may perform better adaptation, especially to culturally diverse environments, and they may maintain more proficient interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Lee & Çiftçi, 2015). As to dealing with challenges resulting from diverse societal norms, EFL teachers with high self-efficacy may show greater resilience against these threats through adaptive coping strategies and reflective practice (Gebregergis, 2020). Individuals with strong efficacy beliefs tend to interpret sociocultural tensions as manageable challenges rather than communication barriers. Such persistence can enable them to navigate culturally diverse environments more reasonably and respond indulgently to normative differences. EFL teachers with high self-efficacy have greater metacognitive knowledge, which enhances their pedagogical practices (Guo, 2025). Such persistence may be a sign of better-adapted methods to accommodate diverse learner needs.

Practical Implications

However, once communicating with native speakers, the difficulties they face signal that they should be provided with more structured and dynamic opportunities to improve their skills in intercultural communication. These results give us a deeper understanding of the importance of EFL teachers' perceptions of high self-efficacy. According to the study's findings, student teachers of English exhibit high levels of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Considering that these student teachers of English will be future English teachers, it can be said that they will be effective in developing their students' intercultural communication skills. In addition, having more intercultural communication opportunities will positively affect the participants' self-efficacy perceptions. In light of these findings, it is crucial to follow strategies to bridge the gap between perceived self-efficacy and intercultural communication practice in authentic settings in terms of foreign language teacher candidates. Last but not least, equipping EFL teachers with fully developed communicative skills in an intercultural context will essentially lead to more effective, adaptable, and comprehensible interactional experiences in diverse educational and professional environments.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this research offer helpful information regarding the self-efficacy perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers in the context of intercultural communication. As indicated by the findings, although participants have limited opportunities to interact directly with the native speakers of English, they perceive themselves as highly self-efficacious, and they feel willing to engage in intercultural communication. The results also suggest that their confidence results from their personal needs and interactive experiences with English language teachers. Overall, the study confirms that the participants tend to auto-control their interaction in an intercultural communication environment with strong confidence and adaptability.

Limitations and Future Research

193 pre-service English language teachers provided both qualitative and quantitative data for this study. The scope of the study can be improved with more English language teacher candidates studying in English language teaching departments of different universities. Theoretically, the study focused on self-efficacy beliefs, which are the confidence levels that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher candidates have in their ability to teach effectively. The scope of the study can be further expanded to encompass diverse educational contexts and additional contextual variables that may influence the phenomenon under examination.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval and written permission were obtained from the Aksaray University Social and Humanities Sciences Ethics Committee (approval granted at the meeting, application no. 2025-05).

Author Contributions

Dr. Zeynep Çetin Köroğlu: Conceptualisation, Theoretical Background, Methodology, Data Analysis, Data Visualisation, Writing, Review and Editing.

Dr. Fatma Kimsesiz: Conceptualisation, Theoretical Background, Writing, Review and Editing.

Dr. Mehmet Elban: Methodology, Writing, Review and Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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