A Study on the Correlation between Language Self-Efficacy and Language Learning Strategies of Non-English Majors

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies of non-English major college students. Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, this study used a questionnaire survey method to collect data, and used correlation analysis and regression analysis to empirically test the relationship between the two. The study found that language self-efficacy is closely related to a variety of language learning strategies, especially in metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies. In addition, language self-efficacy has a certain predictive effect on the use of learning strategies, indicating that students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more inclined to adopt effective learning strategies. The results further verify the applicability of self-efficacy theory in the field of language learning and provide inspiration for optimizing English teaching practice. Based on the research findings, this paper puts forward several teaching suggestions, including strengthening strategy training, providing positive feedback and promoting collaborative learning, to help non-English major students improve their English learning effects.

Keywords: Language Self-Efficacy, Language Learning Strategies, Non-English Major Students, Metacognitive Strategies, Learning Optimization

Introduction

In the era of globalization, English has become an important language for communication, academic exchange, and career development. It is an important medium in international business, science, and technology, making English proficiency a highly valued skill worldwide. In non-English-speaking countries, universities are increasingly focusing on English language education to equip students with the language skills needed to compete in the global market. However, non-English majors often encounter various challenges when learning English, including lack of motivation, learning anxiety, and ineffective learning strategies.

One of the key factors affecting students' language learning success is language self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully complete language-related tasks (Xuanji He. 2024). Bandura's social cognitive theory emphasizes that self-efficacy significantly affects an individual's learning motivation, effort, and persistence (Wang

Tianjian. 2020). Students with high language self-efficacy are more likely to adopt positive learning strategies, set achievable goals, and show resilience in overcoming difficulties. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy may experience frustration, lack of motivation, and avoidance behaviors, resulting in poor learning outcomes.

Language learning strategies (LLS) are another key factor in language acquisition. Oxford divides these strategies into six categories: memory, cognition, compensation, metacognition, emotion, and social strategies (Dai Wenxia. 2024). Effective use of learning strategies can improve students' ability to process and retain information, thereby improving their overall language ability. However, many non-English majors lack awareness of effective learning strategies and rely on passive learning methods such as rote memorization rather than actively participating in strategic learning.

Although language self-efficacy and learning strategies play an important role in language acquisition, research on the relationship between them is very limited, especially in the context of non-English majors. Understanding this relationship is crucial to developing effective teaching methods to support students in optimizing their learning strategies and improving their language ability.

Non-English majors encounter many obstacles in the process of learning English. Many students lack confidence in their language ability and thus avoid English-related activities such as speaking and writing. This lack of confidence is often related to their language self-efficacy, which affects their willingness to take risks and actively participate in language learning (Zhang. 2023).

In addition, improper use of language learning strategies can further hinder students' progress. Some students rely heavily on ineffective strategies such as rote memorization, rather than adopting metacognitive or interactive strategies that facilitate in-depth learning. Other students may not recognize the importance of self-regulation and strategic learning, resulting in inefficient study habits and poor academic performance (Jing Li. 2023).

Although existing studies have investigated the impact of self-efficacy on overall academic performance, research on the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning strategies among non-English majors is still insufficient. The core research question of this study is: How does language self-efficacy affect the selection and use of language learning strategies among non-English majors? Solving this question will provide valuable insights into the role of self-efficacy in language learning and help develop more effective teaching strategies.

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:
1. Examine the level of language self-efficacy among non-English majors.
2. Investigate the main language learning strategies adopted by non-English majors.
3. Analyze the correlation between language self-efficacy and the use of language learning strategies.

By exploring these objectives, this study aims to identify patterns in students' learning behaviors and provide empirical evidence for the interaction between self-efficacy and strategic learning. The findings will provide practical suggestions for educators and curriculum

designers to enhance language teaching and foster more effective learning strategies in students.

Although the role of self-efficacy in academic achievement is well established, research on its relationship with language learning strategies remains limited, especially among non-English majors. By examining this relationship, this study fills a research gap and enriches the existing body of knowledge in applied linguistics and educational psychology. The findings will provide empirical support for Bandura's self-efficacy theory in the context of second language acquisition (SLA) (Chen. 2024). In addition, this study will provide new insights into how students' beliefs about their abilities affect their learning strategies, thereby advancing theoretical discussions on self-regulated learning in language education.

Enhancing teaching strategies can help improve students' self-efficacy by integrating positive feedback, setting achievable learning goals, and encouraging self-reflection. In addition, incorporating explicit strategy guidance into the curriculum can guide students to develop effective learning strategies that match their self-efficacy levels. Ultimately, fostering a strong sense of self-efficacy and promoting strategic learning behaviors will enhance students' confidence, motivation, and overall academic performance in language learning.

This study proposes the following hypotheses:
H1: There is a significant positive correlation between language self-efficacy and the use of effective language learning strategies, such as metacognitive strategies and social strategies.
H2: Students with higher language self-efficacy are more likely to adopt deep learning strategies, while students with lower self-efficacy tend to rely on surface-level strategies.
H3: Improving language self-efficacy can increase strategy use and achieve better language learning outcomes.

By testing these hypotheses, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on how language self-efficacy affects strategy selection and overall language learning success.

Literature Review
Language Learning Strategies
Language learning strategies (LLS) are defined as specific actions, behaviors, or techniques that learners adopt to facilitate language acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use (Ye Tao & Jianbin Yu.2024). These strategies play a vital role in improving learning efficiency and improving language proficiency. Oxford divides LLS into six categories (Pan Junru.2023):
1. Memory strategies - techniques for storing and retrieving information, such as mnemonics, images, and grouping words by category.
2. Cognitive strategies - direct manipulation of language, including repetition, summarization, and note-taking.
3. Compensatory strategies - methods to fill knowledge gaps, such as using synonyms, guessing meanings based on context, or using gestures.
4. Metacognitive strategies - higher-order thinking skills involving planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning progress.
5. Emotional strategies - emotion regulation techniques, such as self-encouragement, relaxation methods, and stress management.
6. Social strategies - interaction-based methods, such as practicing with peers, asking for

clarification, and participating in group discussions.

Each strategy has different uses, and effective language learners often use a combination of strategies to optimize their learning outcomes.

Several factors influence students' choice and use of language learning strategies, including (Wu Hanwei.2023):
1. Individual differences - cognitive style, personality traits, and intelligence level can influence strategy preferences.
2. Motivation - highly motivated learners tend to use more diverse and effective strategies.
3. Language proficiency - advanced learners typically use more metacognitive and cognitive strategies than beginners.
4. Cultural background - different education systems and learning traditions influence strategy selection.
5. Learning environment - classroom dynamics, teacher guidance, and resource access determine students' strategic choices.

Understanding these factors is essential to designing teaching methods that encourage effective use of strategies and promote autonomous learning.

Language self-efficacy
Self-efficacy is a key concept in Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of beliefs in shaping human behavior (Wang Jieping.2023). Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully complete a task. He proposed that self-efficacy affects motivation, effort, perseverance, and achievement in various fields such as education and language learning.

Language self-efficacy specifically refers to learners' confidence in their ability to use and learn a foreign language effectively. It affects students' willingness to participate in language learning tasks, overcome difficulties, and adopt effective learning strategies (Wei Xiaobao & Chen Xun. 2022).

Several factors affect language self-efficacy, including (Huang Yawen. 2020):
1. Past learning experience - previous language learning success will enhance self-efficacy, while repeated failure will weaken self-efficacy.
2. Social and peer feedback - encouragement from teachers and peers can enhance confidence, while negative feedback can weaken confidence.
3. Personal emotional state - anxiety and stress can reduce self-efficacy, while a positive attitude can enhance self-efficacy.
4. Indirect experience - observing peers successfully use the language can inspire learners' confidence in their abilities.

Existing research data shows that language self-efficacy has a profound impact on students' language learning behavior and performance: students with high self-efficacy are more likely to take risks, actively participate in language activities, and persist in completing challenging tasks, thereby gaining a more effective learning experience. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks, feel anxious, and have difficulty staying motivated, which can hinder their progress. In addition, high self-efficacy is positively correlated with

better academic performance because it promotes goal setting, strategic learning, and resilience to overcome obstacles.

Given its impact on learning outcomes, language self-efficacy is an important factor to consider when designing effective language instruction.

The relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies
A large number of studies have explored the relationship between self-efficacy and learning strategies and found a significant correlation between the two variables. For example, Jiao Li (2023) found that learners with high self-efficacy tend to adopt deep learning strategies; Li Yinling (2023) believed that metacognitive planning and critical thinking, while learners with low self-efficacy tend to rely on surface strategies.

Yuan Yi (2024) also observed that confident language learners use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies, enabling them to learn more autonomously and effectively. On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy are more likely to feel anxious and rely on passive learning methods, such as avoidance behavior and rote memorization, which may hinder long-term language acquisition.

Learners with higher self-efficacy are more likely to use metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, self-assessment); participate in social strategies (communicating with peers, seeking help from teachers); and use emotional strategies to manage anxiety and stay motivated. Learners with low self-efficacy rely more on rote memorization and compensatory strategies; avoid active participation in language practice; and show higher anxiety and lower persistence when overcoming learning difficulties (Zhou Chenxiang. 2024).

Methodology
This study uses a quantitative research method to explore the relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies of non-English majors. A correlational research design is used to study how language self-efficacy (independent variable) affects the selection and use of language learning strategies (dependent variable). Data are collected through questionnaires to conduct an empirical analysis of the relationship between the two. The study aims to determine whether there is a significant correlation between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies, and to what extent the level of self-efficacy predicts students' strategic learning behavior.

The subjects of this study are undergraduate students majoring in non-English majors in colleges and universities, and the sample size is expected to be 200 to 300 to ensure sufficient statistical power for data analysis. Participants must have at least two years of English learning experience at the college level; participants should not have received systematic language learning strategy training to ensure that their strategy use is developed naturally rather than through explicit instruction. A random sampling method is used to increase the generalizability of the research results, and efforts are made to ensure a balanced distribution of participants in terms of gender and academic year.

Data collection is conducted through an online questionnaire survey, using two widely validated standardized instruments for data collection. The measurement of language self-efficacy is based on the framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory. The General Self-

Efficacy Scale (GSES) is used and adapted for English learning situations. The scale covers the assessment of students' confidence in their English listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, and is scored using a 5-level Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), such as "I believe I can complete English listening tasks efficiently." The measurement of language learning strategies uses the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) compiled by the University of Oxford. This tool systematically evaluates six major strategies: memory strategies (such as the use of mnemonics), cognitive strategies (such as note organization and summarization), compensation strategies (such as contextual inference of word meaning), metacognitive strategies (such as learning planning and effect evaluation), emotional strategies (such as anxiety regulation) and social strategies (such as peer interaction and help-seeking behavior). All items use a 5-level Likert scale (1=never used, 5=frequently used) to quantify the frequency of strategy use. The reliability (Cronbach's α > 0.85) and validity (content validity and construct validity) of both instruments have been verified in multinational language learning studies, ensuring their applicability to the Chinese non-English major student population of this study.

The collected data were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to examine the relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies. The following statistical methods were used: Descriptive Statistics (Descriptive Statistics): Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated to describe the overall distribution of participants' language self-efficacy and learning strategies. Pearson Correlation Analysis (Correlation Analysis): Examine the strength and direction of the relationship between language self-efficacy and different categories of language learning strategies. Determine whether higher self-efficacy is associated with greater use of specific strategies. Regression Analysis (Regression Analysis): Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive effect of language self-efficacy on the use of language learning strategies. Determine whether self-efficacy can be a significant predictor of metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategy use.

The results of these analyses will provide empirical evidence on whether language self-efficacy affects students' choice of learning strategies and to what extent.

Results and Discussion
Descriptive Statistics
A total of 278 valid questionnaires were collected from non-English major undergraduates. The respondents varied in gender, academic year, and self-reported English proficiency. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the respondents. Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics of language self-efficacy and language learning strategies.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	120	43.2％
	Female	158	56.8％
Academic Year	Freshman	72	25.9％
	Sophomore	85	30.6％
	Junior	69	24.8％
	Senior	52	18.7％
English Proficiency	Low	80	28.8％
	Moderate	124	44.6％
	High	74	26.6%

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of key variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Linguistic Self-Efficacy	3.89	0.76
Memory Strategies	3.42	0.68
Cognitive Strategies	3.85	0.74
Compensation Strategies	3.76	0.71
Metacognitive Strategies	4.01	0.69
Affective Strategies	3.61	0.72
Social Strategies	3.78	0.75

The results indicate that metacognitive strategies had the highest mean score (M = 4.01, SD = 0.69), while memory strategies had the lowest (M = 3.42, SD = 0.68). The average linguistic self-efficacy score was moderately high (M = 3.89, SD = 0.76), suggesting that most students had a positive belief in their English learning abilities.

Correlation analysis
Pearson correlation analysis explored the relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies, and the correlation coefficients are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
The correlation between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies

Variable	Linguistic Self-Efficacy
Memory Strategies	0.32**
Cognitive Strategies	0.48**
Compensation Strategies	0.41**
Metacognitive Strategies	0.52**
Affective Strategies	0.36**
Social Strategies	0.44**

（$p < 0.01$, two-tailed test）

The findings indicate that linguistic self-efficacy is significantly and positively correlated with all types of language learning strategies. The strongest correlation was found between linguistic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies (r = 0.52, p < 0.01), suggesting that students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

The weakest correlation was found with memory strategies ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students with higher self-efficacy do not necessarily rely on rote memorization.

Regression analysis
Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether language self-efficacy could significantly predict the use of different language learning strategies.

Table 4
Regression analysis of language self-efficacy on learning strategies

Predictor Variable	β	t	p
Memory Strategies	0.28	4.21	**< 0.01**
Cognitive Strategies	0.42	6.35	**< 0.001**
Compensation Strategies	0.37	5.49	**< 0.001**
Metacognitive Strategies	0.49	7.12	**< 0.001**
Affective Strategies	0.31	4.76	**< 0.001**
Social Strategies	0.39	5.88	**< 0.001**

The R^2 value for the regression model was 0.41, indicating that linguistic self-efficacy accounts for 41% of the variance in language learning strategy use. Among the different strategies, metacognitive strategies had the highest regression coefficient ($β = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the idea that self-efficacious learners are more proactive in managing their learning process.

Discussion of Research Results
The results of this study confirmed the significant association between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies. First, data analysis showed that language self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with the use of effective learning strategies such as metacognition and social interaction, which supported the research hypothesis H1. Specifically, students with higher self-efficacy were more likely to actively adopt deep learning strategies (such as metacognitive planning and cognitive strategies), while students with lower self-efficacy relied more on surface methods such as memory strategies, which was consistent with the expectations of hypothesis H2. In addition, regression analysis showed that language self-efficacy could explain 41% of the differences in strategy selection, further verifying its role as a key predictor of strategy use (H3). These results echo the research of Han Xinyi (2024), who pointed out that high self-efficacy learners are more adept at using social and emotional strategies to optimize the learning process, highlighting the core position of self-confidence in language learning.

Based on the above findings, this study proposes several practical suggestions to improve students' language self-efficacy and optimize strategy use. Teachers can help students build learning autonomy by strengthening self-regulated learning skills (such as goal setting and progress monitoring); at the same time, the introduction of positive feedback and peer collaboration activities can enhance students' confidence and promote the use of social strategies. In addition, creating a low-anxiety classroom environment can help relieve students' language learning pressure, thereby stimulating their willingness to participate in high-level strategies. However, it should be noted that this study still has certain limitations: the sample is only from a single university, which may affect the generalizability of the

conclusions; the collection method of self-report data may have response bias. Future research can expand the sample range to multiple regions or multicultural background groups, and track the dynamic changes of self-efficacy and strategy use through longitudinal design. The introduction of qualitative methods (such as interviews or think-aloud methods) can also deepen the understanding of students' strategy perception and practice mechanisms, and provide more detailed theoretical support for teaching interventions.

In summary, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence for the interaction between language self-efficacy and learning strategies, emphasizing the need to balance the cultivation of ability beliefs and strategy guidance in teaching, so as to promote the sustainable development of non-English major students in language learning.

Conclusion

This study systematically explored the dynamic relationship between language self-efficacy and language learning strategies of non-English majors. The empirical results show that there is a significant correlation between language self-efficacy and the selection and use of learning strategies, especially in the active use of metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies. Specifically, students with higher self-efficacy are more inclined to adopt deep learning strategies (such as goal planning, active reflection and collaborative learning), while students with lower self-efficacy rely more on surface strategies such as memory to cope with learning challenges (Liu Mengxue & Qiu Ni. 2024). Regression analysis further revealed that language self-efficacy can explain 41% of the differences in strategy selection, among which metacognitive strategies are most significantly affected. These findings not only verify the applicability of Bandura's self-efficacy theory in the field of second language acquisition, but also provide important inspiration for improving students' language ability: enhancing students' confidence in their own language ability can effectively promote the initiative and strategy of their learning behavior, thereby optimizing the overall language acquisition effect.

Based on the research conclusions, teaching practice can start from multiple dimensions to improve students' language self-efficacy and optimize strategy use. First, teachers need to pay attention to the shaping of positive feedback and successful experiences, and help students accumulate "mastery experience" through phased task design, so as to gradually build their confidence in language ability. For example, incorporating peer modeling activities into the classroom and encouraging students to observe and imitate the strategy application of efficient learners can indirectly enhance their sense of self-efficacy. Secondly, language learning strategies should be systematically taught, especially explicit guidance of metacognitive strategies (such as goal setting, progress monitoring and self-assessment) to help students shift from passive acceptance to autonomous planning (Lv Shali. 2023). In addition, the construction of a collaborative learning environment is crucial. Through group discussions, peer evaluation and other activities, it can not only strengthen the use of social strategies, but also alleviate language anxiety and create a low-risk language practice space for students. Finally, the curriculum design needs to incorporate autonomous learning modules to guide students to self-regulate through tools such as reflection logs and learning archives, so as to form a sustainable and virtuous learning cycle.

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by expanding the application of Bandura's self-efficacy theory to the field of second language acquisition (SLA). While prior

research has identified the role of self-efficacy in general academic achievement, this study specifically fills a gap in understanding how linguistic self-efficacy interacts with the learning strategies of non-English majors, a population often overlooked in the SLA literature. By empirically demonstrating a strong predictive relationship between self-efficacy and the adoption of metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies, the findings validate the adaptability of Bandura's framework to the language learning environment. This enriches educational psychology theory by emphasizing the dynamic interplay between learners' psychological beliefs and strategic behaviors, providing a nuanced perspective on self-regulated learning mechanisms in language education.

In terms of contextual contributions, this study addresses the growing need for effective English language education in non-English-speaking countries, where globalization requires advanced language skills. By identifying self-efficacy as a catalyst for strategy learning, this study provides actionable insights for curriculum designers and educators to adapt teaching methods. For example, integrating strategy training and creating a collaborative environment is consistent with the global shift toward learner-centered education. In addition, the findings emphasize the importance of addressing psychological barriers (e.g., anxiety, low self-confidence, etc.) along with cognitive training, thus advocating a holistic teaching model that balances skill development and emotional support.

In the broader academic arena, this study advances applied linguistics by providing empirical evidence of the mechanisms by which self-efficacy affects language acquisition. It challenges traditional pedagogical practices that prioritize rote memorization over strategy engagement and advocates a paradigm shift toward metacognitive and social strategy development. By combining these insights with the challenges faced by non-English majors, this research also contributes to equity in language education, ensuring that diverse groups of learners receive targeted support to thrive in global academic and professional environments. Ultimately, this work not only deepens the theoretical discourse, but also provides practical guidelines for optimizing language teaching and learning in an increasingly interconnected world.

In short, this study reveals the core position of language self-efficacy in strategy-driven learning, and emphasizes that teaching should take into account both the cultivation of ability beliefs and strategic ability training. Only through the synergy of confidence stimulation and strategy empowerment can we help non-English majors break through the bottleneck of language learning and achieve the transition from instrumental learning to autonomous development.

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