

Investigating Human Agency and Self-Efficacy: The Case of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract. Heavily influenced by the proposed claims concerning the close interconnection of self-efficacy, motivation and learning strategies, the current study was conducted to investigate the possible differences among EFL learners with high and low levels of self-efficacy in terms of learning strategies and motivation. The addressed issues are almost exclusively involved in identification of one's agency to form one's identity in a language learning context. Thus, the purpose of the present investigation was finding alternative ways for addressing language learners' learning needs. The results of the analyses indicated equal percentages of low and high levels of general self-efficacy among the learners and slightly higher degrees of high language self-efficacy compared to its low levels. Besides, analysis of the learners with high and low levels of self-efficacy (both language and general self-efficacy) indicated no significant differences in terms of learning motivation and strategy use. However, the results suggested learners' significantly higher degrees of language self-efficacy than their general self-efficacy.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, specific self-efficacy, motivation, learning strategies, agency, learning needs.

1. Introduction

Without recourse to goals, needs act as one of the major precursors of any learning attempt. Nevertheless, one cannot come through the

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relative difficulty of each learning endeavor and align one's pursuit of goals. Acting as true representatives of one's desire for handling learning tasks, needs have been satisfactorily addressed in the area of language learning. Language needs are defined as the language abilities and skills that can help learners survive in a society where the target language is used (Richards, 2001). Assessment of such needs is a kind of change towards improvement (Kaufman, & English, 1979). In fact, learning needs are an aspect of human agency which can be exercised through self-development (Bandura, 1986). Additionally, self-development is by no means possible if one is not aware of his or her capabilities. The knowledge which is achieved about one's abilities and influences is termed as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986).

For acquiring self-efficacy, several types of affordances may be provided by the society and the teachers. The present study tries to consider motivation and learning strategies as two types of affordances that can mediate self-efficacy as a route towards needs assessment. Consideration of these two affordances is based on the claims put forward by some scholars (e.g., Schunk, 1995) for the influences of learning strategies and those of other scholars (e.g., Arnold & Brown, 1999, Bandura, 1986) for the effects of motivational factors in promotion of self-efficacy. Hence, trying to address Iranian EFL learners' needs for learning development, the present study tries to investigate motivation and learning strategies in learners with high and low levels of self-efficacy. In so doing, the following research questions are going to be answered:

1. To what extent are Iranian EFL learners self-efficacious?
2. Are there any significant differences between Iranian EFL learners' specific (language) and general self-efficacies?
3. Are there any significant differences between learners with high and low levels of self-efficacy in terms of the use of learning strategies?
4. Are there any significant differences between learners with high and low levels of self-efficacy in terms of their learning motivation?

2. Literature Review

As far as human agency is concerned, part of attention automatically is switched towards learning needs. Many areas including the area of language learning have been centered on needs, either emotional or materialistic ones, as the underlying causes of their progression and development. In the area of language learning, needs are the linguistic discrepancies that signal the gap between the present and expected abilities of language learners (Richards, 2001). Acting as the underlying reasons for every educational process, needs are the regulatory forces for teaching and learning attempts. Accordingly, curricular and learning problems may not be resolved if learners and teachers' needs are not considered. As Kaufman and English (1979) maintain, needs assessment is a movement whose function is to direct learners and teachers towards their goals and to bring positive changes in an educational program (Kaufman and English, 1979).

Brindley (1989) adopts two orientations towards needs assessment. One is called narrow or product oriented that only has to do with the language that the learners need to use to be able to communicate in different situations (Brindley, 1989). The other is the broad or process oriented approach to needs assessment that brings cognitive and affective factors into focus (Brindley, 1989). In other words, broad needs analysis approach calls for different affective and cognitive processes such as attitudes, motivation, and personality that are involved in every learning attempt (Brindley, 1989). It should also be noted that by manipulating affective factors, the quality of learning may be promoted. As Ciaccio (2004) argues, promoting motivation, using learning strategies, satisfying learning needs, changing negative feelings, and eliminating behavioral problems are five techniques that energize learners (Ciaccio, 2004).

In the attempts to establish positive changes in a curriculum, issues such as motivation, learners' preferred learning strategies and self-efficacy may be highly welcomed with regard to the affective aspect of Brindley's (1989) process oriented approach to needs assessment. In fact, learning needs are in close connection with learning motivation in the

sense that one of the components of learning motivation is satisfaction of needs (Pritchard, & Ashwood, 2008). In fact, motivation is a very complicated concept whose main components are learners' communicative needs and their beliefs about the target language context (Lightbrown, & Spada (2001). In view of Gilbert (2003) motivation refers to the initial questions that the individual learners dwell on to be survived in a learning context. As such, questions addressing the benefits and reasons for learning fall within the range of motivation provoking questions (Gilbert, 2003). This prominent concept in language learning can be highly influenced by teachers' self-beliefs and expectations about their students' learning abilities (Alderman, 2004).

Among the very aspects of motivational categorization, two main classes are integrative versus instrumental and intrinsic versus extrinsic types. Ryan and Deci (2000) define intrinsic motivation as an individual's inner satisfaction of finishing an activity. This type of motivation does not imply any expectation for external rewards (Ryan, & Deci, 2000). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is a kind of drive for doing a task only for its instrumental and external outcomes (Ryan, & Deci, 2000). In the second categorization, instrumental motivation refers to an orientation towards doing an activity for attaining its physical and external benefits (Gardner, 1985). These external advantages may involve job promotion or academic achievement and so forth (Gardner, 1985). Yet, integrative motivation has to do with learners' interests for acquiring the target language and culture and for integrating with target language speakers (Brown, 2007).

Turning back to Ciaccio's (2004) reference to the issues that energize language learner, the concept that directly addresses behavioral problems is self-efficacy. Simply put, self-efficacy is an attempt to change the behavioral problems in any learning activity (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1991). Hence, numerous research studies have widely acknowledged self-efficacy as a concept that can mediate language learning. The significance of self-efficacy is due to its impacts on learners' language achievements (Schunk, 1991; Fast, Lewis, Bryant, Bocian, Cardullo, Rettig, & Hammond, 2010). Besides, higher development of learning motivation and wider application of learning strategies are stemmed in large part

from one's beliefs about his or her own capabilities to perform a learning task (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy is significant in motivating learners, because learners are motivated to participate in those learning tasks that they believe they can handle them (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

According to Bandura's (1997) social and cognitive theory, self efficacy embraces a series of cognitive and personal factors that contribute to human behavioral development. Thus, there is no doubt that learning strategies and motivational tendencies emerge from self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). According to Koehler (2007), learners' perceptions, capabilities and background experiences before and while doing a learning activity, are true representatives of self-efficacy. Therefore, differences in learners' background knowledge and their preferred learning strategies can lead to different levels of self-efficacy (Koehler, 2007). In addition, for improving learners' self-efficacy beliefs, teachers should teach their students different types of learning strategies and equip them with enough feedback regarding the application of the strategies (Koehler, 2007).

Research with regard to teachers has confirmed the positive correlation between language learning strategies and self-efficacy (Wong, 2005). Besides, the teaching of language learning strategies contributes to higher degrees of self-efficacy (Graham, 2007). Thus, due to the connection of self-efficacy to the solutions of different behavioral deficiencies, there is surely a place for the study of language learning strategies and their contributions in solving the existing behavioral problems.

Learning strategies are those approaches that seek out possible ways for controlling, manipulating and designing different types of learning information (Brown, 2007). As Oxford (1990) maintains, learning strategies are at the service of acquiring, storing, retrieving and applying the information and in so doing they make learning a delightful and easy obligation. As a consequence, these steps or so-called strategies are usually used deliberately to improve language skills (Oxford, 2002). Based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) categorization, learning strategies are of three types. They involve meta-cognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Oxford (1990) commits to language learning strategies by designing her so-called SILL questionnaire. According to Oxford (1990),

language learning strategies can be divided into direct and indirect types. Direct strategies involve memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect strategies are the metacognitive, affective and social strategies. There are some other scholars (e.g., Rubin, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1996) who have proposed their categorizations of learning strategies. What makes matters is that despite different applied technical terms in each of the taxonomies of learning strategies, their shared underlying assumption is that learners may approach and handle learning tasks differently.

All in all, individual differences in terms of affective factors (e.g, self-efficacy, learning strategies and motivation) shed light on the existence of their different types of needs. Thus, improving learners' affective conditions can to a large extent satisfy their learning needs. This very goal may only be possible if enough awareness is attained regarding the different individual agencies and particularities.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The subjects of the present study were a sample of 75 EFL learners. Most of the learners were selected from the existing intact groups available at Shiraz University. In addition, some of the learners were from Iran University of Science and Technology who answered mailed questionnaires. Fifteen % of the subjects were male and the remaining 85% were female university students from diverse ethnicities learning English as a foreign language in the Iranian context. The age range of the participants was between 22 to 30 years old. To the extent of knowledge of the researchers, there is no mention of field of study as a potential source of change in the focused variables of the present study. Hence, subjects from different fields of study were selected to ensure the generalizeability of the obtained findings.

3.2 Instruments

To provide information regarding the general self-efficacy of the participants, the adapted version of the 10 item 4 likert scale general self-efficacy questionnaire was applied. This questionnaire has been originally

developed in German. However, there are many versions of the questionnaire in different languages. The present study adapted the Persian version of this scale that has been localized for the Iranian EFL context by Nezami, Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1996). In this scale, number 1 stands for not at all true, 2 stands for hardly true, 3 for moderately true and 4 stands for exactly true. This scale has been confirmed to involve one factor for all subjects except for those suffering from post-acute coronary syndrome (Zycinska, Kuciej, & Syska-Suminska, 2012). Thus, the present study was conducted by considering the original scale that had one construct. For investigating the specific (language) self-efficacy of foreign language learners, self-efficacy questionnaire developed by Wong (2005) was piloted to the target population. This scale is a single factor questionnaire that has been developed for determining the specific self-efficacy of EFL learners in the Malaysian context. It consists of 10 items testing language self-efficacy. Through piloting the scale, the researcher aimed to apply some modifications in the items, if necessary, and use it for the Iranian context. Analysis of language learning motivation and language learning strategies became possible through the application of Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie (1991). This scale consists of 81 items addressing language learning strategies and motivation for language learning. Thirty one items measure motivation that cover six factors including intrinsic goal orientation (items 1, 16, 22, 24), extrinsic goal orientation (items 7, 11, 13, 30), task value (items 4, 10, 17, 23, 26, 27), control of learning beliefs (items 2, 9, 18, 25), self-efficacy for learning and performance (items 5, 6, 12, 15, 20, 21, 29, 31) and test anxiety (items 3, 8, 14, 19, 28). The remained items seek for learners' use of different learning strategies. In this second section the main constructs of concern are rehearsal (items 39, 46, 59, 72), elaboration (items 53, 62, 64, 67, 69, 81), organization (items 32, 42, 49, 63), critical thinking (items 38, 47, 51, 66, 71), metacognitive self-regulation (items 33, 36, 41, 44, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 76, 78, 79), time/study environmental management (items 35, 43, 52, 65, 70, 73, 77, 80), effort regulation (items 37, 48, 60, 74), peer learning (items 34, 45, 50) and help seeking (items 40, 58, 68, 75) (Pintrich et al., 1991). According to Pintrich et al. (1991) the scales

included in the MSLQ questionnaire can be used either separately or in combination. Its application depends on the purposes of the researcher.

3.3 Procedures

The current study is a descriptive research study through which two sets of questionnaires were administered to university students. Before the start of administration, each of these questionnaires was tried out in its target context of application and its reliability was ensured. The pilot group consisted of 25 EFL learners. The obtained Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire and self-efficacy scale were respectively .926 and .801 which were acceptable according to the reliability standards. After piloting and ensuring the reliabilities of the questionnaires, the first questionnaire which was a combination of the specific and general self-efficacy scales (paper-based and mailed) was administered in one session. In the following session the second scale (mailed and paper-based) which was a combination of motivation and learning strategy use was administered.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis in connection to the present study consisted of a series of non-parametric statistical analyses. In order to understand the degrees of self-efficacy, learners' provided scores for general and specific self-efficacy scales were taken into consideration. The decision was to categorize those whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean as low self-efficacious and those whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean as high self-efficacious learners. However, due to non-normal and skewed distribution of the data, learners with scores above and below the median were considered as high and low self-efficacious learners, respectively. For answering the second research question, each person's score in the general self-efficacy scale was compared to his or her score in the specific self-efficacy scale. This analysis became possible through Wilcoxon test which signifies the non-parametric nature of the data derived from the self-efficacy scales. The MSLQ questionnaire was of 7 likert scale type whose scoring was by adding the scores of individuals to the items related to each construct and calculating the means of

the constructs. However, the results of test of normality indicated non-parametric nature of the data. Thus, for answering the third research question, learners with high and low levels of overall self-efficacy were compared through Mann-Whitney U test to understand their differences in the application of learning strategies. Then, for comparing learners in terms of their learning motivations, learners' scores on motivation scale were compared through Mann-Whitney U test. This was also due to the non-parametric nature of the data obtained from MSLQ questionnaire.

5. Results

5.1 Reliabilities of the scales

To satisfy the reliability requirements, Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire and Self-Efficacy Scale (i.e., a combination of specific and general self-efficacy scales) were piloted to 25 representative subjects from the population. As Table 1 portrays, a high degree of Cronbach's alpha reliability was obtained for MSLQ questionnaire:

Table 1. Reliability of MSLQ scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.926	.925	81

The high consistency of the scale of Self-Efficacy was also ensured by the second reliability analysis (Table 2):

Table 2. Reliability of self-efficacy scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.801	.808	20

5.2 Percentages of high and low general self-efficacy

Due to skewedness of the data distribution (i.e., non-normal data distribution), median was considered as the criterion for determining high

and low degrees of learners' self-efficacies. Accordingly, learners with self-efficacy scores above and below the median were considered as high-and low efficacious, respectively. Table 3 represents the descriptive statistics related to each of the self-efficacy types:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of general and language self-efficacy

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness
General Self-Efficacy	75	32.76	33.00	2.77	-.284
Language Self-Efficacy	75	30.24	31.15	4.71	-.660

Out of the total 75 subjects participated in the present study, 13 subjects got equal scores to the median, 31 subjects gained scores below the median (low degrees of general self-efficacy), and 31 subjects got scores above the median (high degrees of general self-efficacy). Figure 1 represents the corresponding percentages:

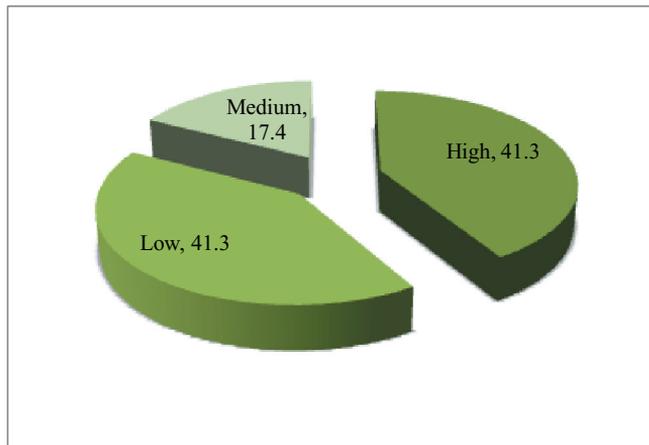


Figure 1. Degrees of general self-efficacy

5.3 Percentages of high and low language (specific) self-efficacy

Out of 75 subjects of the present study, 34 learners gained language self-efficacy scores below the median (due to skewed distribution), 36

learners gained scores above the median and the remaining 5 learners had scores equal to the median. The corresponding percentages have been shown in Figure 2:

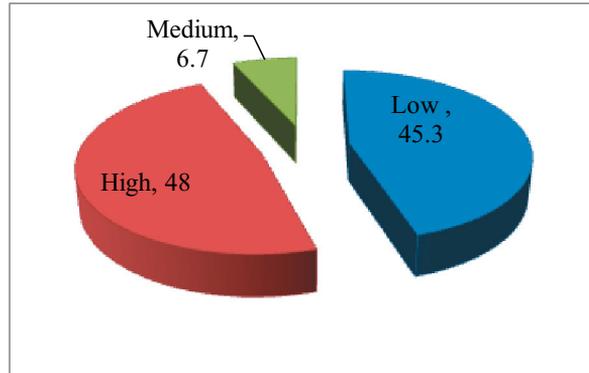


Figure 2. Degrees of language self-efficacy

5.4 Differences between learners' language and general self-efficacies

Due to the non-normal distribution of the data, Wilcoxon test was run to determine differences in the learners' general and language self-efficacies. The results indicated that learners had significantly higher language self-efficacy than general self-efficacy ($Sig. = .00 < .05$):

Table 4. Comparison of learners' general and language self-efficacies

	Mean Rank of General Self- Efficacy	Mean Rank of Language Self- Efficacy	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	22.38	38.95	-4.339	.000

As Table 4 shows, the mean rank of language self-efficacy is significantly higher than that of general self-efficacy at 5 percent level of significance ($38.95 > 22.38$; $Sig. < .05$).

5.5 Uses of learning strategies in learners with high and low general self-efficacy

Applying Mann-Whitney U test, learners with high and low levels of general self-efficacy were compared in terms of their overall use of learning strategies and the related components of learning strategy questionnaire. The results have been presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of learners with high and low general self-efficacies in terms of their uses of learning strategies

	Mean Rank of High Group	Mean Rank of Low Group	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Rehearsal	33.48	29.52	419.00	-.870	.384
Elaboration	31.94	31.06	467.00	-.191	.848
Organization	32.71	30.29	443.00	-.532	.595
Critical Thinking	31.97	31.03	466.00	-.205	.838
Metacognitive Self-Regulation	34.52	28.48	387.00	-1.318	.187
Time/Study Management	33.98	29.02	403.50	-1.087	.277
Effort Regulation	33.95	29.05	404.50	-1.074	.283
Peer Learning	31.15	31.85	469.50	-.156	.876
Help Seeking	33.69	29.31	412.50	-.963	.336
Overall Strategies	33.65	29.35	414.00	-.937	.349

As the results indicate learners with high and low levels of general self-efficacy were not significantly different in terms of their uses of each of the learning strategies as well as their overall uses of learning strategies (*Sig.* > 05).

5.6 Uses of learning strategies in learners with high and low language self-efficacy

Learners with high and low levels of language self-efficacy were also compared in terms of their uses of learning strategies (Table 6):

Table 6. Comparison of learners with high and low language self-efficacy in terms of their uses of learning strategies

	Mean Rank of High Group	Mean Rank of Low Group	Mann- Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
	36.66	32.34	504.500	-.906	.365
	34.25	34.75	569.500	-.105	.917
	34.10	34.90	564.500	-.167	.867
	34.18	34.82	567.000	-.135	.892
	36.09	32.91	524.000	-.664	.507
	37.68	31.32	470.000	-1.328	.184
	37.34	31.66	481.500	-1.187	.235

As the results presented in Table 6 indicate, learners with high and low levels of language self-efficacy were not significantly different in terms of their overall uses of learning strategies as well as the related learning strategy components (Sig. $>$.05).

5.7 Learning motivation in learners with high and low general self-efficacy

Learners with high and low levels of general self-efficacy were compared in terms of their learning motivation. The results have been shown in Table 7:

Table 7. Comparison of learners with high and low general self-efficacy in terms of their learning motivation

	Mean Rank of High Group	Mean Rank of Low Group	Mann- Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	34.42	28.58	390.000	-1.281	.200
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	34.55	28.45	386.000	-1.336	.181
Task Value	34.73	28.27	380.500	-1.412	.158
Control of Learning Beliefs	34.90	28.10	375.000	-1.491	.136
Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance	33.68	29.32	413.000	-.953	.341
Test Anxiety	32.40	30.60	452.500	-.395	.693
Overall Motivation	34.60	28.40	384.500	-1.353	.176

As the results indicate, no significant differences were observed between learners with high and low levels of general self-efficacy in terms of motivation and its related constructs (Sig. $\geq .05$).

5.8 learning motivation in learners with high and low language self-efficacy

In the final stage of the present study, learners with high and low levels of language self-efficacy were compared in terms of their learning motivation and its related factors (Table 8):

Table 8. Comparison of learners with high and low language self-efficacy in terms of their learning motivation

	Mean Rank of High Group	Mean Rank of Low Group	Mann- Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	38.32	30.68	448.000	-1.602	.109
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	36.04	32.96	525.500	-.647	.518
Task Value	37.07	31.93	490.500	-1.076	.282
Control of Learning Beliefs	38.82	30.18	431.000	-1.809	.070
Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance	35.09	33.91	558.000	-.246	.806
Test Anxiety	35.59	33.41	541.000	-.455	.649
Overall Motivation	37.18	31.82	487.000	-1.117	.264

As can be seen from Table 8, learners with high and low levels of language self-efficacy were not significantly different in terms of their overall learning motivation as well as its related constructs (Sig. $\geq .05$).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

A variety of research studies have been conducted to investigate the possible affective factors that play important roles in learning in general and language learning in particular. One of the issues that have recently

been debated in literature is individual's self-efficacy. As such, scholars have proposed their claims on the bases of their collected data on this factor. For example, Gist (1987) and Schunk (1991) drew conclusions on the positive interrelations of self-efficacy and motivation as two of the main psychological traits. Due to the numerous studies (e.g., Tilfarlioglu, & Cinkara, 2009) concerning the beneficial roles of motivation, learning strategies and self-efficacy in one's learning achievement, the present study focused on these factors to identify the learning needs of the Iranian EFL learners applying a humanistic approach.

Brindley (1989) phrases this type of needs identification - that is based on learners' affective traits- in terms of the psychological-humanistic way of looking at the learner needs that considers learners as human beings. He maintains that the affective and psychological desires of the learners are true representatives of their needs. Their desired status in this regard can be higher levels of motivation and confidence (Brindley, 1989). By employing such needs analysis procedure, not only the possible contributions of learners' tendencies for progress in their specific fields of study or interest is considered, but also their demands to establish a link between their desired and expected language abilities are satisfied.

The results of the present study did not show any significant differences between learners' with high and low levels of self-efficacy in terms of their motivation desires and strategy uses. These findings can provide grounds contrary to the previously implied assumptions concerning the higher degrees of motivation and strategy use in learners with high levels of self-efficacy. On one hand, the results imply that determining learners' motivation can be more or less affected by the intervention of some less desired issues. This conceptualization is supported by Schunk's (1991) idea arguing that identification of learning motivation based on self-efficacy may be constrained by several personal and situational factors such as learners' learning objectives, their received negative or positive feedback, and their type of data processing mechanisms.

The other possibility for interpreting the obtained results may be connected to the effect of context. Context consideration is closely in line with the socio-cultural theory of mind maintaining that people's self

identifications change from context to context and even from moment to moment in the same context (Lantolf, 2000). This second view is an extension of the first possibility that incorporates the change of context as the broadest explanation for the gap between the real and expected findings. As such, the very arguments of Kumaravadivelu (2006) concerning the complexity of the real world that cannot be captured by generalizations from one context to the other are confirmed. Furthermore, one can come up with the same claims posed by Kumaravadivelu (2006) regarding the principles of practically and Van Lier's (2004) ecological view that call for one's conceptualizations based on one's gained experiences from the context.

One of the shared concerns of self-efficacy and motivation as two of the main individual traits is their focus on goal determination (Appelbaum, & Hare, 1996). This indicates that even if motivation and self-efficacy are not directly related in a specific context, each of them can mediate the promotion of the other (Appelbaum, & Hare, 1996). Thus, the concept of influence that according to Johnson (2009) is one of the main tenets of socio-cultural theory and does not necessarily entail causality and correlation is signified. The same idea holds true for the use of learning strategies. Hence, a place is surely created for the study of self-efficacy, motivation and learning strategies applying the socio-cultural theories of mind.

Gahungu (2009) found a significantly positive relationship between self-efficacy and learning strategies with regard to learners studying French as a foreign language. He also suggested the higher use of motivational strategies for promoting learners' French learning self-efficacy. Similarly, applying the existing literature together with empirical investigations, Mofokeng (1996) drew conclusions on the relationship between learning strategy use and self-efficacy among learners. In his terms, learners' self-efficacy beliefs influence their alternative reactions and activities towards less desired conditions in the sense that those who have higher degrees of self-efficacy demonstrate higher degrees of enthusiasm for handling their tasks through application of beneficial learning strategies (Mofokeng, 1996). Accordingly, they can relate their newly learnt knowledge to their preexisting information repertoire (Mofokeng, 1996).

In fact, the potential advantages of learning strategies and self-efficacy on satisfaction of learning goals provide the grounds for some correlational studies. But, when it comes to learners' differences in terms of each of the focused factors, extra demands are placed on the researchers. This is because of the direct or indirect intervention of many personal and contextual factors that contribute to the identity formation of each of the research subjects. Hence, to attain knowledge about individuals' mere self-efficacy differences, one should consider the vast majority of the affordances that are provided by the ecological context for identifying and establishing one's self place in the world. As Van Lier (2004) maintains, the same affordances that are provided for different people may mediate different meanings in their minds. This illustrates situatedness of meanings based on Lantolf's (2000) ideas. In other words, the meanings that an individual associates to a specific phenomenon may be totally different from the ones that are got and expressed by another person who witnesses the same phenomenon. Thus, it is highly unlikely that any attempt to consider individual traits (including self-efficacy) be successful without recourse to the contexts of self and identity development and their related affordances.

The obtained results of the present study rejected the claims concerning the higher use of learning strategies (e.g., Pintrich, & De Groot, 1990) and higher development of learning motivation (e.g., Bandura, 1986) in learners with higher degrees of self-efficacy in the Iranian EFL context. This signifies the effects of context in developing one's intrapersonal self which can be manifested in his or her self-efficacy beliefs. What matters is not necessarily finding learners' significant differences in terms of strategy use or motivation degree. Even understanding the learners' agencies with the aid of these factors is a positive step that should be highly welcomed.

As Zycinska, Kuceij, and Syska-Suminska (2012) maintain, self-efficacy is one's consideration of the existing possibilities for achieving one's goals and his or her subjective assessment of one's ultimate outcomes. During this process, affection, cognition and motivation play meditational roles. In this sense, self-efficacy is closely linked to motivation. Discovering such kind of connection seems to act as an extreme form of needs

identification. As such, it is reasonable to consider self-efficacy, motivation and learning strategies closely in line with each other, without recourse to the existing extraneous and of course unobservable factors that may place constraints on the positive influences of these factors. Simply put, the importance of motivation and learning strategy use on self-efficacy and one's success is so significant that it is worth to deposit on the existing indirect and regulatory interconnection of these factors on one's success and learning achievement.

Determining learners' levels of self-efficacy can yield applications in two ways. One is using the findings of self-efficacy appraisal for determining one's learning needs and the other is identification of the gaps between the existent and expected self-efficacy needs of the learners. The present study indicated significantly higher degrees of specific (language) self-efficacy compared to general self-efficacy. This can be influenced by the learners' perceived needs in Iran as a foreign language context for learning English as the lingua franca of the world. One of the main functions of self-efficacy is lowering the affective barriers that impose constraints on language learning (Anyadubalu, 2010). As such, even self-efficacy can act as a psychological refuge that helps learners to satisfy their learning requirements.

Considering the results of the present study, learning strategies and motivational desires act as affordances that may be manifested in the form of self-efficacy within a range from low to medium to high. This implication is quite revealing taking the socio-cultural approach towards learning and teaching especially in foreign language context where the mutual intelligibility stage based on Van Lier's (2004) arguments is not present and the learners suffer from the lack of affective support for their learning affairs. In other words, the researchers cannot consider learning strategies and motivation as the causes of higher degrees of self-efficacy, but rather as factors that mediate self-efficacy promotion. The development of self-efficacy in its turn is highly dependent on the degree of individual's self awareness through the provided affordances in the forms of learning strategies and motivational tools and expectations. As such, any attempt to consider the positive roles of motivation and learning strategies is first connected to the context and then to the

individual whose self is developed within that context.

Taking all the discussed issues in mind, self-efficacy should be considered as an area where much remains to be done especially in the educational contexts. Further studies are recommended to commit to the influences of self-efficacy by targeting the claims and findings of other researchers. For example, taking Bandura's (1993) arguments, factors such as the regulatory role of self-efficacy, its motivational consequences and its connection to learning decisions deserve to be addressed. According to Chen (2007), studies on self-efficacy have been limited to four areas including the relationship between learning strategy use and language self-efficacy, the possible effects of instruction on the promotion of language self-efficacy, the relationship between learning achievement and self-efficacy and factors affecting the evaluation of learners' self-efficacy. Future lines of research can consider the present study as the ground and analyze self-efficacy in terms of the relative contributions of motivational and learning strategy components on enhancement of learners' language self-efficacy.

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