



**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of MA in
English Language Teaching**

**Exploring the Relationship between Self-
Efficacy, Self-Directed Learning, And Critical
Thinking among Iraqi EFL Learners**

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Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish a task or achieve a goal. Self-directed learning involves taking control of one's own learning, while critical thinking involves analyzing information, evaluating arguments, and making reasoned judgments. This study aimed to determine whether self-directed learning, self-efficacy, and critical thinking play a significant role in helping advanced EFL learners achieve second language proficiency. The present study used an Ex post Facto Design. The study included 100 EFL learners, both male and female, aged 18-30. To collect data, the study used the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, Critical Thinking and General Self-Efficacy Scale, and a Socio-Demographic Information Form. The participants also took a comprehensive language proficiency test, the paper-based TOEFL, which is a standard copy released by ERTS in 2002. The correlation coefficient between the learners' performances on the questionnaires was calculated and reported. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-directed learning and self-efficacy belief, as well as between critical thinking and self-efficacy belief of Iraqi EFL learners. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between critical thinking and self-directed learning of Iraqi advanced EFL learners. These findings suggest that second language teachers should make learners more aware of their learning styles. Learners must pay attention to the features of the input they are exposed to and notice the gap between the target-like forms in it and their current state of linguistic knowledge. **Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Learner Autonomy, Self-directed learning, Self-Efficacy

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Over a quarter century ago, Albert Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy or "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (1997, p. 3). Since that time, research in many arenas has demonstrated the power of efficacy perceptions in human learning, performance, and motivation. Teachers' sense of efficacy is a judgment about capabilities to influence student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to exhibit greater levels of planning, organization, and enthusiasm and spend more time teaching in areas where their sense of efficacy is higher, whereas teachers tend to avoid subjects and topics when efficacy is lower. As the main focus of the present study is on the relationship among self-efficacy, self-directed learning and critical thinking among EFL learners at the advanced level of language proficiency, the present chapter is devoted to a brief discussion of the aforementioned notions. Dewey (2019) described critical thinking from a philosophical perspective whereby education was meant to provide conditions to cultivate habits or training of the mind. Additionally, Scriven and Paul (2016) stated that "critical thinking is in a family of interwoven modes of thinking, among them: scientific, mathematical, historical, anthropological, economics, moral, and philosophical thinking" (p.11). A large body of empirical studies in higher education has tried to show which instructional and personal factors can improve critical thinking and also which elements can be influenced by critical thinking. Marashi and Jafari (2012) investigated the effects of critical thinking techniques, constructivist learning techniques, and a combination of critical thinking and constructivist learning techniques on the writing skill among EFL learners. Rashid and Hashim (2018) also investigated the relationship between critical thinking and language proficiency. Mall-Amiri and Ahmadi (2014) explored the relationship among English as a Foreign Language learners' critical thinking, and metacognitive strategies. Various factors affect the EFL learners' language proficiency. Among these factors, both styles and strategies could be considered effective and influential. Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 2018) as a personality trait and Critical Thinking (Dewey, 2013) as well as Self Directed Learning (Long, 2017) as learning strategies have been studied by researchers in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and English Language Teaching (ELT). Bandura (2012) argued that perceived self-efficacy contributes to cognitive development and functioning and operates as an important contributor to academic development of the learner. In this respect he asserted that "students' s in their efficacy to regulate their own learning and to master academic activities determine their aspirations, level of motivation, and academic accomplishments" (p.117). Bandura's (1993) perceived self-efficacy also has been studied in terms of its relationship with development of different language skills in second language learners: Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (2010) argued that there is a high correlation between the goals students set in advance and what they perceive in the classroom. They asserted that "the higher the goals students set for themselves, the greater the direct and indirect influence of students' perceived academic self-

efficacy on academic attainment” (p.239). Also, Zimmerman et al (2010, p.241) presented that “clearly, a determination of students’ aspiration is in her academic efficacy.” Hosseini Fatemi and Vahidnia (2013) argued the association between Iraqi EFL learners’ motivation and self-efficacy and presented that “there exists a significant association between EFL learners’ self-efficacy and their intrinsic motivation” (p.79). They also asserted that among subscales of motivation, a motivation is negatively related to students’ self-efficacy. Bandura (1977, 1997) identified four sources of efficacy expectations: mastery experiences (the most powerful source), physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. The perception that teaching has been successful (mastery) raises expectations that teaching will be proficient in the future, unless the success required such massive work that the individual feels unable to sustain this level of effort. The perception that one’s teaching has been a failure lowers efficacy beliefs, contributing to the expectation that future performances will also be inept, unless the failure is viewed as providing clues about more potentially successful strategies. Interpretations of emotions and physiological arousal can add to the feeling of mastery or incompetence. Some confusion still existing about self-directed learning and its present status within the domain of ELT assert that a coherent theory is not available for the emergence of self-directed learning. Coady (1997) outlines some useful dimensions of a theory and cautions about the often-unrecognized dichotomy that exists between self-directed learning as a process and as a goal. Long (1989) also urged that any self-directed learning theory building be examined in terms of sociological, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions. Chastain (1988) stated affective variables play an important role in developing second language skills. Moreover, in foreign language learning, one of the most important factors for the learners is the method which teachers use in their teaching to facilitate learning (Ahmadi Gilani, 2012). They believed that development of various skills of the English language in young generation is an important element in their preparation for effective roles in the society. Despite the recognition of the value of English language learning in the world, there are some obstacles to achieving acceptable standards of teaching and learning in this area. But, learning strategies should be focused on this area and help students to improve their English language learning through gaining strategies (Chareonwongsak, 2002) Critical thinking is necessary and important for all individuals in academic and daily life. It is considered that having self-directed learning readiness depends on acquiring certain preliminary information, skills and attitudes. Individuals should acquire cognitive and emotional characteristics required by self-directed learning to have self-directed learning readiness. These characteristics are described as skills such as critical thinking, curiosity, assertiveness and motivation, persistence and responsibility in learning, self-efficacy for learning, and being reflective (Gürten, 2010). Self-directed learning process should be constructed considering the individual’s intellectual characteristics and critical thinking skills (Hendricson, 2007) Taking into account the characteristics of critical thinking, it is found that critical thinking is a significant variable for self-directed learning readiness. In self-directed learning process, the individual is expected to construct information in line with their own cognitive strategies and skills. In this context, it is important that the individual display critical thinking attitudes and question information, evaluate ideas rationally, pass what they learn through a mental filter and assess the whole process Bandura (1997), on the other hand, claims that self-efficacy belief plays a vital role in the development of self-directed learners. The perception of and belief in general self-efficacy are important in terms of learning skills, desire for success and intellectual development. While general self-efficacy predicts that the individual can achieve a task depending on their motivation for that task, it also determines their effort, persistence, strategy and performance for the task (Bandura, 1997; Sariolghalam & Noruzi, 2010).

1.1.1. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was originated from social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura. Bandura proposed a social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory states that each individual has about his capabilities is critical to improvement and mastery. As Bandura believes how people behave can be predicted by the s they have about their capabilities (Bandura & Locke, 2003). According to Bandura (1997) cited in Coronado-Aliego (2006) self-efficacy is defined as people’s s about the abilities they have to perform at a level that influences their lives. In other words, self-efficacy is the level of confidence a person holds in his ability to complete a task. Bandura (1989) believed that when people have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they approach difficult tasks as challenges that can be mastered rather than threats that should be avoided. Bandura (1986) added that how people behave can often be predicted by the s that they have about their own abilities. Therefore, low-efficacy may be related to some problems in the academic situations such as poor grades. According to Bandura (9 increased self-efficacy can positively affect a person’s choice of task, the efforts for the purpose of completing

a task and the persistence till mastery of the task. According to Eslami and Fatahi (2008) studied, the efficacy of nonnative English speaking (NNES) of Iraqiian EFL teachers were examined. In their study, EFL teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy in terms of personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and their perceived English language proficiency level were examined. The results showed that the teachers' perceived efficacy was positively correlated with self-reported English proficiency. The findings also revealed that the more efficacious the teachers felt, the more inclined they were to use communicative-based strategies.

1.1.2. Self-directed Learning

In the 1970's, Knowles and other educators such as Carl Rogers were the pioneers of promoting the idea of that education needed to back off teacher-centered classes in which directed learning was fashion of the day, towards learner-centered contexts or facilitated learning. Supporters of this approach suggested that education should adjust to the needs and wants of learners rather than the other way around. In this view, teachers' role will change; they need to move out of the role of 'the leader of orchestra' and to that of 'facilitator on the side' in which learning become more in the form of collaborative between the teacher and students and also among the students themselves. Meanwhile, students are encouraged to become more involved or self-directing in their learning. The notion of self-directed learning is based on the humanistic paradigm, the underlying assumption of which is that education should focus on the development of the individual.

1.1.3. Critical Thinking

Over the last few decades, many definitions of critical thinking have been offered, but there is also no consensus on its definition. Historically, Dewey (1933) described critical thinking from a philosophical perspective whereby education was meant to provide conditions to cultivate habits or training of the mind. Later, Ennis (1987) asserted "critical thinking is a reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do". Following these different insights, Beyer, (1995) concluded that critical thinking is knowing how to define problems and topics, using resources to solve them and revising one's work. Additionally, Scriven and Paul (1996) stated that "critical thinking is in a family of interwoven modes of thinking, among them: scientific, mathematical, historical, anthropological, economics, moral, and philosophical thinking" (p.11).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

it is believed that low achievement of EFL learners is related to their low aptitude. Intellectual abilities may be important in the process of language learning but other factors may also be involved. As Brown (1998) and Chastain (1988), believe the variation in foreign language learning can be explained by aptitude only to some extent. Affective variables, as Chastain (1988) supports, play an important role in developing second language skills. One of the areas which require investigation is the low achievement of general proficiency among Iranian learners (Amiri & Maftoon, 2010). Even in the IELTS examinations Iranian examinees receive low scores in reading comprehension and writing which are cognitively speaking related to critical thinking (Rasti, 2009). According to Bandura (1989), perceived self-efficacy can affect one's regulation of cognitive processes. Skills and sub skills of language proficiency, on the other hand are considered cognitive-oriented concepts (Beeman & Chiarello, 2013; Mahapatra, Das, Stack-Cutler, & Parrila, 2010; Oakley, 2011).

1.3. Objective of the study

The purpose of the present study is to identify whether or not self-directed learning, self-efficacy, and critical thinking play a significant role in leading advanced EFL learners to a successful second language proficiency level. To do so the present research has been designed to explore the significant points in this regard.

1.4. Significance of the Study

As Pajares (2018) discusses, perceived self-efficacy can be studied in relation to various language skills and their development. In this regard, the relationship between second language learners' self-efficacy and their language proficiency could be studied. Meanwhile, as such a relationship has been rarely focused on in the ELT literature concerning the EFL learners. Therefore, the present study can take significant from this respect. MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément (2017) present that low language anxiety correlate with self-ratings of second language proficiency. Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer (2015) argue if self-assessment of knowledge is a cognitive learning or affective measure and asserted the importance of both but they did not consider self-efficacy an important factor in their research. The relationship between EFL learners' language skills, motivation, and critical thinking also has been previously studied (Honey, 2005; Mall-Amiri, 2014; Marashi, 2012; Rashid, 2008; Shirvani, 2009); meanwhile, this relationship has not been investigated in terms of its

likely connection with self-efficacy and self-directed learning. Self-directed learning as a learning strategy has been focused on in the ELT literature.

1.5. Research Questions

Considering the research purpose and the problems stated above the following major and minor research questions could be formulated. RQ1: Is there any statistically significant relationship among self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and critical thinking of Iraqi EFL Learners? RQ2: Is there any statistically significant relationship between Self-Efficacy and Self-Directed Learning among EFL Learners? RQ3: Is there any statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Efficacy among EFL Learners?

RQ4: Is there any statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Directed Learning among EFL Learners?

1.6. Research Hypotheses

Considering the above cited major and minor research questions the following null hypotheses could be presented. RH1: There is no statistically significant relationship among self-efficacy, self-directed learning and critical thinking of Iraqi EFL advanced learners. H02: There is no statistically significant relationship between Self-Efficacy and Self-Directed Learning among EFL advanced learners.

H03: There is no statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Efficacy among EFL advanced learners. H04: There is no statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Directed Learning among EFL advanced learners.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1. Andragogy

The discipline which was initially defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970, as cited in Conner, 2004, p.3), has taken on a broader meaning and refers to an alternative to pedagogy concentrating on learner-focused education for people of all ages (Conner, 2004). The andragogical model, according to Knowles (2014) asserted that five issues be considered and addressed in formal learning. They include (1) letting learners know why something is important to learn, (2) showing learners how to direct themselves through information, and (3) relating the topic to the learners' Experiences. In addition, (4) people will not learn until they are ready and motivated to learn. Often this (5) requires helping them overcome inhibitions, behaviors, and s about learning.

1.7.2. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is defined as the ability to discipline and control information more easily, effectively and efficiently (Paul, 1990, cited in Longman, Atkinson & Breeden, 1997). Critical thinking is considered to be composed of the ability to recognize an existing problem as well as an inquisitive attitude that seeks proof of the evidential. It involves gathering knowledge about the accuracy of this proof and the ability to make use of this knowledge and attitude (Daly, 1998; Simpson & Courtney, 2002). One thing that seems obvious is that teachers need to be critical thinkers to be able to teach this ability to their students. While developing this skill is very essential in our teacher's, mainstream critical thinking research has focused on ways of developing these skills in learners (e.g., Dantas-Whitney, 2002; Faravani, 2006) and its application to teachers' practice. Also, being a critical thinker is an attribute believed to be closely related to teachers' sense of self efficacy (e.g., Sariolghalam & Nouruzi, 2010) and self-efficacy is one characteristic of an effective teacher.

1.7.3. Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy has been defined as learners accepting responsibility for their learning and sharing in the decisions and initiatives that give shape and direction to the learning process (Little, 1995). Little (2000) further suggested that learners who take up responsibility for their learning are more likely to achieve their learning targets and hence likely to maintain their motivation.

1.7.4. Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning, sometimes called "learning how to learn" (1), is an important factor in adult education and learning (2) and is defined as a process in which the learners are responsible for identifying the needs, formulating the objectives, following strategies and resources and evaluating the results of learning (3). However, this is not meant to disregard or downgrade the educational and supportive role of the teachers (4). On the other hand, in self-directed learning, the individual determines the learning objectives, selects an appropriate research method and evaluates the results of learning with or without the help of trainers (5). The learning type "which occurs via employing deliberate means or anticipated ends" (Long, 1994). Gibbons (2002) defined self-directed learning as "any study form in which individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort". (p. 12) Self-directed learning includes self-

management, self-control, self-motivation and hard work (6). The researchers of this field have reported many advantages for self-directed learning, including increasing self-confidence, independence and motivation and developing skills for lifelong learning (7). Also, self-directed learning enables the learners to learn better and to have higher capacity for remembering the materials for a longer time (8). Chambers & Hardy (2005) believe when students are involved in class activities, are responsible for their own learning and indirectly get help from their teachers, their self-efficacy is promoted (9). Similarly, the learner's independence, as a subject related to self-directed learning, has a positively significant relationship with self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is considered a significant element in understanding the learners' readiness for self-directed learning (10). Some researchers have suggested that self-directed learners possess a high level of self-efficacy (11, 12). On the other hand, self-efficacy has occupied a large portion of self-directed learning literature and many researchers have confirmed the Bandura's theory regarding the correlation between self-efficacy and self-directed learning (13-15).

1.7.5. Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1986) stated that "self-efficacy is language learners' s in their ability to succeed and obtain new information or complete a task or activity to a certain level of performance". Bandura (1994) also stated that this affective variable may affect people's decisions and behaviors and different aspects of their lives. As Mills (2004 as cited in Coronado-Aligro, 2006) believed "self-efficacy is an important variable that directly influences students' motivation, persistence, and success during Foreign Language learning". (p.1) .

Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1. Methodology

In this correlational study, the study population included all English language students (n=270) of Baghdad university in the academic year 2023-2024. The bachelor, master and Ph.D. students who had passed at least one semester were included in the study. Since there was a possibility of a difference between academic self-efficacy and self-directed learning among students in terms of their academic level, a total of 159 samples will be selected using Cochran formula and proportional stratified sampling to complete the questionnaires. It is noteworthy that during distribution and collection of questionnaires, the students will be ensured about the confidentiality of their perspectives.

2.3.2. Design of the Study

The present study enjoys an Ex post Facto Design. The reason is that, based on Hatch and Lazaraton (2017), there is no treatment involved in the study, nor is the study concerned with the leaning process the participants might have gone through as a significant factor. No control is implemented over the effect of independent variables of the study (self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and critical thinking) on the dependent variable (learners' language proficiency level) .

2.3. Participants

The EFL Iraqi participants taking part in the present study are hoped to be 100 EFL learners studying English in the advanced level. The participants will be both males and females with the age range of 18-30. The participants will be selected based on the results of the learners' performance on a standardized paper based TOEFL which will be given to 120 advanced students and those who are scored 1 SD below and above the mean will be asked to take part in the study. All participants are Iraqi learners who speak Arabic as their first language. This ensures if the learners know enough English and can answer the questions in the questionnaires appropriately .

2.4. Instrumentation

When conducting the questionnaires in the study, the researchers will try to create a healthy evaluation process for the candidates by making necessary explanations to each candidate in a broad time period, without making any rush. In addition, favorable conditions were created so that the candidates could fill the forms in a comfortable atmosphere. To collect data, the study used Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, Critical Thinking and General Self-Efficacy Scale and Socio-Demographic Information Form. To collect the desired data, the following instruments will be employed: A comprehensive language proficiency test of paper based TOEFL which is a standard copy released by ERTS in 2002. The test includes three sections :Section One: Listening Comprehension includes 50 items, and Section Two: Structure and Written Expressions presents 40 items, while Section Three: Reading Comprehension has 50 items .

2.5. Procedure

At first 120 advanced EFL students studying English in Language department of Baghdad university will receive on a standardized paper based TOEFL. Then based on the learners' performance the researcher hopes to select 100 EFL learners studying in the advanced level. The test be given to the participants and those who are scored 1 Standard Deviation (1SD) below and above the mean will be asked to take part in the study. The participants will be both males and females with the age range of 18-30. The selected learners will receive the three questionnaires of Cornell Critical Thinking Test, Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, and The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). The data will be collected and analyzed via SPSS software; version 21, and then reported and checked against the research questions of the study.

2.6. Data Analysis

The correlation coefficient between the learners' performances on the questionnaires will be calculated and reported. Also, the reliability, and construct validity of the questionnaires used will be calculated and compared with the reported ones in the literature. The data obtained through the Personal Information Form, Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, Critical Thinking and General Self-Efficacy Scale and the points will be obtained from the study will be coded and entered into SPSS 20.0 package program through which the analyses will be performed. The candidates' personal information and inventory total points, and factor points will be presented by finding frequency (f) and percentage (%) values. To indicate the relationship between the points obtained from the scales, Pearson's Moment-Product Correlation analysis (r) will be conducted while multiple regression analysis will be performed to determine whether the points are predictive of each other. (β)

2.7. Self-Directed Learning Scale

This scale is made based on the Fisher & King's components. It is rewritten with a little modification for students, with 16 items, according to a five-point Likert scale (from 1=completely disagree to 5=completely agree). The original scale has 52 items, which was first made by Fisher, King and Tague. They reduced the scale into 41 items after standardization (35). The reliability of this scale was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.83$), including self-management domain ($\alpha=0.87$), willingness to learn ($\alpha=0.85$) and self-control ($\alpha=0.80$). Also, the validity of the scale will be confirmed by construct validity using confirmatory factor analysis (36). It should be noted that in this stud.,

Chapter three

Results

3.1. General Overview

To evaluate teaching efficiency, academic self-efficacy and self-directed learning, one sample t-test was applied. Since the responses of the academic self-efficacy and self-directed learning scales were ranked according to a five-point Likert scale, with an average of 3, score 3 was considered the standard mean or theoretical mean. Further, for teaching efficiency scale, since the responses were based on a four-point Likert scale, score 2.5 was considered as the theoretical mean.

3.2. Introduction

The present chapter deals with presenting the results of the analyses done and the discussion related to them concerning the purpose of the study. Research questions of the study and their statistical analysis will be presented and then the related discussions will follow.

3.3. Testing Assumptions

The present study sought to find appropriate answer to the following research questions.

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Self-Efficacy Belief and Self-Directed Learning among EFL advanced Learners?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Efficacy Belief among EFL advanced Learners?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Critical Thinking and Self-Directed Learning among EFL advanced Learners?

This study aims at investigating the relationships between self-efficacy beliefs, self-directed learning, and critical thinking of EFL advanced Learners. The Pearson correlation was run to probe the research questions posed in this study. The main assumption of the Pearson correlation is normality of data. As displayed in Table 4.1 below the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than +/- 2.58. Thus, the assumption of normality was met (Filed, 2013).

Table 4.1. Testing Normality Assumptions

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Critical Thinking	270	.061	.241	-.161	.478
Self-directed Learning	270	-.595	.241	-.122	.478
Self-Efficacy	270	-.036	.241	-.561	.478

Note. The ratios of skewness and kurtosis were compared against +/- 2.58 due to the large sample size.

3.4. TOEFL Test of General Language Proficiency

The TOEFL test was administered to 270 subjects. Based on the mean plus and minus one standard deviation, 120 subjects were selected to participate in the main study. The TOEFL test enjoyed a reliability of .91.

Table 4.2 *Descriptive Statistics, TOEFL*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	KR-21
TOEFL	270	52.19	16.193	262.211	.91

3.5. Research Questions

Is there any statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy belief and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners? A Pearson correlation was run to find the relationship between self-efficacy belief and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners and the results showed that there was a significant relationship between self-directed learning and self-efficacy belief of Iraqi EFL learners ($r(58) = .81, P < .05$ representing a large effect size). Thus, the first null-hypothesis as “there is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy belief and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners” was rejected. Table 4.3. Pearson Correlation; Self-Efficacy with Self-directed Learning

		Self-Efficacy
Self-Directed Learning	Pearson Correlation	.813**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Chapter four

Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Overview

In the first part of Chapter V, restatement of the problem, as well as research questions, hypotheses, and an overview of the procedures followed for the study, will be presented. In the second part, the pedagogical implications will appear, and in the third part of chapter V, suggestions for further research will be dealt with.

4.2. Restatement of the Problem

The present study was an attempt to study the relationship among self-efficacy belief, self-directed learning, and critical thinking among advanced EFL Learners in Baghdad university. Considering the review of the related literature and what happens in real language classes, the following research questions were put forward:

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy belief and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between critical thinking and self-efficacy belief among EFL advanced learners?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between critical thinking and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners?

To answer the questions set the following null hypotheses were proposed:

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy belief and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners.

H02: There is no statistically significant relationship between critical thinking and self-efficacy belief among EFL advanced learners.

H03: There is no statistically significant relationship between critical thinking and self-directed learning among EFL advanced learners.

4.3. Discussion

Success in the realm of academia and organizational learning depends on the learners' updated knowledge and skills and self-directed learning. Also, it seems teachers' efficient teaching affects students' academic self-efficacy, orienting them toward self-directed learning.

4.4. Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that firstly, there was a significant relationship between self-directed learning and self-efficacy belief of Iraqi EFL learners. Secondly, the results revealed that there was a significant relationship between critical thinking and self-efficacy belief of Iraqi EFL learners, and thirdly, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between critical thinking and self-directed learning of Iraqi EFL learners. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is a significant relationship among self-efficacy belief, self-directed learning, and critical thinking of advanced EFL learners.

4.5. Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of the present study have some limitations as mentioned in chapter I, and further research is needed for investigations:

1. The same hypothesis can be formulated for Iraqi language learners at different levels of language proficiency. It is worth investigating whether learners at various proficiency levels feel the same way in terms of their self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and their critical thinking ability.
2. Future studies might consider examining the residual effects of style-related activities to explore whether and how long-term these effects actually could be. A semi-longitudinal study of the concepts of self-efficacy and self-directed learning or critical thinking on a specific group of learners can reveal if this theory energizes "retention of second language items in the learners' mentality or not.
3. In addition, the present study investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and critical thinking. Future studies may be needed to replicate the findings with language skills or components.
4. Further research is recommended to explore the relationship between self-efficacy, self-directed learning, cooperative learning, instructed noticing, attention, and awareness in developing grammar, vocabulary, or any other skill and component of the second language and their relationship together or the probable effect they leave on learner autonomy, self-regulatory factors of learning, and learner motivation.
5. The age and gender of students were not controlled in this research (of course the participants will be both males and females with the age range of 18-30). The researcher had to assume that no significant difference exists between male and female participants in this study, nor does a significant difference exist between participants with different ages. The age and gender of the learners could be taken into consideration in another study of the same type with a bigger size to present more generalizable results and findings.

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