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Interface between Self-Efficacy, Proficiency Level, and Reticence: The Case of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate any possible relationships between Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy, particularly general and speaking self-efficacy, proficiency level, and reticence. To this end, 92 students were asked to respond to Nelson Proficiency Test (300 D), New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSES) adopted from Chen, Eden, and Gully (2001), a Questionnaire on EFL Learners' Self-Efficacy in Speaking Skill borrowed from Saeidi and Farshchi (2012), and Kelly, Keaten, Hazel, and Williams' (2007) Reticence Scale-12 (RS-12). The analysis of the data showed a strong positive correlation between the participants' general self-efficacy and speaking efficacy beliefs. Also, a weak negative relationship was found between learners' general self-efficacy and reticence in language classrooms. Moreover, it was revealed that there was a strong negative correlation between speaking self-efficacy and reticence of the participants. Finally, the result of the statistical analysis demonstrated no significant association between the students' proficiency level and reticence. The findings manifested fruitful implications for EFL teachers and learners to enhance classroom participation.

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Introduction

To date, a host of studies have been carried out in the field of foreign/second language learning to investigate psychological aspects of learning such as self-efficacy, reticence, and unwillingness to communicate. Self-efficacy is believed to play an important role in EFL learners' success and academic achievement. It can be defined as a person's beliefs about his/her capabilities in performing a certain task (Csizer & Magid, 2014). Concerning language learning, it can be conceptualized as "the learner's perceptions of their ability to complete various tasks connected with language learning, such as writing an e-mail in English or being able to give a short presentation" (Csizer & Magid, 2014, p.190). Self-efficacy was reported to have a tremendous impact on learners' performance in different language domains including speaking as well as willing to take part in oral activities in the classroom (Raoofi, Bee, & Swee, 2012).

Speaking, as a productive skill, is a complex activity affected by numerous factors, one of which is learners' perceptions about their capabilities (Sundari, 2014). Those who enjoy high self-efficacy will engage in communication and oral tasks more eagerly. However, a number of students prefer to remain silent and not to actively participate in classroom activities and discussions. The passivity and unwillingness to take part in classroom activities is known as reticence.

Although reticence and self-efficacy have received much attention in educational and psychological studies, to the best knowledge of researchers, there have been very few, if any, investigations in the context of Iran that have examined the association between the so-called variables. Hence, it can be claimed that the current study is an important contribution to a growing body of research associated with students' beliefs about their academic performance. Significance of this study can be viewed from three perspectives: theory, research as well as practice.

First, the theoretical frameworks, including self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997) and reticence (Phillips, 1977, 1986, 1997), have been developed in western contexts; therefore, it will be valuable to apply the theories in practice in different settings and domains. Second, as already mentioned, the topic of reticence has been rarely reviewed in the second/foreign language literature neither for its impact on other variables nor for its correlation with psychological

factors. In this manner, the present study is among the few that attempts to fill the gap in the literature of reticence and self-efficacy.

Third, Findings from this study can help teachers and students to understand the significance of efficacy beliefs on students' academic performance and classroom involvement.

Therefore, the following research questions were formulated for the current study:

Q1. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' general self-efficacy and reticence?

Q2. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' speaking self-efficacy and reticence?

Q3. Is there any relationship between general self-efficacy and speaking self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners?

Q4. Does reticence level correspond to learners' proficiency level significantly?

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy is a self-construct that was first introduced by Bandura in 1977 with the publication of Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change (Lenz & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002). A decade later, in 1986, he located self-efficacy construct within a Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and embedded cognitive development within a socio-structural network of influences. According to this theory, not only can people reflect on their actions, but also they are capable of shaping their environment instead of reacting passively. Later on, in 1997, Bandura published Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control in which self-efficacy was described as a form of agency operating alongside other social factors. Reviewing a vast body of research, he addresses various issues such as sources of self-efficacy, its advantages, and processes through which self-efficacy can be strengthened (Bandura, 1997).

General self-efficacy defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" is affected by four sources of information including performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1986, p.391). Concerning performance

accomplishments, it should be noted that practicing and earlier experiences are the most important sources of self-efficacy because they depend on people's own experiences (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2011).

Accordingly, experiences of success enhance general self-efficacy while regular failure has negative impact upon one's self-beliefs. Second source deals with the observation of others. Observing successful performance of others, particularly those who are similar to the observer will increase his/her self-efficacy (Lunenburg, 2011). Third source is concerned with verbal persuasion. In this regard, when people are encouraged to perform a task, they will form positives attitudes about their capabilities. The last source, physiological states, indicates that people's moods, physical reactions, and stress levels exert great influence on how they feel about their abilities and selves.

Reticence. Efficacy beliefs affect various aspects of language learning such as remaining reticent or getting involved in activities either directly or indirectly (Kalanzadeh, Mahnegar, Hassannejad, & Bakhtiarvand, 2013). Reticence in classroom is a remarkable educational phenomenon which was coined by Gerald M. Philips in 1965 (Negari & Nabavizadeh, 2011). Publishing his first article, Philips drew scholars and practitioners' attention to individuals' communication problems and provided an interesting topic for subsequent studies. In this regard, Li and Liu (2011) indicated that "students' reticence, withdrawal, or fear of interacting not only deprives of them sharing what they know, but also deprives the teacher and classmates of benefiting from it" (p.961).

Moreover, it should be noted that the construct of reticence can be studied from different dimensions among which cognitive and behavioral perspective are the most noticeable (Li & Liu, 2011). Based on the cognitive perspective, reticent learners believe that being a good communicator is an innate ability. Behavioral dimension puts emphasis on skill difficulties (e.g., arranging ideas, choosing and delivering words, and storing ideas in mind) that reticent learners may have (Soo & Goh, 2013).

Empirical Background

There is a remarkable body of research on individual differences and psychological factors that affect foreign language learning. Self-efficacy is one of the factors that have long

attracted the attention of researchers. In 2012, Raoofi et al. published a review article focusing on the importance of self-efficacy in foreign/second language learning contexts. The findings of their study demonstrated that strategies, styles, and contextual variables play an important role in enhancing learners' self-efficacy, furthermore, it was reported that self-efficacy is a significant variable in performing certain tasks and skills.

In another study, Saeidi and Farshchi (2012) focused on the effect of teaching communication strategies (CSs) on Iranian EFL learners' speaking self-efficacy in content-based courses and indicated that CSs has positive effect on speaking self-efficacy.

In spite of the large number of studies that have attempted to examine self-efficacy construct from various dimensions, very few researches have been launched in order to shed light on the relationship between self-efficacy and reticence. In 2013, Soo and Goh did a research to examine the extent to which students who are majoring in English experience reticence in the classroom and to determine factors that can affect learners' reticence. In the light of analyses, it was concluded that students with high level of language proficiency experienced reticence like their low proficient counterparts. Additionally, results revealed that males and females were equally reticent in classroom. Riasati (2014) declared that reticence has detrimental impact on the effectiveness of foreign language learning process and suggested some solutions to the problem such as following Communicative Language Teaching method, reducing learners' anxiety, and allowing students' choice of topic. In a similar vein, Li and Liu (2011) addressed the causes and resolutions of reticence which is a common phenomenon in the context of China. Accordingly, low self-esteem, fear of evaluation, cultural differences, and communication apprehension were stated to be the possible causes of classroom reticence.

Negari and Navabzadeh (2011) focused on the role of vocabulary knowledge in EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate and explored the possible correlation between productive vocabulary knowledge, gender, and reticence. According to the results, a significant relationship was found between learners' vocabulary knowledge and reticence, while no significant difference was reported between male and females in terms of reticence.

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Method

Participants

In order to gather the required data for the present study, 92 EFL learners ranging in age from 15 to 20 were selected from among males and females studying English as their foreign language at Farhikhtegan-e-Farda, Golshahr, and Jahad Daneshgahi institutes in Zanjan, Iran. Sixty one percent of the sample was females (N= 56) and the remaining 39% was male students (N= 36). The average age of the sample was 16 at the time of data collection (January and February 2016). For determining the sample size needed to be representative of a given population, the table of determining sample size for research activities designed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used. Total number of intermediate EFL learners was reported to be 120. Hence based on the table, 92 Iranian students both male and female were required to participate to fill out the questionnaires and to take Nelson Proficiency Test to achieve a 95% confidence interval in generalizing to 120 students.

In order to ensure that the final sample includes 92 students, a greater number of students were taken and only those who filled the questionnaires and took a test were included in the final analysis. It is important to note that all of the participants' mother tongue was Turkish and they spoke Farsi as national language. Participants were considered to be homogenous because they were in intermediate level of language proficiency based on the levels specified by the institutes. However, to ensure homogeneity Nelson Proficiency Test (Version 300 D) was administered.

Instruments

1. Nelson Proficiency Test (Version 300 D) was used for homogenizing the participants based on their language proficiency level and also for dividing them into three groups: pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper intermediate.

The reliability of the proficiency test utilized in the current investigation was determined by conducting Chronbach's Alpha. The reason behind using internal consistency methods to estimate reliability was that the test was administered only once. The Alpha coefficient was calculated to be .819, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Furthermore, to ensure the test employed in the investigation was valid enough, it was handed to two judges at University of Zanjan to set their comments and views in details. They

were requested to evaluate the test with regard to its appropriateness for the purpose of the study. Based on the feedback from the professors, the test and its suitability for testing students were approved.

2. The New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSES) was utilized to measure general self-efficacy of the participants. NGSES, revised in 2001, aimed to "assess a person's belief in their overall competence to affect their performance across a wide variety of achievement situations" (Marder, 2009, p. 16). It is an 8-item questionnaire, rated on a scale of 1. Strongly disagree to 5. Strongly agree. The reliability of the scale was estimated and turned out to be .812 Cronbach's Alpha. Concerning the validity of instruments, Chen et al. (2001) in their article titled "Validation of a New General Self-Efficacy Scale" examined content validity, discriminant validity, predictive validity, and construct validity of the questionnaire. Since the validity of the questionnaire was previously ascertained, the researchers did not modify the items.

3. A Questionnaire on EFL Learners' Self-efficacy in Speaking Skill. Saeidi and Fashchi (2012) developed this scale based on three questionnaires: Persian Adaptation of the General Self-efficacy Scale constructed by Nezami, Schwarzer, and Jeursalem (1996), self-efficacy questionnaire about listening comprehension developed by Rahimi and Abedini (2009) and a 40 item questionnaire constructed by Gahungu (2007). In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire which is 5-item Likert scale consisting of 29 items was found to be .868. The content validity of this scale was approved by Saeidi and Fashchi (2012) who asserted that the speaking self-efficacy scale "was intended to elicit the information on students' self-efficacy" (p. 226).

4. Reticence Scale-12 or RS-12 (Kelly et al., 2007). It is a shortened version of the Reticence Scale developed by Keaten and his colleagues in 1997. This scale measures the level of reticence along six dimensions (two items per dimension) of social situation reticent individuals experience in (a) feelings of anxiety, (b) knowledge about topics, (c) timing skills, (d) organization of thoughts, (e) delivery skills, and (f) memory. RS-12 requires students to answer to the items based on five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1. Strongly disagree to 5. Strongly agree. The reliability of this instrument was found to be .826.

Previous studies and researches utilizing RS-12 have shown it to be a reliable and valid scale of reticence. Soo and Goh (2013) stated that RS-12 is a fundamental tool to gauge learners'

tendency of being reticent in classrooms. It should be noted that RS-12 has face validity because the scale items are relevant to the concept in question and they are unambiguous. Since the reliability and validity of the scale has been demonstrated in the majority of studies, the researchers used it without modification.

Pilot Study

Before actual data collection, pilot study was carried out. For the purpose of the pilot study, 10 EFL intermediate learners were chosen to be the participants of the study. Selection procedure occurred based on the following grounds. First, participants' age, educational, and sociocultural background were similar to those of the respondents of the main study. They were both female and male Turkish native speakers with the age range of 15 to 20. Second, according to the levels determined by the institutes, they were at the same level of English language proficiency as the participants of the main study.

When the selection procedure was completed, the researcher distributed the instruments among the participants. The procedure of piloting Nelson Test and the questionnaires was the same as their actual administration in the main study. This piloting aimed at timing the instruments and identifying the problems that students may address like what are the words or items that they do not understand, items that are ambiguous and unclear, items that they think are not suitable, instruction that is confusing, and so forth.

It was estimated that a period of 75 minutes (50 minutes for the test and 25 minutes for the questionnaires) would provide sufficient time for the learners to answer the test and the questionnaires.

During pilot study, which was done within one session, the researcher faced no problem in administering the instruments. Furthermore, no problem was reported regarding item difficulty and item discrimination. It should be mentioned that as most participants were not familiar with Likert scales, the researcher attempted to provide ample explanation concerning how to respond to the items.

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Data Collection Procedure

After the pilot study, Nelson Proficiency Test was administered to the participants to make sure of their homogeneity. Those students who obtained the pass mark were selected to participate in the present study. The provided time of taking the test was 50 minutes in which the participants were asked to answer 50 multiple choice items of Nelson Proficiency Test. Having collected the exam sheet of the proficiency test, the researchers distributed NGSES, speaking self-efficacy questionnaire, and RS-12 among the participants to measure their general self-efficacy, speaking self-efficacy, and reticence, respectively. As it was revealed in the pilot study, students were not familiar with Likert scales, therefore, the researchers attempted to explain how they should complete the scales.

Based on the results obtained from Nelson Proficiency Test, participants were divided into three sublevels: pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate in order to answer the forth research question. It should be indicated that total scores within 30-36 represented pre-intermediate, 37-43 intermediate, and 43-50 upper-intermediate. The numbers of participants in pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate levels of proficiency were 42, 24, and 26, respectively. After collecting and coding questionnaires, data was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Based on research questions, appropriate statistical procedures were chosen.

Data Analysis

The data collected from Nelson Proficiency Test, NGSES, speaking self-efficacy questionnaire, and RS-12 was analyzed by SPSS. First of all, descriptive statistics of the variables, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation were calculated. Then, inferential statistics including three Pearson product-moment correlations and one regression analysis were carried out in order to find out the relationship between study variables and to reject or confirm the following research hypotheses:

H01. There is no significant relationship between general self-efficacy and speaking self-efficacy of learners.

H02. There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' general self-efficacy and reticence.

H03. There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' speaking self-efficacy and reticence.

H04. Reticence of learners does not correspond to their proficiency level.

Results

The First Research Question

In order to answer the first research question, first descriptive statistics (Table 1) with 95% confidence intervals were analyzed, and then Pearson correlation was examined.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Responses to NGSES and Speaking Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
General Self-Efficacy	92	13.00	43.00	30.2391	5.61859
Speaking Self-Efficacy	92	57.00	137.00	1.02282	15.96654
Valid N (listwise)	92				

The maximum score obtained in NGSES was 43, and 13 was the minimum score obtained. Higher scores correspond to greater general self-efficacy. With regard to speaking self-efficacy questionnaire, the maximum and minimum scores obtained were 137 and 57, respectively. To determine the strength and direction of the association between general self-efficacy and speaking self-efficacy, Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. Part of the process to analyze data using Pearson's correlation involves checking to ensure that the data can actually be analyzed employing Pearson's correlation. According to Mackey and Gass (2009), there are four assumptions that underlie this particular statistic: normal distribution, independence of samples, continuous measurement scales, and linear relationship between scores for each variable.

Concerning the first assumption, Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to determine the normality of each variable separately. Table 2 represents the details of this statistical procedure.

Table 2

Tests of Normality of the Participants' General Self-Efficacy Scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
General Self-Efficacy	.087	92	.085	.987	92	.498

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As it can be observed from the above table, the data was normally distributed because Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test was greater than .05. If it is below .05, the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Similar to the students' general self-efficacy scores, data obtained from speaking self-efficacy questionnaire was normally distributed (p-value > .05).

Table 3

Tests of Normality of the Participants' Speaking Self-Efficacy Scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Speaking Self-Efficacy	.063	92	.200[*]	.981	92	.199

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Regarding the second assumption, it has to be acknowledged that the sample was independent since there was only one group in the study. As with the third assumption, it can be argued that the questionnaires used in the current investigation were continuous since ordinal scales, including Likert ratings, with more than four categories are classified as continuous scales (Newsom, 2013). Finally, to test the last assumption, the researcher created a scatterplot using

SPSS Statistics. Figure 1 shows the scatterplot of general self-efficacy scores against speaking self-efficacy scores.
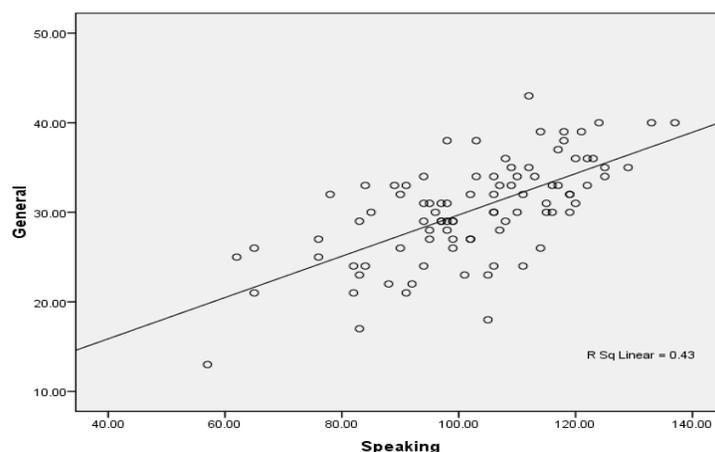

Figure 1. Scatterplot for General Self-Efficacy and Speaking Self-Efficacy

As it is evident in Figure 1, there was a linear relationship between the two variables. The scatter plot shows that as general self-efficacy increases, there is a strong tendency for speaking self-efficacy to increase. Having tested the assumptions proposed by Mackey and Gass (2009), the researcher ran Pearson product-moment correlation and used Cohen's (1988) criteria for determining the strength of the relationship between the variables. Cohen (1988) mentioned that "a correlation of .10 to .29 is regarded as small, .30 to .49 is regarded as medium, and .50 to 1 is considered as large" (cited in Pallant, 2005, p. 126).

Table 4

Pearson Correlations between General Self-Efficacy and Speaking Self-Efficacy

		General Self-Efficacy	Speaking Self-Efficacy
General Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.655[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Speaking Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.655[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

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

As demonstrated in Table 4, there was a strong positive correlation (r = .655, n = 92, p < .05) between the two variables of general self-efficacy and speaking self-efficacy. The level of statistical significance of the correlation coefficient in this analysis was .000 meaning that there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables (see, Fred & Perry, 2008). Therefore, the null hypothesis for the first research question was rejected.

The Second Research Question

The second research question aimed at finding the association between Iranian EFL learners' general self-efficacy and reticence. Before performing the correlation analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated using measures of central tendency and dispersion. Descriptive statistics of general self-efficacy scores were presented in the previous section. Descriptive statistics of RS-12 are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of RS-12

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reticence	92	20.00	53.00	31.0870	9.97872
Valid N (listwise)	92				

As can be seen in Table 5, the minimum score of reticence was 20, the maximum score was 53, and the average score was 31.0870. To assure the assumptions underlying Pearson-product moment correlation, normality of the distribution of scores for the students' reticence was assessed (Table 6).

Table 6

Tests of Normality of the Distribution of the Scores on Reticence

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Reticence	.141	92	.200	.949	92	.318

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

In the case of reticence, the Sig. value in Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was .200 which is above the significant level of .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of scores was normal and Pearson correlation can be carried out. To check the assumption of linearity, a scatterplot was generated (Figure 2).
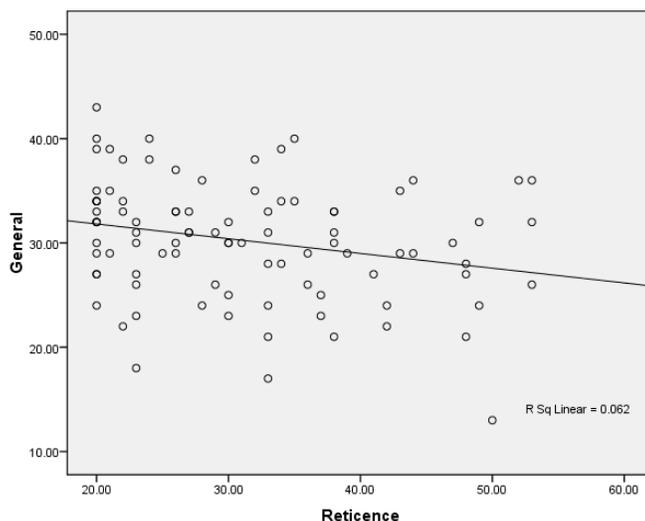
Figure 2. Scatterplot for General Self-Efficacy and Reticence

The scatterplot illustrates that the relationship was linear since a straight line can be drawn through the points. The results of correlation analysis are given in the Table below.

Table 7

Pearson Correlations between General Self-Efficacy and Reticence

		General Self-Efficacy	Reticence
General Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	-.281[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Reticence	Pearson Correlation	-.281[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

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

As Table 7 displays, there was a weak negative correlation (r = -.281, n = 92, p < .05) between the participants' general self-efficacy and their reticence. As the p < .05 indicates, this

correlation was statistically significant. Therefore, the second null hypothesis indicating that there was no significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' general self-efficacy and reticence was rejected.

The Third Research Question

The third research question of the study sought to explore any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy and their reticence. The first three assumptions required for carrying out Pearson correlation were tested in the previous sections. A scatter plot was created below to examine the linearity of the variables (Figure 3).
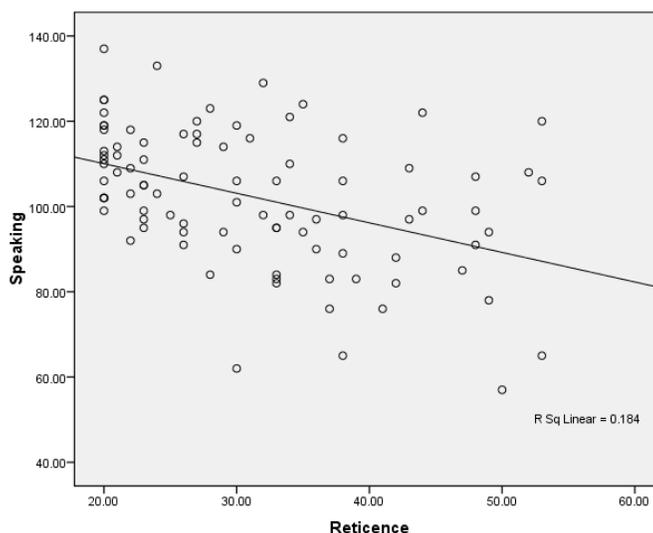

Figure 3. Scatterplot for Speaking Self-Efficacy and Reticence

Figure 3 clarifies the existence of the linear relationship between speaking self-efficacy and reticence. The researcher conducted another Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to answer the third research question. The results for this analysis appear in Table 8.

Table 8

Pearson Correlations between Speaking Self-Efficacy and Reticence

		Speaking Self Efficacy	Reticence
Speaking Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	-.581[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Reticence	Pearson Correlation	-.581[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

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

According to Cohen's (1988) classification of Pearson correlation values, there was a significant, strong negative correlation (r = -.581, n = 92, p = .000) between the participants' speaking self-efficacy and their reticence. A strong negative correlation implies that the two variables, speaking self-efficacy and reticence, vary inversely. Accordingly, the third null hypothesis proposed by the researcher indicating that there was no significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' speaking self-efficacy and reticence was rejected.

The Fourth Research Question

The final research question of the present study was to examine the possible relationship between the Iranian EFL learners' proficiency level and their reticence. To this end, the participants were divided into three pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate groups based on proficiency scores assigned to each level. The results of descriptive analysis for each group of the respondents are provided below.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Nelson Proficiency Test for Three Groups of the Participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-intermediate	42	30.00	36.00	31.6905	1.86741
Intermediate	24	37.00	41.00	37.9167	1.10007
Upper-intermediate	26	44.00	47.00	44.6538	.93562
Valid N (listwise)	24				

Table 9 presents three groups' number of participants, minimum and maximum scores, mean, and standard deviation. For example, it can be seen that pre-intermediate group consisted of 42 respondents, whose scores ranged from 30 to 36, with a mean of 31.69 and standard deviation of 1.87. Apart from descriptive statistics, the researcher used linear regression analysis to test research hypothesis. It is worth mentioning that normality of data was examined previously. The results of regression analysis are presented in the following tables.

Table 10

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.492[a]	.242	.128	7.90363

a. Predictors: (Constant), Upper-intermediate, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate

Table 10 provides R and R2 values. The R value represents the simple correlation and is .492. The R2 value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, reticence, can be explained by the independent variables. In this case, 24.2 % can be explained. To assess the statistical significance of the results, it is necessary to look in the table labeled ANOVA.

Table 11

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	398.484	3	132.828	2.126	.129[a]
Residual	1249.349	20	62.467		
Total	1647.833	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Upper-intermediate, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate

b. Dependent Variable: Reticence

As revealed in Table 11, the p-value was greater than 0.05 meaning that independent variables did not show a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, or that the group of independent variables did not reliably predict the dependent variable. It should be noted that this was an overall significance test assessing whether the group of independent variables when used together reliably can predict the dependent variable, and did not address the ability of any of the particular independent variables to predict the dependent variable. The ability of each individual independent variable to predict the dependent variable is addressed in the table below where each of the individual variables is listed.

Table 12

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	114.990	96.638		1.190	.248
Pre-intermediate	-.985	.760	-.253	-1.296	.210
Intermediate	-3.222	1.514	-.419	-2.128	.066
Upper-intermediate	1.554	1.803	.170	.862	.399

a. Dependent Variable: Reticence

Table 12 helps the researcher to test the statistical significance of each of the independent variables. Concerning the first independent variable, it can be seen that the coefficient was -.985. Therefore, for every unit increase in pre-intermediate EFL learners' proficiency scores, a .985 unit decrease in reticence scores was predicted, holding all other variables constant. However, according to Sig. column, this association was not statistically significant (p-value > .05). The coefficient for the second variable was -3.222 meaning that for every unit increase in intermediate EFL learners' proficiency scores, 3.222 unit decrease in reticence scores. Like the previous one, this relationship was not statistically significant because the p-value, .066, was greater than 0.05. Similar to the first and the second variables, the coefficient for upper-intermediate EFL learners' proficiency scores (1.554) was not statistically significantly because its p-value was definitely larger than 0.05. Consequently, the fourth null hypothesis stating that reticence of EFL learners did not correspond to their proficiency level was supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study was carried out to answer the research questions that were developed previously. The first research question of the current study, sought to discover whether or not there is any relationship between general self-efficacy and speaking self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners. Statistical analysis of the results revealed a strong positive correlation between the variables meaning that as general self-efficacy increases so does speaking self-efficacy.

Within the first as well as second language fields, special attention has been given to the students' perceptions of their abilities to further quality of instruction and help students move toward the clearly defined goals. Inspite of the bulk of studies that have been conducted in this regard, few, if any, researchers have endeavored to investigate the association between different classifications of self-efficacy constructs, namely general and speaking self-efficacy. Among these studies, the results of the current investigation are in line with Holmquist and Gable (2014). They examined the relationship between general self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy of 88 participants selected from three New England adult education centers. The results of their study showed a significant positive relationship between general self-efficacy and specific academic dimensions of self-efficacy.

With respect to the second research question, concerned with the relationship between general self-efficacy and reticence, the results of statistical analysis revealed a weak negative correlation between the variables. In other words, there is an inverse relationship between two variables indicating that when general self-efficacy increases, reticence decreases.

Concerning the third research question of the study, it was found that there is a negative correlation between speaking self-efficacy and reticence of Iranian EFL learners. The strong negative correlation shows that as speaking self-efficacy increases, students' tendency to remain silent and passive decreases at an almost exact rate.

The results of the study can be supported by Abdullah, Abu Bakar, and Mahbob's (2012) investigation. Abdullah and his colleagues interviewed three groups of active students and three groups of passive students identified through a five weeks observation on three classrooms. They pointed out that self-efficacy is one of the factors that play significant role on students' tendency to take part in classroom activities.

The fourth research question of the study, which dealt with the relationship between EFL learners' reticence and proficiency level, was answered by conducting regression analysis. According to the results of the study, no significant correlation was found between proficiency level and reticence of EFL learners. This finding runs counter to the study which was conducted by Jackson and Liu (2009). The purpose of their study was to determine if proficiency in English affects students' classroom participation. They reported that proficiency plays an important role in "distinguishing the advanced-level from the low-level students in terms of their perceptions of the value of interpersonal communication. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the differences were not large, not much more than a quarter of a standard deviation unit" (p. 11).

The present study is also in contrast with a study done by Badkoubeh (2013). She attempted to find the relationship between EFL learners' level of language proficiency and reticence. The results of her study showed that proficiency level of the learners' affect their reticence level and the higher the language proficiency level, the better oral performance in the classroom.

In conclusion, taking students' psychological status into consideration can be beneficial in the process of learning and teaching. If teachers become aware of the factors that hinder students' progress, they can employ practical ways to help their students tackle the problems.

Limitations of the Study

This study, like any other researches, suffers from some limitations that may raise some new questions for further research in the field. First, to collect data, the researcher used two types of instruments: a test and three questionnaires. If other tools, for instance, classroom observation, both structured and semi structured interviews, and reflective journals had been used, further outcomes would have been obtained. Second, the focus of the present study was on self-efficacy meaning that other factors (e.g., motivation, anxiety, personality type, context of education, and so forth) which might affect the findings were not taken into consideration. Third, the participants of the study were at intermediate level of language proficiency. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other levels such as elementary or advanced.

Implications

The results of this study can provide some implications for EFL teachers and students. Teachers can help students' promote their students' active engagement in classroom discussions by creating a welcoming, relaxing, and non-threatening classroom environment (Zou, 2004), paying attention to students' personality traits and factors (psychological, linguistic, cognitive, etc.) that can affect their classroom participation, getting students to come prepared to the class, preventing a few students from dominating and controlling classroom discussions and activities.

EFL learners can actively participate in classroom activities by understanding the significance of classroom participation and trying to get involved in discussions, overcoming the barriers that prevent them from speaking English in the classroom actively, and so forth.

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