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Self-Efficacy of Students as a Mediator between Entrepreneurial Learning Engagement and EFL Learners' Performance towards Writing Skill

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Abstract

The current research is based on certain objectives with an inclination towards student performance. EFL learners based in China are required to learn English as a foreign language because they will have to interact with international communities in the future. Entrepreneurial activities require communication at a level that is easily understandable to all participants. This study is examining the correlation between ELE and SP to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students. In addition, this study intends to examine the relationship between ELE and the SE and entrepreneurial competences of students. It strengthens the significance of entrepreneurial events theory by indicating that entrepreneurial learning engagement strongly supports students learning of entrepreneurship. It is an effective event in the entrepreneurial process. Therefore, the results strongly support the entrepreneurial events theory. Second, this study adds to the support of the theory of planned behavior. The results indicate that entrepreneurial learning engagement and its association with student's self-efficacy and entrepreneurial competency are planned behaviors. Instructors should be clear about providing an engaging learning environment to students. Teachers should be self-efficacious and develop self-efficacy and competency in their learners. Moreover, this research implies that EFL learners can be good entrepreneurs as they will have more command of English than those who are not English language learners.

Keywords: Learning Opportunities, Teachers Training, Self-Efficacy, Entrepreneurial Learning, Student Performance, Online Writing

Introduction

Neoliberalism has increased people's interest in language proficiency and instruction as possible sources of income (Muth & Percio, 2018). There has been a growing emphasis on the need to enhance one's competency and language skills. This will lead to economic growth based on a larger community and add to the economic resources. This is evident in second/foreign language education policies in numerous national settings. Diverse nations have made significant investments in their populations' second and foreign language proficiency over the last several decades to increase their economic competitiveness on the world stage. For instance, nations that speak languages other than English prove to be the fertile place for investment opportunities in English language learning. China stands in the list of those nations (Pan, 2015).

This is evidenced by initiatives such as lengthening the time English is taught in the curriculum and focusing on communication strengthening the importance of intellectual capital and improve

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competitiveness at macro level are the stated goals of English proficiency (Park & Wee, 2013). Learning a foreign language under the neoliberal educational model is reframed to include students as neoliberal workers and consumers, as well as a technical skill (Li & Costa, 2017). This approach stands out because it usually puts the study of a second or foreign language in moral terms.

Language investment, on the other hand, is advocated as the concern of a moral citizen who excellently cares for their own intellectual capital and brings improvements in the society by carefully managing it. Accordingly, the neoliberal strategy of teaching second and foreign languages can be seen as an example of linguistic entrepreneurialism (De Costa et al., 2019). According to De Costa et al. (2016), associating with the moral obligation to purposefully use resources which are especially related to language in order to boost one's value constitutes linguistic entrepreneurship. A compelling example of linguistic entrepreneurship in action is the neoliberal English language education policy, which emphasizes structured and systematic attempts by governments and institutions to use people's abilities as language learners and speakers for financial gain.

The idea of linguistic entrepreneurship helps explain how people might feel pressured to adopt the entrepreneurial persona that is supported by such depictions of language learning (De Costa et al., 2019). It should be highlighted that the players involved in such second- and foreign-language education policies go far beyond the people who choose to devote their time, energy, and financial resources to language study. State ministries, educational institutions, commercial businesses that have an impact on the labor market via their employment practices, and other organizations are helpful in shaping and carrying out national language education policy (De Costa et al., 2019).

The methodical endeavor of entrepreneurship is deeply entwined with society and humanity (Basha et al., 2025). It produces new goods and services that the public demands. Entrepreneurs should develop their social communication and organizational skills to thrive in business (Cadenas et al., 2020). Instead, the majority of choices that student entrepreneurs make are made on the spur of the moment, without any thoughtful deliberation, consistent investment in learning, or competitive analysis or research. Consequently, student entrepreneurs lack the all-encompassing qualities and essential specialized abilities for entrepreneurship to tackle a variety of challenges, ultimately failing (Zhang et al., 2020b).

Thus, investment in entrepreneurial engineering is crucial. College and university students need a healthy dose of realism, enthusiasm for starting their own businesses, and the capacity to participate in lifelong learning (Jena, 2020). This includes learning about entrepreneurial philosophy, strengthening social communication skills, improving the management of team members, boosting the ability to react to emergency situations, and learning self-recognition and scientific planning. To keep up with the evolution of the times, educational institutions have vigorously adopted entrepreneurial skill development programs for students at college level, assisting them in learning about entrepreneurship (Al-Ani et al., 2020).

In other words, the basis of successful entrepreneurship is entrepreneurial learning engagement (ELE), and ELE among students significantly impacts how entrepreneurship will evolve in the future. Both internal and external factors may impact the ELE (Hu & Yuan, 2020). Characteristic variables that are often difficult to change constitute the majority of internal factors. Since everyone's personality and psychological makeup varies, learning about entrepreneurship is not

always easy (Li, 2025). As a result, students' degrees of acceptability of entrepreneurial education at institutions vary (Liu & Chen, 2018). Therefore, EFL students' ELE is a mix of their psychological capital and emotions (Zhang et al., 2020a). This will impact students' self-efficacy, competency, and performance.

Studies on entrepreneurial learning engagement have mostly concentrated on the aspects that influence entrepreneurial intention and have paid little attention to actual entrepreneurial engagement (Ayegba & Omale, 2016; Khuong & An, 2016; Osakede et al., 2017). Therefore, the focus is on students' propensity to launch entrepreneurial activities. Although having an entrepreneurial purpose is the first step in the formation of a new enterprise, those who have already begun the entrepreneurial process have a larger likelihood of becoming the owner of a commercial endeavor in the future. Therefore, limited research has been performed on the factors influencing ELE.

In particular, few studies have assessed the influence of entrepreneurial learning engagement on student performance (Osakede et al., 2017). By investigating the factors that influence students' entrepreneurial engagement and whether such activity has any bearing on academic success, this study adds to the body of prior research in the field. This analogy is based on several theories that provide an understanding of the problem stated in this study (Ajzen, 1991; Becker, 1964; Shapero & Sokol, 1982).

Drawing on this suggested model, entrepreneurial learning engagement can affect EFL learners' performance, but this cannot be achieved alone. Therefore, based on social learning and self-efficacy theory, it is suggested that SE can mediate the direct relationship between ELE and students' performance. According to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, learning concerned with entrepreneurship enhances one's sense of SE. First, entrepreneurship education provides students an excellent opportunity to engage in activities associated with running their own businesses, such as conducting feasibility studies, developing business plans, and carrying out their business plans. Additionally, social pressure is evident in entrepreneurial education through student participation in class debates and academic success.

As there is considerable agreement that the cognitive process plays a key role, researchers studying entrepreneurship have considered this issue (Bandura, 1986). For instance, Krueger (2003) suggested that knowledge of entrepreneurship is vital, particularly regarding how to establish a firm, manage it, and ensure its continued growth. Furthermore, a number of academics are of the opinion that the influence of perceived SE on conduct of an individual and attitude results in an increase in cognitive performance (Pihie & Bagheri, 2010). According to Bandura (1986), the social learning process of self-efficacy may account for the relationship between people's entrepreneurial attitudes and cognitive processes. Therefore, self-efficacy was considered a mediator in the current study.

Moreover, entrepreneurial competencies are developed based on entrepreneurial learning. Two study methodologies can be identified when examining how entrepreneurs contribute to the establishment or development of entrepreneurship. One is the personality approach, and the other is the competence approach (González-López et al., 2021). Studies that use a competency-based approach concentrate on entrepreneurship-related topics, in contrast to personality-based research, which primarily examines the rigid qualities and fixed inclinations of the individual (Ponraj et al., 2025). The present research adopts a competency-based approach to mediation, as it has been stated that fostering entrepreneurial abilities is a more crucial problem than merely

providing more resources and a favorable environment.

The current research is based on certain objectives with an inclination towards student performance. EFL learners based in China are required to learn English as a foreign language because they will have to interact with international communities in the future. Entrepreneurial activities require communication at a level that is easily understandable to all participants. This study is examining the correlation between ELE and SP to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students. In addition, this study intends to examine the relationship between ELE and the SE and entrepreneurial competences of students. This study examines the mediating roles of SE and entrepreneurial competences in the relationship between entrepreneurial learning engagement and student performance.

Theoretical Foundation

Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory is asserting that the provision of formal education is crucial for augmenting a productive capacity of individuals. It stresses how education enhances individuals' productivity and self-confidence by cultivating their cognitive abilities. In this context, entrepreneurial human capital is defined by an individual's competencies and attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial talent encompasses the aptitude to identify opportunities, evaluate their feasibility, and devise inventive solutions to challenges, whereas entrepreneurial attitudes emphasize personal autonomy, risk tolerance, work ethic, and earning potential (Douglas & Shepherd, 2005).

Shapiro and Sokol (1982) proposed the entrepreneurial event hypothesis, which posits that an individual's assessment of the feasibility and appeal of entrepreneurship substantially influences their propensity to pursue self-employment. Before an individual can develop an interest in and pursue self-employment, they must first acknowledge the benefits of self-directed work. Feasibility is the assessment of an individual's financial resources, talents, and knowledge that are readily accessible. While, desirability is about an individual's emotions, values, and attitudes, influenced by their social environment: peer group, family and professional circle.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986), which is occasionally referred to as Social Cognitive Theory, explains human behavior as the result of interaction of individual, behavioral, and environmental factors. An individual's level is the primary focus of personal factors, which can be either robust or deficient. The response an individual experiences after engaging in a specific activity is referred to as a behavioral factor, and it can be either positive or negative. This process is influenced by environmental variables, which reflect the effects of the external environment during task execution. The three factors that influence entrepreneurial intention are attitude, social norm, and behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

Entrepreneurial intention constitutes a deliberate action aimed at fostering student engagement in entrepreneurial learning. These factors affect intention and, consequently, engagement in specific behavior. An individual's positive or negative assessment of an action is their attitude. It assesses the significance that an individual assigns to a specific behavioral trend. The phrase subjective norm denotes the social pressure or influence exerted by an individual's parents, peers, and other esteemed relations to engage in an activity or refrain from it. The ability to perform an activity and the accessibility of resources are both components of perceived behavioral control that are influenced by the individual.

Entrepreneurial intention (EI) has been modelled using the theory of planned behavior in most

studies. TPB is the contemporary behavioral theory in literature, as it incorporates components from other entrepreneurial ambition theories. Factors that drive the inclination to initiate a business are the subject of conflicting findings. Typically, the inclination to establish a business is not substantially influenced by all TPB qualities. Iqbal et al. (2012) investigated the responses of undergraduate students to entrepreneurial aspirations and found that entrepreneurial intention was significantly and positively affected by attitude and the perceived behavioral control. Therefore, subjective norms have a negligible effect on the entrepreneurial inclinations of students.

The Role of Entrepreneurial Learning Engagement

ELE is a condition used to describe people who are employed, and Feldman et al. (2015) described it as the level of enthusiasm and involvement in one's job. The term engagement relates to enjoyment, satisfaction at work, and other mental states. When a person working for themselves has the appropriate level of engagement, they will devote all their resources to their task and give their full attention to it. However, if a self-employed individual is not dedicated to their profession, they will ultimately distance themselves from it and resign from their position. Numerous professionals have undertaken relevant studies on ELE. Vanno et al. (2014) shown a strong relationship between ELE and work routine.

According to Dada and Fogg (2016), participation by businesses and universities is a key element in fostering college students' entrepreneurship orientation. This research also showed that small and medium-sized enterprises' organizational learning was positively impacted by entrepreneurial orientation. However, improving the company's learning level heightened an entrepreneur's awareness of new business opportunities in the wake of entrepreneurial failure (Boso et al., 2019). A key takeaway is that a company's success will be less negatively impacted by entrepreneurial failures if the company's learning levels are constantly raised throughout the startup.

In conclusion, demonstrating a good learning attitude throughout the entrepreneurial process may help businesses run well by making constant advancements. Can students' entrepreneurial engagement be sparked by a good entrepreneurial learning mindset, which would subsequently influence how well they perform as entrepreneurs? However, these findings have yet to be validated. The efficacy of virtual learning is largely determined by student participation and satisfaction (Rajabalee & Santally, 2021). The goal of student engagement is to increase the motivation level among students to take part in their skills development process by devoting time and effort (Luan et al., 2020). Student engagement (SE) is characterized in two types: behavioral; students' effort, attention, and perseverance and emotional; students' zeal, enthusiasm, and pleasure (Luan et al., 2020).

Previous research has shown that student engagement is an observable measure of the quality of online learning and helps keep students linked to their own learning. In addition, student engagement has been shown to keep teachers engaged (Luan et al., 2020; Heo et al., 2021). Boso et al. (2019) suggested that students' engagement is linked to their academic performance. It indicates that students' performance can be influenced by student engagement. More specifically, in this case, students' entrepreneurial learning engagement can influence their performance. Therefore, the authors consider the affective role of ELE on students' entrepreneurship performance.

Recently, researchers have emphasized evaluating the effect of entrepreneurial education on students' SE (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015; Wardana et al., 2020). They did not evaluate the impact of student's entrepreneurial learning engagement on their self-efficacy. Similarly, entrepreneurial learning engagement could influence students' entrepreneurial competencies. Some researchers have found that entrepreneurial education may affect entrepreneurial competencies. In this regard, Middleton et al. (2020) concluded that institutions involved in entrepreneurial education are the places that inculcate entrepreneurial competencies among students. Moreover, they contended that informal learning with the help of a mentor may develop entrepreneurial competencies among learners. Based on this literature, the authors propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Entrepreneurial learning engagement has a positive association with student performance.

H2: Entrepreneurial learning engagement has a positive association with self-efficacy.

H3: Entrepreneurial learning engagement has a positive association with entrepreneurial competencies.

Mediating Role of SE

It is exceedingly unlikely that an individual will engage in deliberate actions that are intended to attain an uncertain outcome if they lack confidence in their capacity to do so (Newman et al., 2019). In the same vein, an individual who is uncertain about their capacity to influence their environment will encounter challenges in acquiring new skills and expanding their knowledge (Shinnar et al., 2014). To modify behavior in accordance with a new worldview, which incorporates societal expectations that result from the recognition of new information and values, it is imperative to make modifications to SE beliefs (Engel et al., 2014).

These perspectives are influenced by societal impacts, experimentation, and the observation of individuals (Dalborg & Wincent, 2015). As a result, it is imperative to comprehend the way individuals adjust their behavior in response to altered perceptions of efficacy to comprehend their adaptation to uncertainty while participating in new economic activities. Entrepreneurs acquire new skills and insights by engaging in specific behaviors or actions, thereby accumulating experience. They are more likely to have the capacity to manage ambiguity, which is a critical skill for entrepreneurs (Engel et al., 2014). Personal beliefs and social contexts determine the transformation of experience into knowledge, while experience influences the perceptions and values of individuals (Bandura, 1986).

The two most common methods of acquiring experience are through experimentation and imitating the behavior of others (Bandura, 1986). Individuals frequently assimilate social behaviors through incidental observation and subsequent imitation of others in the context of modelling, even though the acquisition of a talent or the pursuit of new endeavors typically involves trial and error process. They acquire knowledge through the observation of others rather than through direct experience (Zozimo et al., 2017). Ultimately, people become biased for either modelling or mastery to acquire new knowledge and skills. This preference is indicative of their readiness to adapt to uncertainty and their capacity (or incapacity) to manage it (Lévesque et al., 2009).

Alt (2015) has conducted extensive research over the past two decades that has emphasized the

importance of self-efficacy as a significant factor of students' academic success and a significant outcome that is influenced by the learning environment. Alt (2015) has identified a variety of contextual factors that influence students' SE, such as student cohesion, teacher effectiveness, and student involvement, in numerous empirical studies. Self-efficacy has been shown to have a substantial impact on the learning outcomes of students, including their engagement and enjoyment (Wei & Chou, 2020). Students having higher self-efficacy exhibit a greater degree of motivation to study and satisfaction with their progress (Tas, 2016).

SE has consistently served as a substantial mediator between academic success and the learning environment (Ma et al., 2018), particularly in relation to educational objectives and learning environment components. Research suggests that the mediating influence of self-efficacy enables students to perceive environmental attributes, such as teacher support (Ma et al., 2018) and student engagement (Dorman & Fraser, 2009), which are indirectly linked to their academic outcomes. Based on this literature assessment, the authors formulated the following hypothesis:

H4: Self-efficacy mediates the positive relationship between entrepreneurial learning engagement and student performance.

Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Competencies

Competence is an amalgamation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have been synthesized and integrated into a single entity. Consequently, competencies can be modified, acquired, and developed through training, coaching or experience (Volery et al., 2015). It has been conceptualized both holistically and specifically regarding the talents an entrepreneur must possess to manage a successful firm. Mulder et al. (2007) asserted that competence is the ability to adeptly manage intricate demands in a specific context. Nonetheless, several studies opt to delineate the specific competencies that successful entrepreneurs must possess in a more analytical and behavior-centric approach (Chwolka and Raith, 2012).

Many scholars assert that risk-taking is an inherent and essential element of entrepreneurial success, regardless of the industry, when identifying the competencies deemed vital for entrepreneurs across various sectors (Ferrerias-Garcia et al., 2021). Entrepreneurs must possess the requisite abilities to mitigate these risks and their consequences, as embracing opportunities also heightens the probability of failure and setbacks (Mas et al., 2021). Consequently, persistence has been acknowledged as the primary competency. Successful entrepreneurs can endure these obstacles. Their perseverance enables individuals to commit to their work and persevere until completion (Pulka et al., 2021).

Successful entrepreneurs diligently fulfil their responsibilities despite fatigue. They endure hardships and defeats. Historically, entrepreneurial talent has been examined in relation to entrepreneurial performance. However, no one has examined its influence on students' performance. Consequently, this study examines the relationship between entrepreneurial competency and students' performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Pulka et al. (2021) demonstrated that entrepreneurial competencies can enhance the performance of SMEs. This study highlights the importance of entrepreneurial qualities in performance assessment. Consequently, drawing on the literature and the potential mediating influence of entrepreneurial competences, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5: Entrepreneurial competencies mediate the positive relationship between entrepreneurial learning engagement and student performance.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research mainly focuses on providing insights into the entrepreneurial learning of EFL students. FL students learn English as a second language in regions where it is not a native language. In this study, the EFL learners were based in China, and their mother language was not English. These students face difficulties in interacting with international peers. FL learners try their best to compete with international communities. There is a need to devise mechanisms that can ease the situation between EFL learners and entrepreneurs of their times. Entrepreneurship is a widespread phenomenon nowadays. Students are given entrepreneurial education during their student years. Due to the significance of entrepreneurship learning, EFL learners try to communicate with their peers, teachers, and counterparts.

This research is providing insights into the significance of entrepreneurial learning engagement in students' performance. Moreover, this study highlights the mediating effects of students' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial competencies. This study contributes to the literature on linguistics and management sciences. First, it strengthens the significance of entrepreneurial events theory by indicating that entrepreneurial learning engagement strongly supports students learning of entrepreneurship. It is an effective event in the entrepreneurial process. Therefore, the results strongly support the entrepreneurial events theory. Second, this study adds to the support of the theory of planned behavior. The results indicate that entrepreneurial learning engagement and its association with student's self-efficacy and entrepreneurial competency are planned behaviors.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Planned behaviors help entrepreneurs shape their performance. This research also implies that the findings are in line with the assumptions of human capital and social learning theories. Social learning is a cognitive process, and students with high self-efficacy receive support from entrepreneurial learning engagement. In return, students with self-efficacy and entrepreneurial competency will perform better than those who are not engaged in entrepreneurial learning. This research also has practical and managerial implications for the management of EFL and entrepreneurial education courses. Instructors should be clear about providing an engaging learning environment to students. Teachers should be self-efficacious and develop self-efficacy and competency in their learners. Moreover, this research implies that EFL learners can be good entrepreneurs as they will have more command of English than those who are not English language learners.

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