

**Exploring English Language Learners' Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Language Learning Strategies  
and Goal Orientation**

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) program. This study was conducted to further analyze the relationships among self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategies, and goal orientations of college-level ELLs. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986, 1989, 1997), Oxford's learning strategy theory (1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2003) and Midgley's goal orientation theory (1996, 2000) provided the theoretical framework for this study. A quantitative research design was used to address the research questions. Students who were enrolled in the ESL program at a southeastern public university participated in this study. An English language learning survey adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991), version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), and Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 1996, 2000) were used in this study. Analysis of survey data was conducted with the independent sample t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

Participants had positive self-efficacy beliefs toward their English learning and they frequently used learning strategies in their English language learning process and the most often used strategies were compensation, social and metacognitive strategies. Participants who were

more than 25 years old had a higher level of self-efficacy than those who were less than 25 years old. Students who were less than 25 years old also used significantly greater overall strategies, and specifically affective, cognitive, compensation, social strategies than those who were older than 25 years of age. This study also found that female students had a greater mastery goal orientation tendency than male students. Self-efficacy was positively correlated with overall strategy use, cognitive, compensation, memory, metacognitive, social strategy, and mastery goal orientation while negatively correlated with performance-avoidance goals. Overall strategy, affective, memory and metacognitive strategies were also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. It was inferred that greater strategy use could result in higher level of self-efficacy, mastery goals, performance approach goals and performance avoidance goals. As mastery goals increase, level of overall strategy, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive strategy and social strategy use increase.

This study suggested that teachers provide scaffolding for learners through strategy instruction. Teachers are encouraged to choose appropriate teaching techniques and learning strategies suitable for students and teach learners how to understand and use appropriate learning strategies, and to set assessment focus on ELLs improvement and mastery of content to enhance their levels of self-efficacy, confidence and ultimately learning autonomy in their lifelong learning.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### **Overview**

Many universities have considered recruiting international students as a high priority. The number of international students attending American universities is increasing. With more than 4,000 universities and colleges, the United States has been a popular place for international students to pursue college education (Chow, 2011). According to the 2015 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States had the highest rate of growth in 35 years. In comparison, there were 886,052 in the year 2013-2014 and increased by ten percent to a record high of 974,926 students in the 2014-2015 academic year. It has been confirmed that the United States remains the destination of choice for higher education (Institute of International Education, 2015). International students are from different countries, and students from Brazil account for 78.2 percent of the growth, and at the same time a wider range of countries contributed to the increase which included India, Kuwait, Nigeria, Mexico (Institute of International Education, 2015).

Many non-English speaking industrialized countries devote their effort to students' English language education because English is significant in many fields and widely used in the world. However, many English language learners (ELLs) still do not acquire the expected competency after many years of formal education. Mastering a foreign or second language requires learners

to overcome a lot of difficulties such as a skillful use of phonological, syntactic, and semantic codes (Sparks & Ganschow, 1993). This process usually takes a long time, and as Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993) pointed out, it takes about ten years of deliberate effort to develop expertise in a specific field. Even students who had learned a language more than ten years ago, may still not be able to achieve native-like language proficiency. Cummins (1981) observed English as Second Language (ESL) students' learning process and found that it generally takes three to five years for them to develop skills for basic communication and five to seven years to develop a proficiency required for academic learning.

Many ELLs have come to the United States from countries where little or no English is spoken. Linguistic diversity in a classroom in the states may be a benefit as well as an obstacle. In some cases English may naturally become a lingua franca in the classroom and form a connection among students. However, in a classroom with high linguistic diversity, the students may find little support among their classmates if they cannot understand each other. When these students arrive at a foreign country, the first days may be very challenging. They have to adjust to a new social and academic environment as soon as possible. The adjustment issues of these students have been investigated in many studies (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Research has identified that they experience significant difficulties when they adjust to a new environment, and the adjustment issues include educational system differences, academic requirements, cultural differences, language challenges, food incompatibilities, time management, and social integration (Fatima, 2001; Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Kim, 2001; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008).

Research about the challenges ELLs experience indicates that many students are not mentally and culturally well-prepared for the new environment and they are unaware of so many adjustment problems they must overcome in the totally different learning settings (Li, Baker, & Marshall, 2002). Many students have limited cultural and linguistic knowledge of the foreign country when they arrive there. Because of the difference between the home country environment and the foreign country environment, ELLs are unable to handle the change effectively and efficiently (Ayano, 2006). Their real experiences in foreign countries differ from what was expected. Students feel lonely, isolated and even disappointed, as they have little knowledge and limited resources about the country, society, culture, and education. Students from different cultures have different adjustment challenges and related strategies (Cheng, Leong, & Geist, 1993; Reynolds & Costantine, 2007). Kaur (2007) identified that these students had to face challenges when they adjusted to their new academic environment because of the differences between the two academic systems including learning styles, class discussion and participation, and student-teacher relationships. Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) revealed that Asian students at a Canadian university had problems such as understanding lectures, taking notes, and answering questions. Swagler and Ellis (2003) indicated that Asian students found it difficult to socialize with their American counterparts due to differences in cultural values. Politzer (1983) also found that compared with Hispanics, Asians used more rote memorization while Hispanics used more social strategies. Cheng (1987) stated “most international students in the states must shift from lecture method to a freer learning environment. They must adapt to solving problems instead of memorizing facts and must learn to locate information themselves instead of depending on their professors” (p. 365).

Adjustment issues may be associated with the limited language proficiency and cultural knowledge and skills required to acclimate to a new environment. Among these issues, English language ability and its impact on ELLs' adjustment process is an important concern for these students (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Newman and Hartman (2012) insisted that language barriers are the main barriers for newcomers to the U.S. Language differences can be barriers to clear communication and these differences can affect their self-confidence, community, and academic involvement. The resulting obstacles to interaction result in "experiences of cultural disorientation" (Newman & Hartman, 2012, p. 2). Limited English language proficiency impacts students' participation in academic life and their adaptation in the new culture. Many ELLs are concerned about their English language ability as they may have some difficulties when being understood by native speakers. These students may think that they cannot communicate well with native speakers as they may have limited English proficiency, so they are not confident when expressing their opinions and communicating with people from other cultures. This perception affects their communication in class when discussing with others and asking and answering questions (Holmes, 2004).

According to Andrade (2005), many students' listening and comprehension skills are not good enough so they feel confused in lectures and class discussion. The researchers suggested that direct contact between native and non-native English speakers was essential for learners' English language learning. But because of the difficulties and adjustment issues, these students needed more time to study, thus they had less time for social involvement (Nicholson, 2001). Academic and social difficulties are related. Lack of English language ability makes ELLs feel isolated from their American peers because they are afraid of being embarrassed and

misunderstood. They tend to stay together and interact with fellowmen of their native language. Yeh and Inose (2003) indicated that international students often lean toward friendships with fellow international students. However, interactions with American peers help ELLs to improve spoken language, overcome challenges, and gain a better understanding of local culture. Learning a second language (L2) involves more than just mastering new information and it also involves the social and cultural aspects of the second language (Dörnyei, 1994).

With the increasing number of enrollment of ELLs in postsecondary levels in the U.S., many institutions and programs in universities are designed to provide regular academic English language courses for international students or scholars. There are over 400 educational institutions in the different regions of the United States that offer English language programs. These programs provide a variety of courses, from academic English for university-bound students to language and culture courses for travelers. The ESL programs are designed to develop functional and interpersonal English communicational skills. The Intensive English Programs (IEPs) generally require 20 to 30 hours per week in the classroom. Courses include classroom instruction, small group discussions, language labs, and out-of-class work. Intensive courses may or may not allow students to attend regular academic classes in subjects outside the English as-a-second-language curriculum. Most programs are developed as pre-academic preparatory courses, designed to prepare students for admission into a U.S. college or university (“English Language Program”, 2015). However, these programs continue to experience difficulty in developing listening and speaking competency and many ELLs do not acquire English skills quickly enough to achieve academic success in school or ensure subsequent success in life. College-level ESL courses are often limited only to developing students’

decoding skills and knowledge of syntax or vocabulary for literal comprehension (Beebe, 1988). ELLs in mainstream classrooms are often marginalized and their lived experiences are ignored by their teachers (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Teachers have little knowledge of second language acquisition, and they usually rely on their beliefs about teaching in general. There are no special academic curricula or special assistance available for ELLs in the university classrooms. “ELL’s should have full access to appropriate curricula taught by qualified teachers using appropriate instructional resources and methods that match students’ language and grade level. However, not many schools can afford such support (e.g., bilingual instructional materials, time, and specific guidelines)” (Cho & Reich, 2008, p. 238).

### **Statement of Problem**

Some research has explored effective ways to help ELLs across levels of pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade to learn to speak, read, and comprehend English effectively and efficiently (Slavin & Yampolsky, 1992). There are also reports addressing the needs of bilingual learners from elementary to high school in the U.S., for example, the Bilingual Education Act (20 U.S. C. 3283), and the No Child Left Behind Act, Title III (2002). But there have been few studies that focus on ELLs at the postsecondary level or graduate level (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011). The challenges for both the secondary and post-secondary learner are similar. However, post-secondary or graduate level English learners face unique challenges in the process of obtaining their educational goals. Galbraith (2004) revealed that these learners are varied in their physical, social, psychological, moral, and learning developmental needs. These learners come from diverse backgrounds and have unique personal, cultural, economic, and academic experiences and their needs are different from ELLs in grades K-12 settings, and it is difficult to identify

effective instruction for these learners (Condelli & Wrigley, 2004). Thus, to assist ELLs in post-secondary levels to achieve English competency required for effectively functioning in the daily communication and academic courses classroom in the new environment is a significant undertaking for ELLs as well as educators.

Learners' self-efficacy, learning strategy, and goal orientation have not yet been integratively examined in an ESL context. Researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) contend that previous studies were not able to offer effective solutions to improve language learners' motivation, autonomy, and performance because they did not address students' individual learning needs in the classroom (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994). Furthermore, fewer studies in the L2 literature explore the perspectives of ESL students in the postsecondary level. This study thus intends to bridge the gap in the field of L2 learning.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986, 1989, 1997), Oxford's learning strategy theory (1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2003) and Midgley's goal orientation theory (1996, 2000) described below provided the theoretical framework for this study.

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to self-perceptions or beliefs of capability to learn or perform tasks at designated levels. A person's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are strongly influenced by what he or she believes. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, learning is knowledge acquisition through cognitive processing of information (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The theory explains the role of cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human development and change (Bandura, 1986). He



believed that most human motivation is cognitively generated and that learners form beliefs about what they can do, anticipate likely outcomes, and set goals and plan activities based on their level of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) argued that learners with stronger efficacy beliefs would have higher performance attainments regardless of actual ability or past achievement. An individual's self-efficacy is a strong determinant of success or failure in completing tasks (Bandura, 1977). Those with high self-efficacy tend to view challenges as achievable tasks, be more interested in the tasks they undertake, be strongly committed to their assignments, and be able to rebound from disappointments and setbacks caused by the tasks they embark upon (Bandura, 1977). Those with a low sense of self-efficacy are believed to shy away from demanding undertakings; they tend to believe that difficult tasks are not achievable, are affected by their failures in completing their mission, and lack confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997).

According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. "Strategies are especially important for language learning, because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence" (p. 7). Use of strategies facilitates learners in control of learning process, increasing confidence and motivation. A strategy is helpful if "(a) the strategy relates well to the L2 task at hand, (b) the strategy fits the particular student's learning style preference to one degree or another, and (c) the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies" (Oxford, 2003, p. 8). Oxford divided language learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve direct learning and require mental

processing of the language (Oxford, 1990), which include (1) memory strategies, help learners store and retrieve new information, such as grouping, creating mental linkages, applying images and sound, reviewing, and employing action, (2) cognitive strategies, enable learners to understand and produce new language, such as reasoning, practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and summarizing, (3) compensation strategies, allow learners to use the new language for comprehension or production despite limited knowledge, and they are used to make up for “an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, especially, of vocabulary” (Oxford, 1990, p. 17). The strategies include guessing meanings from context or using gestures when the learners do not know the precise expression. Indirect strategies support learning indirectly (Oxford, 1990), which include (1) metacognitive strategies, help learners to regulate their learning, such as paying attention, planning, self-evaluating and monitoring one’s errors or the learning process, (2) affective strategies, help learners to deal with their own emotions, motivation, and attitudes, such as lowering anxiety, self-rewards, self-encouragement, (3) social strategies, refers to ways in which learners learn the language through interactions with native speakers or the target language, such as asking questions, cooperating with peers and improving cultural understanding.

Goal orientations refer to learners’ reasons or purposes for being involved in learning tasks with goal-directed and cognition-based behaviors (Midgley et al., 2000). Different goals foster different response patterns (Midgley et al., 2000). Midgley’s goal orientation theory includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The three goals used by Midgley (2000) are: (1) mastery goals (2) performance-approach goals (3) performance-avoidance goals. A mastery goal orientation has been associated with adaptive patterns of learning, whereas a performance-

avoidance goal orientation has been associated with maladaptive patterns of learning and a performance-approach orientation associated with both adaptive and maladaptive patterns of learning (Midgley et al., 2000). “When oriented to mastery goals, students’ purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to develop their competence. They seek to extend their mastery and understanding.” (Midgley et al., 2000, p. 7). Learning is interesting for these learners and they tend to focus on the task and increasing their ability. They believe that effort leads to success. When oriented to performance-approach goals, students’ purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to “demonstrate their competence”. (Midgley et al., 2000, p. 9). They focus on gaining positive external evaluation and public appraisal or recognition. They tend to attribute failure to lack of ability. When oriented to performance-avoid goals, students’ purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to “avoid the demonstration of incompetence” (Midgley et al., 2000, p. 10). They tend to avoid negative evaluation and attribute failure to their incompetence, and they are more likely to withdraw from challenging tasks.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program. Data collected was analyzed and implications were suggested for language educators to enhance ELLs’ self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and facilitate mastery goal orientations. The study provided new insights to stimulate discussions around the issues from an ELL perspective in the university classroom and also proposed instructional suggestions for language educators.

## **Importance of the Study**

Students enter class to learn English with different purposes and beliefs about their ability to accomplish class tasks. These beliefs predetermine their cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement and responses in various learning situations (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). The research on self-efficacy mainly focuses on three main themes in the field of second language learning: the relationship between self-efficacy and language performance; sources of learners' self-efficacy beliefs; and the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies.

It is paramount to help ELLs address their difficulties and increase their feelings of self-efficacy. Increasing students' self-efficacy and strategy use are important to consider when students do not consider themselves as successful learners (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). "Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence" (Oxford, 1990, p. 7). Strategy training can improve learners' performance and enhance self-efficacy (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991). Schunk (1995) also maintained that strategy instruction raises self-efficacy because strategies help students to process academic material. Teaching students about different strategies may be more important for improving actual performance on classroom academic tasks, and improving students' self-efficacy beliefs may also lead to more use of these strategies (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Researchers believe that successful language learning relies on several interacting factors, and the learning paradigms need to be expanded to include constructs that have shown compelling predictive values in learner behaviors which might provide more insightful information as for how to improve ELLs' motivation and performance (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994;

Oxford & Shearin, 1994). ELLs' goals and self-efficacy contribute to not only their learning behaviors in language but also predict their chances of continuing language learning after completing program requirements.

Researchers who support the cognitive view of motivation believe that goals provide learners directions and momentum toward completing learning tasks (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Goal-directed actions are essential for language learners since what they have in mind will influence how they approach and engage in the language learning tasks. The goals behind students' learning actions are closely linked with their motivation to learn, which influences their choices of actions, effort, and degree of persistence (Clark & Estes, 2002).

With this in mind, understanding the needs of ELLs and increasing their self-efficacy, strategy use and mastery goals in university settings is essential to provide appropriate instruction and services. Teaching and learning are an integral part of education. An investigation of ELLs' self-efficacy, strategy use and goal orientation and how they relate with each other and the influence of language learning behaviors could make significant contributions to both the teaching and learning processes as they relate to indicators of success. The current study can identify suggestions for instructors, administrators, and researchers in the language learning field. Furthermore, it will list appropriate instructional resources and methods that match students' current language level.

### **Research Questions**

Previous studies have not adequately addressed how to enhance ELLs' self-efficacy and strategy use and explored relationships among self-efficacy, strategy use and goal orientation. To

help language educators sustain ELLs' motivation and improve their strategy use, self-efficacy and performance, the relationships among self-efficacy, strategy use and goal orientation variables should be clarified. The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
2. What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
3. What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
4. What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has certain limitations. The first limitation is generalizability. This study explored a single American university campus whose population, personnel, programs, and environment may or may not precisely parallel others. A single university has an unusual population when compared to the university district at large because its ELL group comprises a larger percentage of the general district or community. There is a small sample size with students from ESL program in the university. The participants from ESL program include students enrolled in Intensive English Program as well as students enrolled in the course INTL 1820 and INTL 1830. Many of students who are now enrolled in the course INTL1820 and the course INTL1830 are previous Intensive English Program students and they are also taking English

class as well as academic courses. Many ELLs in the ESL program often exit high school or IEP ill prepared for the demands of using English in a college or professional setting. I considered them as under the same conditions for learning English, but outside factors may have influenced students. This is the second limitation. The third limitation involves the self-reported questionnaire. The students may not completely understand themselves and their learning process. The fourth limitation is that since few studies have investigated the self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and goal orientation of ELLs together, this study is limited by available resources for reference. The final limitation of this study is that classroom teachers did not participate. Teacher's participation would have brought the teachers' perspectives into the study and would have helped in understanding the students' behaviors in class.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*English Language Learner (ELL)/English Learner (EL)* refers to a student acquiring English whose primary language is not English and who is not proficient in English (California Department of Education, 2012).

*Goal orientations* refer to learners' situation-specific beliefs, reasons, and the purposes that lead them to approach and engage in the learning tasks with goal-directed and cognition-based behaviors (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986).

*International students* are those students who do not hold citizenship or permanent residency status in the United States. Adopted in 2006, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) convention is to use the term "international student" when referring to students crossing borders for the specific

purpose of studying. Not all international students are ELLs; those who participated in this study are, in fact, ELLs.

*Learning strategies* are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Language learners can use metacognitive techniques, affective, social, cognitive, memory, and compensation strategies to improve their learning (Oxford, 1989, 1990; Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovack, 2006).

*L2, a second (or third/fourth) language*, refers to any language other than their mother tongue.

*Mastery goal orientation*: when oriented to mastery goals, students' purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to develop their competence. They seek to extend their mastery and understanding. Attention is focused on the task. A mastery goal orientation has been associated with adaptive patterns of learning (Midgley et al., 2000).

*Performance-approach goal orientation*: when oriented to performance-approach goals, students' purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to demonstrate their competence. Attention is focused on the self. A performance-approach orientation has been associated with both adaptive and maladaptive patterns of learning (Midgley et al., 2000).

*Performance-avoidance goal orientation*: when oriented to performance-avoid goals, students' purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to avoid the demonstration of incompetence. Attention is focused on the self. A performance-avoid goal orientation has been associated with maladaptive patterns of learning (Midgley et al., 2000).



*Second language acquisition (SLA) or second language learning* is the process by which people of a language can learn a second language in addition to their native languages. It refers to learning “the language spoken in the local community and also at times serves as the generic term used to refer to both second and foreign language learning” (Cohen, 1998, P. 4).

*Self-efficacy beliefs* refer to self-perceptions or beliefs of capability to learn or perform tasks at designated levels (Bandura, 1997).

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction to the study, theoretical framework, purpose(s) of the study, importance of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II reviews relevant research literature addressing the research questions. Chapter III describes the methodology and data analysis of the study. Construction of the survey instruments is discussed in this chapter, as are the sample selections, administration of the instruments, and methods of data interpretation. Chapter IV includes demographic information, descriptions of ESL programs. The survey results also appear in Chapter IV. Survey results are shown including ELLs’ self-efficacy scores, learning strategies identified by the learners and relationships among self-efficacy, strategy use and goal orientations of the learners. Chapter V offers implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for further research. References and Appendices follow Chapter V.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Overview**

The review of the literature provides a framework for the present study by discussing the theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategies, and goal orientation in language learning. The theories on SLA and L2 motivation will first be discussed. Next, social cognitive theory and self-efficacy are discussed, followed by language learning strategy and goal orientation theory. Then, the relationships between self-efficacy, learning strategy and goal orientation in language learning are reviewed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program. Data collected is analyzed and implications are suggested for language educators to enhance ELLs' self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and facilitate mastery goal orientations. The study will provide new insights to stimulate discussions around the issues from an ELL perspective in the university classroom and will also propose instructional suggestions for language educators.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
2. What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
3. What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
4. What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?

### **SLA Theories and Individual Differences in SLA**

Previous studies have examined second language acquisition from various perspectives and many theories have been proposed to explore how language is learned and which factors influence mastery of a second language.

Table 1 shows the framework of study on SLA. From the 1950s and 1960s, behaviorism, which was characterized by basic stimulus-response approach, was a dominant theory of learning in American education, followed by theories of SLA based on Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory, which focused on learners' innate capacities to acquire a second language, and this theory now still dominates the field of SLA. The behaviorists' approach was criticized by many researchers such as John Dewey and Jean Piaget, who believed that learners are not passive receivers of knowledge and they can construct their own knowledge by building the cognitive structures (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Then, sociocultural theory was introduced, which explain SLA in terms of social environment of learners. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning involves a communicative process, and learning and cognitive development are culturally and

socially based. “Learning is a social process rather than an individual one, and occurs during interactions between individuals” (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 12). There are theories emphasizing the role of the learning environment or the social context in which the language was being learned (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). These theories did not seriously consider individual learner differences and how these differences could influence learners’ second language acquisition. Gardner’s research in 1985 moved away from the social dimension of SLA and focused on learner motivation as a primary force in enhancing or hindering learning (Dörnyei, 1999).

Table 1

*Frameworks for Study of SLA*

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Linguistic</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Social</b>
1950s and before	Structuralism	Behaviorism	Sociocultural Theory
1960s	Transformational-Generative Grammar	Neurolinguistics Information Processing	Ethnography of Communication Variation Theory
1970s	Functionalism	Humanistic Models	Acculturation Theory Accommodation Theory
1980s	Principles and Parameters Model	Connectionism	Social Psychology
1990s	Minimalist Program	Processability	

*Note.* Reproduced from “Introducing Second Language Acquisition” by M. Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 24. Copyright 2006 by Cambridge University Press.

In the 1980s, research began to focus on individual’s characteristics and how these characteristics influence learner’s capability of language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Individual differences are strong indicators of learners' potential success in second language acquisition (Raofi, Tan & Chan, 2012). Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) defined individual differences as "possible characteristics of individuals that will influence how successful different individuals will be at learning another language" (p. 344). They identified the most frequently investigated individual differences in SLA which include language anxiety, language aptitude, attitudes and motivation, field dependence/independence, learning strategies, and self-confidence. It is also suggested that in SLA studies individual differences include age, aptitude, culture, gender, language learning strategies, language learning styles, motivations, learner's beliefs, and self-esteem (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1992; Saville-Troike, 2006). These individual difference variables are associated with the language learning success (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Gardner, 2001; Gardner et al., 1997).

### **Motivation Theories in Second Language Acquisition**

From the previous SLA research on individual differences, it can be seen that learner beliefs and learning strategies and how they influence second language learning has been a major concern. Since the 1960s, the related research began to shift focus from methods of learning to factors that influence learning. When literature on self-efficacy and goal orientation is reviewed, motivation is inevitable to discuss first. Motivation has been identified as an influential contributor to language learning success (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Motivation drives students to make effort and to persist on various learning tasks (Clark & Estes, 2002; Gardner, 2001), which are two elements in measuring students' level of self-efficacy. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) noted motivation as "the process

whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained” (p. 4). Although Gardner (1985) separated learners’ goal orientation from motivation since he considered that it is the language learners’ attitudinal inclination that determines the final learning outcome, not goals, he recognized that L2 motivation has a quality of goal-directedness, and goals are seen as a central element in motivation studies.

The major L2 motivation work has been associated with Gardner and his colleagues who have been investigating the influences of social factors on L2 learners since 1972. Robert Gardner proposed that learning context is less important than motivational factors in determining learners’ ultimate success and he also introduced the idea of integrative versus instrumental motivations (Dörnyei, 1999). While acknowledging his contribution to the field of L2 motivation, several researchers have argued that Gardner’s model did not explain the motivational issues in the foreign language classroom. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) pointed out that this approach did not have strong predictive utility of students’ behavioral responses.

In the early 1990s, L2 motivation researchers started considering alternative motivational concepts that are more in accordance with actual teaching and learning situations (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Skehan, 1991). Dörnyei (1994) built upon the data collected in these previous studies to promote a more pragmatic, education-centered approach to further self-efficacy research. Believing that learning environment had more influence on motivation than previously thought, Dörnyei felt that there was a need to move from building theoretical frameworks to immediate classroom application of previous results. His published work helped push research from defining motivation to practical applications of motivational techniques. Dörnyei (1994) proposed that L2 motivation researchers should develop alternative explanations for students’

motivation to learn. The new directions in research are expected to provide more insightful information about how language learners differ in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Dörnyei, 1994), which influence their choice of action, effort, and persistence along the path of L2 learning.

According to Tremblay and Gardner (1995), motivational behaviors are the “characteristics of an individual that can be perceived by an observer” (p. 506). They explained that motivational behavior could be expressed by someone who is always volunteering to demonstrate something, participate in a project, or challenging him or herself to try something new. Whereas, motivational antecedents are “factors that cannot be readily perceived by an external observer, but still influence motivational behavior through their cognitive or affective influence” (p. 507). An essential part of motivational antecedents are the characteristics of expectancy and self-efficacy.

A dominating paradigm in motivation research is the expectancy-value theory, which proposes that learner’ motivation is influenced greatly by their expected success in tasks and the value placed on that success (Dörnyei, 1999). It is composed of three components: attribution theory, self-worth theory, and self- efficacy theory. Attribution theory examines how success or failure in past events affects future efforts and outcomes, while self-worth theory is based on the idea that an individual’s highest motivating factor is saving face. Self-efficacy theory, by contrast, focuses on learners’ judgment of their innate ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1986, 1989).

## Self-efficacy

In the framework of second language acquisition, self-efficacy is used to describe the way a learner feels about his or her ability to learn or improve proficiency in a second language. Bandura (1977) was first to present, research, and expand on the construct of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as referring to self-perceptions or beliefs of capability to learn or perform tasks at designated levels. He pointed out that self-efficacy beliefs influence how people motivate themselves, think, feel, and act (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1997) believed that most human motivation is cognitively generated and that learners form beliefs about what they can do, anticipate likely outcomes, and set goals and plan activities based on their level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs lay the groundwork for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Pajares, 2002). It is assumed that learners possess the ability to reflect and regulate their actions and to shape their environment rather than just react to it. Self-efficacy is not about learning how to succeed, but rather it is about how to keep trying when one does not succeed (Pajares, 2006).

According to Bandura (1977), people with high self-efficacy are different from those with low self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) stated that learners with higher efficacy beliefs would have higher performance attainments regardless of actual ability or past achievement. Those with high self-efficacy tend to view challenges as achievable tasks, be more interested in the tasks they undertake, be strongly committed to their assignments, and be able to rebound from disappointments and setbacks caused by the tasks (Bandura, 1977). Those with a low sense of self-efficacy are believed to shy away from demanding undertakings; they tend to believe that difficult tasks are not achievable, are affected by their failures in completing their mission, and



lack confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997).

## **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory was first developed for use in the field of psychology to explain how different forms of motivation influence the learning of particular behaviors. The social cognitive theory was first known as the social learning theory and was proposed in 1941 by Miller and Dollard. In 1963, Bandura and Walters added in principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement to improve the theory (Pajares, 2002). In 1977, Bandura first discussed self-efficacy in his book *Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change* since he found that an important element of self-beliefs had not been discussed in the social learning theory. Bandura continued the self-efficacy research in education with Schunk, Pintrich, Pajares, and Zimmerman. In 1986, Bandura changed the name of the theory to social cognitive theory, which separated the theory from social learning theories, and since then he continued the research on human functioning and explored what is truly central to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). The social cognitive theory explains the role of vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in learner development in conjunction with human functioning and also emphasized the importance of cognition in an individual's ability to self-regulate, perform behaviors, and understand information and complete tasks and it also offers an approach to motivation and self-regulatory development (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 2006). Through self-reflection, people can understand and explore their own self-beliefs, cognition and behavior (Pajares, 2002).

The greater the learner's foresight, proficiency, and means of self-influence, all of which are acquirable skills, the more successful the learner is in achieving what she seeks (Bandura, 1997).

According to the theory, the outside conditions like economic, socioeconomic and educational conditions or structures do not directly affect human behavior, and instead, they influence aspirations, self-efficacy beliefs, values, emotions, and other self-regulatory responses (Pajares, 2002).

### **Self-efficacy and Achievement**

Past research concluded that an individual's self-efficacy is a strong determinant of success or failure in completing tasks and high levels of self-efficacy have been associated with high levels of achievement (Bandura, 1977). Tremblay and Gardner (1995) also supported that self-efficacy is a greater determinant of success than environment, societal pressure, or innate ability. Students with high levels of self-efficacy outperformed those with low levels of self-efficacy even if those with high levels were less prepared academically (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991; Schunk, 1989). Schunk (1989) also revealed that an individual's self-efficacy is a better predictor of intellectual accomplishment in academics than skill alone. These findings are supported by Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, and Hall (2003): "Self efficacy determines aspect of task engagement including which tasks individuals choose to take on, the amount effort, persistence, and perseverance they demonstrate with regard to the task, and their feelings related to the task" (p. 423). According to Bandura (1997), a person's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are strongly influenced by what he or she believes. Efficacious students "sustain their work longer, because they anticipate that they will succeed at the end of the task" (Wiseman & Hunt, 2001, p. 40). Self-efficacious individuals view attainments as under their control. The level of perseverance devoted to a task is supported by perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When students believe they are capable of performing well on an academic task, they are motivated to

perform well, engage in the task, and work harder, for longer portions of time. These behaviors are essential for academic success. Even when failing at a task the level of self-efficacy plays a role in the learner's cognitive processing of the outcome (Bandura, 1997). Individuals with high self-efficacy will contribute failure to lack of effort or situational impediments while those with low self-efficacy are more likely to contribute the failures to lack of ability (Bandura, 1997).

There are four main contributors to a person's self-efficacy: mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses (Bandura, 1977). Mastery experiences means that an individual's self-efficacy can be increased when the person successfully completes tasks or assignments. However, if the individual fails to positively deal with life's challenges, his or her self-efficacy is lowered. Social modeling refers to observing others accomplish their tasks. Individuals' self-efficacy is raised by their belief that they, too, can successfully perform the tasks they observed others perform. Social persuasion is important to a person's self-efficacy because other people's encouragement raises an individual's confidence in completing difficult tasks. Psychological responses refer to a person's mood, level of stress, and state of mind. The way a person feels about performing a task can raise or lower self-efficacy. A high level of stress towards a particular task can lower the person's self-efficacy. If the person can elevate his or her mood to overcome this level of stress, then self-efficacy increases (Bandura, 1977).

It is important to examine some terms and definitions that can be mistakenly confused with self-efficacy: motivation, self-confidence, self-concept, and self-esteem. While self-efficacy is used interchangeably with motivation in some fields, there is a significant difference in their definitions according to Bandura (1997). Motivation is a broad concept that includes external and internal influences that affect outcomes while self-efficacy is focused only on the internal beliefs

of the learner. Self-confidence is sometimes used as a construct that has many of the same features as expectancy and self-efficacy. Self-confidence in language learning research tends to include anxiety, while self-efficacy does not. Self-confidence is usually measured at the time of testing, while self-efficacy is considered a perceived proficiency and is therefore tested in the future or at the end of a study (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Self-concept is defined by Bandura (1997) as a composite view of self formed by direct experience as well as evaluations from significant others. It is an attitude toward self and a general outlook on life. While self-concept is an encompassing self-image, self-efficacy focuses only on the perception of ability related to a specific task. Self-efficacy is highly predictive of behavior while self-concept is weaker and more equivocal (Bandura, 1997). Unlike self-efficacy, self-esteem is concerned with judgments of one's self worth. It is the concept of one's overall place within the culture and environment and how the individual judges personal achievement compared to others. Self-esteem, as defined by Bandura, is a general concept that remains consistent across multiple tasks. Self-efficacy is particular to a given task. Bandura believed that it took more than high self-esteem to attain goals. Achievers can have a strict performance judgment and standards, thus having high self-efficacy but perhaps struggling with self-esteem. Furthermore, perceived self-efficacy predicts what goals an individual will set and performance attainment, while self-esteem has little effect on either (Bandura, 1997).

### **Research on Self-efficacy of ELLs**

Bandura's work on self-efficacy was grounded in psychology but many scholars from other fields including nutrition, mass communication, and second language acquisition have conducted research and made attempts to apply the theory into different disciplines (Bandura, Barbaranelli,

Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

In recent research about self-efficacy and SLA, focus has been shifted from expanding Bandura's theories to developing empirical evidence through the creation of standardized instruments to measure learner's self-efficacy. Studies also have focused on a variety of factors and correlations, such as the relationship between self-efficacy and language performance, and sources of learners' self-efficacy beliefs. A few studies examined relationships between students' self-efficacy and cognitive processing and behaviors.

Huang and Chang (1996) explored four university-aged learners' English self-efficacy beliefs and their relationship to achievement in a mixed methods study by using questionnaires and interviews. They examined what influenced learners' self-efficacy, how self-efficacy influenced achievement, and how achievement influenced self-efficacy. The results concluded that learners' self-efficacy did not correlate with learning achievements; achievements did correlate with ability perception; interest in topics influenced self-efficacy; and the teacher played a large part in learners' self-efficacy. One possible explanation for the mixed results is a lack of task criterion correspondence. Templin (1999) found that, on an English test, high efficacy students obtained significantly higher grades than low efficacy students. Wong (2005) looked at the overall language self-efficacy of ELLs in Malaysia and how self-efficacy influenced their language learning strategy use. Participants, a group of 74 students training to become English-language teachers, were given 10 hypothetical learning contexts and asked to rate their confidence in carrying out each task correctly on a 10-point Likert scale. Participants were also given a companion language learning strategies questionnaire to identify the strategies they used in English learning. It is found that participants who had a higher level of self-efficacy

also reported greater use of learning strategies. Strategies most often mentioned were cognitive (i.e., use of English listening, reading, and writing outside of classroom) and social (i.e., assistance from interlocutors). The study also found that participants with low self-efficacy used context to guess meanings they did not understand while those with high self-efficacy tried to find the meaning of misunderstood information by enlisting interlocutors or seeking print resources. The results of this study suggested that self-efficacy might be increased by teaching learning strategies to students, particularly the strategies that were most often mentioned by learners. Based on her results, Wong also suggested that the negative attitude of learners with low self-efficacy should be addressed within the classroom to improve overall performance (Wong, 2005).

Teng (2005) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, motivation and learning activities of students in Taiwan. There were 654 students from three colleges in Taiwan who were majoring in English, business, or engineering as the participants in the study. The study also was the first research of its kind focused on Taiwanese learners of English. The results indicated that gender, academic major, English score and career goals all had significant effects on students' self-efficacy and motivation. It was also found that students with a higher self-efficacy in English learning were more likely to become self-directed than students with lower self-efficacy.

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) revealed that ESL students with high levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy tend to experience lower levels of stress and direct energy toward improving their attitude of cultural adjustment. The study also found these students experienced a higher level of stress in their first period of arriving to the U.S. These students experienced a number of

concerns such as accommodations, communication, transportation, social interaction with native speakers and local culture, health insurance, discrimination and academic life. Leclair, Doll, Osborn, and Jones (2009) examined whether ELLs' descriptions of classroom supports for learning were different from the descriptions of non-ELL students or not. The study also explored ELL's perceptions of classroom and general education students' perceptions of classroom. The Class Maps Survey was used in the study. Classroom relationships and supports for self-regulation were surveyed. It is revealed that ELLs rated themselves significantly lower in academic efficacy and rated their non-ELL classmates as having higher levels of behavioral self-control and more likely to follow class rules compared to the ratings of non-ELL students. This research also suggested teachers should effectively support ELLs' academic engagement and improving the academic and social experiences of ELLs in U.S. schools.

Gahungu (2007) explored the interrelationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy and language ability in university foreign language setting. The researcher used two surveys, a cloze test, interviews, and class observations to collect data. It was found that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between language learning strategy use and language ability, between strategy use and self-efficacy, and between self-efficacy and language ability of participants. The findings revealed that students should take a more active role in their foreign language learning rather than rely only on the instructors. Students need to be trained in the use of strategies, and they should be motivated in their learning. Magogwe and Oliver (2007) examined English language learning strategies used by Botswana students and the relationship between language strategies, age, proficiency, and self-efficacy beliefs. Data was collected from 480 students from primary schools, secondary schools, and a tertiary institution. The adapted versions of the Oxford's Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and the Morgan-

Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) were used as instruments in this study to collect data. The results were consistent with previous language learning strategy studies (e.g., O' Malley & Chamot, 1990) and found that more proficient students used more overall strategy than less proficient students. It was also indicated that Botswana students used a number of language learning strategies, but they had preferences for particular types of strategies (e.g., social strategies) since these strategies were culturally more appropriate. There was a relationship between type of strategy use and successful language learning, but it was mediated by factors such as self-efficacy beliefs. The study also indicated that a positive significant relationship between self-efficacy and overall strategy use of students across all proficiency levels, but the relationship was not strong. There was also interplay of relationship between use of language learning strategies and proficiency, level of schooling and self-efficacy beliefs. Secondary and tertiary students were more likely to choose metacognitive strategies than primary students perhaps due to their level of cognitive development. Strategies should be incorporated into curriculum and teachers should explicitly teach students how to use strategies.

Hsieh and Schallert (2008) found self-efficacy was the strongest predictor, supplemented by ability attributions, in predicting achievement. Students who attributed failure to lack of effort had higher self-efficacy than students not making effort attributions. The findings indicate that when students report a low level of self-efficacy, helping them view success and failure as an outcome that they can control may increase their expectancy for success and lead to actual successful learning. A similar study conducted by Hsieh and Kang (2010) also proposed self-efficacy as a good indicator of academic achievement and additionally attribution was an important indicator of achievement. Successful learners attributed their success to internal, personal factors. It was suggested teachers pay attention to cognitive beliefs, not just



performance. If teachers can facilitate learners in being more aware of their cognition, motivation, and behavior in language learning then, students could get more control of outcomes and achievement (Hsieh & Kang, 2010).

Tilfalioglu and Cinkara (2009) compared the self-efficacy scores of students in three proficiency levels (i.e., pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper intermediate) at an English as a foreign language (EFL) program in Turkey to explore EFL self-efficacy level in relation to their academic success in English. The English as a foreign language self-efficacy questionnaire (EFL-SEQ), which was translated into Turkish, was used in this study. The EFL-SEQ consists of 40 items scored on an 8-point Likert scale. One hundred and seventy five preparatory students participated in this study to examine whether students at higher proficiency levels would show a higher level of self-efficacy than those at lower levels. It was found that EFL students had high level of self-efficacy in language learning tasks. There was a significant positive correlation between high self-efficacy and high levels of English proficiency. It was suggested that strategy instruction could help to raise self-efficacy and indices of academic motivation need to be examined in the future and further studies could examine the relations between goal orientations and self-efficacy which could provide insights to the concept in educational setting (Tilfalioglu & Cinkara, 2009).

Rahimi and Abedini (2009) explored the relationship between self-efficacy and proficiency in listening comprehension for Iranian freshmen majoring in English literature enrolled in intermediate-level English as foreign language classrooms. A questionnaire designed by the researcher and a Listening Diagnostic Pre-Test from the Longman TOEFL were used to collect data. After comparing listening comprehension with results from other aspects of English

instruction, results showed that self-efficacy had a substantial influence on success in listening comprehension. In order to promote self-efficacy of learners in the classroom setting teachers should praise what is praiseworthy, emphasize skill development, and foster optimism. Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012) identified a significant strong positive correlation between high self-efficacy scores and improvement in reading comprehension skills. There was also a relationship between high self-efficacy scores and students reading strategy use (Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012). Four strategies were identified in this study--cognitive, metacognitive, compensatory, and testing. Cognitive strategies were most often identified, followed by testing. Results showed that students who employed a combination of the four strategies also proved to have the highest self-efficacy scores. Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012) believed that their results showed a need for learning strategies to be explicitly taught to learners. They also believed that teaching learning strategies could aid independent study and learning of language outside the classroom.

Idrus and Sivapalan (2010) investigated students' self-efficacy scores and success in oral English communication as well as factors that contributed to their sense of self-efficacy. One hundred and seventy first semester pre-university Malaysian students in English 1 classes participated in this study. The contributing factors included: learner ability, activity perception, and aspiration that achieving fluency in a second language would bring personal and professional success (Idrus & Sivapalan, 2010). A questionnaire adapted from Bandura and Mikulecky and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Results of this study indicated that it is not just an overall sense of self-efficacy that benefits learning, but a particular belief in one's language learning abilities and perception of potential for success in particular language-learning activities. Idrus and Sivapalan concluded that when a student found a learning strategy that improved performance, this realization could lead to greater overall self-efficacy. This finding

makes it important for teachers to be aware of the self-efficacy level of their students and provide students with various strategies for learning so that individuals can find strategies that best work for their learning style.

Most of these studies found a positive relationship between learner self-efficacy and learner success, whether it be in a particular facet of second language learning or an overall evaluation of learner proficiency. Another similarity is that most studies were conducted in non-native English language environments with a focus on learners of a similar national origin. There are few studies focusing on English as a second language learning settings. The topic of perceived self-efficacy in the field of ESL has been rarely investigated although its study is particularly important for language learning (Huang, Lloyd & Mikulecky, 1999). With strong but limited current research in the field of English as a second language and learner self-efficacy, it is important to conduct studies to investigate the relationship between second language learning and self-efficacy in other learning groups and environments. The present study focuses on ELLs in a U.S. university setting. Many students study English outside their native countries and in programs where students are from diverse national and language backgrounds. Because self-efficacy has an impact on ELLs learning outcomes and success, more research is needed to investigate whether previous findings would be replicated through studies of diverse populations of English as a second language students studying in a single, native English learning environment. If the impact of self-efficacy is consistent in different language and learning environments then learning strategies identified in previous studies could be applied to these populations. Conclusions not consistent with previous studies would indicate that there may be something unique about these situations that influences self-efficacy or learning outcomes and would be an avenue for additional research.

## Learning Strategies

Individual differences involving general factors will influence the rate and level of L2 achievement. But how does their influence operate? One possibility is that they affect the nature and the frequency with which individual learners use learning strategies. According to cognitive learning theories, learners are active participants in the learning and teaching process rather than passive recipients. They do not just receive information from teachers as learning process involves learners processing information which includes mental activities (Hosenfeld, 1976; O' Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). The aim of using strategies is to “affect the learner’s motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge” (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 315). Oxford (1989) defines language learning strategies as “the often-conscious steps of behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information” (p. 4). Cohen (1998) defines language learning strategies as:

Those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language. (p. 4)

Learning strategies are the particular approaches or techniques that learners employ to try to learn an L2. Language learning strategies are conscious or potentially conscious actions and learners can identify them in their learning process (Cohen, 1998). Learning strategies consist of “mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use” (Ellis, 1994, p. 529), in other words, they can be behavioral (for example, repeating new words aloud to remember them) or they can be mental (for example,

using the synonyms or situational context to infer the meaning of a new word) (Ellis, 1997).

Strategies can make learning “easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Strategies are also long-range, compared with learning tactics, which are often used interchangeably with learning strategies. Learning tactics are short-term use of particular behaviors or devices while learning strategies are long-term process and learners use different strategies in their different stage of learning process (Ellis, 1997; Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Cohen, 1992). Learners employ different learning strategies when they are faced with different problems, so learning strategies are also problem-oriented which also can be found in Oxford’s studies. Oxford (1990) identified twelve key features of language learning strategies as follows:

Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence;

Allow learners to become more self-directed;

Expand the role of the teachers;

Are problem-oriented;

Are specific actions taken by the learners;

Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive;

Support learning both directly and indirectly;

Are not always observable;

Are often conscious;

Can be taught;

Are flexible;

Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Many researchers have focused on how successful or good language learners try to learn and tried to identify what strategies worked for them to find which strategies are effective for language learning (Ellis, 1997). The assumption is that once successful learning strategies were identified, they can be taught and learned by less successful learners to improve their language learning (Rubin, 1975). The methods of data collection include interviews, observations, students self-report, questionnaires and diaries. Rubin (1975) identified that good L2 learners are accurate guessers; willing to communicate and practice; are often uninhibited; monitor speech; and pay attention to meaning. Stern (1975) investigated strategies used by good language learners, and the identified strategies include:

Planning strategy: a personal learning style or positive learning strategies; Active Strategy: an active approach to the learning task; Empathic strategy: a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers; Formal strategy: technical know-how about how to tackle a language; Experimental strategy: a methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it; Semantic strategy: constant searching for meaning; Practice strategy: willingness to practice; Communication strategy: willingness to use the language in real communication; Monitoring strategy: self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use; Internalization strategy: developing a second language as a separate reference system and learning to think in it. (p. 309)

Stern's classification provided an initial framework for further research on the language learning strategies. Compared with Rubin's study, Stern's strategies classification shares some similarities with Rubin's, such as willingness to practice and communication, attention to

meaning and self-monitoring. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978) claimed the need “to study critically the different inventories of learning strategies and techniques and to develop an exhaustive list, clearly related to a learning model” (p. 220). Researchers have identified different kinds of language learning strategies (Cohen & Chi, 2004; Naiman et al., 1978; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Purpura, 1999; Rubin, 1981; Wong-Fillmore, 1979). Naiman et al. (1978) identified five major learning strategies by observing, testing and interviewing successful and unsuccessful learners in a university. The five strategies are: active task approach; realization of language as a system; realization of language as a means of communication; management of affective demands; and self-monitoring. Wong-Fillmore (1979) examined five Mexican children learning English in school and found three social strategies (i.e., join a group or seek friend’s help) and five cognitive strategies (i.e., look for recurring parts in the known formulas or make the most of what you have got) used by children to increase their communicative competence. Wong-Fillmore also argued that social strategies could increase the amount of exposure to the target language for learners so they were more important than the cognitive strategies. Rubin (1981, 1987) proposed three major strategies directly or indirectly support language learning. The first one is learning strategy including cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Rubin explained cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which can contribute directly to language learning. Cognitive strategies in learning require analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning material while metacognitive strategies refer to regulating or self-directed learning such as planning, goals setting or self-management. Rubin identified six direct learning strategies compared with indirect strategies: 1) clarification/verification strategies, including asking for verification or confirmation for the language rules; 2) guessing/ inductive reasoning, which can be used to infer meaning based on what students knew in the language; 3)

deductive reasoning, which refers to learners using rules or knowledge of the language to deduce hypotheses about the language forms; 4) practice, which can be used in repetition or applying rules or focusing on the accurate use of language rules; 5) memorization, which refers to use techniques to store and retrieve new information; 6) monitoring, which include identifying and correcting errors. The second major type is communication strategies, which contribute less directly to learning and the third major type is social strategies, which are used when learners are involved in tasks and apply or practice their knowledge (Rubin, 1987).

Although there are some differences because of different participants and contexts, all these classifications of learning strategies have many similarities, but there is no consensus. Since the publication of books by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), and Wenden (1991), the research of language learning strategy began to attract the major attention in the field of second language acquisition, among which O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990)'s classification are two of the best known.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) developed three types of strategies, namely metacognitive strategies (selective attention, planning, monitoring and evaluating learning activity), cognitive strategies (rehearsal, organization, inferencing, summarizing, reducing, imagery, transfer, and elaboration), and social/affective strategies (cooperation, questioning for clarification, and self-talk).

Oxford (1990) proposed a more detailed classification model of language learning strategies based on the synthesis of the previous work on good language learning strategies and her classification is "the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies" (Ellis, 1994, p. 539). She divided language learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct



strategies involve direct learning and require mental processing of the language (Oxford, 1990). The strategies include memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies support indirectly but are powerful to learning process (Oxford, 1990). These strategies include metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Oxford also developed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which has two versions, one for English speakers learning a new language (version 5.0) and the other for speakers of other language learning English (version 7.0). In other words, one can be used for ESL students and the other can be used for English as a foreign language (EFL) students. But she did not distinguish the differences between the ESL and EFL students. To examine language learners' strategy use many researchers still use SILL to collect data (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1996; Griffiths, 2003; Yang, 1996).

Based on the previous research on successful language learners, Ellis (1994) summarized five major aspects of good or successful learners including: “a concern for language form; a concern for communication; an active task approach; an awareness of the learning process; and a capacity to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements” (p. 546). Wenden (1991) proposed two main kind of learning strategies: cognitive strategies (select information, comprehend, store and retrieve information) and self-management strategies (monitor or manage learning process such as regulatory skills or self-directed learning skills). Another commonly used language learning strategy inventory designed by Cohen and Chi (2004) is the Learning Strategy Use Inventory. The inventory is divided into listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, and translation sections to measure strategy use. In the present study the most commonly

used questionnaire—SILL are adopted to measure ELLs’ strategy use. Table 2 represents the major classifications of language learning strategies.

Table 2

*Classification of Language Learning Strategies*

Researcher	Classification					
Stern (1975)	Planning Strategy	Active Strategy	Empathic Strategy	Formal Strategy	Experimental Strategy	
	Semantic Strategy	Practice Strategy	Communication Strategy	Internalization Strategy		
Naiman et al (1978)	Active task approach	Realization of language as a system	Realization of language as a means of communication	Management of affective demands	Self-monitoring	
Rubin (1987)	Direct Strategies			Indirect Strategies		
	Learning Strategies		Communication Strategies		Social Strategies	
	Cognitive Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies				
O’Malley & Chamot (1990)	Cognitive Strategies		Metacognitive Strategies		Social/Affective Strategies	
Oxford (1990)	Direct Strategies			Indirect Strategies		
	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Wenden (1991)	Cognitive Strategies		Self-Management Strategies			

Language learners can use memory, metacognitive, affective, cognitive, social, and compensation strategies to enhance their language learning. The successful learners are more likely to use strategies according to specific tasks, context, or different needs. The more effective learners used strategies more “appropriately, with greater variety, and in ways that helped them

complete the task successfully” (Chamot & Kupper, 1989, p. 17). Successful language learners are more flexible and appropriate in their use of learning strategies (Ellis, 1997). Different strategies have been reported associated with different learning styles (Oxford & Cohen, 1992). Various factors have been found to influence learners’ choice of language learning strategies. Ellis (2008) claimed that factors influencing learners’ choice of learning strategies include learner factors and social and situational factors. Chamot and Kupper (1989), Oxford (1994), Oxford and Ehrman (1995), Oxford, Nyikos, and Ehrman (1988) identified factors that influenced the choice of language learning strategies including gender, age, cultural background, motivation, attitudes and beliefs, type of task, learning style and teacher perceptions. Motivated learners are more likely to use more strategies than less motivated learners and the reasons for studying the language also contribute to the choice of learning strategies. Learners with negative attitudes or beliefs often use less effective strategies (Oxford, 1994; Oxford & Nyikos, 1993).

Politzer (1983) found that Hispanics and Asians had differences in the choice of language learning strategy use. Hispanics used more social strategies while Asians used more memorization strategies. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) also claimed that the perceptions of good strategies are ethnocentrically-based and similar findings also found that Asian students preferred strategies such as rote memorization and language rules instead of communicative strategies (Tyacke & Mendelsohn, 1986). Bedell and Oxford (1996) explored strategy use of students from different cultural backgrounds. It was found that students with Hispanic background had high scores in metacognitive strategies while Asian students used more social, metacognitive, cognitive and compensation strategies and higher proficient students used more strategies overall than less proficient students.

According to Oxford, Nyikos and Ehrman (1988), females use more social strategies than males. Dreyer and Oxford (1996) had a similar finding that female students used more metacognitive strategies than male students in their study.

Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) claimed that high proficient learners used more functional strategies to enhance communicative skills. O' Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mazanares, Russo and Kupper (1985) interviewed and observed 70 high school students who learned English in classrooms. It was found that beginning and intermediate level students used more cognitive strategies than metacognitive strategies, but intermediate level students still used more metacognitive strategies than beginning level students, which indicated strategy use may be associated with proficiency level. Both levels of students preferred note-taking, repetition, cooperation, and asking for clarification. Older or more advanced learners used more complex strategies and certain strategies were identified often by advanced learners (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Chamot and El-Dinary's (1999) noted that high-achieving children used greater metacognitive strategies while low-achieving children used greater cognitive strategies. Ellis (1997) also argued that good language learners are especially good at metacognitive strategies. Abraham and Vann (1987) found that very successful learners used a greater variety of learning strategies and they preferred guessing the meaning, paraphrasing and using more clarification strategies. It reinforced Phillips' (1991) study, which explored 141 Asian adult ESL learners strategy use in the U.S. It also found that more proficient students used more paraphrasing, setting goals or avoiding verbatim translation. Advanced-level students used strategies more frequently than elementary-level students (Griffiths, 2003). High achievement group students reported significantly more different strategies than low achievement group. Less successful students were more likely to use same strategies available to them (Pape & Wang, 2003). In

conclusion, successful learners used strategies more frequently, flexibly and with greater variety. They are more effective at monitoring and adapting their strategies and they can use inference or background information to learn the language. However less effective learners tend to overuse one or two major ineffective strategies (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999). Dörnyei (1994) discussed strategies that motivate learners as follows:

...develop students' self-confidence through regular praise, encouragement, and reinforcement, making sure that students regularly experience success and a sense of achievement... and involving students in more favorable and easier activities; promote students' self-efficacy with regard to achieving learning goals by teaching students learning and communication strategies, as well as strategies for information processing and problem-solving; promote favorable self-perceptions of competence in L2 (second language) by highlighting what students can do in the L2 rather than what they cannot do, encouraging the view that mistakes are part of learning; decrease student anxiety by creating a supportive and accepting learning environment in the L2 classroom... and applying anxiety-reducing activities and techniques; promote motivation-enhancing attributions by helping students recognize links between effort and outcome and attribute past failures to ...the use of inappropriate strategies rather than to lack of ability; and, encourage students to set attainable sub-goals. (p. 281)

According to Dörnyei strategies are not the end for language instruction, but are suggestions or techniques for enhancing learner's motivation, self-efficacy and confidence in language learning. Dörnyei emphasized the significance of regular praise, positive reinforcement, supportive environment, teaching students problem-solving, communication, and information

processing skills, emphasizing students' abilities rather than inabilities, etc. It is also indicated that language learning strategies can be trained and taught, which is also suggested by many researchers (Cohen, 1998; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003).

Learner training should facilitate learners having access to methodological resources such as techniques and activities, and using a criterion for selection of materials (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Cheng (2000) claimed that “any teacher, Western or Eastern, who plans to use methodologies which inevitably involve students' participation must make sure that the students are familiar with and accept such methodologies” (p. 444). Teachers and researchers have recognized the importance of training learners in effective strategy use to promote learner autonomy (Brown, 1994; Oxford, 1996; Wenden, 1991). Teachers are encouraged to choose appropriate teaching techniques and learning strategies suitable for students and teach learners how to understand learning strategies to enhance levels of self-directed learning (Reder & Strawn, 2001; Tarone, 1980; Rubin 1981). Murray (2004) also maintained that teachers needed to use the most appropriate methods, procedures, and activities to promote learner autonomy by “modeling for students strategies which they can use in self-directed learning” (p. 6).

Oxford (1990) explained, “Strategies are especially important for language learning, because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence.” (p. 7). An active use of strategies facilitates learners in control of developing language skills, increasing confidence and motivation in the learning process (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Strategy instructions enhance learners' independent learning and autonomous learning and help learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Ellis,

1997). The more strategies a learner uses, the more the learner feels in control of their learning process and will be more self-efficacious (Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovack, 2006). Strategy training can enhance self-efficacy and help learners to become autonomous (Ellis, 1997; Schunk & Rice, 1987). The studies on learning strategies also indicate that self-monitoring behavior characterizes autonomous and successful learners (e.g., Wang & Peeverly, 1986).

The present study concerns self-efficacy and strategy use of language learners in an ESL setting and higher education setting. Most studies that looked at self-efficacy or learning strategies did not combine the two in an ESL setting. More studies should examine self-efficacy awareness and learning strategies within an ESL curriculum. The present study will explore relationships between self-efficacy, goal orientation and learning strategy. Goal orientation will be presented and discussed in the following sections.

## **Goal Orientation**

### **Goal and Orientation Theory of Motivation**

A goal is defined as “the object or aim of an action, for example, to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit” (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705). Goals represent what learners try to achieve as well as reasons for accomplishing learning tasks. Different types of goals are associated with different cognitive, affective, or behavioral responses. There is a significant interaction between students’ motivational goals and cognitive performance (Barker, McInerney, & Dowson, 2002). Researchers who support the cognitive view of motivation believe that goals can give learners directions and momentum toward completing tasks (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Goal orientations refer to learners’ reasons or

purposes for involving learning tasks with goal-directed and cognition-based behaviors (Dweck, 1986; Midgley et al., 2000). Goal orientation represents an integrated pattern of beliefs that leads to “different ways of approaching, engaging in, and responding to achievement situations” (Ames, 1992, p. 261). Goal-directed behaviors are important for language learners since what they have in mind will influence how they approach and engage in the learning tasks. Different goals foster different response patterns (Midgley et al., 2000). In addition, goal orientation “can reflect a type of standard by which individuals will judge their performance or success, which then has consequences for other motivational beliefs such as attributions and affect as well as actual performance and behavior.” (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, p. 234).

Goal orientation theory includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Midgley et al., 2000). This theory is considered to be highly relevant to explaining different academic behaviors and performances (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). According to goal-orientation theory, motivation can be defined by the general goals that students pursue in the process of learning or in achievement-related environments (Ames 1992; Dweck 1986). Dweck and Elliot (1983) pointed out that students’ engagement in achievement activities is motivated by a set of goals. Students feel successful when they reach goals and this feeling of success increases the students’ interest in learning, and then students are more likely to continue goal setting, use effective strategies, and seek feedback (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007).

### **Types of Goal Orientation**

Learners enter learning situations with different goals, which result in different response patterns of learners in competence-related activities (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). There are different goal orientations, but the two that are always represented in the different goal



orientation theories have been labeled learning and performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988), or task-involved and ego-involved goals (Maehr, 1983; Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1984), or mastery and performance goals (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1987, 1988) or task-focused and ability-focused goals (Maehr & Midgley, 1991). Although there is some disagreement about whether these terms represent the same constructs, they have many overlapping components that lend them to be treated as similar concepts. Mastery and performance goal orientations have appeared in the L2 literature (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In the present study the terms mastery and performance goals are used to refer to the two general goal orientations. And traditionally, theorists have described motivation in terms of both approach and avoidance tendencies (Atkinson, 1957; Lewin, Dembo, Festinger, & Sears, 1944; McClelland, 1951). The three goals most commonly used by theorists and empiricists (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Midgley et al., 2000) are: (1) mastery goals (2) performance-approach goals (3) performance-avoidance goals.

Mastery goals focus on acquiring new knowledge or skills and which characterize individuals who enjoy participation in activity for its own sake (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Midgley et al., 2000). When oriented to mastery goals, a student's purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to develop new skills, competence or achieve a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards (Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1983; Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988; Midgley et al., 2000). These learners, regardless of their perceived ability, often have a mastery-oriented response to failure and they focus on the task and enhancing their understanding, ability and mastery. They believe that effort leads to success (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Midgley et al., 2000).

A mastery goal orientation has been associated with adaptive patterns of learning. (Dweck,

1986; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Midgley et al., 2000). Students who perceive an emphasis on mastery goals in the classroom report to use more effective strategies, prefer challenging tasks, take risks, persist in the face of difficulty, express intrinsic interests in learning activities, have a more positive attitude toward the class, and have a stronger belief that success follows from one's effort (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck, 1986; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Meece et al., 1988). Mastery goals are reported as positive predictors of learning achievement (Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot, 2005; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007; McGregor & Elliot, 2002; Skaalvik, 1997).

When a performance goal is adopted, students are primarily concerned with their ability and sense of self-worth. Task choice and pursuit process is built on learners' concerns about their ability level (Dweck, 1986). Ability is measured by performing better than others, by surpassing normative-based standards, or by achieving success with minimal effort (Ames, 1992). In other words, performance goal-oriented students value learning outcomes and determine their progress by comparing themselves with norms, not their prior learning experiences. Students tend to evaluate their ability negatively, because ability is evident by doing better than others and students tend to attribute failure to lack of ability (Ames & Archer, 1988). Learners with this type of goal seek to maintain favorable judgments of their ability or avoid negative evaluation (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Learning is a means to an end. Ability is perceived as a fixed and stable trait and students' self-worth is determined by perceptions of their abilities to perform. As a consequence, student's learning interest tends to decrease and they tend to avoid challenges, withdraw efforts when they encounter difficulty in order to avoid appearing incapable (Covington & Omelich, 1979a, 1979b; Dweck, 1986; Elliott & Dweck, 1988). It was also found that students with high performance goals had a lower level of cognitive engagement and were

more likely to present behaviors such as gaining social recognition, pleasing the teacher, or avoiding work (Meece, et al., 1988). Elliot and Church (1997) revealed that mastery goals facilitated intrinsic motivation while performance goals had negative effects on intrinsic motivation and graded performance.

Individuals may be motivated by the desire to attain success or to avoid failure (Middleton & Midgley, 1997). A distinction between the two different types of performance goals is helpful to determine their independent influences on motivation, behavior, and performance.

According to Midgley et al. (2000), when students oriented to performance-approach goals, their purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to demonstrate their competence (Midgley et al., 2000). They try to gain positive external evaluation or favorable judgments or public recognition that they have achieved better than others (Elliot & Thrash 2001; Midgley et al., 2000). These learners' attention is focused on the self, and they want to demonstrate their ability relative to others or gain public appraisal of their performance by outperforming them and publicly displaying their task-relevant knowledge or skills. Compared with mastery goals, performance-approach goals are conceptualized to share similar cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences to mastery goals, but the purpose behind these responses is to demonstrate ability, earn public recognition, and get good course grades. A performance-approach orientation has been associated with both adaptive and maladaptive patterns of learning (Midgley et al., 2000). It is found that approach goals have either a negative or no relationship on positive thoughts (McGregor & Elliot, 2002), feelings (Harackiewicz et al., 2002), and behaviors (Wolters, 2003) when a difficulty arises.

Students with performance-avoidance goals tend to avoid appearing incompetent and

incapable (Meece et al., 1988). Their purpose or goal in an achievement setting is to avoid the demonstration of incompetence. Compared with mastery and performance-approach orientation, performance-avoidance oriented students also focuses more on public display of competence than on developing new knowledge or skills, but rather than seeking to best their peers, they seek to avoid negative external evaluation and they avoid being assessed as incompetent (Middleton & Midgley, 1997). According to Midgley et al. (2000), a performance-avoidance goal orientation has been associated with maladaptive patterns of learning. The learners with performance-avoidance goal orientation tend to choose easier tasks, withdraw from challenging tasks, invest only limited mental effort on language tasks and view failures as evidence of their incompetence. Students with performance-approach goals have been found to demonstrate higher adaptive patterns of cognition, motivation, affect, and behavior than those who with performance-avoidance goals (Pintrich, 2000a). Students with mastery goal orientation have been found to predict their performance of a task requiring long-term retention of information, whereas performance-avoidance was negatively related to performance on that task (Utman, 1997). However, Elliott and Dweck (1988) indicated that performance goals are likely to elicit mastery orientations for some positive outcomes (e.g., demonstrate ability, obtain public recognition) in a competence-related task. Researchers have called for an incorporation of mastery goals, approach, and avoidance goals to form a triochotimous goal model (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Harackiewicz et al. (2002) found that, although approach goals had the strongest predictability of performance, only mastery goals predicted long-term interest in terms of taking advanced courses.

In general, goal theory researchers have consistently suggested that the mastery orientation is the positive predictor for learning behaviors and achievement, and they generally agree that

mastery goals are more productive than performance goals and approach goals are more productive than avoidance goals. However, a controversy has arisen about whether performance-approach goals should be considered productive and there is no consensus as for its predictability and effects on learners' behavior change, thus whether it should be recommended to teachers as desirable complements to mastery goals or not has not been agreed to in the research.

### **Relationships among Self-efficacy, Learning Strategy and Goal Orientation**

After presenting theories and studies about self-efficacy, learning strategies and goal orientation separately, this section will examine studies that relate to the relationship among self-efficacy, learning strategies and goal orientation.

Self-efficacy is an important cognitive factor that has shown a relationship with different types of goals (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Students with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to invest more efforts and persistence for their goals and use better and more strategies to attain their goals than do students with low self-efficacy beliefs (Ellis, 1989; Jacobs, Prentice-Dunn, & Rogers, 1984; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Students with higher confidence or positive perceptions in their ability tend to become more mastery-oriented by being involved in challenging tasks and showing positive affect and greater persistence in the face of difficulties, whereas students with low confidence or negative self-perceptions are more likely to have performance goal orientation by avoiding challenging tasks and showing low persistence in the face of difficulties (Dweck & Elliott, 1984). Some researchers believed that self-efficacy is a primary motivational source influencing self-regulatory changes thus contributing to performance while others claimed that using strategy to influence self-efficacy is by making the task appear easier so that students believe they are capable of completing the task (Zimmerman

& Kitsantas, 2002; Wolters, 1998). More strategy use then results in a greater sense of self-satisfaction and motivation, persisting longer in the learning tasks, and more capable of enhancing actual performance on academic tasks in the classroom.

The use of strategies is related to learner's self-efficacy beliefs, beliefs of the usefulness of the task, and motivation (Huang & Chang, 1998; Pajares & Valiante, 1997; Wolters, 1998; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) found that frequent use of cognitive strategies correlated with high levels of self-efficacy by using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MALQ) in their study. It is indicated that improving students' self-efficacy beliefs will most likely enhance more cognitive strategies use. Consequently, using more cognitive and self-regulatory strategies will enhance students' actual performance in the classroom (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Ching (2002) had similar findings that if students are given the right tools, like strategies, their self-regulation and self-efficacy beliefs may improve. Chularut and DeBacker (2004) examined ESL college students' use of learning strategy for reading comprehension as well as its relationship to self-regulation, self-efficacy, and achievement. The results showed that strategies could assist students' cognitive, affective, and motivational performance. An active use of strategies is helpful for learners to be in control of developing language skills, increasing confidence and sustaining their motivation in the learning process (Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). The use of strategies can mediate between achievement goals and students' course achievement (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999).

Boekaerts (1996) claimed that successful learners are more self-efficacious and more capable of adopting appropriate strategies, whereas less successful learners have lower self-

efficacy and academic goals and using strategies ineffectively. Locke and Latham (1990, 2002) found that goals facilitated students investing efforts and using strategies for the related activities and tasks. Students with a goal and self-efficacy to attain the goal are most likely to try to get involved in the related activities. Through monitoring progress towards obtaining the goal and receiving feedback, learners realize they are more skillful and through this process their self-efficacy is enhanced (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Bandura (1997) also indicated that self-efficacy is enhanced as goals are set, performance monitored, adjustments are made based on feedback, and goals are attained.

For students with mastery goal orientation, learning is inherently interesting, an end in itself (Midgley et al., 2000), thus, students with higher mastery goals are more likely to report better emotional states and enhanced well-being (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999). Schunk and Ertmer (1999) found that mastery goals led to higher self-efficacy, self-regulatory competence, and strategy use. A number of studies found that students with mastery goals used more effective learning strategies, but students with performance goals were found not to use learning strategies frequently or used ineffective learning strategies (Ames, 1984; Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991; Meece, et al., 1988; Nolen, 1988; Pintrich, 1989; Stipek & Kowalski, 1989).

It has been reported that students with higher levels of mastery goals used more deep information processing strategies and self-regulated strategies (Ames, 1992; Bandalos, Finney, & Geske 2003; Cleary & Chen 2009; Pintrich, 2000b; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Wolters 2004). Wolters (1998) also found students who were mastery goal-oriented used more intrinsic regulation strategies to sustain efficacy and interest, whereas performance goal-oriented students

tended to use more extrinsic regulation strategies (e.g., self-rewarding) to maintain their motivations. Students who had a higher level of mastery goals are also expected to use more adaptive help-seeking (Karabenick 2004).

In terms of performance goals, a positive relationship between performance goals and use of learning strategies has been found, although the positive relationship between mastery goals and use of learning strategies is stronger (Meece, et al., 1988). Garcia and Pintrich (1991) and Hagen (1992) have similar findings that students' use of metacognitive strategies may be increased not only by mastery goals but also by performance goals.

Performance goals have been reported associated with ineffective or the superficial use of strategies (Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Students with performance goal orientations are likely reluctant to take risks or seek help since they want to avoid exposing their inability or incompetency (Ames, 1992; Butler & Neuman, 1995; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). They may also feel anxious about tests and evaluation, because that might reveal their lack of ability. Furthermore, they may also feel less positively about their ability to master tasks (efficacy) (Middleton & Midgley, 1997). Students who fear to be judged incompetent are more likely to adopt strategies to avoid demonstrating inability (Covington, 1992). Ryan and Pintrich (1997) had a similar finding that performance-approach goal oriented students tend to avoid seeking academic help. Students with avoidance goals also have been reported positively related to avoiding seeking help (Middleton & Midgley, 1997).

Students with performance goals tend to have negative affect after experiencing failure or positive affect following effortless success (Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Some studies have found a positive relationship between performance-approach goals and perceived



academic efficacy (Midgley, 1993; Midgley & Urdan, 1995; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996). But, Anderman and Young (1994) found a negative correlation between performance-approach goals and perceived academic efficacy. They also identified that a performance-approach orientation was negatively correlated with the use of deep cognitive strategies, but positively correlated with surface level strategies.

Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) did experiment with college students to examine the predictive value of the approach and avoidance achievement goal. It was found that only avoidance goals would reduce students' intrinsic motivation. Skaalvik (1997) also found that only avoidance goals decreased learners' task involvement and intrinsic interest. McGregor and Elliot (2002) had similar findings that approach goals were positive predictors of positive affects such as eagerness, hope, and excitement while avoidance goals were positively related to negative affects such as worry, fear, and anxiety.

The relationship between performance goals and educational behaviors and outcomes is not clearly defined. It was expected that mastery orientation would have the highest positive relation with self-efficacy, followed by performance-approach orientation. Conversely, it was expected that the performance-avoidance orientation would be negatively correlated with self-efficacy. It is essential that teachers understand the value and importance of different types of goal orientations. There is not enough evidence about their predictability, and there is little in the L2 motivation literature about how L2 learners' goals affect their learning behaviors.

The present study includes three types of goals--mastery goals, performance-approach goals and performance-avoidance goals and explores the relationships among each type of goal orientation, self-efficacy and learning strategies. In the ESL field, many researchers have

conducted studies to investigate relationships among self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategies, and performance (Chamot, 1987; Ellis, 1989; Huang, Lloyd, & Mikulecky, 1999; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Oxford, 1989; Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 2003). However, these relationships have not been widely examined in the context of L2 learning.

### **Summary**

This chapter has briefly reviewed Bandura's social cognitive theory and related self-efficacy studies in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. Higher levels of self-efficacy have been associated with positive learning behaviors, cognitive processing and outcomes. In recent studies pertaining to self-efficacy and SLA, focus has been on developing empirical evidence to measure learner's self-efficacy and to explore a variety of factors and correlations for learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Then language learning strategies were presented after self-efficacy. Historical issues of language learning strategies are briefly reviewed. From these studies it can be seen that researchers focus has been shifted from identifying different strategies to factors that influence the choice of learners' strategy use. Researchers also examined what strategies used by successful and unsuccessful learners. It was concluded that successful learners used strategies more frequently and flexibly. Different classifications of language learning strategies also have been discussed. There are some differences based on contexts, but generally, there is no major difference and six major language learning strategies have been identified: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Factors that influence learners' strategy use include gender, cultural background, age, motivation, and beliefs about language learning. Goal orientation theory was discussed followed the learning strategy. The three major types of goal orientations were presented one by one. The last part of this

chapter involves research about the relationships between self-efficacy, language learning strategies, and goal orientation. After this review of the literature, Chapter III will demonstrate the methods of this study in detail.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to investigate self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program and to understand how their self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and goal orientation relate with each other and influence their language learning. This study included an analysis of data gathered from a self-report questionnaire, which was voluntarily completed by ELLs. The questionnaire chosen to collect data for this study was the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) designed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), designed by Rebecca Oxford, and The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) developed by Midgley and other researchers. This chapter consists of the following sections: (1) research questions, (2) participants, (3) instruments, (4) data collection procedures, (5) validity and reliability, and (6) data analysis.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?

2. What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
3. What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
4. What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?

### **Participants**

Because this study explored ELLs' self-efficacy, language learning strategies and goal orientation within an ESL setting for ESL group students, the participants of this study were students who were taking English courses in ESL program at a southeastern university in the United States of America. They were selected as a possible participant because they were enrolled as a student in the ESL program, and they were age 18 or older. They had to be English language learners who were enrolled in English language classes in the U.S. during the period of time of this study and they had to have attended at least one semester ESL class in the U.S. The above criteria were to ensure the ESL participants had the identical educational background prior to their participation in the study.

All participants were from an ESL program in a southeastern public university in the U.S. The university, located in the South, was founded in 1856. Its fall 2015 semester enrollment was 27,287. There are more than 140 degree options in 13 schools and colleges at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels in the university. If the non-native English speakers' English

proficiency does not meet the requirement for taking the regular school classes, they will be required to take English lessons, which are designed for the ESL students. For the college level students, it is usually the ESL program that does the language skills training for these students. Before the students enter the language program, they are tested on their language proficiency. The language program then assigns each student to the proper level of class according to their language ability. Once they complete all the levels of the language program, they are qualified to register in the college or university to take regular classes. Another way the students might skip the language program is to take the TOEFL (Testing of English as a Foreign Language) test. Once their scores on the TOEFL test meet the school requirement, they can register for the regular classes directly. But if they want to work as a teacher assistant or research assistant and their English language proficiency does not meet the requirement, they have to take the English courses also.

All the participants in this study are from ESL programs and include students enrolled in the Intensive English Program (IEP) as well as students enrolled in the course INTL1820, *Classroom Communication for International Teaching Assistants*, and the course INTL 1830, *Writing Proficiency in English for International Students*. The IEP offers intensive English instruction, orientation to American culture, and TOEFL preparation to international students and scholars from throughout the world. This ESL program is designed for those who are not completely proficient in English and who would like to improve their English skills in a pleasant, academic environment. The IEP is open to persons eighteen years of age or older who have already attained a basic knowledge of English. The IEP participants are students preparing for study in an American university, business people and professionals seeking to improve their English

communication skills, and visitors to the United States who want to study English while becoming familiar with American culture.

### **Instruments**

The English Language Learning survey was used in the study (Appendix A). The survey consists of four measures: Demographic Information, the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), and the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS).

The demographic information was developed based on several previous studies (Oxford, 1990; Park, 1995; Yang, 1992). It was designed to elicit students' demographic information such as gender, age, major, and educational background, self-assessed level of English proficiency and reasons to learn English. This section was designed to provide additional information about the participants and at the same time help contextualize the results of the self-efficacy and learning strategy and goal orientation questionnaires.

The English Language Learning Survey was adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 1996, 2000). As for the questionnaire MSLQ, the researcher chose to include only the sections of the questionnaire that pertained specifically to the study: Self-efficacy. Regarding the questionnaire version 7.0 SILL and the questionnaire PALS, the researcher used them to measure students' language learning strategy use and goal orientation respectively. The original questionnaires were used with the only modification—

changing all the word “class” in the original questionnaires to “English class” to insure their suitability for the group of participants in this study.

### **Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire**

There are many instruments to measure learners’ self-efficacy and in this study self-efficacy was assessed using the expectancy component scale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich et al., 1991). This questionnaire has been validated and used by many studies. It was developed by Dr. Paul Pintrich and his colleagues at the University of Michigan to evaluate the effectiveness of a “Learning to learn course” for college undergraduates (Pintrich et al., 1991). The MSLQ was developed based on a social-cognitive view of motivation (Pintrich, 2003). This questionnaire is an 81 item, self-report instrument designed to assess college students’ motivational orientations and self-regulated learning for a specific course (Pintrich et al., 1991).

It contains two sections: (1) a motivation section and (2) a learning strategies section. According to the MSLQ Manual, the motivation section consists of 31 items concerning students’ goals in a course, beliefs about their success in a course, and their anxiety about tests in a course. The learning strategies section includes 31 items, which are about students’ use of different cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In addition, the learning strategies section includes 19 items regarding student management of different resources (Pintrich et al., 1991). The MSLQ consists of 15 sub-scales, six within the motivation section and nine within the learning strategies section. The motivational beliefs are further subdivided into self-efficacy, intrinsic goal orientation, and test-anxiety. Self-regulated learning strategies are divided into cognitive strategy usage and self-regulation (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). The instrument is



completely modular, and thus the scales can be used together or individually, depending on the needs of the researcher. This study only used the self-efficacy subscale in MSLQ to measure self-efficacy beliefs of students (See Appendix A—part A). The items measure participants' beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform a task such as, "I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course", "I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course" and "I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course" (Pintrich et al., 1991). Students rate themselves on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me). Scores for the individual scales are computed by taking the mean of the items that make up the scale.

According to Rosnow and Rosenthal (2005), validity is defined as "how well the measure or research design does what it purports to do" (p. 139) and reliability is defined as "consistency or stability" (p. 140). The authors of the MSLQ completed two confirmatory factor analyses to determine "the utility of the theoretical model and the operationalization of the MSLQ scales" (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & Mckeachie, 1993, p. 805). One analysis was for the motivation section and another for the learning strategies section (Pintrich et al., 1991). The majority of the Cronbach's alphas for the individual scales were greater than .70. Among them the largest one was self-efficacy for learning and performance, the alpha= .93. Overall, these results suggested the MSLQ had relatively good internal reliability. As for the zero-order correlations between the different scales, they were fairly robust and suggested that the scales in this questionnaire were valid measures of the motivational and cognitive constructs (Pintrich et al., 1991; Pintrich et al., 1993).

## **Oxford Language Learning Strategies and Strategies Inventory for Language Learning**

A lot of attempts have been made to develop instruments to measure learning strategies (Brown & Holtzman, 1967; Christensen, 1968; Cohen & Chi, 2004). The best known and most used inventory for measuring foreign and second language learning strategies is the Oxford Language learning strategies and Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

The SILL was created by Oxford (1990) to identify the variety and frequency of use of language learning strategies. The questionnaire contains 50 items (ESL/EFL version) with six categories of strategies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The questionnaire is self-scoring and students rate themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (“never or almost never true of me”) to 5 (“always or almost always true of me”). According to Oxford (1990), items with means ranging from 1.0 to 1.4 on SILL indicate that the items are “never or almost never used,” between 1.5 to 2.4 indicate that the items are “generally not used,” between 2.5 to 3.4 indicate that the items are “sometimes used,” between 3.5 to 4.4 indicate that the items are “usually used”, between 4.5 to 5.0 indicate that the items are “always or almost always used”.

The SILL has been field-tested and used by many studies after it was developed in 1986 (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). It is widely considered as a quantitative instrument with high reliability and validity in examining learner’s language learning strategy use (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). Many studies have used the SILL 7.0 (EFL/ESL versions of the SILL) in the United States. These studies have had Cronbach alphas of .91 (Oxford & Bury-Stock, 1995), .92 based on Japanese students using Japanese translation and .91 based on EFL students in Puerto Rico using Spanish translation in Watanabe’s study (1990), in Taiwan the reliability was .93 in

Yang's study (1992). The Cronbach's alpha, which indicates the internal consistency reliability of the survey items, was .936 for the sample of 198 participants in this study. As for the content validity, according to Oxford (1986) the inter-rater agreement of SILL, which correlates two judges' ratings, was .95. It is statistically a high level of agreement. Regarding content validity, SILL can be used for both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student, and SILL has been widely used, so the use of SILL is justified.

### **The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales**

The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 1996) was designed by Midgley and other researchers at the University of Michigan. The PALS has been developed and refined over time using goal orientation theory to examine the relation between the learning environment and students' motivation, affect, and behavior. The PALS was first developed based on research showing that a differential emphasis on "mastery" and "performance" goals is associated with adaptive or maladaptive patterns of learning (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Maehr, 1984; Midgley et al., 1996). Furthermore, a performance goal orientation can be conceptualized in terms of both approach and avoidance components (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Skaalvik, 1997). Therefore, the personal goal orientations were developed to include not only mastery and performance goals but also to differentiate between performance-approach and performance-avoid dimensions. This study used The Patterns of Adapted Learning Survey with these three dimensions to measure students' goal orientations (Midgley, et al., 1996, 2000). The three subscales are mastery goal orientation, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientation.

The task or mastery goal orientation scale has six items that focused on efforts to acquire

new knowledge or skills. The performance or ego approach goal orientation scale has five items focusing on students' desires to outperform others. The performance or ego avoidance goal orientation scale has six items concerned with students' avoidance being assessed as incompetent. The PALS is a self-report scale and students rate themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 ("not at all true") to 5 ("very true"). Example items of the scale are "An important reason why I do my class work in this English class is because I like to learn new things," and "Doing better than other students in English class is important to me."

Median splits were created for each of the three subscales to determine whether students are high or low on each goal orientation. The PALS and SILL use the same 5-point Likert scales, so in this study the two questionnaires added together were considered as the second part—"Language Learning Strategy and Goal Orientation" in the "English Language Learning Survey" with the Likert scale from 1 ("never or almost never true of me") to 5 ("always or almost always true of me") (See Appendix A--Part B).

According to Midgley et al. (2000), regarding the mastery goal orientation scale of PALS,  $\alpha = .86$ , and performance-approach scale,  $\alpha = .86$ , and performance-avoidance scale,  $\alpha = .75$ . In the current study, comparable alpha coefficients of .83 (mastery goal), .88 (performance-approach), and .88 (performance-avoidance) were generated.

As for the mastery goal orientation scale, high scores above the mean were viewed as mastery goal oriented, same as the performance-approach goal orientation scale and the performance-avoidance goal orientation scale on the 5-point Likert scale (Midgley et al., 2000). The means of mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals for each participant were derived from the sum totals of the subscale items averaged by the number of

responses to the subscale items. Overall subscale means were based on the average of the mean responses from each student in the sample. Higher mean scores on the mastery subscale indicates a mastery goal orientation, higher mean scores on the performance-approach subscale indicates a performance-approach goal orientation, and higher mean scores on the performance-avoidance subscale indicates a performance-avoidance goal orientation.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

With the help from students taking English courses at the ESL program and several teachers who were teaching in ESL program at the university, 207 students participated in answering the English Language Learning Survey in the spring and fall semester of 2015. The participants were students from the Intensive English Program as well as the course INTL1820, *Classroom Communication for International Teaching Assistants*, and the course INTL 1830, *Writing Proficiency in English for International Students*.

The researchers first contacted the head director and two major instructors and coordinators of the ESL program to receive permission to conduct this study with students in the ESL program. After obtaining permission from them, the researcher asked the English instructors' permission to distribute the surveys and assistance in collecting responses from their students. Permission to conduct this research was granted by the IRB office (See Appendix F).

At the beginning of the data collection process, the participants were informed about three aspects before receiving the English Language Learning Survey. First, the purpose of this study, which was to discover self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategies use and goal orientations reported by this group of people. Secondly, the data they provided may help teachers in ESL programs or

in higher education ESL setting as they may find it useful for effective teaching. Thirdly, their participation in this study was completely anonymous and voluntary. There were no foreseeable risks associated with this study. The participants were asked to honestly answer in terms of how well the statement describes them according to their own English learning experience in the U.S. It was made clear that there was no right or wrong answer for each item. All the participants were informed that all of the personal information, answers, and responses collected from them would be kept confidential.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

All collected data were analyzed by using SPSS-PC 14.0. The survey scales were tested for their reliability and yielded Cronbach alpha scores. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected data, and the analysis methods were chosen and employed based on each research question. The descriptive analyses were conducted to scrutinize demographic variables and an independent sample t-test was used to investigate students' self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and goal orientation in relation to age and gender. In order to answer the aspects regarding the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methods used to examine the self-efficacy, learning strategies, goal orientations of participants in relation to age and gender. The population used in this study were students who were enrolled in the ESL program courses at a southeast public university during the Spring and Fall semester. The instrument used for data collection was the

English Language Learning Survey, which was adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, et al., 1991), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), and the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 1996, 2000). The descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient were used to analyze the quantitative data. In the following chapter, the findings and results are presented and addressed based on the research questions.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

In this chapter, the results and findings from data analyses were presented. The demographic data were presented. Then, the results and findings for each research questions were presented along with descriptive and inferential analyses in tables.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program. Data collected were analyzed and implications were suggested for language educators to enhance ELLs' self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and facilitate mastery goal orientations. The study provided new insights to stimulate discussions around the issues from an ELL perspective in the university classroom and also proposed instructional suggestions for language educators.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?



2. What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
3. What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
4. What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?

### **Demographic Results**

The total number of students who participated in this research was 207. Among those responses, 9 were eliminated because they were incomplete. Therefore, 198 responses were included in the analysis for this study. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of 198 survey participants by each demographic group. The male participants consisted of 55.6% and the female participants consisted of 44.4%. There were more responses from males than females.

The participants who had high school diplomas consisted of 47.0%; bachelor's degree was 33.8%; master's degree was 16.7%; doctorate was 2.5%. The majority of this study had a high school diploma as a previous educational level.

The participants who were between the age of less than 25 (18-24) was 58.1% and more than 25 consisted of 41.9%, specifically, between the age of 18-29 consisted of 81.3%; 30-39 was 8.6%; 40-49 was 8.1%; and 50-59 was 2.0%. The majority of participants of this study were between 18-29 years of age.

The participants who were Asian was 70.2%, Arab/Middle Eastern consisted of 15.2%, African consisted of 2.0%, European was 1.5%, and participants from Brazil, Mexico and Colombia was 11.1%. Most of the participants of this study were born in Asia.

Table 3

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristics	f	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	88	44.4%
Male	110	55.6%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	115	58.1%
25-59	83	41.9%
<b>Geographic Background</b>		
African	4	2.0%
Asian	139	70.2%
European	3	1.5%
Middle Eastern	30	15.2%
American (including Brazilian, Colombian, Mexican)	22	11.1%
<b>Years of Study English</b>		
Less than 5 years	61	30.8%
5-10 years	82	41.4%
More than 10 years	55	27.8%
<b>Highest Education Level</b>		
High school	93	47.0%
Bachelor	67	33.8%
Master	33	16.7%
Ph.D.	5	2.5%
<b>Self-Perceptions of Overall English proficiency</b>		
Excellent	14	7.1%
Good	108	54.5%
Fair	71	35.9%
Poor	5	2.5%

## Reliability

With the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha test, the results of the tests for self-efficacy, each type of strategy and each goal orientation are presented in Table 4. A value of .70 or higher was considered evidence of reliability (Becker, 2000). The value of Cronbach's Alpha for self-efficacy was .903. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for each strategy was as follows: memory strategy, .814; cognitive strategy, .815; compensation strategy, .705; metacognitive strategy, .835; affective strategy, .704; social strategy, .799. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for each type of goal orientation was as follows: mastery goals, .833; performance-approach goals, .883; performance-avoidance goals, .880.

Table 4

### *Reliability of the English Language Learning Survey*

	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-efficacy	8	.903
Strategies		
Memory	9	.814
Cognitive	14	.815
Compensation	6	.705
Metacognitive	9	.835
Affective	6	.704
Social	6	.799
Goal Orientations		
Mastery	6	.833
Performance-approach	5	.883
Performance-avoidance	6	.880

## Discussion of Findings

### Research Question 1

The first question for this study was “What are the self-efficacy belief beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?” SPSS software was used to perform the descriptive statistics to examine the scores of self-efficacy beliefs. The mean score of self-efficacy is 5.48. The subscale of MSLQ used to measure self-efficacy is a 7-point Likert scale, which indicates that participants in this study have a positive self-efficacy belief. SPSS software was used to perform the independent sample t-test to examine the differences of self-efficacy based on their gender and age. Table 5 shows the differences of self-efficacy beliefs between male students and female students was not significant. However, as shown in Table 6, students more than 25 years old (M=5.65) had a significantly greater self-efficacy than students less than 25 years old (M=5.36),  $t(198)=-2.23, p=.027<.05$ . The value of Cohen’s  $d$  effect was 0.33 indicating a moderate effect size.

Table 5

#### *Summary of Variation in Self-efficacy by Gender*

Self-efficacy	Female (N=88)		Male (N=110)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
	5.58	.857	5.40	.933	1.337	.183

\*  $p<.05$

Table 6

*Summary of Variation in Self-efficacy by Age*

Self-efficacy	<25 (N=115)		≥25 (N=83)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
	5.36	.932	5.65	.835	-2.230	.027*

\*  $p < .05$ **Research Question 2**

The second research question for this study was “What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?” SPSS software was used to perform the independent sample t-test to examine the differences of strategy use between less than 25 years old and more than 25 years old students, between male and female students. According to Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), a mean score of all participants in the range of 3.5 to 4.4 (always or almost always used) and 4.5 to 5.0 (usually used) on a SILL item was considered to reflect high use of that strategy, 2.4 to 3.4 (sometimes used) medium use, and 1.0 to 1.4 (never or almost never used) and 1.5 to 2.4 (usually not used) low use.

The results of the t-test analyses are illustrated in Table 7. As shown in Table 7, overall, there was a significant difference of strategy use between students more than 25 years old ( $M=3.50$ ) and less than 25 years ( $M=3.67$ ),  $t(198)=2.519$ ,  $p=.013 < .05$ . The value of Cohen’s  $d$  effect was 0.35 indicating a moderate effect size. Four of six strategy categories except for the metacognitive and memory category had significant differences between less than 25 years old

students and more than 25 years old students. Students who were less than 25 years old ( $M=3.40$ ) had a significantly greater affective strategy use than students who were more than 25 years old ( $M=3.11$ ),  $t(196)=3.11$ ,  $p=.002<.01$ . The effect size (Cohen's  $d$  effect= $0.45$ ) was moderate. Students who were less than 25 years old ( $M=3.74$ ) utilized cognitive strategies significantly more frequently than students who were more than 25 years old ( $M=3.58$ ),  $t(196)=2.16$ ,  $p=.032<.05$ . The value of Cohen's  $d$  effect was  $0.30$  indicating a moderate effect size. In addition, students who were less than 25 years old used compensation strategies ( $M=3.80$ ) significantly more frequently than students who were more than 25 years old ( $M=3.62$ ),  $t(196)=2.09$ ,  $p=.038<.05$ . The effect size (Cohen's  $d$  effect= $0.30$ ) was moderate. Finally, students who were less than 25 years old used social strategies ( $M=3.87$ ) significantly more frequently than students who were more than 25 years old ( $M=3.60$ ),  $t(196)=2.62$ ,  $p=.009<.01$ . The effect size (Cohen's  $d$  effect= $0.37$ ) was moderate. There was no significant difference of other specific learning strategies in relation to age. Among these strategies, social, metacognitive and compensation strategies were the most often used strategies for both group of students. The means of overall strategy for both groups ( $M=3.67$ ;  $3.50$ ) also showed that participants in this study always or almost always used language learning strategies in their English language learning process.

Table 7

*Summary of Variation in Language Learning Strategy by Age*

Strategies	<25 (N=115)		≥25 (N=83)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Memory	3.38	.688	3.35	.692	.303	.762
Cognitive	3.74	.515	3.58	.535	2.162	.032*
Compensation	3.80	.543	3.62	.660	2.089	.038*
Metacognitive	3.86	.608	3.74	.623	1.343	.181
Affective	3.40	.648	3.11	.649	3.113	.002**
Social	3.87	.609	3.60	.842	2.621	.009**
Overall	3.67	.466	3.50	.505	2.519	.013*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

However, overall, there was no significant difference of strategy use between female students and male students. For the use of six strategy categories, there was no significant difference between female and male students in this study.

### Research Question 3

The third research question for this study was “What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?” SPSS software was used to perform the independent sample t-test to examine the differences of goal orientation based on

their gender and age. The results of the t-test analyses are illustrated in Table 8. There was only a significant difference of mastery goal orientation between female (M=4.01) and male students (M=3.80),  $t(198)=2.087$ ,  $p=.038<.05$ . The effect size (Cohen’s  $d$  effect=0.30) was moderate. It indicated that female students had a greater tendency of using mastery goals than male students. No other types of goal orientation produced significant differences based on learners’ gender.

A series of t test for independent means was used to examine the difference in learners goal orientations based on their age. The results of the t-test analyses shows that there was no significant difference of goal orientation produced based on their age.

Table 8

*Summary of Variation in Goal Orientation by Gender*

Type of Goal Orientation	Female (N=88)		Male (N=110)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Mastery	4.01	.644	3.80	.734	2.087	.038*
Performance-approach	3.38	.996	3.47	.958	-.623	.534
Performance-avoidance	2.95	.971	3.06	.931	-.819	.414

\*  $p<.05$

**Research Question 4**

The fourth research question for this study was “What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?” A Pearson product-moment correlational analysis was conducted to examine if there



was any statistically significant relationship among self-efficacy, overall learning strategy, affective strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, memory strategy, metacognitive strategy, social strategy, mastery goals, performance-approach goals, and performance avoidance goals. The results are illustrated in Table 9. There was a positive correlation between self-efficacy and overall strategy use ( $r=.28, p<.01$ ), cognitive strategy ( $r=.29, p<.05$ ), compensation strategy ( $r=.24, p<.05$ ), memory strategy ( $r=.16, p<.05$ ), metacognitive strategy ( $r=.32, p<.01$ ), social strategy ( $r=.29, p<.01$ ), and mastery goals ( $r=.34, p<.01$ ). Whereas, self-efficacy was negatively correlated with performance-avoidance goals ( $r=-.19, p<.01$ ). There was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and affective strategy, self-efficacy and performance-approach goals.

Overall strategy also positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.56, p<.01$ ), performance-approach goals ( $r=.31, p<.01$ ) and performance-avoidance goals ( $r=.21, p<.01$ ), among which the correlation between overall strategy and mastery goals was strong since  $r=.56>.50$ . A strong positive correlation was determined when the Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) between two variables was greater than  $.50$  (Green & Salkind, 2011).

Specifically, affective strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.37, p<.01$ ), performance-approach goals ( $r=.35, p<.01$ ) and performance-avoidance goals ( $r=.38, p<.01$ ). Cognitive strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.45, p<.01$ ) and performance-approach ( $r=.19, p<.01$ ), but there was no correlation between cognitive strategy and performance-avoidance goals. Compensation strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.23, p<.01$ ) whereas no significant correlation was found between compensation strategy and performance-approach goals, compensation strategy and performance-avoidance

goals. Memory strategy was positively correlated with all types of goal orientations as follows:  $r=.46$ ,  $p<.01$  in mastery goals,  $r=.33$ ,  $p<.01$  in performance-approach goals,  $r=.23$ ,  $p<.01$  in performance-avoidance goals. Metacognitive strategy was also positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.55$ ,  $p<.01$ ), performance-approach goals ( $r=.31$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and performance-avoidance goals ( $r=.15$ ,  $p<.05$ ), among which the correlation between metacognitive strategy and mastery goals was strong. Finally, social strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals ( $r=.51$ ,  $p<.01$ ) while there was no significant relationship between social strategy and any other goal orientations.

Table 9

*Pearson Product Correlations of Measured Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Self-efficacy	--	.28**	.15	.29*	.24*	.16*	.32**	.29**	.34**	-.02	-.19**
2.Overall Strategy		--	.77**	.86**	.65**	.73**	.79**	.82**	.56**	.31**	.21**
3.Affectvie			--	.55**	.35**	.54**	.53**	.57**	.37**	.35**	.38**
4.Cognitive				--	.62**	.57**	.64**	.66**	.45**	.19**	.12
5.Compensation					--	.31**	.37**	.43**	.23**	.12	.02
6.Memory						--	.49**	.42**	.46**	.33**	.23**
7.Metacognitive							--	.65**	.55**	.31**	.15*
8.Social								--	.51**	.11	.06
9.Mastery Goals									--	.23**	.08
10.Performance-approach										--	.51**
11.Performance-avoidance											--

\*  $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$

## Summary

The quantitative data provided answers to the research questions of this study: (1)What are the self-efficacy belief beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender? (2)What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender? (3)What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender? (4)What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program? To answer the Research Question 1, the participants scored 5.48, which indicated they had a positive self-efficacy to English language learning. The result of independent sample t-test revealed that participants who were more than 25 years old rated themselves significantly higher than those who were less than 25 years old in their self-efficacy of English language learning.

To answer the Research Question 2, the independent sample t-test analysis showed that students who were less than 25 years old used significantly greater overall strategies than those who were more than 25 years old. Students who were less than 25 years old significantly used greater affective, cognitive, compensation, social strategies than students who were more than 25 years old. The most often used strategies of ELLs in this study were social, metacognitive and compensation strategies. There was no significant difference of strategy use between female students and male students in this study.

To answer the Research Question 3, the result of independent sample t-test revealed that female students had a greater mastery goal orientation tendency than male students. No other types of goal orientation produced significant differences based on learners' gender and age.

To answer Research Question 4, the Pearson product-moment correlational analysis revealed that self-efficacy were positively correlated with overall strategy use, cognitive, compensation, memory, metacognitive, social strategy, and mastery goal orientation while negatively correlated with performance-avoidance goals. There was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and affective strategy, self-efficacy and performance-approach goals.

Overall strategy also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, among which the correlation between overall strategy and mastery goals was strong. Specifically, affective as well as memory strategy was positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. Cognitive strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals, and performance-approach goals, but no correlation between cognitive strategy and performance-avoidance goals was found. Compensation strategy was only positively correlated with mastery goals. Metacognitive strategy was also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, among which the correlation between metacognitive strategy and mastery goals was strong. Finally, social strategy was only positively correlated with mastery goals.

## **CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents the summary of this study, conclusions based on the data analysis, implications of the findings and results, and recommendations for future research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy beliefs, learning strategy, and goal orientation of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program. Data collected were analyzed and implications were suggested for language educators to enhance ELLs' self-efficacy beliefs, strategy use and facilitate mastery goal orientations. The study provided new insights to stimulate discussions around the issues from an ELL perspective in the university classroom and also proposed instructional suggestions for language educators.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the self-efficacy beliefs of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
2. What are the language learning strategies identified by college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?

3. What are the goal orientations of college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program in relation to age and gender?
4. What is the relationship among self-efficacy, language learning strategy and goal orientation for college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program?

## **Summary**

### **Study Overview**

Mastering a foreign language requires learners to overcome several major difficulties. This process usually takes a considerable period of time. Students enter class to learn English for different reasons and hold different beliefs about their ability to accomplish various course tasks. These beliefs predetermine the level of their cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement in various learning situations. A person's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are strongly influenced by what he or she believes. Appropriate language learning strategies result in greater self-confidence and strategy instruction can improve learners' self-efficacy since strategies help students to process academic material.

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986, 1989, 1997), Oxford's learning strategy theory (1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2003) and Midgley's goal orientation theory (1996, 2000) provided the theoretical framework for this study. A quantitative research design was used to address the research questions. The students who were enrolled in the ESL program at a southeastern public university participated in this study.

An English language learning survey adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, et al., 1991), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 1996, 2000) were used in this study. There were more responses from males than females, and most of the participants were 18-29 in age; Asian; had a high school diploma as a previous educational level. The survey adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, et al., 1993), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Strategies (PALS) survey (Midgley et al., 1996, 2000) were used to collect data. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics test, independent t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to investigate learners' self-efficacy, strategy use, goal orientation and the relationship among self-efficacy, learning strategy and goal orientation.

### **Findings of Survey**

Research Question 1 examined the level of self-efficacy of ELLs in relation to gender and age in this study. A positive self-efficacy belief was identified and a significant difference of self-efficacy between participants who were more than 25 years old and those who were less than 25 years old was found.

Research Question 2 explored ELLs' strategy use and the difference of strategy use in relation to gender and age. The descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test identified that students who were less than 25 years old used significantly greater overall strategy than those who were more than 25 years old. Students who were less than 25 years old significantly used greater affective, cognitive, compensation, social strategies than students who were more than 25

years old. The most often used strategies for ELLs in this study were social, metacognitive and compensation strategies.

Research Question 3 examined differences of ELLs' goal orientations based on their gender and age. The result of independent sample t-test revealed that female students had a greater mastery goal orientation tendency than male students.

Research Question 4 investigated the relationship among self-efficacy, strategy use and goal orientations. The Pearson product-moment correlational analysis revealed that self-efficacy was positively correlated with overall strategy use, cognitive, compensation, memory, metacognitive, social strategy, and mastery goal orientation while negatively correlated with performance-avoidance goals. Overall strategy also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, among which the correlation between overall strategy and mastery goals was strong. Specifically, affective as well as memory strategy was positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. Cognitive strategy was positively correlated with mastery goals, and performance-approach goals. Compensation strategy was only positively correlated with mastery goals. Metacognitive strategy was also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, among which the correlation between metacognitive strategy and mastery goals was strong. Finally, social strategy was only positively correlated with mastery goals.

### **Conclusions**

One conclusion of this quantitative study was that college-level ELLs enrolled in ESL program had a positive self-efficacy. Participants who were more than 25 years old had a higher



level of self-efficacy than those who were less than 25 years old. The most often used strategies of ELLs in this study were social, metacognitive and compensation strategies. Students who were less than 25 years old used significantly greater overall strategy than those who were more than 25 years old. Specifically, students who were less than 25 years old significantly used greater affective, cognitive, compensation, social strategies than students who were more than 25 years old. This is different from the findings that older or more advanced learners used more complex strategies and certain strategies were identified often used by them (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). The discrepancy may be due to the greater limited English language proficiency of older learners since language learning is different from the other subject learning which requires an optimal or younger learning age. This study also found that female students had a greater mastery goal orientation tendency than male students.

Self-efficacy was positively correlated with overall strategy use, cognitive, compensation, memory, metacognitive, social strategy, and mastery goal orientation. It means that participants who had a higher level of self-efficacy also reported greater use of learning strategies (except affective strategies). This finding affirmed a previous finding that participants who had a higher level of self-efficacy also reported greater use of learning strategies (Gahungu, 2007; Wong, 2005), and students with higher confidence or positive perceptions in their ability tend to become more master-oriented (Dweck & Elliott, 1984). But self-efficacy and performance-avoidance goals were negatively correlated and as performance-avoidance goals increase, level of self-efficacy decrease. It is similar with the findings that students with mastery goal orientation have been found positively correlated with their performance of a task, whereas performance-avoidance was negatively related to performance on that task (Utman, 1997). Overall strategy also positively correlated with mastery, performance-approach and performance-avoidance

goals. It was inferred that greater strategy use could result in higher level of self-efficacy, mastery goals, performance approach goals and performance avoidance goals, and among which the relation between overall strategy use and mastery goals is strong.

In addition, as mastery goals increase, all types of strategy increase; mastery goal had strong correlations with overall strategy, metacognitive strategy, and social strategy; As performance approach goals increase, all strategies except compensation and social strategies increase; As performance avoidance goals increase, all strategies except self-efficacy, cognitive, compensation and social strategies increases. It was inferred that among three types of goal orientations mastery goal orientation was the most adaptive and possessed the facilitating roles in language strategy use and enhancing learners' self-efficacy. The findings of this study were consistent with the literature and positive relationships between mastery goals and strategy use, between performance goals and use of learning strategies have been found, among which the positive relationship between mastery goals and use of learning strategies is stronger (Meece, et al., 1988). Students with higher mastery goals are more likely to report better emotional states and strategy use (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999). Strategies can assist students' cognitive, affective, and motivational performance. Teachers are suggested to choose appropriate teaching techniques and learning strategies suitable for students and teach learners how to understand and apply learning strategies to enhance levels of self-efficacy and facilitate adopting mastery goals to ultimately promote learners' self-directedness in their lifelong learning.

### **Implications**

Important educational implications for English language educators and administrators were suggested as a result of this study in order to address areas for development and improvement for

English language curriculum, instruction, and teaching methods. Doing so will assist in promoting higher education level ELLs' independence, confidence, motivation and language ability.

### **English Language Educators**

Cummins (2001) identified three fundamental pillars of effective language instruction for ESL students—activate prior knowledge/build background knowledge, access content and extend language. Based on students' prior experiences, meaning was constructed by applying prior knowledge to the new content. Accessing content refers to teachers making complex English language accessible to language learners. Scaffolding, as an instructional strategy, facilitates learners accessing content and extending learners' knowledge. In order to help learners to acquire the English language, teachers should create settings to involve learners in the activities and facilitate the mastery of the English academic courses content in the second language learning setting. Scaffolding as the support that is “designed to provide the assistance necessary to enable learners to accomplish tasks and develop understandings that they would not be able to manage on their own” (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 9) should be adopted by teachers to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process. Scaffolding increases learners' independence and helps learners to “know not only what to think and do, but how to think and do, so that new skills and understandings can be applied in new contexts” (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 10).

Scaffolding strategies or techniques include peer group discussion or interactions, visual support, hands-on activities, connections to students' background and experiences, clear directions, explicit explanations about tasks and assignments, and peer revision and timely feedback (Davis

& Miyake, 2004; De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Ellis, 1985; Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Teachers can provide scaffolding for learners through strategy instruction. An active use of strategies is helpful for learners to be in control of developing language skills, increasing confidence and sustaining their motivation in learning processes. It is suggested that teachers make sure that students are familiar with strategies or methods so that they can accept them. Teachers are encouraged to choose appropriate teaching techniques and learning strategies suitable for students and teach learners how to understand learning strategies to enhance levels of self-directed learning. Teachers need to provide learners access to methodological resources such as techniques and activities, modeling strategies, guidance for setting goals, criteria for selection of materials and evaluations of their progress and performance. Students can be guided by teachers through presenting explicit expectations and perceptions and helping learners become familiar with learning strategies.

Teachers need to use more student self-directed and less instructor-led strategies as students' abilities improve so that students can find strategies that work best for their learning styles, and then teachers gradually withdraw support as learners gain greater autonomy and consequently promote their language proficiency and self-direction.

Using strategy to influence self-efficacy can be achieved by making the task appear easier so that students believe they are capable of completing the task. In order to increase sense of self-satisfaction and motivation, it is better to design meaningful classroom activities to encourage learners to persist longer in the learning tasks and involve students' actively in the classroom tasks. The results of this study showed that mastery goal orientation is the most adaptive and

beneficial for language strategy use and enhancing learners' self-efficacy. Thus, ELLs should be encouraged to adopt mastery goals and teachers should design class tasks that emphasize individual's interest and skill development. It is vital for teachers to support and guide learners by providing feedback, encouragement and reinforcement. Teachers need to develop learners' self-awareness as language learners and their awareness of learning goals and options and of language itself in order to help learners get accustomed to the new content. A good relationship should be established with learners and a supportive environment should be created and structured by teachers to allow learners to exercise increasing responsibility. Assignments should be meaningful and relevant to learners' goals. Learners also need to learn skills to deal with stress and other negative affective factors that may interfere with learning and reduce learners' self-efficacy. Learners should become self-motivated and self-disciplined thus promoting self-efficacy, which in turn facilitates strategy use and performance of learners.

Teachers need to use assessments to focus on ELLs improvement and mastery of content. The traditional assessment, which relies on examinations, involves students through a summative evaluation of their work (Biggs, 1995). Traditional assessments usually focus on competition for grades, which could increase learner's anxiety and reduce their motivation and efficacy. The traditional competitive exam-oriented assessment does not encourage the deep approaches to learning, which tend to emphasize rote learning and promotes surface learning. Traditional assessments can use different approaches that encourage teaching innovations by using participative methods and problem-solving strategies to ensure deep transformational learning (Harris, 1995, p. 78). "The ways in which students are assessed have a strong influence on the ways they approach their learning tasks. Therefore it is critical that teachers use assessment methods which tend to facilitate a deep approach to learning" (Zhang & Watkins, 2001, p. 256).

Self-assessment can be used to measure learners progress and as a diagnostic way to improve their performance. Self-assessment is a way of being aware of individual progress (Harris, 1997). Self-assessment helps learners to learn actively, make self-reflections, and develop the awareness that they have the responsibility for their own learning. Giving learners power and freedom to evaluate their own learning helps them to feel more efficacious and in control of their own learning. Students should be encouraged to get actively involved in their own learning and they can make gradual progress if they understand themselves better and know their own strengths and weakness (Harlen & James, 1996). Since self-assessment is essential to language learning, it has to be as accurate, thorough, and relevant as possible so that learners can self-assess appropriately and realistically.

Students need to be encouraged to get involved in assessment, and formative assessment, which includes self-assessment and peer-assessment, could be an effective strategy used by teachers to increase students' learning autonomy. However, examinations need not be totally excluded or dismissed. Self-assessments can involve the learners determining their level of knowledge and skills through testing or feedback. Examinations can be integrated in a self-directed learning situation so that learners could be fully aware of objectives, conditions, criteria, and expectations in their learning process (Gremmo & Riley, 1995).

### **English Language Administrators**

English language administrators need to establish a close relationship with the international organization within the school or community to help ELLs socialize with English native speakers. Engaging ELLs in a less anxious and more supportive social settings can enhance ELLs' self-efficacy and motivation in language learning as well as integrating into the local

community. English language administrators can cooperate with these organizations to expand ELLs social network and provide mentoring or tutoring services for ELLs.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Further follow-up studies are needed to clarify students' perceptions and strategy use in their English language learning.
2. Further research with a large number of participants in a larger community to examine factors that influence ELLs' self-efficacy and goal orientations.
3. Teachers' perspectives can be investigated together with students' perspectives in English language classrooms.
4. Qualitative studies can be combined with quantitative studies to further explore learners' individual differences, and motivational variables in an ESL setting.
5. Further studies are needed to measure the effects of self-efficacy and learning strategy on proficiency.
6. Qualitative studies are needed to explore how to foster ELLs' self-efficacy and adoption of mastery goals.

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APPENDIX A  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING SURVEY

## English Language Learning Survey

The following questions ask about your self-efficacy, language learning strategy use and goal orientation about English language learning. Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. This usually takes about 10 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let the researcher know immediately.

### Demographic Information

Please first answer the following questions about yourself. Your answers will be treated in a confidential manner and only identified to the researcher for this study.

<p>1. Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Male</li><li><input type="radio"/> Female</li></ul> <p>2. Age: _____</p> <p>3. Country of origin: _____</p> <p>4. First (Native) Language: _____</p> <p>5. Highest education level: _____</p> <p>6. How many years have you been studying English in your life? _____</p> <p>7. Please indicate the program or course you are now enrolled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> Intensive English Program<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Level 1</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Level 2</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Level 3</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Level 4</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Level 5</li></ul></li><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> INTL 1820</li><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> INTL 1830</li></ul> <p>8. How do you rate your overall English proficiency?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Excellent</li><li><input type="radio"/> Good</li><li><input type="radio"/> Fair</li><li><input type="radio"/> Poor</li></ul>	<p>9. How do you rate your overall English proficiency as compared with the proficiency of other students in your class?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Excellent</li><li><input type="radio"/> Good</li><li><input type="radio"/> Fair</li><li><input type="radio"/> Poor</li></ul> <p>10. Why do you want to learn English? (Check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> I have an interest in learning English</li><li><input type="radio"/> I am interested in English speaking countries</li><li><input type="radio"/> I have friends who speak English</li><li><input type="radio"/> The need for future jobs</li><li><input type="radio"/> The need for future education</li><li><input type="radio"/> Need it for traveling</li><li><input type="radio"/> Required to take English courses to graduate</li><li><input type="radio"/> English is a tool of communication</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other (list): _____</li></ul> <p>11. Besides the U.S., have you ever lived in an English-speaking country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Yes<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Indicate country _____</li><li>Length of stay _____</li></ul></li><li><input type="radio"/> No</li></ul> <p>12. How long have you been in the U.S.? _____</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Part A—Self-Efficacy**

Please read each statement and check the box that best describes how you feel:  
1= Not at all true of me to 7= Very true of me

	Not at all true of me						Very true of me
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this English class.							
2. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this English class.							
3. I'm confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this English course.							
4. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this English course.							
5. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this English course.							
6. I expect to do well in this English class.							
7. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this English class.							
8. Considering the difficulty of this English course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.							

**Part B—Language Learning Strategy and Goal Orientation**

Please read each statement and check the box that best describes how you feel:  
1= Never or almost never true of me to 5= Always or almost always true of me

	Never or almost never true of me	Usually not true of me	Some- what true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
	1	2	3	4	5
9. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.					
10. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.					
11. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help remember the word.					
12. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.					
13. I use rhymes to remember new English words.					
14. I use flashcards to remember new English words.					
15. I physically act out new English words.					
16. I review English lesson often.					
17. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.					
18. I say or write new English words several times.					
19. I try to talk like native English speakers.					
20. I practice the sounds of English.					
21. I use the English words I know in different ways.					
22. I start conversations in English.					
23. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.					
24. I read for pleasure in English.					
25. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.					

	Never or almost never true of me 1	Usually not true of me 2	Somewhat true of me 3	Usually true of me 4	Always or almost always true of me 5
26. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.					
27. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.					
28. I try to find patterns in English.					
29. I find the meaning of English words by dividing it into parts that I understand.					
30. I try not to translate word for word.					
31. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.					
32. To understand an unfamiliar English word, I make guesses.					
33. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.					
34. I make up new words if I do not know the rights ones in English.					
35. I read English without looking up every new word.					
36. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.					
37. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.					
38. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.					
39. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.					
40. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.					
41. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.					
42. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.					
43. I look for people I can talk to in English.					
44. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.					
45. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.					
46. I think about my progress in learning English.					
47. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.					
48. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.					
49. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.					
50. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.					
51. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.					
52. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.					
53. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.					
54. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.					
55. I practice English with other students.					
56. I ask for help from English speakers.					
57. I ask questions in English.					
58. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.					
59. I like class work that I'll learn from even if I make a lot of mistakes.					
60. An important reason why I do my class work in this English class is because I like to learn new things.					



	Never or almost never true of me	Usually not true of me	Some-what true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
	1	2	3	4	5
61. I like class work in this English class best when it really makes me think.					
62. An important reason why I do my work in this English class is because I want to get better at it.					
63. An important reason I do my class work is because I enjoy it.					
64. I do my class work in this English class because I'm interested in it.					
65. I would feel really good if I were the only one who could answer the teacher's questions in class.					
66. I want to do better than other students in my English class.					
67. I would feel successful in class if I did better than most of the other students in this English class.					
68. I'd like to show my teacher that I'm smarter than the other students in this English class.					
69. Doing better than other students in English class is important to me.					
70. It's very important to me that I don't look stupid in my English class.					
71. An important reason I do my class work is so that I don't embarrass myself.					
72. The reason I do my class work is so my teacher doesn't think I know less than others in this English class.					
73. The reason I do my work is so others won't think I'm dumb.					
74. One of my main goals in this English class is to avoid looking like I can't do my work.					
75. One reason I would not participate in this English class is to avoid looking stupid.					

Survey adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993), the version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Strategies (PALS) survey (Midgley et al., 2000).

APPENDIX B

AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INTENSIVE ENGLISH  
PROGRAM OF AUBURN UNIVERSITY



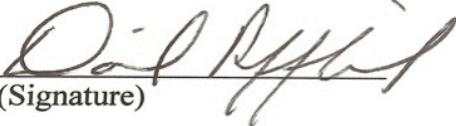
Intensive English Program  
316 Foy Hall  
Auburn, AL, 36830

February 2, 2015  
Auburn University Institutional Review Board  
c/o Office of Research Compliance  
115 Ramsay Hall  
Auburn, AL, 36849

Please note that Hong Shi, AU Graduate Student, has the permission of the Intensive English Program to conduct research in our classes for her study, "Exploring English Language Learners' Self-efficacy Beliefs, Self-regulated Strategies and Goal Orientation."

Ms. Hong Shi will hand out an information letter and a survey, which will be returned to her immediately. Hong Shi's plan is to have the survey distributed in the middle of the 2015 spring semester. Hong Shi has also agreed to provide to my office a copy of the Auburn University IRB-approved, stamped consent document before she recruits participants and will also provide a copy of any aggregate results.

If there are any questions, please contact my office at (334) 844-2122.

  
(Signature)

Dr. Dan Raffalovich, Director of IEP



APPENDIX C

AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM MARY DIAMOND



February 2, 2015  
Mary Diamond  
Instructor & ISEC Coordinator  
English as a Second Language  
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, “Exploring English Language Learners’ Self-efficacy Beliefs, Language Learning Strategies and Goal Orientation”, presented by Hong Shi, AU graduate student. I have granted authorization for students to be recruited from the following courses INTL1820, Classroom Communication for International Teaching Assistants. The students will be recruited during the class, and Hong Shi will hand out an information letter and a survey, which will be returned to her immediately. Hong Shi’s plan is to have the survey distributed in the middle of the 2015 spring semester. Hong Shi has also agreed to provide to my office a copy of the Auburn University IRB-approved, stamped consent document before she recruits participants and she will also provide a copy of any aggregate results.

If there are any questions, please contact my office at (334) 844-2747.

  
(Signature)

Mary Diamond

APPENDIX D

AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM BETH TOPPING

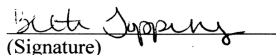


February 2, 2015  
Beth Topping  
Instructor & Student Services Coordinator  
English as a Second Language  
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, “Exploring English Language Learners’ Self-efficacy Beliefs, Language Learning Strategies and Goal Orientation”, presented by Hong Shi, AU graduate student. I have granted authorization for students to be recruited from the following courses INTL1830. The students will be recruited during the class, and Hong Shi will hand out an information letter and a survey, which will be returned to her immediately. Hong Shi’s plan is to have the survey distributed in the middle of the 2015 spring semester. Hong Shi has also agreed to provide to my office a copy of the Auburn University IRB-approved, stamped consent document before she recruits participants and she will also provide a copy of any aggregate results.

If there are any questions, please contact my office at (334) 844-7371.

  
(Signature)

Beth Topping

316 Foy Hall, Auburn, AL 36849-5149; Telephone: 334-844-2175; Fax: 334-844-2195

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APPENDIX E  
INFORMATION LETTER OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING SURVEY FOR  
THIS STUDY



## AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

"The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from February 23, 2015 to February 22, 2018. Protocol #15-073 EX 1502"

### INFORMATION LETTER

#### **"Exploring English Language Learners' Self-efficacy Beliefs, Language Learning Strategies and Goal Orientation"**

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate English Language Learners' self-efficacy beliefs, language learning strategy use and goal orientation and the relationships among three factors. This study is being conducted by Hong Shi, graduate students of Department of Educational Foundations, leadership, and Technology at Auburn university, under the direction of Dr. Maria M. Witte, a professor of Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently enrolled as a student in the ESL program at Auburn University, and you are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to take an anonymous survey. Your total time commitment will be approximately 10 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely anonymous and voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any time. Your decision about whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with the Department of EFLT and Auburn University.

There will be no costs to participation or compensation. Information collected through your participation will or may be used for dissertation, publication or professional presentation.

If you have any questions about this study, please ask her now or contact Hong Shi at [hzs0032@auburn.edu](mailto:hzs0032@auburn.edu).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subject Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at [hsubjec@auburn.edu](mailto:hsubjec@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 3684-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Hong Shi

2/2/2015

Investigator's signature

Date

Hong Shi

Print Name

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 3684-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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APPENDIX F

APPROVED LETTER FROM OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE OF AUBURN  
UNIVERSITY



March 4, 2016

MEMORANDUM TO: Hong Shi  
Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

PROTOCOL TITLE: "Exploring English Language Learners' Self-efficacy Beliefs, Language Learning Strategies and Goal Orientation"

IRB FILE NO.: 15-073 EX 1502

APPROVAL: February 13, 2015  
EXPIRATION: February 12, 2018

The referenced protocol was approved "Exempt" by the IRB under 45 CFR 46.101 (b) (2):

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

- (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
- (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Note the following:

1. CONSENTS AND/OR INFORMATION LETTERS: Only use documents that have been approved by the IRB with an approval stamp or approval information added.
2. RECORDS: Keep this and all protocol approval documents in your files. Please reference the complete protocol number in any correspondence.
3. MODIFICATIONS: You must request approval of any changes to your protocol before implementation. Some changes may affect the assigned review category.
4. RENEWAL: Your protocol will expire in three (3) years. Submit a renewal a month before expiration. If your protocol expires and is administratively closed, you will have to submit a new protocol.
5. FINAL REPORT: When your study is complete, please notify the Office of Research Compliance, Human Subjects.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Research Compliance.



Bernie R. Olin, Pharm.D.  
Chair of the Institutional Review Board #2  
for the Use of Human Subjects in Research

cc: Maria Witte