

EFL University Students' Self-efficacy and Its Relationship to Their Identity

Ahmed M. M. Abdelhafez^{1,2}, Hossam M. Zaki^{3,4}

(1. Department of TEFL Curriculum & Instruction, Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt;

2. Taibah University, Saudi Arabia; 3. Department of Mental Health, Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt;

4. Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia)

Abstract: The aim of the current study is to identify the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and identity and to identify gender differences and those related to nationality between the study sub-groups. The sample consisted of 320 male and female EFL undergraduate university students at two state universities in Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Two scales (the EFL self-efficacy and the EFL identity) were prepared by the researchers to collect quantitative data, which were analyzed using t-test and correlation coefficient. In addition, qualitative data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 of the participants. The findings of the study revealed a statistically-significant correlation between self-efficacy and identity of the study participants. Statistically-significant differences were also found between the study sub-groups in all dimensions of identity (except the social dimension) favoring the female and Egyptian groups. Discussion and implications of the findings for language education are highlighted.

Key words: adolescents, applied sociolinguistics, identity, self-efficacy, language education, EFL

1. Introduction

Although the identity issue is closely related to learning a foreign language, little attention is given to this issue in the EFL contexts in the current study. Bashir-Ali (2006) indicates that generally there is a lack of understanding of identity issues in bilingual students. Block (2007) also highlights that there is lack of studies focusing on bilingual English users in contexts where English is a foreign language. Kramsch (2009, p. 4) adds that L2 learners are neither trained nor challenged to "construct new identities for themselves". However, Zacharias (2010) notices that some studies are slowly starting to emerge, pointing to the encouraging effect of critical pedagogies focusing on issues related to language, culture and identity in bilingual students' sense of self.

The current study with its focus on the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and identity is in alignment with other studies that acknowledge the powerful role played by the area of sociolinguistics in language education. Norton (2010) points out that one of the current trends in the field of second language acquisition is the shift from the notion of language learning as the mere acquisition of the linguistic system of the target language to the view that it involves the sociological dimensions of language learning and the language learners. Similarly, Bahramy et al. (2013) confirm that there has been a social turn from predominately psycholinguistic approach to first and second language acquisition toward socio-cultural dimensions of language learning. Norton (2010) puts it

Corresponding author: Ahmed M. M. Abdelhafez, Dr., Department of TEFL Curriculum & Instruction, Faculty of Education, Minia University; research areas/interests: EFL education. E-mail: amma2030@googlemail.com.

that this sociocultural view of learning involves that language learning is not a neutral process but is conflictual and transformative.

Bahramy et al. (2013) pointed out that learning a language other than native language therefore means adopting a new identity. They add that a new identity comes in but the earlier one is here to stay and the learner — engaged in negotiation in the target language — constructs a new identity a combination of past, present and even imagined — future identity. Block (2007) asserts that in foreign language settings, there is usually far too much first language-mediated baggage and interference for profound changes to occur in the individual's conceptual system and his/her sense of self in the target language. Asada (2013) adds that when interacting with various people using their L2, learners are engaged in identity construction and negotiation possibly constructing multiple identities and affecting their perceptions of themselves, other people and the world. Zealand (2004) studied verbal self-efficacy, an essential component of social communication. She found that inability to fulfill language self-efficacy could result in psychological disorders that would have negative influence on the individual throughout his/her entire life. These disorders could result from the multiple selves or identities of bilingual EFL learners.

2. Conceptualizing EFL Self-efficacy and Identity

Wang et al. (2014) defined self-efficacy as the person's beliefs about his/her performance in situations which require successful performance of the task taking into account previous experiences. In the current study, EFL self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs regarding his/her ability to competently carry out language tasks related to various skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) while learning English as a foreign language.

Identity, according to Norton (1997, p. 408), is concerned with “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. However, as highlighted by Zacharias (2010), the process of trying to pin down the term identity is extremely complex. The meaning of the term identities has evolved from seeing it as synonymous to a “stable core self” (Hall, 1996) to dynamic, contradictory and multiple dimensions of a person (Block, 2007). Asada (2013) highlights that the definitions of identity are extensive referring to the notion of it being negotiated and constructed in relation to the world which we move in, and that identity construction is an ongoing process.

From a poststructuralist point of view, as pointed out by Zacharias (2010), identity is multiple, diverse, dynamic and even contradictory. L2 identities are multidimensional, a site of struggle, fluid, and changing over time. This is the conception of EFL learners' identity as perceived by the researchers of the current study. The aim of the study is to understand learners' experiences — in terms of identity construction — as learners of a foreign language. These experiences may include dramatic changes, conflicts, alienation of self, reconciliation, identity negotiation and identity reconstruction. The study attempts to shed light on identity reconstructions of language learners in two EFL contexts.

3. Review of Literature

Some researchers argue that self-efficacy could be relevant to identity perception and construction among EFL students (e.g., Bahramy et al., 2013; Asada, 2013; Zacharias, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Liu, 1999). Bahramy et al. (2013) investigated the role of learning EFL in shaping the identity of English major university students in Iran. The authors adopted an attitude questionnaire representing different cultural dimensions by which a community

may be defined. The findings revealed that the participants, who were highly motivated to learn English and had high English proficiency levels, viewed English as a means to relate themselves with English community. They expressed their deep open admiration for aesthetic sense of English culture especially when it comes to movies and music. However, the participants rejected English to become the official language of their community and stressed on the importance of their own language use and protection. The authors explained these seemingly contradictory views that although via learning a new language and as a result learning a new culture the identity goes under great changes, the changes do not necessarily entail the learners' alienation of self. They further added that EFL learners — who look for growth and improvement of self-engaged in a process of identity reconstruction. They learned how to face the diversity of cultures, how to get the wisdom existing in other cultures, how to represent understanding and tolerance for contrasting perspectives and how to cooperate with worlds of others.

Asada (2013) investigated the impact of bilingualism on the identity of six bilinguals living in the UK (three of them living in the UK for over seven years and the other three for about a year) using aspects of a case study approach and narrative inquiry. The findings of her study revealed correlations with regard to language skills and learning environments where people who were more exposed to English speaking environments gained more confidence in speaking and listening, whereas people who have learnt English as a school subject developed more confidence in reading and writing. Moreover, the participants' views of themselves, other people and the world they live in had therefore broadened and become more complex as a result of becoming bilinguals, and their identity was negotiated through intercultural communication. Consequently, they had a greater affinity with people of different cultures and appreciated the differences more. The participants were all aware of their changes in behavior, but also illustrated significant L1 influence when speaking in English; most of the participants did not believe that their core identity changed. The author highlighted that the learning environment and L2 proficiency were ostensibly key factors affecting the participants' recognition of their bilingual identity and bilingualism.

Zacharias's (2012) study focused on EFL Students' Understanding of Their Multilingual English Identities. She aimed to explore how 30 EFL Indonesian students (22 females and eight males in their early to mid-20s) in a pre-service teacher education constructed their multilingual English identities as written in response journals, part of a course requirement in a Cross-cultural Understanding (CCU) course. The response journal addressed personal experiences related to language, culture and identity. The findings revealed that while the identities of the participants were far from stable, the participants appeared to negotiate their multilingual identities on the basis of core identities derived from their L1 culture. Although the participants were active users of English, they were fully aware of the effect of English on their identities as Indonesian nationals. For some participants, English use in public spaces created the feeling of self-enhancement; repositioning them as educated and part of the elite. For many others, however, English, both the language and the cultures, was perceived as an imposition to their core cultural identities. In addition, many participants saw their NNS status as a drawback rather than a resource that they could draw on. They appeared to be submissive to the NNS identity options that might be enforced upon them by previous education without any attempts to challenge or even resist such negative constructions.

Pavlenko (2003) examined TESOL students' imagined professional and linguistic communities. She asked each of the participants (44 MATESOL students of diverse ethnic, racial and linguistic backgrounds studying in the USA) to write a 5-page autobiographic essay which would reflect language learning and teaching history as linked to concepts and issues discussed in class. Discursive analysis of the students' positioning in their linguistic autobiographies revealed that the traditional discourse of linguistic competence positioned students as members of one of two communities, native speakers or non-native speakers/L2 learners. Some of the students reimagined

themselves as multicomponent and bilingual and this outlook allowed them not only to view themselves positively, but also to transmit these views to others and to engage in active attempts to reshape the surrounding contexts. Among those most engaged in challenging the native speakers/non-native speakers dichotomy and embracing the new imagined community of multicomponent speakers were students whose legitimacy was challenged most often, namely L2 users of English or other languages. The author suggested that theories of bilingualism and second language acquisition would open up an alternative imagined community, that of multicomponent, bilingual, and multilingual speakers; an option which would allow some TESOL professionals to construe themselves and their future students as legitimate L2 users rather than as failed native speakers of the target language.

Liu (1999) explored how the labels “native speaker” and “nonnative speaker” had an impact on shaping personal, professional and social identity of seven nonnative English speaking professionals in TESOL. Using data from email and face-to-face interviews, the author found cultural affiliation to be an important dimension of how a native speaker of a certain language is defined. He also highlighted the term “dual identities” referring to the state of some of the participants in his study who had multiple social identities that can change with new experiences and new social interactions according to people’s needs and their readiness to accept how they perceived by authors. The author considered the labels “native” and “nonnative” as simplistic and reductionist as members in his study were uncomfortable with the “nonnative speaker” as such a definition was always arbitrary.

4. Questions of the Study

The following questions are sought to be answered by the researchers of the current study:

- (1) Are there gender differences among the study participants in EFL self-efficacy?
- (2) Are there gender differences among study participants in EFL identity?
- (3) Are there differences among study participants in EFL self-efficacy due to nationality?
- (4) Are there differences among study participants in EFL identity due to nationality?
- (5) Is there a correlation between EFL self-efficacy and identity among study participants?

5. Hypotheses of the Study

(1) There is no statistically significant gender difference between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL self-efficacy scale.

(2) There is no statistically significant gender difference between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL identity scale.

(3) There is no statistically significant difference due to nationality between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL self-efficacy scale.

(4) There is no statistically significant difference due to nationality between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL identity scale.

(5) There is no statistically significant correlation between the study participants’ scores in the EFL self-efficacy scale and the EFL identity scale.

6. Methodology of the Study

The descriptive-interpretive methodology with mixed methods was adopted in the current study. Both

quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed. Although it provides a parsimonious and economical view, quantitative data makes an important contribution to the bricolage of information built up during the study. A more in-depth understanding could be gained from qualitative data using interviews to explore causal factors associated, provide reasons for various beliefs, and reveal socio-cultural influences. They, thus, make the interpretation of the data more meaningful. The data collected using questionnaires and interviews is complementary and form a more complete and coherent picture. Besides, a mixed-method approach allows cross-validation of the data.

6.1 Sample of the Study

The sample of the study (who responded to the EFL self-efficacy scale and identity scale) consisted of 320 undergraduate university male and female EFL students from the two universities. The interviewee sample consisted of English as a foreign language male and female students from the two universities. The table below describes the sample of the study. The interviewees were purposefully selected representing those students who obtained the highest and lowest scores in the two scales.

Table 1 Sample of the Study

Sample	Gender		Nationality		Academic year				Total
	Male	Female	Egyptian	Saudi	First	Second	Third	Fourth	
Pilot	40	23	42	21	0	0	33	33	63
Main	189	131	165	155	114	41	75	90	320
Interviewees	9 (S1,S2,S3,S4,S5,S6,S7,S8,S9)	3 (S10,S11,S12)	6 (S7,S8,S9,S10,S11,S12)	6 (S1,S2,S3,S4,S5,S6)	3 (S1,S2,S3)	3 (S4,S5,S6)	2 (S7,S8)	4 (S9,S10,S11,S12)	12

6.2 Instruments of the Study

Qualitative data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews from 12 undergraduate university male and female EFL students from two state universities in Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Quantitative data was collected by means of two scales: the EFL self-efficacy scale (See Appendix A) and the EFL identity scale (See Appendix B), both designed by the researchers. The two scales were constructed to suit the Arab environment after reviewing relevant literature.

6.3 Validity and Reliability of the Two Scales

Face validity was ensured by consulting 3 experts (2 professors and 1 assistant professor) in the areas of TEFL and mental health. Test/re-test reliability was carried out on 12 university EFL students with an interval of 3 weeks resulting in a level of (0.57) for the EFL self-efficacy scale and (0.63) for the identity scale, which are both significant at the level of 0.05. Internal consistency of the EFL self-efficacy scale dimensions and the identity scale dimensions were measured in relation to the total score resulting in the values of 0.83, 0.92, 0.81 and 0.88 respectively for the four dimensions (EFL listening, speaking, reading and writing) of the EFL self-efficacy and 0.73, 0.75 and 0.74 for the three dimensions of the identity scale (personal, social and professional identity). Alpha Cronbach was also calculated for both scales resulting in the level of 0.91 for the EFL self-efficacy scale and 0.62 for the identity scale as well as split-half reliability with a value of 0.76 for the EFL self-efficacy scale and 0.48 for the identity scale and after modification of the two scales based on the feedback of 3 experts in the

areas of TEFL and mental health, the values have risen to 0.86 for the EFL self-efficacy scale and 0.65 for the identity scale.

6.4 Data Analysis

The study is designed using mixed methods. Quantitative data were collected by means of two Likert scales: the EFL self-efficacy scale and the identity scale. The quantitative data were analyzed using t-test and correlation coefficient. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to carry out quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with the questions of the study guiding the interview questions, but allowed for emergent issues to be discussed and included in the qualitative data evidence. Interview evidence was integrated with quantitative evidence while presenting the findings of the study. Informed consents were obtained from the interviewees who were ensured about their privacy and the safety of the data collected.

7. Findings of the Study

7.1 The First Hypothesis

The t-test results rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant gender difference between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL self-efficacy scale. The results (as shown in Table 2) revealed that there is a statistically significant gender difference between means of scores of the male and female members of the study group in the EFL self-efficacy scale in favor of the female group. The t-values ranged between 2.54 and 5, which are all statistically significant at the level of 0.01 with the exception of the t-value of the third dimension (self-efficacy in reading) which is significant at the level of 0.05.

Table 2 Gender Difference in EFL Self-efficacy

EFL self-efficacy	Male students (N = 189)		Female students (N = 131)		T-value	Significance level
	M*	SD**	M	SD		
Listening	20.97	3.45	22.19	3.46	3.10	0.01
Speaking	18.85	3.44	20.52	3.77	4.10	0.01
Reading	12.31	2.18	12.94	2.20	2.54	0.05
Writing	16.58	3.37	18.52	3.41	5.00	0.01
Total score	68.71	10.73	74.17	11.38	4.46	0.01

* M stands for Mean

** SD stands for Standard Deviation

It is obvious that female students have higher EFL self-efficacy than male students. They have a higher EFL self-efficacy in EFL listening with a t-value of 3.10. According to one female interviewee:

I like to watch movies in English. I also like to listen to the news in English. Since I was a very little child, I love learning not only English, but also everything that is new. I feel that I am gifted in a lot different ways (S10).

It is worth mentioning that this was not mentioned by any of the male interviewees.

The female group obtained higher scores in self-efficacy in the EFL speaking skill with a t-value of 4.10.

This is also evident in the interviews. According to one female interviewee:

I like to read poetry in English even if I don't understand every word. I also like to talk to others about myself

in English. When they don't understand what I say to them in English, I start to explain the meaning to them. When I do this, I feel more confident (S11).

The opposite was true for male students. One male interviewee stated:

I don't like to speak in English what I can say in Arabic. Maybe I don't do this because I am not very confident about my ability to use English well (S1).

The female group outperformed the male group in self-efficacy in the EFL reading skill with a t-value of 2.54. This is because, as characteristic in the contexts of the current study, female students have more time than male students who prefer going out to studying at home. This is unlike female students, in the contexts of the current study, who stay longer periods of time at home. They invested this time in reading and studying. As mentioned by one female interviewee:

I buy books in English. I like to read novels. Reading helps me a lot in my study. When I listen to something in English, I don't find a lot of unknown words unlike my classmates. I always search for new novels to read in English (S12).

As for self-efficacy in EFL writing, the female group obtained higher scores than the male group with a t-value of 5. The female group is more able than the male group to express their ideas and feelings in EFL writing. According to evidence from the interviews, one female student mentioned:

I like to write in English especially when I am annoyed or anxious. Sometimes, I rewrite parts of the novels I read such as *Oliver Twist* (S10).

This indicates that female students use writing as a healing mechanism to release negative emotions and feelings.

Another explanation could be attributed participants' developmental stage (i.e., adolescence). The adolescence stage is characterized by a stable sense of identity versus an identity disorder (Erickson, 1968). During this stage, adolescents form relationships outside of home and tend to show off especially in front of members of the other sex. They even create a special language. This is available more for male than for female groups in the contexts of the current study. Therefore, the male group might have found it easier to express themselves in native language not in the target language. This could explain male low EFL self-efficacy. Overall, the female group outperformed the male group in the EFL self-efficacy scale. This finding does not correspond to that in Kucukoglu's (2013) study. He found no statistically significant gender differences between reading comprehension and self-efficacy. These different findings may be attributed to the difference in context between the current study and that of Kucukoglu (2013).

7.2 The Second Hypothesis

The t-test results (as shown in Table 3) rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant gender difference between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL identity scale. As evident from Table 3, there is a statistically significant gender difference at the level of 0.01 between means of scores obtained by the female and male groups in the EFL students' identity scale in favor of the female group in the EFL students' personal dimension of identity (t-value = 3.25) and the professional dimension (t-value = 4.31). However, there are no statistically significant gender differences between means of scores obtained by the female and male groups in the EFL students' social dimension of identity.

Table 3 Gender Difference in EFL Students' Identity

EFL students' identity	Male students (N = 189)		Female students (N = 131)		T-value	Significance level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal	23.88	3.41	25.09	3.15	3.25	0.01
Social	21.75	2.30	21.45	2.85	1.06	Non-significant
Professional	23.77	3.72	25.46	2.96	4.31	0.01
Total score	69.41	7.73	72.00	7.10	3.04	0.01

As for the EFL students' personal dimension of identity, the female group obtained higher scores than the male group. According to one female interviewee, "Studying EFL helped me know myself and express my ideas either in writing or through talking to others". It is worth noting here that most of the study participants were in the adolescence stage which is characterized by earlier psychological maturity of female students compared to male ones. This could explain the outperformance of the female group. Similar to the EFL students' personal dimension of identify, the female students outperformed the male students in the professional dimension of identity.

The positive sense of self-efficacy helped female students develop a positive attitude towards multilingualism. One interviewee stated:

When I learned English, I started to feel more confident about learning other languages. I started to learn French, Indian and Spanish. Language reflects the culture of the people who speak it. When I learn a language, I also learn a lot about the culture associated with it (S12).

There were no gender differences in the EFL students' social dimension of identity. Establishing appropriate social relationships is bound to the social values. Both male and female students who are studying EFL in the current study reported social benefits of learning English as a foreign language. According to one interviewee,

Studying EFL helps me interact with people all over the world because EFL is a global language. I am not afraid of travelling to anywhere in the world because I will find people there with whom I can communicate in English (S9).

This is asserted by both male and female students that EFL is an important tool in social interaction. It is more a means of international communication than a source of social prejudice. Overall, the female group obtained higher scores than the male group in the identity scale. This indicates that female EFL students in the current study have a more positive sense of identity than the male group.

7.3 The Third Hypothesis

The t-test results (as shown in Table 4) rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference due to nationality between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL self-efficacy scale. As evident from Table 4 below, there is a statistically significant difference due to nationality between means of scores obtained by the Egyptian and Saudi students in the EFL self-efficacy scale. The difference is in favor of the Egyptian group in all dimensions of the EFL self-efficacy scale (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). The differences ranged between 4.82 and 9.53 and are all significant at the level of 0.01.

Table 4 Differences due to Nationality in EFL Self-efficacy

EFL self-efficacy	Egyptian group (N = 165)		Saudi group (N = 155)		T-value	Significance level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Listening	22.35	3.18	20.52	3.59	4.82	0.01
Speaking	21.21	3.26	17.75	3.22	9.53	0.01
Reading	13.33	2.02	11.75	2.10	6.80	0.01
Writing	18.98	3.12	15.68	3.10	9.47	0.01
Total score	75.86	10.06	65.70	10.17	8.97	0.01

The above finding is partly attributed to the different methods of teaching EFL in the Egyptian and Saudi contexts. Saudi students are not encouraged enough to use active learning strategies while learning EFL. According to one Saudi interviewee:

I find it difficult to use EFL in the classroom because we don't practice speaking or writing in EFL. Besides, I don't want others to laugh at me if I make a mistake (S6).

This intolerant classroom environment results in lack of participation and consequently negative beliefs and feelings about being an EFL learner. This is unlike what was mentioned by members of the Egyptian sample. According to one interviewee:

I love English language because I was taught by an excellent teacher in high school. He used to talk in English during the lesson. He had rapport with me. He used to ask about me if I was absent and was in contact with my father to report my progress. Believe it or not! He is still in touch with me and my father even after I left school (S7).

The students in the Egyptian group had a higher degree of self-efficacy. This is attributed as indicated by Bandura (1999) to success experiences, good model and emotional support. Besides, the students developed a more positive sense of self-efficacy due to the methods of teaching followed in the classes they were taught and the support they were given by their teachers. Interview evidence supports these remarks. The following are some of the remarks made by the interviewed students in the Egyptian group:

The English language became like a mother tongue. Nowadays, we live in a world which has become like a small village (S8).

I love to use English language with others even if they don't understand me. I explain to them what I mean (S11).

I like to learn English since I was a very little child. I exert a lot of effort to be good at English. I did it. I got 84% in a test conducted by the British Council in Cairo (S9).

In primary school, I had an excellent English language teacher. He used to give us extra activities to help us be good at English language (S11).

Another factor was also highlighted which contributes to interpreting the previous finding. This factor is related to over-reliance on technology, which has become widely available for many learners in the Saudi context. One interviewee explained:

Using the internet and mobile applications affects learning EFL in a negative way. For example, if I am looking for a word or a phrase in the internet, I don't even complete typing it, and the results appear. I know that even if I type incorrectly, the computer will auto-correct my mistakes, so I don't bother learning the correct spelling (S2).

In addition, the way the Saudi students are assessed does not encourage them to be willing to practice using EFL actively. Exams take the form of multiple choice items with very few chances to use oral or composition tests. One Saudi interviewee mentioned:

We are not good at writing because teachers don't focus on teaching us how to write or speak (S5).

Another Saudi interviewee stated:

Although I am good in EFL, I don't dare speak in public or in front of my classmates. I may make a mistake. I never speak in public in class either in Arabic or in English. Generally, I don't volunteer to speak in class unless I am asked by the teacher. Why do I put myself in an embarrassing situation?!(S4).

This is unlike the situation for the Egyptian group who were more willing to share their ideas and express their feelings in EFL openly. One Egyptian interviewee mentioned:

I like to listen to movies in EFL even without looking at the subtitles (S12).

Another Egyptian interviewee stated:

I sit with my classmates and we speak in EFL. Sometimes, I write my diaries in EFL (S11).

Besides, oral and composition tests are frequent in the EFL Egyptian classroom which motivated EFL students to practice EFL to achieve academic success, and to express themselves freely and creatively.

One aspect of self-efficacy is the learner's beliefs about his/her ability to use EFL appropriately. This ability could be mediated by the support given by the EFL teacher as highlighted by one interviewee. He stated:

My English language teacher believed in me. He kept telling me that I would excel in English language. I achieved far beyond my expectations. I even learned how to use English well. I learned that, in some situations, I should use certain English words and sentences, but in other situations, it is not appropriate to use them (S10).

Students in the Egyptian group had the opportunity to make use of their free time in a way that could have helped in improving their EFL self-efficacy. It was stated by one interviewee: "During summer vacation, I work in tourism and improve my language." This could have helped students in the Egyptian group to improve their EFL self-efficacy.

7.4 The Fourth Hypothesis

The t-test results (as shown in Table 5) rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference due to nationality between means of scores obtained by the study sub-groups in the EFL identity scale. According to Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference between means of scores obtained by the Egyptian and Saudi groups in favor of the Egyptian group who had a more positive sense of identity. The differences for all dimensions of identity ranged between 5.86 and 7.42, and are all significant at the level of 0.01 with the exception of the social identity dimension, which is not significant.

Interview evidence reveals that the Egyptian EFL students had a more positive sense of identity while studying EFL. One interviewee mentioned:

EFL is an honor for anyone who speaks it because it is the first language all over the world. I like to live in an English speaking country like the USA. I like to go there because there are not enough job opportunities in my country (S7).

Table 5 Differences due to Nationality in EFL Students' Identity

EFL students' identity	The Egyptian group (N = 165)		The Saudi group (N = 155)		T-value	Significance level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal	25.40	2.77	23.29	3.59	5.90	0.01
Social	21.59	2.59	21.68	2.49	0.31	Non-significant
Professional	25.77	2.64	23.06	3.82	7.42	0.01
Total score	72.76	6.15	68.03	8.20	5.86	0.01

Another interviewee mentioned:

If I am good at EFL, I will have self-confidence. I think that studying EFL increased my awareness and developed my personality. It is also useful for communicating with other people all over the world (S12).

For students in the Egyptian group, the main goal for learning is to be able to communicate using English language. It is an opportunity to project national identity and love for the mother tongue (Arabic language). One interviewee from the Egyptian group stated:

I know English and I can make use of my knowledge in English to teach Arabic language to English language speakers who wish to learn it. Besides, I can translate useful works from English into Arabic to benefit people in my society who don't know English (S10).

Students in the Egyptian group were more positive about national identity. Knowledge of English deepened love for and pride in Arabic language, which is a salient projection of national identity. As for the EFL students' professional dimension of identity, the Egyptian group outperformed the Saudi group. The former group thought that studying EFL would enable them to succeed in their future professional life.

As for the EFL students' social dimension of identity, there are no statistically significant differences between the Egyptian and Saudi groups. This is attributed to the several similarities between the two countries in terms of language, religion, and geography, to name some. This aspect is underscored in previous research. For example, Bandura (2006) stated that the individuals' behaviors are related to their social circumstances.

7.5 The Fifth Hypothesis

The correlation coefficient results (as shown in Table 6 below) rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant correlation between the study participants' scores in the EFL self-efficacy scale and the EFL identity scale. As evident from Table 6 below, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between means of the study group's scores in the EFL self-efficacy scale and identity scale. Correlation coefficient values ranged between .146 and .571, and are all significant at the level of 0.01. This finding indicates that the more EFL self-efficacy the participants have, the more positive sense of identity they have, and that high self-efficacy in EFL is a predictor of a more positive sense of identity.

Table 6 Correlation between EFL Students' Self-efficacy and Identity (n = 320)

EFL students' identity	EFL Self-efficacy				Total score
	listening	speaking	reading	Writing	
Personal	0.436	0.539	0.379	0.451	0.524
Social	0.164	0.199	0.188	0.146	0.198
Professional	0.458	0.570	0.451	0.473	0.562
Total score	0.462	0.571	0.441	0.469	0.560

The person who can listen well to EFL can express himself/herself clearly. Consequently, this person has a better chance for a positive sense of personal and social identity. Good listening is a useful skill that will help this person in his career (professional dimension of identity). Similarly, the person who speaks EFL well can communicate well with himself/herself (personal dimension of identity) and with others (social dimension of identity). Good communication is also a requirement of getting a job in his/her specialty of EFL (professional identity).

Interview evidence supports the positive correlation between EFL self-efficacy and personal, social and professional dimensions of identity. As stated by one interviewee:

Because I am good at English language and I enjoy what I listen to in English, I started to change and feel good about myself. I also became able to speak well in the presence of others. Besides, I felt that finding a job in tourism would not be that difficult as I thought before (S10).

The third dimension of EFL self-efficacy (reading) increases the knowledge base of the person. This knowledge contributes to the sense of identity with all its dimensions. The person who has high EFL self-efficacy in writing can express his/her ideas and feelings in a way that will deepen their sense of personal social and professional dimensions of identity. One interviewee stated:

I don't think that studying EFL will have a negative influence on my identity or my native language. On the contrary, studying EFL is useful while learning Arabic (S11).

She further explained that:

You learn EFL terms which may be new to Arabic culture or language, and you start to think about these terms and how they are meaningful in Arabic culture and language (S11).

Another interviewee mentioned:

Reading in English language helped me to know a lot about myself and my abilities (S10).

Another interviewee stated:

Writing in English language helped me to release my negative feelings and emotions (S12).

8. Discussion

Two identity options (i.e., the non-native identity option and the bilingual identity option) will be discussed in this part. The first option is linked to a negative sense of self-efficacy and identity whereas the second option is empowering and linked to a positive sense of self-efficacy and identity. These two options relate to two orientations that were held by participants in the current study. The findings of the current study revealed that the male and the Saudi groups had lower EFL self-efficacy and tended — as revealed by interview evidence — to adopt the non-native option, whereas the female and Egyptian groups had higher EFL self-efficacy and tended to adopt the bilingual identity option. This latter option was found to be relevant to a more positive sense of identity among the EFL students in the current study as revealed by the groups of students whose scores were higher in the identity scale (i.e., the female and Egyptian groups). The narrative accounts revealed by the interview data also confirmed these findings. The following discussion compares these two identity options and relates them to findings of the study and existing literature.

The learners who adopted the non-native identity option experience a conflict as learners of a foreign language. This is attributed to the fact that target and native languages — Arabic and English in the case of the current study — have different linguistic and cultural value systems. Learners who adopt the non-native identity option feel that the construction of new identity, which is linked to the learning of the foreign language, takes place at the expense of the L1 identity. They constantly view themselves as non-native users of the target language. In addition, they feel a conflict because the learning of the foreign language with the embedded foreign culture has a negative influence on the already constructed L1 identity.

The non-native identity option is echoed in previous literature. For example, Zacharias (2010) highlights that some EFL learners experience a significant identity conflict when using English. They may have concerns about losing their cultural identities as a result of acquiring English, and shuttling between different languages within oneself is not only lonely, but also troubling and confusing (Zacharias, 2012). Zacharias (2012) adds that for some EFL learners, identifying one's identity seems to be a struggle as English, both the language and the cultures, was perceived as an imposition to EFL learners' core cultural identities. Sung (2014) highlights that conflicts are part of L2 learners' identity, particularly when aspirations of membership to the L2 community may be perceived to be in conflict with expression of loyalty to the local community. However, as stated by Lamb (2004), It should also be acknowledged that struggles and tensions inevitably accompany the construction of an L2 identity that may co-exist with local and/or national identities. Ellis (2003) pointed out that one explanation for the emergence and persistence of native speaker dominance in ELT is that it tied in neatly with Chomskyan notions of the "ideal speaker" who could be taken as the reference point and ultimately the arbiter of what contributes a grammatical version of the language.

Unlike the non-native identity option which is characterized by conflict and struggle experienced by some EFL learner groups, the bilingual identity option provided other learners (i.e., the female and Egyptian groups) with a means of reconciliation between the demands of the native and target language identities. Cook (1999) highlights that because L2 users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of their L2 and L1s and in some of their cognitive processes, they should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers.

Learning a second language does not necessarily mean abandoning learner ethnic identities. In fact, several studies indicate that successful second language learners are the ones who are able to maintain their ethnic identity as they adapt to L2 culture (Zacharias, 2010). This view is consistent with the findings of the current study given that the students who were found to have higher EFL self-efficacy (i.e., the female and Egyptian groups) tended to adopt this option as supported by interview evidence.

Pavlenko (2003) links the bilingual identity option with the term multi-competence to convey what bilingual English users can do rather than what they cannot do as the term "nonnative speaker" does. According to her, "people who know more than one language have a distinct compound state of mind, not equivalent to two monolingual states, and can be considered legitimate L2 users" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 262). She suggests that through discussions of multi-competence, bilingualism, and the effect of second language acquisition to the first language, students can see their own competence differently and more positively. She highlights some benefits of introducing multi-competence in pedagogy. First, it offers an appealing alternative for students who are eager to reframe their own competence. Second, it allows bilingual students to reimagine themselves in a new and much more positive light and to position themselves differently with regard to their multilingualism. Third, as a concept, multi-competence has a therapeutic effect; it affects not only students' views of their linguistic competence but

also their self-esteem as legitimate users of English.

The above discussion highlights the opportunities offered as a result of being a bilingual, an identity option which could be linked to the wider discourse about global identity and EFL learners as global citizens. Sung (2014) highlights that L2 users may wish to signal their belonging to a wider global community. They often associate their use of English with a sense of a “global identity” and develop a desire to become “global citizens”. Yashima (2002, p. 57) suggests that a global identity is related to “international posture”, which is seen to be made up of an “interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude towards different cultures”. Most of these aspects were talked about favorably by the study sub-groups (i.e., the female and Egyptian groups) who scored higher in the EFL self-efficacy and identity scales. Pennycook (2007) explains that the expression of identity among L2 speakers may be tied up with the identification with both local and global contexts. Kang (2012) also highlighted that the dual identity construction in international communication seems to go beyond the dichotomy of “native culture” versus “target language culture”, but involves the incorporation of both the native culture and the global culture. Their desired global identities appear to be “globally oriented yet locally grounded” (Kang, 2012, p. 168).

9. Implications

The findings revealed in the current study raises implications for EFL classroom pedagogy, curriculum design and teacher education. Zacharias (2010) explains that as a major source of input for English learning, the classroom provides settings where EFL students construct their bilingual identities. What EFL teachers can do is to help English learners to be aware of their multiple identities. One way to do this is by raising awareness of the identity options available during classroom instruction.

Teachers can play a big role in making learners view their EFL identities as either an opportunity or a threat. In classrooms where teachers have realized and accepted the reality of multiple identities, learners and teachers bring their multiple identities into the classroom and can legitimize the use of the first language (L1), and consequently, these identities and practices are empowered and explored as “resources” (Zacharias, 2012). Hall (1995) asserts that teachers are influential in learners’ identity construction. Teachers can either create or impose identities on learners. To make students’ aware of their multiple identities, Pavlenko (2003) recommends classroom pedagogy to expose students to readings and discussion aimed to solidify students’ knowledge base about the natures of bilingual users to support students feel legitimate, instead of deviant, L2 users. Thus, teachers can help promote EFL learners’ self-esteem as competent bilinguals instead of the debilitating sense of inferiority associated with the non-native identity option. Moreover, EFL teachers can play a significant role in promoting international communication through the foreign language learning and teaching process by bringing up children who now live in a world that has become more globalized to be open-minded to other cultures and to adopt a flexible identity orientation without underestimating the valuable contribution of their own culture and identity to the international community.

EFL textbook writers could play an important role in alleviating the struggle EFL learners experience while they are reconstructing their EFL identity. Canagarajah (1993) recommends textbooks authors to engage discourses that are relevant to the students’ lives. EFL textbooks also need to reflect a fair amount of international, cultural and cross-cultural issues and references. As for teacher education, EFL educators can play a significant

role in raising the awareness of EFL prospective teachers in how to train and challenge EFL learners to reconstruct their EFL identity through the EFL learning experiences and opportunities. One way to raise teachers' awareness is by integrating issues of bilingual identities in courses or formal discussion/seminars offered in EFL pre-service and in-service teacher educational programs. It is important for pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development programs to introduce dialogue about non-nativeness, and bilingualism to facilitate construction of supportive L2 identities.

10. Conclusion

The findings of the current study revealed a positive correlation between EFL university students' self-efficacy and their sense of identity. From one hand, the students' who had lower self-efficacy in English language had a negative sense of identity viewing that the construction of a new identity concurrent with the learning of a new language was at the expense of the L1 identity. On the other hand, the students who had higher self-efficacy in English language had a positive sense of identity viewing the learning of another language as a means of reconciliation between the demands of the native and target languages. The research in this area needs to be pushed forward. For example, one future study may explore the identity options held by EFL teachers and their effect on their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Teachers themselves need to be aware of the identity issues of bilinguals. This is particularly because EFL teachers are the mediators between the classroom community and the communities of practice their EFL students learn about.

References

- Asada A. (2013). "An investigation of the Impact of bilingualism on the identity of a sample of bilingual English teachers", dissertation submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts (TESOL), Canterbury Christ Church University UK.
- Bahramy M., Aidinlou N. A. and Kazemi S. A. (2013). "Reconstruction of 'self' and 'other' in EFL learners", *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 56–62.
- Bandura A. (1999). *Self-efficacy in Changing Societies*, UK, Cambridge University Press.
- Bandura A. (2006). "Toward a psychology of human agency", *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 164–180.
- Bashir-Ali K. (2006). "Language learning and the definition of one's social, cultural and racial identity", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 628–639.
- Block D. (2007). *Second Language Identities*, London, Continuum.
- Canagarajah S. (1993). "American textbooks and Tamil students: Discerning ideological tensions in the ESL classrooms", *Journal of Language, Culture and Curriculum*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 143–156.
- Cook V. (1999). "Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 185–209.
- Ellis E. (2003). "Bilingualism among teachers of English as a second language: A study of second language learning experience as a contributor to the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers of ESL to adults", Ph.D. thesis, School of Language and Linguistics, Griffith University Australia.
- Erickson E. H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, New York, W. W. Horton Company.
- Hall J. K. (1995). "(Re)creating our worlds with words: A sociohistorical perspective of face-to-face interaction", *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 206–232.
- Hall S. (1996). "Introduction: Who needs 'identity'?", in: S. Hall & P. D. Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage Publication.
- Kang Y. (2012). "Singlish or globish: Multiple language ideologies and global identities among Korean educational migrants in Singapore", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 165–183.
- Kramsch C. (2009). *The Multilingual Subject*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Kucukoglu H. (2013). "The interface between EFL teachers' self-efficacy concerning critical reading comprehension and some select variables", *Procedia — Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 70, pp. 1646–1650.

- Lamb M. (2004). "Integrative motivation in a globalizing world", *System*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 3–19.
- Liu J. (1999). "Nonnative-English-speaking professionals in TESOL", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 85–102.
- Norton B. (1997). "Language, identity, and the ownership of English", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 409–429.
- Norton B. (2010). "Language and identity", in: N. H. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, pp. 349–369.
- Pavlenko A. (2003). "I never knew I was a bilingual: Reimagining teacher identities in TESOL", *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 251–268.
- Pennycook A. (2007). *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Sung C. C. M. (2014). "English as a lingua franca and global identities: Perspectives from four second language learners of English in Hong Kong", *Linguistics and Education*, Vol. 26, pp. 31–39.
- Wang C., Kim D., Bai R. and Hu J. (2014). "Psychometric properties of a self-efficacy scale for English language learners in China", *System*, Vol. 44, pp. 24–33.
- Yashima T. (2002). "Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 86, No. 1, pp. 54–66.
- Zacharias N. T. (2010). "Acknowledging learner multiple identities in the EFL Classroom", *k@ta*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 26–41.
- Zacharias N. T. (2012). "EFL students' understanding of their multilingual English identities", *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 233–244.
- Zealand R. (2004). "Relationships among achievement, perceptions of control, self-regulation & self-determination of students with & without the classification of learning disabilities", Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University.

Appendix A EFL Self-efficacy Scale

No.	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	I understand conversations in English.			
2	I can guess the meaning of an unknown word as I listen to programs in English.			
3	I can understand what is intended by a speaker in English.			
4	I get distracted while listening to conversations in English.			
5	I find it difficult to judge what I listen to in English.			
6	I find it difficult to understand English poetry.			
7	I can follow English movies without subtitles.			
8	I can understand the details of what I listen to in English.			
9	I can identify the main idea of what I listen to.			
10	I can give a talk in English.			
11	I can use correct grammar while speaking.			
12	I trust my ability to use English to discuss my teacher while giving a lecture in English.			
13	I find it difficult to introduce myself in English during interviews.			
14	I avoid discussions and debates conducted in English.			
15	I have an exceptional ability in selecting content of speech in English.			
16	I can organize my ideas well while speaking in English.			
17	I find it difficult to pronounce English correctly.			
18	I feel enthusiastic if I am asked to speak in English.			
19	I read with comprehension articles in English.			
20	I can understand magazine stories in English.			
21	I find it difficult to judge articles in English.			
22	I trust my ability to scan for specific information while reading in English.			
23	I can read with comprehension English poetry.			
24	I can distinguish between important and unimportant ideas of what I read.			
25	I get distracted while reading in English.			
26	I find it difficult to write personal reflections in English.			
27	I use punctuation marks while writing in English.			
28	I trust my ability to summarize a topic in English.			
29	I can correspond with native English speakers.			
30	I have doubt in my ability to write a letter in English.			
31	I can organize my ideas related to a topic I want to write about in English.			
32	I can generate many ideas while writing in English.			
33	I am one of the best students who can write in English.			

Appendix B EFL Identity Scale

No.	Statement	Always	Some-times	Never
1	I think that studying English helps me know myself.			
2	I feel at odds with myself since I have started studying English.			
3	Learning English increases my self-confidence.			
4	Studying English enhances my ability to express myself.			
5	I did not change since I have started studying English.			
6	Studying English makes me lose my personal identity.			
7	I began to have clear goals since I have started studying English.			
8	I felt more independence since I have started studying English.			
9	Studying English makes me think negatively about myself.			
10	Studying English makes me distinguished.			
11	Studying English makes me interact more with others.			
12	Speaking in English is a source of social pride.			
13	Speaking English makes me rebellious in my society.			
14	I wish to live in an English speaking country.			
15	Studying English helps me interact easily with the other sex.			
16	Studying English helps me know how others think of me.			
17	I tend to imitate the behaviors of English native speakers.			
18	Studying English has a negative influence on using Arabic.			
19	Studying English increases my social relationships.			
20	Studying English helps me enjoy living in my society.			
21	Knowledge of English is essential for professional excellence.			
22	Studying English makes me more satisfied with the profession I will choose.			
23	Studying English makes me more ready for the work I will choose.			
24	Studying English hinders the achievement of my professional goals.			
25	I think it is difficult to apply what I learn in English in my future.			
26	I wish to use English in business after graduation.			
27	I chose to study English after long thought.			
28	Using English will make me enjoy my future work.			
29	I do not finish reading in English what I start.			
30	Studying in English helps me make better decisions.			