



## THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE ON EFL SUDANESE TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS

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Received 14<sup>th</sup> August 2015; Published 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015

### Abstract

The paper aimed to investigate the impact of self-confidence on EFL Sudanese tertiary level students. The sample of the study consisted of 221 (male and female) students, department of English language at El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College for Science and Technology in the White Nile State for the academic year 2013/2014. It is a mixed methods research design "mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods". A descriptive-correlation design was employed to find out the relationship between self-confidence, academic performance and oral communication. A student's questionnaire and a teacher's interview with teachers of English language who teach oral communication were used for data collection. The data was analyzed by using a variety of statistical methods which included percentages, mean, degree of freedom, sig. (2-tailed), Presumptive mean, standard -deviation, Pearson Correlation coefficient, Spearman rank correlations, Spearman- Brown equation, two way ANOVA, T- test, the equation of Cronbach's Alpha and the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) for the analysis of the data. The findings revealed a positive, significant correlation between self-confidence, oral communication proficiency and academic performance. The students who scored high in the self-confidence questionnaire also had high scores in oral communication test and academic performance. The study also revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between self-confidence and gender or age of EFL learner. The study concluded with some recommendations which offered to EFL learners, Teachers of English language, administrations of universities, curriculum designers in order to help in directing less confident students to better learning performance. Finally, Further researches were suggested in relation to the impact of personality traits on foreign language learning.

**Keywords:** Investigate, Self-Confidence, Sudanese, Percentages, Mean.

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**To cite this paper:** Dr. Salih abdallah Ahmed Abdallah and Dr. Ahmed Gasm Alseed Ahmed, 2015. The impact of self-confidence on efl sudanese tertiary level students, *International Journal of Information Research and Review*. Vol. 2, Issue, 09, pp.1093-1106, September, 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

Personality is a psychological factor of individual learners which have been shown to have a marked effect on foreign language development. Many researches have been carried out in the area of personality traits to find out which traits of the personality of foreign language learner make a difference in the language learning process, and then to determine why those traits have such an effect. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of personality in learning a foreign language specifically self-confidence in order to improve the process of learning English language in the Sudanese context.

### Aims and objectives of the study

The study primarily aims to:

- Conduct a survey on the effects of personality of foreign language learners upon learning the foreign language, and

the relationship between personality traits and learning the foreign language.

- Investigate self-confidence among the university students in the Sudan, mainly in the White Nile State and find out its relationship to EFL learners' performance in oral communication.
- Investigate the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in EFL learning.
- Find out the relationship between self-confidence and EFL learner's age and gender.
- Discover ways of building students' self-confidence and suggesting suitable remedies for overcoming lack of self-confidence.

### Statement of the problem

Personality as one of the factors affecting foreign language learning has been studied in terms of number of personal traits

such as self-esteem, shyness, assertiveness, inhibition, extroversion, adventurousness, responsiveness, empathy, dominance and self-confidence. Although the results that showed doubts, confusions and difficulties facing the researches carried out to find a clear and reliable relationship between personality and foreign language learning, the linguists interested and involved in this field have great confidence that there is a strong relation between personality traits and language learning. On the other hand, there is a rareness in studies that carried out in seeking an obvious impact of self-confidence as a personality trait on learning the foreign language. In spite of that, the available studies in this trait support the conclusions that self-confidence has a great effect on language learning by showing that the self-confident person is a more successful language learner.

### Research Questions

The problem of the study can be summarized in the following questions:

- What is the degree of self-confidence among Sudanese tertiary level students of English language in the White Nile State?
- What is the relationship between self-confidence and oral communication proficiency?
- Is there any correlation that has statistical indication between highly self-confident EFL learners and academic performance?
- Are there any differences between male and female EFL learners in the degree of self-confident?
- Are there any differences between young and old EFL learners in the degree of self-confident?

### Hypotheses

The study aims to test the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis (1):** Sudanese tertiary level students of English language in the White Nile State are highly self-confident.

**Hypothesis (2):** There is a significant statistical correlation that have some indications between EFL learners of high self-confidence and oral communication proficiency.

**Hypothesis (3):** There is a significant correlation between highly self-confident EFL learners and academic performance in EFL learning.

**Hypothesis (4):** There are differences that have statistical indications between EFL male and female learners in the degree of self-confident in favour of the first group.

**Hypothesis (5):** There are differences that have statistical indications between EFL young and old learners in the degree of self-confident in favour of the first group.

### Literature review

#### Definition of Self-confidence

Norton, *et al.* (2008) states that " Self-confidence as an issue of second language learning has been basically investigated as an influential variable with a social psychological approach in the general contexts of investigations on second language learners' attitudes and achievements" cited in Al Khotaba (2012: 533).

Brown (2007:155) states that "no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-confidence' in oneself – the belief in one's 'own capabilities to successfully perform an activity'" (Cited in Alves 2008:6). Norton, *et al.* (2008) states that "Self-confidence as an issue of second language learning has been basically investigated as an influential variable with a social psychological approach in the general contexts of investigations on second language learners' attitudes and achievements" (Cited in Al Khotaba and Sakarna 2012:533). AL-Hebaish (2012) states that "it is a psychological and social phenomenon in which an individual evaluates him/ herself according to some values which may result in different emotional states, and which become developmentally stable, but are still open to variation depending on personal circumstances (Reasoner, cited in Rubio, 2004)" (P.60). Pae, (2008) states that "Another causal factor that directly explains the variances associated with L2achievement is self-confidence. Self-confidence is operationally defined as low anxiety and high self-evaluation of L2 competence (Clément *et al.* 1994). In such a context, self-confidence becomes an important determinant of attitudes and efforts to learn an L2 and directly influences L2 achievement" (p.11).

#### General Self-Confidence

AL-Hebaish (2012) states that: "*General self-confidence is developed during the age of childhood and emerges from the accumulation of inter and intrapersonal experiences (Harris, 2009; Brown, 1994). The literature on the sources of building general self-confidence points to self-confidence being derived from several factors. The most important factors are: (1) personal experiences; successful experiences increase the development of high self-confidence, while the experiences of failure have the opposite effect, (2) social messages received from others. Community, home, school, and peers are important for self-confidence growth. Sending positive messages for others is thought to be detrimental to the development of high self-confidence, whereas exposure to negative messages decreases the level of self-confidence*" (p. 60).

#### Linguistic Self-Confidence

Lee (2012) states that: "*Another important psychological construct in motivational studies is learners' linguistic self-confidence. Linguistic self-confidence was first described by Clément, Gardner and Smythe (1977) who defined it as self-perceptions of communicative competence or self-assessments of L2 proficiency. They claim that it is a dimension of motivation and also a state that is free of anxiety. Linguistic self-confidence was found to be a significant motivational factor in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations in which learners do not have direct contact with the L2 community*" (p.7).

#### Self- Confidence and Age

Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013) states that "It is also assumed that other individual differences will influence foreign language speaking confidence. Among the numerous individual differences, an attempt was made to see if age also plays a role in this connection.

It is believed that while adults find it difficult to attain the ability to obtain and incorporate complex data and dealt with different aspects at the same time, children can do it automatically and unconsciously (Romero, 2006: 602).

### Self- Confidence and Gender

Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013) states that "Another individual difference that is supposed to affect not only students' speaking confidence but also learning processes is gender. Concerning the relationship between the gender and foreign language speaking, Koosha, Ketabi and Kassaian, (2011) conducted a study the result of which showed that there was no statistically significant association between gender and foreign language speaking" (p.603).

### The effect of self-confidence on oral communication

The majority of the studies carried out concerning the impact of self-confidence on students' oral performance have proved that self-confidence is a significant factor in language learning. Brown (1994) states that ".Among the four language skills, the achievement of oral performance is thought to be highly correlated with self-confidence. FL learners can't speak the language or express themselves freely and fluently without some degree of it" (Cited in Al-Hebaish 2012:61). In their attempts to find out if any relationship exists between L2 learners' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance among the Korean college students, Park and Lee (2004) found that "The higher confident they were, the higher oral performance they showed" (p.197).

### The effect of self-confidence on academic performance

Many studies conducted on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance have shown that it has a great impact on students' academic performance. Al-Hebaish (2012) states that "Self-confidence is a personal factor that pays a supportive role in the achievement of foreign language learning. Some studies claim that no language learning activities will be carried out successfully without it" (P.60). In his study on students' self-confidence and learning through dialogues in a net-based environment, Jakobsson (2006) states that "The findings has shown that students' self-confidence clearly related to students' activities and academic results" (p.395).

### Building self-confidence among EFL learners

Based on the findings of the previous studies conducted all over the world concerning the impact of self-confidence on EFL learning, the majority of the studies have proved that there is a significant relationship between self-confidence and success in EFL learning, namely success in oral communication and academic performance. For this reason, it is important to find out the suitable methods of building L2 learners' self-confidence for better proficiency in oral communication and better achievement in academic performance. Eldred *et al* (2004) cited in James and Nightingale (2005) reported that "Development of confidence seems to be one of the keys to the successful development of literacy, language and numeracy skills through the Skills for Life Strategy"(p:4).

Maxwell (2011) provided some recommendations to EFL learners so as to promote their self-confidence by stating that " Self-confident people push through resistance specially their own, to transform their visions into existence" (p.1). He added that " awareness of one's personality as a step of building self-confidence. Act of awareness promote confidence and self-preservation" (p.1). A number of recommendations were given to teachers of English language in order to enhance the level of self-confidence among their EFL learners. Al-Hebaish (2012) suggested that: "*language instructors are recommended to focus on building their students' self-confidence through creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages them to speak and participate in oral activities without fear. They can help learners recognize their fears and help them learn to deal with them. They can support positive thinking and fight negative views and beliefs. During oral activities, they should maintain a relaxed and humorous atmosphere; design interesting activities give more time and opportunities and concentrate on the positive*" (p. 64).

Juhana (2012) mentioned another solution for lack of self-confidence which affect negatively on EFL learning by stating that: "*The possible solution to overcome those psychological factors, most students believed that motivating them to be more confident to speak English is worth considering. This finding suggests that the teachers should be more aware of their students' hindrance to speak in English class*" (p.100).

### Oral communication and Self-confidence

Several studies have been carried out all over the world concerning the relationship between self-confidence trait and oral communication proficiency of L2 learner. To discuss this issue in details , it is important to know all about oral communication.

### What is oral communication?

Rahman (2010) defines oral communication as "the spoken interaction between two or more people. A unique and learned rhetorical skill that requires understanding what to say and how to say it" (p.3). Yamani *et al* (2013) defined Oral communication as "an interactive process in which an individual alternately takes the roles of speaker and listener" (p.255). Richards and Rogers (1986) quoting La Forge (1983) cited in Abdulla (2013:19) declare that oral communication "is more than just a message being transmitted from a speaker to a listener; the speaker is at the same time both subject and object of his own message" (p. 91).

Maguire (2013) provides four Definitions of Oral Communication as follows:

- *the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience (University of Virginia Oral Communication Competency Report).*
- *the ability to compose, critically analyze, present, and deliver information through verbal interactions (University of Wyoming University Studies Program).*
- *information spoken by mouth; the use of speech (SIL International).*
- *the art of expressing and exchanging ideas in speech. It involves the ability to compose, critically analyze, and deliver information*

through verbal, vocal, and visual interactions (Old Dominion University Office of Institutional Research and Assessment" (p.1).

### The effect of self-confidence on oral communication

The relationship between self-confidence and oral communication receives a great concern among researchers in language learning. Juhana (2012) in her study on psychological factors that hinder students from speaking in English class, states that "the study revealed that psychological factors such as fear of making mistake, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence and lack of motivation hinder students from speaking in English class" (p.100). Park and Lee (2004) in their study of L2 learner' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance, states that "The results of the analysis showed that there were significant effects of anxiety and self-confidence on L2 learners' oral performance" (p.197).

### Definition of academic performance

Academic performance is defined in many ways. Martha (2009) states that "Academic performance according to the Cambridge University Reporter (2003) is frequently defined in terms of examination performance" (p.14). Okoh (2010:99) states that "Academic performance is defined or regarded as participants' examination grades (Grade point average) at the end of a particular semester or programme. It could also be seen as the level of performance in a particular field of study. Higher scores indicate better academic performance (Egbule 2004)". Yusuf, A. (n.d) states that " Performance is defined as the observable or measurable behaviour of a person an animal in a particular situation usually experimental situation (Simpson and Weiner.1989:84)

### The effect of self-confidence on academic performance

Shoemaker (2008) affirmed the relationship between self-confidence and learners' academic performance by stating that "Students' reported confidence at the conclusion of the course was correlated with their academic performance in three of the four years that were examined" (p.1). (cited in American Society for Horticultural Science 2011). Tavani and Losh (2003) supported that finding saying that "Levels of students' internal characteristics, such as motivation and self-confidence, also strongly influence their achievements during their high school careers" (p.142)

### Previous studies in the role of self-confidence on FL learning

Jakobsson (2006) conducted a study on students' self-confidence and learning through dialogues in a net-based environment. The instrument used was dialogues and collaborative situation's in small groups. Results of the study have been extracted using statistical analysis. The factor related to students' self-confidence has been divided into two specific factors, namely self-confidence: studies and self-confidence: the academic setting. The first describes students' self-confidence related to succeeding at their university studies and the latter to feeling comfortable in academic settings. The findings has shown that students' self-confidence clearly related to students' activities and academic results.

Shoemaker's (2008) study focused on Student confidence correlation with academic performance. The study investigated the psychological constructs of "confidence" and "self-efficacy" to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted learning objectives on student achievement. Student learning outcomes, or SLOs, were used as the framework for course development. A pre- and post-assessment was given to students enrolled in the course in the fall semesters from 2005 to 2008 to assess whether the SLOs were being met. The 50-item assessment asked students to record their confidence in ability to do something. Students' reported confidence at the conclusion of the course was correlated with their academic performance in three of the four years that were examined.

Rahimi and Farvardin (2009) conducted a study to find out the relationships between attitudes, self-confidence, compensation strategies, teacher evaluation and class evaluation in Iranian university EFL students. The instrument used in the study was the English version of the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (Espinosa, 2007) and the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning developed by Oxford (1990). The instrument used by Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) also included measures of self confidence and measures of interest. Responses were analyzed by using inferential statistical techniques including Pearson  $r$  and Multiple Regression. Teacher evaluation and self-confidence were the best predictors of attitude toward learning English and compensation strategies respectively. In this study 50 participants were selected. All of them were sophomore English students studying at Kashan University, Iran. Their age ranged from 19 to 22. From among the subjects, 28 were female and 22 were male. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS. After the scoring procedure, the correlations between attitude toward learning English, self confidence, compensation strategies, teacher and class evaluation were computed. Bivariate Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used. To address the second and third research questions, Multiple Regressions concerning the variables involved were calculated. The findings of the study has shown that self-confidence and teacher evaluation manifested high correlations. It shows students with high self-confidence evaluated their English teachers positively and they believed that their English teachers' role in their self-confidence was effective and crucial.

Molberg (2010) conducted a study to explore the consequence of motivation and linguistic self-confidence in relation to pupils' oral interaction. The study discusses which consequences motivation and linguistic self-confidence have on pupils' oral interaction in the English classroom. The researcher used a qualitative approach and conducted a semi-structured interview with six pupils, three girls and three boys from 10<sup>th</sup> graders and their English teacher from a Norwegian school located in Tromsø Municipality. The findings show that motivation and linguistic self-confidence do have an impact on oral interaction, where the pupils' motivation and linguistic self-confidence is linked to the output they produce". Al-Hebaish (2012) studied the Correlation between General Self-Confidence and Academic Achievement in the Oral Presentation Course. participants of the study were (53) undergraduate Saudi students majoring in English at Taibah University. They were female and the range of their age was

from 20 to 22. A descriptive – correlation design was employed to find out the relationship between general self-confidence and academic achievement. Data was collected through a General Self-Confidence Questionnaire (GSCQ) and final evaluation grades in the Oral Presentation course. SPSS was used for analyzing data. The results revealed a positive, significant correlation between general self-confidence and academic achievement. Those who scored high in GSCQ also had high scores in the oral achievement test. Language instructors were recommended to enhance building up their students' self-confidence in order to develop their oral performance achievement.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of self-confidence on EFL Sudanese Tertiary level students. To achieve this aim, the study adopts the following methodology:

### Description of the study's population

The study's population are (310) first, second, third and fourth year students enrolled in English departments in El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College for Science and Technology in the White Nile State.

### Description of the samples

The samples of the study are (221) Sudanese EFL first, second, third and fourth year students (aged 18-45) studying English as a major subject in El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College for Science and Technology. A number of boys and girls young and old learners of English language from the two institutions were selected by using a simple random sampling. From among the subjects, (124) were males and (97) were females.

### Data collection instruments

- Self-confidence scale designed by the researcher (2014) with the adaptation of the academic performance sub-scale from Sidney Shrauger's Self-confidence scale (1990) which had been adopted, modified and translated into Arabic language by Mohammad, A. A. (2000), with the addition of some items and modification made by the researcher to fit with the Sudanese context.
- The data of academic performance were collected from the students' academic records. The results of the study samples in all English courses have taken from the final examinations of the session of the academic year 2013/2014.
- Data were collected from students' degrees in oral communication by two methods: Students' academic Records and an oral communication proficiency test.
- A formal-structured interview used to take the comments of EFL teachers who teach oral communication in the two institutions.

### Procedures

The following procedures were followed in conducting and analyzing the students' self-confidence questionnaire, students' academic records and the teachers' interview:

- The modified self-confidence scale validated by using two methods which are expert-validation (face validity) by assistant professors in English language and psychology from El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College for Science and Technology. The second method was Pearson correlation coefficient (content validity).
- The equation of Cronbach's Alpha and Spearman Brown were applied to measure the reliability of the self-confidence questionnaire.
- The self-confidence questionnaire submitted in Arabic language to fulfill its purposes and to avoid misunderstanding of its items.
- The results of the self-confidence questionnaire were investigated and analyzed carefully to find out the students who have high self-confidence and those of low self-confidence.
- All the data collected from the questionnaire were computed, and results were analyzed statistically according to the questions and hypotheses of the study to find out whether the degree of self-confidence make a significant impact on EFL learners' oral communication and academic performance or not.
- Statistical tools which were used for data analysis are percentages, mean, degree of freedom, sig. (2-taild), Presumptive mean, standard -deviation, Pearson Correlation coefficient, Spearman rank correlations, Spearman- Brown equation, two way ANOVA, T- test, the equation of Cronbach's Alpha and the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) for the processing of the study data.

**Table 1. Description of sample based on Institute**

No.	Institute	Number	Percentage
1	El-Imam El-Mahdi University	207	93,7%
2	White Nile College for Science and Technology	14	6,3%
	Total	221	100%

**Table 2. Description of sample based on gender**

No.	Gender	Number	Percentage
1	Male	124	56,1%
2	Female	97	43,9%
	Total	221	100%

**Table 3. Description of sample based on age**

No.	Age	Number	Percentage
1	17 – 30 years	203	91.9%
2	31 – 45 years	18	8.1%
	Total	221	100%

### Self-confidence questionnaire

Data related to the objective of the study will be collected by the Self-Confidence Questionnaire constructed by the researcher (2014). Academic performance sub-scale was adopted from the Arabic version of self-confidence scale for Sidney Shrauger (1990) to measure the level self-confidence trait in academic performance. The Arabic version has been adopted, modified, translated into Arabic language by Adel Abdullah Mohammed - Faculty of Education - Zagazig University, Egypt (2000).

The researcher decided to designed the self-confidence questionnaire for two reasons:

- The available scales are not suitable for the Sudanese context.
- Among the available scales, the researcher didn't find a scale which combine the two variables (oral communication and academic performance) in relation to self-confidence trait.

### **The original self-confidence scale**

The scale of self-confidence has been prepared by Sidny Shrauger (1990) to measure the confidence of the individual of himself through his assessment to himself, and when the scale had designed the open response formula used to determine the areas which are more closely related to self-confidence through its application to a sample of (211) students from the University of New York at Buffalo. The most six commonly used dimensions was chosen as sub-scales. These dimensions are (academic performance, sports, physical appearance, romantic relationships, social interaction and talking to others). The academic performance sub-scale is one of the six dimensions included in the Arabic version. Each sub-scale includes seven items except for the scale of Sports which only consists of five items. Thus, the scale consists of (54) items in front of each of them there are four options, namely, (strongly agree - substantially agree – disagree to some extent - strongly disagree ). The range of each item is between 1- 4 degrees making the total score of the scale ranging between 54-216 degrees. The high degree Indicates a high level of self-confidence, and vice versa. Mohammed (n.d 8/9).

### **The adopted and modified academic performance sub-scale**

The researcher adopted and modified the academic performance sub - scale from the Arabic version of self-confidence scale for Sidney Shrauger (1990) which contains (9) items. The researcher added another (9) items. Thus, the total number of items that make up the sub - scale become (18) items in which (8) of them are positive and (10) are negative. The researcher also designed a sub - scale to measure the relationship between self-confidence and achievement in oral communication which consists of (18) items included the most prominent oral communication activities such as group discussions, role play, questions and answers, small group discussions, reading aloud, dialogues, debates, seminars, short talk, conversations, problem solving, oral interviews, telephone calls, oral reports, formal / informal discussions, oral discussions and face to face conversations.

### **Combination of the two sub-scales**

The two sub-scales of the academic performance and oral communication have been combined in one scale. The scale consists of (36) items in which half of them (18) to measure self-confidence in academic performance (study) while the other half (18) to measure self-confidence in oral communication. Half of the items were positive and the other half were negative. Items were distributed in a systematic manner through the succession of positive and negative ones as follows:

Items measuring self-confidence in academic performance are as follows:

- Positive items are eight which are: (1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29).
- Negative items are ten which are: (3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 33, 35).
- 2- Items measuring self-confidence in oral communication are as follows:
- Positive items are nine which are: (2, 6, 14,18, 22, 26, 30, 34).
- Negative items are nine which are: (4, 8, 12, 16,20, 24, 28, 32, 36).

In front of each item there are five choices which are: Almost true – Generally true – Somewhat true – Generally not true – Almost not true). The range of each item is between 0 – 4 degrees which making the total score of the scale ranging between 0 – 144 degrees ( see appendix --). The high degree indicates a high level of self-confidence, and vice versa. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic language so as to avoid the possibility that some lower-proficiency students might misunderstand some of the items, specifically first year students.

### **Oral communication test**

Data were collected from students' degrees in oral communication by two methods:

**Students' academic Records:** through monitoring the degrees of oral communication subject for first-year students at the University of El-Imam al-El-Mahdi and the White Nile College for Science and Technology in the final examinations of the session of the year 2014, where the department of English at both institutions teach oral communication for students specialized in English language as a major subject within the first year curriculum.

**Oral communication test:** has been prepared by the researcher to the students of second, third and fourth levels from the University of El-Imam El-Mahdi and Sudan Open University so as to measure their achievement in this subject. The test Included a number of oral communication activities such as pair/group discussions, presentations, interviews, problem solving and role play. Through these activities conducted by teachers oral communication who measured the students' performance in oral communication skills such as fluency, accuracy, eye contact, body language, style, understanding the audience, adapting to the audience, active and reflexive listening, politeness, and conciseness. The degrees of the test were 100 and the estimations are (excellent, very good, good, pass, failed

### **Academic performance records**

Participants' scores in academic performance in English language were obtained from their (GPAs). According to Kracher (2009:17) grade point average (GPA) is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit hours attempted (College Board, 2005). The Grade Point Average (GPA) indicated academic performance

on the total courses of (3) credit hours each. Marks in a course were obtained on a midterm and final examinations as well as a semester-work component including term papers presentations and assignments. The obtained marks were then curved for relative grading for each course. Relative grades across courses combined to form the GPA of a student.

### Teacher's interview

An interview is "a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent" (Moster and Kalton, 1971; quoted in Bell (1993:91); cited in Al-Samawi (2000). The rationale behind the use of interview as a data collection tool was that it can provide access to things that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, or beliefs (Merriam, 1998: cited in Ohata, 2005: 140 cited in Tanveer 2007:35). The interview was forml-structured, whereby seven questions were prepared before the interview to support the results obtained from the questionnaires. The questions focused on the relationship between oral communication achievement and L2 learner's level of self-confidence such as the factors that contribute to successful and active oral communication in the English foreign language classroom, challenges in teaching oral communication to EFL learners of low self-confidence, oral communication activities that help to enhance the levels of self-confidence among EFL learners, oral communication skills which indicate the state of self-confidence among EFL learners and need to be strengthened, correlation between EFL learners of high self-confidence and success in oral communication and suggestions for teachers of oral communication so as to improve the levels of their students of low self-confidence. The teachers' interviews included their experience of students' problems in L2 oral communication. The research tool used in collecting the interview's data was an interview schedule by using a written list of questions varied from open ended to closed. The interaction in the interview was a person-to-person interaction which performed face to face.

### Collection of questionnaire's data

The final questionnaire which consisted of (36) items was administered to the students majored in English language from El- Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile college of Science and Technology in the White Nile State. The questionnaire was administered by teachers of English language in the two institutes by the end of the academic year 2013/2014, in the students' regular English classes, over a period of one month. Students were informed about the aims and purposes of the questionnaire. Also they were informed to be sure that their replies will remain completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the research. Students were asked about their agreement to participate in the study. After that they were asked to fill the application of the basic information which includes (name - class (level) - age - gender - index number - accumulative average). The written directions accompanying the instrument were repeated orally by teachers of English language who participated in administering the questionnaire. After reading the directions, teachers asked students to choose from among the five response options in the self-confidence questionnaire. They were not given a time

limit but they were asked to determine the items which they feel the most applicable to them. The questionnaire took approximately between 15-20 minutes to complete. At last, participants were thanked by the researcher for taking time to fill the questionnaire and that their participation was very valuable for the researcher and for the field of study.

**Table 4. Distribution of teachers of English language based on institute**

No.	Institute	Number	Percentage
1	El-Imam El-Mahdi University	5	83.3%
2	White Nile College for Science and Technology	1	16.7%
	Total	6	100%

### Reliability and validity of self-confidence scale

#### Reliability of self-confidence scale

Data analysis began with estimating the instrument's reliability. Seliger and Shohamy (1989:185) states that "The criterion of reliability provides information on whether the data collection procedure is consistent and accurate". The equation of Cronbach's Alpha and Spearman Brown were applied to measure the reliability of self-confidence questionnaire.

The results shown in the following Table:

**Table 5. Reliability factors of the study population**

No. Of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlation between forms spearman-Brown Coefficient
35	.958	.956

#### Validity of self confidence questionnaire

Validity refers to the extent to which the data collection procedure measures what it intends to measure (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:188). To measure the validity of the self-confidence scale, the researcher used two methods:

**Expert-validation (face validity):** Accompanied with a letter included the aims and objectives, statement of the research problem, questions, hypotheses and variables of the study, the researcher administered the scale of self- confidence designed by the researcher (2014) after translating it into Arabic to reviewers of assistant professors in English language and psychology at El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College of Science and Technology to ensure the validity of content and to check the Arabic translation. The experts were asked to check every item in the light of the objectives and the variables of the research. They suggested that (13) items out of the (36) should be reduced, separated, deleted and changed by another. At last, the opinions of all reviewers indicated the suitability of the scale for application and the accuracy of the translation into Arabic language. Then the researcher did all the required modifications of the scale.

**Pearson correlation coefficient (content validity):** was used to measure the correlation of the item to the total score of the scale.

#### Pilot study of self-confidence questionnaire

To know the standard characteristics of the items of self-confidence questionnaire in its modified version which

**Table 6. Pearson correlation coefficients of the scores with the total score of self-confidence questionnaire (n= 20)**

Item	Correlation factor	Item	Correlation factor	Item	Correlation factor
1	.282	13	.689	25	.481
2	.634	14	.473	26	.629
3	.759	15	.464	27	.426
4	.802	16	.696	28	.612
5	.717	17	.195	29	.779
6	.725	18	.752	30	.404
7	.681	19	.661	31	.650
8	.642	20	.663	32	.709
9	.267	21	.582	33	.559
10	.862	22	.656	34	.687
11	.714	23	.686	35	.758
12	.370	24	.564	36	.734

consisted of (36) items based on the experts instructions, the researcher applied it in an exploratory sample with a size of (20) subjects selected by stratified random sampling from the population of the present study. After correcting the responses, data were entered to the computer. Then the researcher applied the content validity through checking the internal consistency of the items. Item (17) was deleted for its weakness and lack of correlation,

**Table 7. The deleted item from the correlation coefficient and the reason of deletion**

No. of the deleted item	Reason of deletion
17	Weak item and lacked correlation

Validity is .979 = .98 This indicates a high degree of validity

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Methods used for statistical analysis of self-confidence questionnaire

After finishing the data collection process, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were processed by using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version (19). Variety of statistical methods were used which included percentages, means, degrees of freedom, sig. (2-taild), standard deviations, Pearson Correlation coefficient, Spearman correlations, two way ANOVA, T- test and the equation of Cronbach's Alpha.

### Results of students' self-confidence questionnaire

In this section, the researcher represented the five questions and hypotheses with their data analysis and results.

#### Representation of question and hypothesis (1), their data analysis and results

**Question (1):** What is the degree of self-confidence among Sudanese tertiary level students of English language in the White Nile State?

**Hypothesis (1):** Sudanese tertiary level students of English language in the White Nile State are highly self-confident.

To answer this question and test its hypothesis, the researcher applied a one sample T- test for a medium of a single community. The Table below represents this procedure.

#### Representation of question (2) and its hypothesis, their data analysis and results

**Question (2):** What is the relationship between self-confidence and oral communication proficiency?

**Hypothesis (2):** There is a significant statistical correlation that have some indications between EFL learners of high self-confidence and oral communication proficiency.

To answer this question and test the hypothesis, the researcher has calculated the rank coefficient correlation for Spearman.

Table (4.2) reveals a high correlation coefficient between students' self-confidence and oral communication. The value of correlation coefficient with oral communication is (.770\*\*) at statistical significant (.000) which is less than (.05). This indicates a statistically significant relationship between highly self-confident students and oral communication proficiency and so the hypothesis is confirmed.

#### Representation of question and hypothesis (3), their data analysis and results

**Question (3):** What is the correlation between learners of high self-confidence and academic performance in EFL learning?

**Hypothesis (3):** There is a significant statistical positive correlation between EFL learners of high self-confidence and academic performance in EFL learning.

In order to answer the question and test the hypothesis, the rank coefficient correlation for Spearman was applied.

#### Representation of question and hypothesis (4), their data analysis and results

**Question (4):** Are there any differences between male and female EFL learners in the degree of self-confident?

**Hypothesis (4):** There are differences that have statistical indications between male and female EFL learners in the degree of self-confident in favour of the first group?

In order to explore the differences between males and females EFL learners in the degree of self-confidence, the researcher has calculated the mean and standard deviation of each group separately, then applying a T-test for the difference between the medium of two independent groups.

**Table 8. T-test for a medium of one-Sample Statistics for the students' degree of self-confidence**

No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Presumptive Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Deduction
221	89.9774	25.60885	70	11.597	220	.000	High self-confidence

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

**Table (4.2). Relationship between self-confidence and oral communication**

Independent variable	No	Sig. (2-tailed)	value of correlation coefficient with oral communication	Deduction
Self-confidence	221	.000	.770**	There is a statistical significant correlation

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

**Table 9. Relationship between self-confidence and academic performance**

Independent variable	No	Sig. (2-tailed)	value of correlation coefficient with academic performance	Deduction
Self-confidence	221	.000	.736**	There is a statistical significant correlation

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

**Table 10. Differences in self-confidence due to gender variable**

Independent variable	Dependent variable (gender)	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Deduction
Self-confidence	Male	12	89.0484	26.37252	-.609-	219	.543	No differences
	Female	4						
		97	91.1649	24.68286	- 609 -	219	.543	

**Table 11. Differences in self-confidence due to age variable**

Independent variable	Age	No	Mean	Std. deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Deduction
Self-confidence	18-30	203	90.8966	25.37919	1.801	219	.073	no significant differences
	31-45	18	79.6111	25.63951				

### Representation of question and hypothesis (5), their data analysis and results

**Question (5):** Are there any differences between young and old EFL learners in the degree of self-confident?

**Hypothesis (5):** There are differences that have statistical indications between young and old EFL learners in the degree of self-confident in favour of the first group.

To answer the question and test the hypothesis concerning the differences between young and old EFL learners in the degree of self-confidence, the researcher has calculated the mean and standard deviation of each group separately, then applying a T-test for the difference between the medium of two independent groups.

### Discussion of the Results of self-confidence questionnaire

In the present study, the outcomes of data analysis of self-confidence questionnaire have shown that EFL tertiary level students in the White Nile State are highly self-confident. This finding may be attributed to many factors such as the friendly atmosphere which was created by teachers of English language in both institutes, the great and long experience of many of those teachers in teaching EFL which enabled them to create comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for their students. Another important reason is that half of the teachers are graduates of the universities in which the study conducted. A thing that make them friends and beloved consultants for the students and that led to enhance the students' self-confidence. The results of the study also indicated that there is a significant correlation that has a statistical indication between the degree

of self-confidence and students' proficiency in oral communication. This outcome agreed with Al-Hebaish (2012) who affirmed that general self-confidence could affect the quality of oral performance. It was also noticed by: Park and lee (2004) who proved that there were significant effects of anxiety and self-confidence on L2 learners' oral performance.

The findings of the present study also revealed that there is a positive correlation between the degree of self-confidence and academic performance of EFL tertiary level students in the White Nile State. This finding corresponds with Shoemaker's (2008) study finding which affirmed that self-confidence was correlated with students' academic performance in three of the four years that were examined.

All the above studies support the results of the present study. So, for raising oral communication and academic performance and for better learning, self-confidence trait is necessarily required or to be developed. Concerning the relationship between oral communication, academic performance, gender and age due to the level of self-confidence, the researcher found that it is no use trying to prove any relationship since the outcomes of this study revealed un-significant relationship between self-confidence, gender and age of EFL learners.

### Analysis and Results of teachers' interviews

In the presentation of the results of the teachers' interview, the researcher analyzed and discussed the answers from the interviews and connected the results to the previous work in the study. The responses were analyzed in terms of themes related to the study objectives.

The analysis included quotes from the answers of the interviewed teachers. The quotes from the interviewed teachers were used to facilitate the analysis.

**Question (1) Based in your experience, what are the factors that contribute to successful and active oral communication in the English foreign language classroom?**

Four of the six interviewed teachers referred to personality factor among their mentioned factors. Teacher (1) referred namely to self-confidence as a factor that contribute to success in oral communication. The other factors given by all six interviewed teachers were motivation, attitude, aptitude, exposure to the target language, supportive and encouraging atmosphere and school environment. It was noticed that most of teachers mentioned psychological factors among factors they think influence oral communication. This indicates that teachers of English language are aware of the importance of psychology of the language learner in the learning process.

**Question (2) What are the challenges in teaching oral communication to less confident EFL learners?**

The teachers specifically referred to psychological problems such as fear, anxiety, shyness, lack of self-confidence and demotivation. They also referred to other challenges such as linguistic problems, limited vocabulary, poor teaching environment and the use of out of date methods of teaching. It is interesting to note that teachers mentioned the psychological factors first, which indicates their awareness of the impact of the psychology of language learner on learning the language.

**Question (3) which of the following oral communication activities considered a problem to your EFL students specifically those of low self - confidence? (Please put a tick)**

The teachers mentioned whole-class discussions, debates, face to face conversation, questions and answers, role play, oral report, and oral interview. These selections indicate that teachers of English language have observed the personality of their students very well. So, teachers of oral communication are recommended to make much efforts in order to enhance the levels of self-confidence among their students for better oral communication proficiency.

**Question (4) In your opinion, what are the suitable activities of oral communication that help to enhance the levels of self – confidence among EFL learners?**

The teachers mentioned a number of activities which focused on guided presentations (with tips). Questions and answers, small group discussions and face to face conversations. It was noticed that teachers concentrated on the interaction activities which lead to strengthen the level of self-confidence.

**Question (5) Which of the following oral communication skills indicate the state of self-confidence among EFL learners and need to be strengthened.**

No.	Oral Communication Skill	Indicates self-confidence
1	Fluency	
2	Accuracy	
3	Body language (non-verbal)	
4	Understanding the audience	
5	Adapting to the audience	
6	Active and reflexive listening	
7	Style	
8	Social skills (politeness...etc)	
9	Conciseness (brief talk)	
10	Organization	
11	Conveying facts	
12	Delivery	

Most of the teachers referred to fluency, body language, adapting to the audience, active and reflexive listening and style. These choices which derived from the observation and long experience direct the attention of teachers of English language to make hard in order to strengthen the mentioned skills for enhancing the level of self-confidence among their students.

**Question (6) Do you think that there is a positive correlation between EFL learners of high self-confidence and success in oral communication?**

All six teachers answered "Yes" and one of them sustained this believe by saying: "Sure, most of the high self-confident learners are risk-takers in speaking". These opinions are in accord with Molberg's (2010) findings which showed that motivation and linguistic self-confidence do have an impact on oral interaction, where the pupils' motivation and linguistic self-confidence is linked to the output they produce".

**Question (7) What do you suggest for teachers of oral communication so as to improve the levels of their students of low self-confidence?**

The teachers mention that among the important factors that improve the levels of their less confident EFL students is that the students feel confident in the classroom. One of the teachers (teacher 2) said: "Students should feel secure, be sure that they are important participants, believe in themselves and their abilities". Another teacher explained this further by saying: "Teachers have to try to free the learners from all psychological and educational barriers so as to raise the level of their self-confidence"

**Discussion of the results of teachers' interview**

Since the interviewed teachers were very honest and serious when answering the interview questions, most of their answers confirmed the results of the students' questionnaire and several findings of the previous studies which affirmed the relationship between the degree of student's self-confidence and proficiency in oral communication. This settles well with Nadeem (2013) who mentioned that. "The students report a need to become more proficient in communication skills and affirm the importance of self-confidence as a critical component of being an effective communicator. Also agreed with Ohata and Christianson (2008) findings which showed that the primary findings from the interviews were that the participants conceptualized self-confidence as a positive evaluation of self which is important in language learning.

## Summary of results, conclusion and recommendations

### Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of self-confidence on Sudanese tertiary level students majoring in English language from El-Imam El-Mahdi University and White Nile College for Science and Technology in the White Nile State. In addition to that, the current research was to investigate the relationship between self-confidence, gender and age of EFL learners. Finally, the present paper made an attempt to reveal the personality of the successful and the unsuccessful EFL learner. The study was an attempt to contribute to the area of research which had been neglected or haven't been highlighted enough by the present researches. As shown in the literature review, there are few studies which have attempted to relate self-confidence to success in foreign language learning. Most of the findings of these studies confirmed that self-confidence has a significant impact on EFL learning. The studies have shown that high self-confidence enabled the students to achieve better results in tests of oral communication and in academic performance. Low level of self-confidence on the other hand, affect negatively in the possess of foreign language learning. The outcomes of the analysis of the present study have confirmed the findings of the previous studies, namely that self-confident learners are better learners in terms of oral communication and academic performance. It can be concluded that self-confidence as a personality trait have an influence on EFL learning, either positive or negative, depending on its level. The future researches may support or extend the findings concerning the relationships between self-confidence oral communication and academic performance.

### The findings obtained by the present paper are

- The participants in this study are highly self-confident.
- Sudanese tertiary level students in the White Nile State proved to be influenced by the level of their self-confidence, in which those of high self-confidence are more successful than those of low self-confidence in oral communication achievement and in academic performance.
- Gender and age of the participant proved to have no significant impact on the degree of self-confidence.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made.

#### Recommendations for less confident EFL learners

Less confident learners should:

- Be aware of their personalities and push through resistance specially their own, to transform their visions into existence.
- Do their best to enhance their self-confidence so as to develop their oral communication proficiency and academic performance.
- Try to discover the reasons behind their lack of self-confidence. Then taking active steps to change this

negative trait by identifying, preventing it from having power over them and making self-confidence a targeted process.

- Focus and believe in success and not on their failures.
- Believe that " To err is human".
- Encourage themselves to be assertive and risk-takers.
- Try to find language activities that suit and represent their abilities.
- Make much efforts to discover their hidden skills in language learning which they don't discover before and improve them in order to be assistant tools for building self-confidence.

### Recommendations for Teachers of English language

- Teachers of English language are recommended to enhance building up their students' self-confidence in order to develop their academic performance and oral communication achievement.
- Teachers of English language should consider their students' personalities as a subject that needs special care. They need to be aware of the affective needs of their students and create an environment which addresses those needs.
- Using the suitable teaching methods with their adequate materials that suits the needs of the different students, specifically those of low self-confidence such as community language learning total physical response and suggestopedia.
- Teachers can foster psychological security by noticing signs of lack of self-confidence, developing a non-threatening classroom climate, helping students to strengthen their self-confidence through encouragement, being empathetic, and avoiding authoritative and sharp criticism.
- Teachers of English language are recommended to help their students discover the true reasons behind their lack of self-confidence and how to find their own remedies, in order to rise their levels of self-confidence,
- Teacher of English language are recommended to create a supportive and encouraging classroom environment that encourages students to speak and participate in oral communication activities without fear or inhibition.
- During oral communication activities, teachers should maintain a comfortable and friendly atmosphere and design interesting activities that encourage students of low self-confidence to participate freely and to be secure.
- When teaching oral communication, it is more useful to prepare activities that enables students of all levels and personalities to feel confident such as simple questions and answers, role play, games, Small group discussions and topics that are familiar to students can enhance the level of comfort.-
- Positive learning environment that cares for students' personalities, feelings and needs should be provided in EFL classroom by teachers of English language to enhance students' self-confidence.

### Recommendation for administrations of universities

- More emphasis on the psychological needs of students is needed through the training of teachers of English language

specifically in the psychology of language learners and their personality traits.

- Introducing the academic supervision into universities in order to deal with such a problem.
- Appointing specialists in psychology and social supervisors to handle with the students' psychological problems specifically lack of self-confidence among tertiary level students.

### Recommendation for designers of English curricula

Curricula designers should alter curricula or to make programs to individuals students in order to help unsuccessful foreign language learners of low self-confidence succeed.

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