

# SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE IN LEARNING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE VIA ONLINE

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## ABSTRACT

As online learning becomes a major development in recent years and escalates due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it helps to have a high self-efficacy and self-regulated learning (SRL) to succeed in such a learning context. This study explored the undergraduates' levels of self-efficacy and SRL and provides a comparative analysis of these variables while learning Arabic as a Foreign language via online. The data was collected from 77 undergraduates in a public university in Malaysia through an online survey. The findings showed that both self-efficacy and SRL mean scores were high and that there was a statistically strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and SRL. Students appeared to adapt to online learning by managing their time, organising their schedules, interacting with classmates and instructors, and selecting the best spot to maximise their online learning experience.

The findings suggested that it is important and beneficial for language instructors to create interesting and inspiring lesson plans in an online environment so that the undergraduates could experience satisfaction inside and outside of learning, and simultaneously facilitate them for their success in foreign language learning.

**Keywords:** foreign language; Malaysian undergraduates; online learning; self-efficacy; self-regulated learning (SRL)

## Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have examined online learning, and this list has grown significantly due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic which has changed the educational settings from physical traditional classes to online classes (Omar et al., 2021). Similar to many other countries, Malaysia swiftly adopted a fully online learning approach to provide students at all educational levels, ranging from primary to tertiary education, an alternative mode of learning in compliance with stay-at-home directives and restrictions on in-person classes. It is worth noting that prior to the pandemic, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), where this study took place, had already integrated online learning for several years, primarily utilising a blended learning approach (University Senate Standing Committee for Undergraduate, 2016). As a result, UMK students have had prior exposure to and familiarity with online learning tools and practices. Consequently, the shift to a fully online mode during the pandemic provided UMK students with an even more extensive experience with online learning (Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic & International, 2020). While online learning is not a novel concept, it still presents numerous challenges for both instructors and students, particularly when fully implemented within an educational context. One major challenge is the absence of physical interaction in the class, both between teachers and students and among the students themselves, as everyone participates in online classes from their respective homes. This signifies the need for self-directed learning, encompassing self-efficacy and self-regulatory learning, which have the potential to enhance learning achievement (Loong, 2012; Wang et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 2000).

## Literature Review

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is about the individual's belief in their capabilities to execute work and perform well in each situation (Bandura, 2002) which refers to the beliefs that an individual has about what they can do and achieve influence how they will perform the required task. Several studies reported on self-efficacy and learning achievement. Shen et al. (2013) conducted a survey on self-efficacy in online classes and learning satisfaction among 406 students and reported that the students associated satisfaction with online

learning with their capabilities to complete an online course. Next, Joo et al.'s (2013) study on 897 undergraduates found that besides task value, self-efficacy was a significant predictor of learners' achievement in an online context. Wang et al. (2013) also discovered that among 256 respondents, students with higher levels of self-efficacy in technology showed better learning performances in online courses as compared to those with low levels of technology self-efficacy. In summary, the cited studies suggested that self-efficacy was the key to improved learning performances among students.

Hasan et al. (2014) confirmed that there was a significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance among students of two polytechnic institutes in Malaysia. Latip et al. (2020) focussed on the level of e-learning acceptance and self-efficacy among 414 local undergraduates and concluded that "students with a positive feeling about the usefulness of e-Learning tend to have a positive acceptance of the e-Learning method, and this, in turn, will affect their self-efficacy, thus resulting in an excellent understanding of the lessons" (p. 659). Also, Badiozaman et al. (2019) stated that the 838 undergraduates from four higher education institutions in Malaysia generally have a positive perception regarding their academic capabilities in learning English as a Second Language although they rated their English language proficiency as low.

Numerous studies have substantiated the impact of self-efficacy on students' academic achievement. However, there is a dearth of research addressing the connection between students' self-efficacy and online foreign language learning, particularly in the Malaysian context. Thus, it would be worthy to expand this investigation to encompass students' perceptions of their language proficiency and self-efficacy in learning other languages. For this study, the chosen foreign language is Arabic.

### **Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)**

Self-regulated learning is defined as the constructive process whereby the individual systematically organises their thoughts, feeling and actions to achieve their goals, and it could also refer "... to the processes whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviours that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of personal goals" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011, p. 1). Agustiani et al. (2016) reported that apart from self-efficacy, SRL is the other variable that predicts students' academic performance as 101 respondents showed a positive correlation between self-regulation of learning and academic performance. Moreover, a majority of studies have linked SRL with learning performance, highlighting that students equipped with self-regulatory skills tend to outperform those lacking such skills (Littlejohn et al., 2016; Reparaz et al., 2020; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

Next, Artino Jr. and Stephens (2009) found out that graduates were more aware of what they wanted to achieve, and thus they displayed "more adaptive self-regulated learning profiles" than the undergraduates even though they were not technically familiar with online learning as compared to the undergraduates (p. 149). Next, it appeared that students were quite selective whereby they would strategise their SRL when they felt that

the task given to them could benefit them, and on the contrary, they were not interested if they felt that the task has little utility value (Li & Zheng, 2018). Likewise, Littlejohn et al. (2016) stated that students with high SRL scores would relate their learning to their future needs in comparison with those with low SRL scores who were only interested in completing the online course. In sum, these studies indicated the possible differences in SRL scores among students enrolled in online courses, and that SRL is highly related to goals and performances.

Besides that, Loong (2012) compared the usage of SRL strategies between the international and home students at a university in Malaysia and stated that although home students use more SRL strategies than international students, both groups related their “excellent understanding of the lessons” due to SRL strategies (p. 309). Next, a study by Lim et al. (2020) among 347 undergraduates also in Malaysia found that SRL strategies were positively and statistically significant in online learning satisfaction. It appeared that both studies showed that SRL strategies contributed to online learning.

A high degree of SRL could be associated with learner autonomy since the student would have control over his or her learning activities but this notion is not mostly favoured in some Asian countries that follow “the conservative Asian cultural tradition that teachers know better”, hence learners were not involved in constructing the curriculum or even planning the language lessons (Omar et al., 2021, p. 479). Their study revealed that contrary to that controversial notion, students perceived high responsibilities for their learning and were able to manage their learning activities during online classes. These findings indicate the development of learner autonomy among them.

It could be concluded from these studies that SRL was also related to students’ learning, and all of them were looking at the general students’ learning or language learning. Therefore, there is still much to explore regarding the SRL strategies, particularly among undergraduates who were learning Arabic as a foreign language. Would they yield similar results as previous studies that showed the importance of SRL, or would they be selective of certain SRL strategies that helped to facilitate their Arabic language learning?

### **The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and SRL**

Some researchers have further discussed the relationship between self-efficacy and SRL. For example, Wang et al. (2013) stated a chain reaction of 256 students who experience online learning were likely to have higher SRL strategies that led to high motivation and self-efficacy, and similar findings were reported by Lee et al. (2020) among 184 participants who enrolled in two massive open online courses that “there was a statistically significant difference in the use of self-regulated learning strategies between learners who possessed high self-efficacy and those who possessed low self-efficacy” (p. 23).

Next, Ulfaton et al.’s (2021) study among accounting undergraduates also investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and SRL during the COVID-19 pandemic in which the students could only have online classes at home also confirmed

that students' high levels of online self-efficacy are correlated with their high levels of online SRL. In addition, one interesting research on the relationship between self-efficacy and SRL was by An et al. (2021) who specifically discussed how undergraduates in China utilised technology in enhancing the SRL strategies to assist their self-efficacy, enjoyment and learning outcomes in English language classes, and they discovered that, "SRL strategies fully mediated the relationship between English enjoyment and English learning outcomes" (p. 1). In summary, these research studies concluded that students with high self-efficacy were able to utilise more SRL strategies during online classes, which in turn enhanced their learning and conversely, those with lower self-efficacy tended to utilise fewer SRL strategies. It would be interesting to find out whether online learning Arabic as a foreign language in Malaysia would produce similar findings or would the students perceive differently from these previous results.

In addition, the learning contexts have now shifted from physical traditional classrooms to online classes and these situations have escalated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapting to online learning in one's own home and away from the hustle and bustle of the physical classroom might be a challenge to learners such as reported in studies by Zapata-Cuervo et al. (2023), Handayani and Sholikhah (2021), and Simamora (2020) that in general learners faced difficulties in online classes. Thus, this has also heightened the importance of self-efficacy and self-regulation to increase learners' engagement and motivation in an online learning environment (Artino Jr. & Stephens, 2009; Hasan et al., 2014; Joo et al., 2013; Latip et al., 2020; Li & Zheng, 2018; Shen et al., 2013).

The overview of cited studies on self-efficacy and SRL focussed on their influences on students' language learning in general, but research on these two variables in online foreign language learning is still scarce. This study would contribute to the body of research by clarifying the relationship between students' self-efficacy and SRL with foreign language within the online learning context, which helps to fill the knowledge gap in the existing literature particularly in higher education institutions in Malaysia. Next, findings from this research could provide an understanding of what the undergraduates have felt and experienced during their online classes and may be valuable, particularly to young lecturers who have little experience with online methodology. The data could assist them in conducting lessons that better meet the students' online learning situation. Lastly, the data could inform instructors of foreign language classes on assisting students to operationalise self-efficacy and SRL strategies to achieve their learning goals. Specifically, three research questions were formulated for this study as follows.

RQ 1: What is UMK undergraduates' self-efficacy level in online Arabic language classes?

RQ 2: What is UMK undergraduates' SRL level in online Arabic language classes?

RQ 3: What is the correlation between the self-efficacy level and endorsement of SRL strategies among UMK undergraduates?

The results of this study could provide an understanding of what the undergraduates have felt and experienced during their online classes and may be valuable to young lecturers who have little experience with online methodology. The data could also assist them in conducting lessons that better suit the students' learning situation at home.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, the socio-cognitive perspective by Bandura (2002) was applied as a theoretical framework to examine students' self-efficacy and self-regulatory learning (SRL) since it viewed individuals as the ones in charge of their learning processes including achievement and these processes interact with one's behaviour, personal factors, and the surrounding context (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Bandura (2002) highlighted that there are three modes of agency within the social cognitive theory, namely, direct personal agency, proxy agency and collective agency, and they are closely related to each other.

In an academic context, students have their own perceptions of their capabilities and learning styles (direct personal agency), but they might compare their performances with their peers who got good grades for benchmarking (proxy agency) and collaborate with each other as in group work to get better results (collective agency). These indicated the relationship between self-efficacy and SRL beliefs within the socio-cognitive model. In line with this perspective, most studies demonstrated self-efficacy and SRL as the important variables that enable learners to determine their learning paces, strategies, materials, and achievements (Loong, 2012; Ömer & Akçayoğlu, 2020; Wang et al., 2013; Wulandari et al., 2023; Zimmerman, 2000).

### **Methodology**

This small-scale descriptive study was carried out among 77 undergraduates from all faculties in a public university in Malaysia. The researchers contacted around 80 students who enrolled in Arabic I (Level 1) in the previous semester through WhatsApp and provided the link to the online questionnaire along with the information about this study such as the research objectives and its significance. A total of 77 students ranging from first year to third-year undergraduates, who also have experienced at least one semester of learning academic courses fully online participated in the study.

There were 36 male respondents (46.8%) and 41 female respondents (53.2%) ranging from first year to third-year undergraduates, and they have experienced at least one semester of learning academic courses fully online. During the online learning period, 41 respondents (53.2%) were residing in the suburbs while another 36 respondents (46.8%) were residing in the rural area.

## **Instrument**

Data were collected using an online questionnaire that consisted of two main scales: Self-Efficacy and SRL. The items in the Self-Efficacy scale are adopted from Tsai et al. (2020). The 26 items were measured on a 5-point rating scale from 1 (cannot do at all) to 5 (highly confident can do):

- Self-efficacy to complete an online course.
- Self-efficacy to interact socially with classmates.
- Self-efficacy to handle tools in a CMS (Course Management System).
- Self-efficacy to interact with instructors in an online course.
- Self-efficacy to interact with classmates for academic purposes.

Meanwhile, the items in the SRL scale are adopted from Barnard et al. (2009), and there are 24 items. The items were measured on a 5-point rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- Environment structuring
- Goal setting
- Time management
- Help seeking
- Task strategies
- Self-evaluation

Malay translation was incorporated for all questionnaire statements to enhance respondents' comprehension. To ensure accuracy, two researchers initially translated the original English version into Malay. Subsequently, another proficient colleague performed a re-translation from Malay to English. The final Malay translation aligned with the original English version.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The online questionnaire was distributed to the undergraduates who have completed one or more foreign language online courses. For the purpose of this study, the researchers chose the Arabic language since it has the highest student enrolment in comparison to other foreign languages such French, Japanese, German, Thai, Spanish and Korean. As stated earlier, the researchers reached out to the potential respondents through Whatsapp.

Before completing the online questionnaire, participants were provided with information about the research's nature and assured that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. Participation was entirely voluntary, and by selecting the "I agree to participate in this study" option in the online form, participants indicated their consent for the researchers to use their response data. Out of 80 students who completed Arabic I, 77 have responded, giving a high response rate of 96.3%.

The students were given a week to complete the online questionnaire, and the collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). To determine the level of students' online self-efficacy (SE) and SRL (SRL) descriptive and inferential statistics were employed on the data obtained. The mean score and standard deviation of the SE and SRL scales were also derived from the mean analysis procedure. After the normality test was conducted, the relationship between students' SE and SRL was measured by employing Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient *r*. Pearson correlation was utilised in this study to assess the strength of the relationship between SE and SRL due to the nature of the data which is normally distributed (Saunders et al., 2019).

### Findings

The mean analysis was carried out on the data to obtain the mean score of the self-efficacy (SE) and SRL (SRL) scales. Table 1 shows the mean analysis of factors and the items for SE. The SE scale comprises five factors with 26 items in total. The analysis of Subscale 1 (*Self-efficacy to complete an online course*) has displayed the highest mean score ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ). This is followed by Subscale 5 (*Self-efficacy to interact with classmates for academic purposes*) ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). The lowest mean score among the five subscales is Subscale 3 (*Self-efficacy to handle tools in a CMS*) with a moderate level of mean score ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ).

**Table 1**  
*The Mean Analysis of Self-Efficacy (SE) Items*

Subscales and Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Subscale 1: Self-efficacy to complete an online course</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.60</b>
1. I am willing to face challenges.	4.01	0.72
2. I create a plan to complete the given assignments.	4.14	0.68
3. I willingly adapt my learning styles to meet course expectations.	4.03	0.78
4. I understand complex concepts.	3.75	0.76
5. I complete my previous online course at Fakulti Bahasa (FBI) with a good grade.	3.91	0.67
6. I keep up with course schedule.	4.26	0.70
7. I evaluate assignments according to the criteria provided by the lecturers or instructors.	4.17	0.77
<b>Subscale 2: Self-efficacy to interact socially with classmates</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>0.65</b>
8. I pay attention to other students' social actions.	3.84	0.71
9. I initiate social interaction with classmates.	3.79	0.77



10. I apply different social interaction skills depending on situations.	3.84	0.73
11. I develop friendship with my classmates.	3.95	0.87
<b>Subscale 3: Self-efficacy to handle tools in a CMS</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.69</b>
12. I send email to classmates with or without attached files.	3.06	0.86
13. I reply to classmates' messages in a discussion board.	3.62	0.74
14. I post a new message in a discussion board.	3.42	0.78
<b>Subscale 4: Self-efficacy to interact with instructors in an online course</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.63</b>
15. I clearly ask my questions to lecturers or instructors.	3.71	0.72
16. I seek help from lecturers or instructors when needed.	4.05	0.79
17. I timely inform the lecturers or instructors when unexpected situations arise.	3.95	0.65
18. I initiate discussions with the lecturers or instructors.	3.74	0.79
19. I express my opinions to lecturers or instructors respectfully.	3.96	0.80
<b>Subscale 5: Self-efficacy to interact with classmates for academic purposes</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>0.59</b>
20. I actively participate in online discussions.	3.73	0.70
21. I effectively communicate with my classmates.	3.77	0.78
22. I respond to other students in a timely manner.	3.68	0.75
23. I request help from my classmates when needed.	4.09	0.73
24. I request help from others when needed.	4.01	0.73
25. I express my opinions to other students respectfully.	3.88	0.71
26. I provide help to other students when assistance is needed.	4.13	0.62

Table 2 shows the mean analysis of factors and items of SRL. There are six subscales in SRL, consisting of 24 items. The analysis outcome shows that Subscale 2 (*Environment structuring*) has provided the highest mean score ( $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=0.52$ ). Both Subscale 1 (*Goal setting*) ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ) and Subscale 4 (*Time management*) ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=0.60$ ) have shown high mean scores after Subscale 2. The mean analysis shows that Subscale 3 (*task strategies*) has the lowest mean score ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ).

**Table 2**  
*The Mean Analysis of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Items*

<b>Factors and Items</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Subscale 1: Goal setting</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.66</b>
1. I set standards for my assignments in online courses.	3.80	0.78
2. I set short-term goals as well as long term goals.	3.91	0.71
3. I keep a high standard for my learning in my online courses.	3.60	0.85
4. I set goals to help me manage studying time for my online course.	3.84	0.76
5. I don't compromise the quality of my work because it is online.	3.77	0.74
<b>Subscale 2: Environment structuring</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>0.52</b>
6. I choose the location where I study to avoid too much distraction.	4.04	0.64
7. I find a comfortable place to study.	4.21	0.57
8. I know where I can study most efficiently for online.	3.99	0.70
9. I choose a time with few distractions for studying during my online courses.	3.87	0.66
<b>Subscale 3: Task strategies</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.71</b>
10. I try to make more thorough notes for my online courses because notes are even more important for learning online than in a regular classroom.	3.82	0.84
11. I read aloud instructional materials posted online to fight against distractions.	3.48	0.93
12. I prepare my questions before joining in the chat room and discussion.	3.71	0.92
13. I work extra problems in my online courses in addition to the assigned ones to master the course content.	3.44	0.79
<b>Subscale 4: Time management</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.60</b>
14. I allocate extra studying time for my online courses because I know it is time demanding.	3.75	0.71
15. I try to schedule the same time every day or every week to study for my online courses, and I observe the schedule.	3.74	0.70
16. Although we 'on't have to attend daily classes, I still try to distribute my studying time evenly across days.	3.84	0.67
<b>Subscale 5: Help seeking</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>0.58</b>

17. I find someone who is knowledgeable in course content so that I can consult with him or her when I need help.	4.10	0.64
18. I share my problems with my classmates online, so we know what we are struggling with and how to solve our problems.	3.62	0.81
19. If needed, I try to meet my classmates face-to-face.	3.57	0.90
20. I am persistent in getting help from the lecturer through email.	3.54	0.87
<b>Subscale 6: Self-evaluation</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>0.63</b>
21. I summarize my learning in online courses to examine my understanding of what I have learned.	3.75	0.73
22. I ask myself a lot of questions about the course material when studying for an online course.	3.73	0.64
23. I communicate with my classmates to find out how I am doing in my online classes.	3.60	0.86
24. I communicate with my classmates to find out what I am learning that is different from what they are learning.	3.74	0.77

Table 3 displays the result that shows both SE ( $M = 3.87, SD = 0.55$ ) and SRL ( $M = 3.77, SD = 0.51$ ) mean scores are high.

**Table 3**

*Summary of Mean Analysis of Self-Efficacy (SE) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)*

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	No. of Items	<i>n</i>
Self-Efficacy (SE)	3.87	0.55	26	77
Self-regulated Learning (SRL)	3.77	0.51	24	77

As shown in Table 4, the mean score was also used to categorise the respondents' SE and SRL levels.

**Table 4**

*Range of Mean Categorization*

Range of mean	Interpretation
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.67	Moderate
3.68-5.00	High

Table 5 reveals that most of the students belong to the high-level category in both SE (68.8%) and SRL (46%). Only 1 student (1.3%) belong to the low level.

**Table 5**  
*Categorisation of Stude'ts' Self-Efficacy (SE) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Levels*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SE	Low	1	1.3
	Moderate	23	29.9
	High	53	68.8
SRL	Low	1	1.3
	Moderate	30	39.0
	High	46	59.7
<i>n</i>		77	100.0

Further analysis was conducted to identify the correlation between SE and SRL. Table 6 shows that there is a statistically strong positive relationship between SE and SRL ( $r = .690, p < .001$ ). The strong correlation between these variables indicates that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with higher levels of SRL.

**Table 6**  
*The Pearson Correlation Analysis*

Variables		Self- efficacy	Self-regulated Learning
Self-efficacy	Pearson	1	.690**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>n</i>	77	77
Self-regulated Learning	Pearson	.690**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>n</i>	77	77

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

## Discussion

### **RQ1: What is UMK undergraduates' self-efficacy level in online Arabic language classes?**

A possible explanation for the highest score appearing for *Subscale 1: Self-efficacy to complete an online course* (see Table 1) is that the students perceived their potential in

accomplishing the Arabic I course and did not face many difficulties in learning online. One of the items under this subscale that has the highest score, that is, Item 6: I keep up with course schedule, indicated that students' capabilities to cope with the lessons' arrangement and having this confidence could help them to get good grades in this course. Item 7: I evaluate assignments according to the criteria provided by the lecturers or instructors was also one of the highly rated items that showed students followed closely the instructions for assignments to get good marks. Also, as expected, students reported high levels for this subscale since they were aware that they could not enrol in the following Arabic II if they failed this course which is a prerequisite to Arabic II.

Online learning separates students physically from each other and from the instructors or teachers. Thus, this probably hinders the interaction between students and students or between teachers and students. However, the results in Subscale 5: Self-efficacy to interact with classmates for academic purposes, indicate otherwise. The high score for this scale demonstrates that students have been actively interacting with their peers through online discussion and helping each other when they encounter any issues throughout the online learning experience. This is further strengthened with evidence from Item 23: I request help from my classmates when needed, and Item 26: I provide help to other students when assistance is needed. In addition, Subscale 4: Self-efficacy to interact with instructors in an online course that students rated as high, showed that they realised that they could contact their teachers anytime online as the interactions were not limited to class hours. It could also indicate that being physically away from classmates or teachers did not discourage them from collaborating with each other in academic matters. Other than that, all items of Subscale 2: Self-efficacy to interact socially with classmates were rated high which suggested that students managed to develop friendships among themselves although they have never met each other in real life.

There was, however, the lowest mean score among the five subscales, which is Subscale 3: Self-efficacy to handle tools in a CMS. This score shows that students' participation in utilising tools such as email or discussion boards are at a moderate level. This scenario might be due to the high usage of applications on a mobile phone such as WhatsApp, WeChat or Telegram are more popular, convenient, and widely used than email. In the context of this study, the interaction between the teacher and students is usually through the main online platform of the university and other online video conferencing applications such as Google Meet and Zoom, which explained the moderate level of email correspondence in this subscale.

In summary, the students displayed a high level of self-efficacy despite engaging in an online learning setting in which students would have to learn the Arabic language by themselves at home, in seclusion away from their classmates and teachers. As reported in other studies, if these students could maintain this kind of self-efficacy, it could lead to successful online learning (Joo et al., 2013; Wang et.al., 2013).

## **RQ2: What is UMK undergraduates' SRL level in online Arabic language classes?**

“SRL involves activities that focus on learning objectives in which students direct, modify, and maintain their learning activities” (Agustiani et al., 2016, p. 2). In the context of this study, students were learning Arabic I in their second semester as they had gone through online learning during the first semester. Based on their previous online learning experience, students were able to locate a proper place in their house for studying purposes. Hence the highest mean score for Subscale 2: Environment structuring indicates that students can station themselves at a comfortable spot, which is also suitable to avoid distractions while learning online.

Online learning entails some degrees of autonomy mainly because the students are learning independently at home, and not in a traditional face-to-face classroom, as well as lacking physical interaction with their teacher and classmates. As stated earlier, though it is not a new concept, learner autonomy is not widely practised among Asian students. However, the high mean scores for Subscale 1: Goal setting and Subscale 4: Time management show that they are highly determined to learn and know how to manage their time when learning online which reflects the traits of learner autonomy. These also indicated that students might have organised their SRL strategies since they know the importance of passing this Arabic I course as the prerequisite to Arabic II, and these were like findings by Li and Zheng (2018) that students would operate SRL activities when they valued that the task was worthy and beneficial to them.

Next, students also rated Subscale 5: Help seeking and Subscale 6: Self-evaluation as high to indicate their willingness to ask for help from teachers and peers in learning Arabic in addition to self-study. This was consistent with how they perceived high self-efficacy towards interaction with teachers and classmates in an online learning context where they can easily become socially isolated.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score for Subscale 3: Task strategies suggests that students moderately prepare prior to the online class session. Arabic is a foreign language to them, and they need to work hard to learn it. Apart from the grammar and vocabulary, the students also must learn how to write the Arabic Alphabet, and this might be easier if they were in a traditional, physical class with a teacher who can show or correct them on the spot. Online learning, however, requires students to depend on themselves on how to learn all these, and as such the teachers provided abundant learning materials so that the students would get the necessary exercises and did not have to generate extra efforts to acquire them. The support from the teachers could help to ease the students' learning process.

## **RQ3: What is the correlation between self-efficacy and SRL levels among UMK undergraduates in online Arabic language classes?**

Overall, the analysis for both self-efficacy and SRL levels shows that most of the students belong in the high-level category (see Table 3). This result shows that students can adapt

to online learning by managing their time, organising their schedules, interacting with classmates and instructors, and selecting the best spot to maximise their online learning experience.

This study confirms that students' self-efficacy is associated with their SRL, particularly in terms of online learning. This finding agrees with Ulfatun et al. (2021), An et al. (2021) Lee et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2013), which showed that the two variables were correlated. The strong correlation between these variables indicates that a high level of self-efficacy will also increase the level of SRL among the students.

The observed positive correlation between students' self-efficacy and SRL might be explained by applying Bandura's (2002) socio-cognitive perspective. This theoretical framework views individuals as the ones in charge of their learning processes and achievement, which interact with other factors including the surrounding context (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning contexts have shifted from physical traditional classrooms to online classes. In this case, to thrive in the new context, the students who oversee their learning journey resorted to having a high level of self-efficacy and SRL, which are pertinent to their achievement in Arabic as a foreign language online course.

Finally, based on the findings, there are some strategies that could enhance students' self-efficacy and SRL in online Arabic language classes. According to Yu (2023), previous studies have shown that external assistance and instruction can significantly enhance SRL proficiency, and without teacher support in teaching, students may overestimate their ability to understand learning materials (Baars et al., 2018). Thus, here are some suggested interventions that present and future language instructors could implement to enhance students' self-efficacy and SRL in online Arabic language classes such as encouraging more online collaborative work among the student, exposing them to more learning platforms in Arabic for learning engagement, increasing their awareness of SRL strategies, as well as encouraging and stimulating students' learning interest in Arabic.

## **Conclusion**

This research has presented a contextualised view of self-efficacy and SRL and has made several contributions such as adding to the current existing literature on these variables in online foreign language learning settings. From a pedagogical perspective, awareness of the relationships between foreign language self-efficacy, SRL and online learning is important and helpful for language instructors. The findings indicate that university students demonstrate a high level of self-efficacy in online Arabic language learning, which strongly predicts their employment of SRL strategies. However, their agreement level regarding task strategies suggests only moderate preparation for online foreign language class sessions. Furthermore, the findings indicate that students' self-efficacy and SRL are both high, with a positive association between self-efficacy with SRL in online foreign language classes. This implies a substantial impact of their elevated self-efficacy

on their SRL level. This study found that students perceived a positive correlation between self-efficacy and SRL in online Arabic language classes. However, there are some limitations such as the study design which relies on students' perception of the variables and the correlation among them, self-perceived survey questions which may be prone to bias in the responses, and the student sample being only from an online Arabic language class which may not generalise to other foreign language settings. Future investigations should investigate the causal relationships between self-efficacy, SRL and performance in learning as well as utilising qualitative approaches to corroborate the statistical evidence.

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