

# The Relation Between Stereotyped Thoughts and Self-Efficacy Beliefs Related to a Foreign Language in a Higher Education Context

## Yüksek Öğretim Bağlamında Yabancı Dil ile İlgili Kalıplaşmış Düşünceler ile Yabancı Dil Öz Yeterlilik İnançları Arasındaki İlişki

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### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin yabancı dile yönelik kalıplaşmış düşünceleri ile yabancı dil öz yeterlilik algıları arasındaki ilişkiyi çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelemektir. Çalışma nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden ilişkisel araştırma yöntemiyle yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın örneklemini, 2018-2019 eğitim öğretim yılında Batı Karadeniz'de devlet üniversitesinin Eğitim Fakültesi'nde öğrenim gören lisans öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Basit rastgele örnekleme yöntemiyle çalışmaya toplam 352 katılımcı dahil edilmiştir. Veri toplama araçları olarak iki adet beşli likert tipinde "Yabancı Dile Yönelik Kalıplaşmış Düşünce Ölçeği" ve "İngilizce ile İlgili Öz Yeterlilik Ölçeği" uygulanmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda katılımcıların yabancı dile yönelik kalıplaşmış düşünceleri ve İngilizce ile ilgili öz yeterlilik düzeyleri orta seviyede olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca katılımcıların kalıplaşmış düşünceleri ve öz yeterlilikleri arasında düşük düzeyde de olsa anlamlı ve pozitif yönlü bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmacılar, İngilizce ile ilgili öz yeterliğinin yabancı dile yönelik kalıplaşmış düşüncelerdeki varyansı anlamlı bir şekilde açıkladığını ortaya koymuştur. Ek olarak yabancı dile yönelik kalıplaşmış düşünceler, katılımcıların İngilizce ile ilgili öz yeterliğindeki varyansı önemli ölçüde açıklamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İngilizce ile İlgili Öz Yeterlilik, Yabancı Dile Yönelik Kalıplaşmış Düşünceler, İngilizce Öğrenme

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between undergraduate students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and their perception of foreign language self-efficacy in terms of some variables. The study was conducted as correlational research method, one of the quantitative research methods. The sample of the study consists of undergraduate students studying at the Faculty of Education at a state university in Western Black Sea Region in Turkey during the academic year of 2018-2019. A total number of 352 participants were included into the study via simple random sampling method. As data collection tools, two five-point Likert-type "Stereotyped Thoughts about Foreign Languages Scale" and "English Self-Efficacy Scale" were used. As a result of the study, it was found out that participants' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and their self-efficacy levels about English were at a medium level. In addition, it was found that there is a significant and positive relationship between stereotyped thoughts and self-efficacy of the participants, albeit at a low level. Researchers revealed that self-efficacy in L2 English significantly explained the variance in stereotyped thoughts about foreign language. Moreover, stereotypes about the foreign language significantly explain the variance in participants' English self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Stereotyped Ideas Towards Foreign Language, English Language Learning

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## Introduction

It is already known that learning is individual and is affected by various factors such as attitude, aptitude, motivation, and etc. (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003) Thus, a hypothesis that these factors and many others affect one's L2 (second language) learning in terms of ultimate proficiency level and learning rate can be suggested. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to determine the undergraduate students' stereotypes concerning English and to examine whether these stereotypes affect their self-efficacy beliefs towards learning English. In accordance with this purpose, two 5-point Likert type scales which are Stereotyped Thoughts about Foreign Languages Scale (developed by Ünal, 2015) and Self-Efficacy Scale for English (developed by Yanar & Bümen, 2012) were applied to undergraduate students studying at the faculty of education at a university in the Black Sea Region. The study will inform the researcher and readers about the factors affecting stereotyped ideas, factors affecting self-efficacy beliefs of participants to learn English and the relation between stereotyped ideas on English and self-efficacy beliefs to learn it. To address this research gap, the following research questions are formulated by the researcher:

1. What are the levels of undergraduate students' (at an education faculty) stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language and their L2 self-efficacy beliefs about English?
2. Is there a significant relationship between undergraduate students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and their L2 self-efficacy beliefs about English at an education faculty?
3. Do stereotypes about foreign languages, year of university education and gender predict L2 self-efficacy beliefs of undergraduate students at an education faculty?
4. Do L2 self-efficacy beliefs about English, university education year and gender predict stereotyped thoughts of undergraduate students about foreign languages at an education faculty?

## Literature Review

Stereotyped thoughts can be defined as certain thoughts in people's minds that are stereotyped, hardened, and often unnoticed by them (Dökmen, 1997). It can be stated that L2 learners' stereotyped ideas and beliefs about a second language is one of the major limitations on their ultimate achievement of an L2 (Ryoo, 2013; Vinkenbun, Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). The close relationship between a learner's motivation to learn an L2, effort he puts in learning it, his attitude towards target language and his stereotyped ideas have already been suggested (Garnder & Lambert, 1959). Thus, it can be stated that what one believes can affect his behaviours. These thoughts might be unrealistically negative which may be accepted as stereotypes. However, it may be possible to change one's unrealistic thoughts and prevent their negative outcomes through education (Ünal, 2015). An effective learning process and careful examination of these false ideas can prevent learners from having these irrational thoughts. Dökmen (1997) classifies different stereotyped ideas that might affect one's learning process as well as his daily life: Polarization, Personalization, Absolutism, Extreme Effort to Change, Extreme Sacrifice, Extreme Regression, and Overgeneralization.

One of the common points of these stereotyped ideas is their resistance to change and their high possibility to be rejected (Dökmen, 2008). From an L2 language classroom perspective, these stereotyped ideas might create some obstacles for L2 learners. Therefore, determining these stereotyped ideas and eliminating them might dramatically affect language learning process. Although there are many studies working on stereotypes (Gunaldo et al., 2020; MacKenzie, 2018; McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002; Mollaeva, 2018; Ryoo, 2013), there are not many studies specifically designed for determining the stereotypes related to foreign language learning.

The construct of self-efficacy is often grounded in Bandura's (1997) research on socio-cultural theory (Bandura, 1986). One of the most accepted definitions of self-efficacy, thus, has been suggested by Bandura (1997) as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 174). Therefore, self-efficacy is mostly recognised as a "generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural sub skills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes" rather than a fixed set of personal traits or abilities (Bandura, 1997, pp. 36-37).

Maddux (1995) and Bandura (1997) suggest that self-efficacy beliefs affect human behaviour in four interrelated ways: (1) setting and pursuing goals (2) motivation to continue and feeling of persistence in case of any problems (3) feelings about attaining a goal (4) decision of situations that can be challenging (as cited in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 240). In the same vein, Graham and Weiner (1995) stated that self-efficacy is not only effective in one's ideas about the possibility of achieving a task, but also effective in deciding the required skills to achieve a task. Similarly, Bandura (1997) asserts that one's "action is based more on what one believes rather than on what is objectively true" (p. 2). It has been evidenced in the literature that self-efficacy has an effect on one's academic success in all four skills of a language namely listening, reading, speaking and writing (Ayoobiyan & Soleimani, 2015; Bandura, 1997; Herron, 2006; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Mills, Pajares, & Pajares, 2008; Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Tilfarlioğlu & Çiftçi 2011). These studies show us that self-efficacy beliefs regarding different skills might also differ. To be clear, one can have a high self-efficacy belief for reading in L2 while having a lower self-efficacy belief for speaking in the same L2.

Accordingly, organizing learning environments in a way that can improve learners' self-efficacy may also facilitate their second language learning processes (Mager, 1997). This makes self-efficacy a concept to consider carefully in setting goals for learners, designing tasks, and even deciding a curriculum to follow.

## Method

This study is a relational type of study (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012) as the relationship between two or more variables is examined without any intervention to these variables. In the study, undergraduate students' stereotypical thoughts about foreign language, their self-efficacy beliefs about English, the relationship between these, and the predictive variables for English self-efficacy beliefs were examined.



**Participants**

The population of this study consists of undergraduate students studying at the Faculty of Education of a university in the Black Sea Region of Turkey. The sample was determined with simple random sampling, one of the random sampling methods, in order to represent the specified population in the most valid way (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014). The 352 students included in the sample were from six different departments, namely Science Education (*n*= 42), Elementary Mathematics Education (*n*= 99), Psychological Counseling and Guidance (*n*= 48), Fine Arts Education (*n*= 39), Primary Education (*n*= 31), and Social Science Education (*n*= 93). As a part of their schedule, participants received 2 hours of online English Language course (2 credits, 3 ECTS) training for around 28 weeks during their first year. So, by the time of data collection, the end of fall term of 2018/2019 academic year, students except for freshmen have already taken these courses on their first year. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 36 ( $X = 20.48, sd = 1.87$ ). The frequency and percentage of the participants by gender, year of university, and departments are given in Table 1.

**Instruments**

Two separate 5-point Likert type questionnaires which are Stereotyped Thoughts about Foreign Languages Scale and Self-Efficacy Scale for English were administered to the participants in an online platform through Google Forms at the end of the fall term. Both of the questionnaires were in Turkish which eliminates the language and understanding burden for the participants while answering the questions.

The Stereotyped Thoughts about Foreign Languages Scale for Foreign Languages was designed to measure students' stereotypes of English as an L2. The specified scale consists of a total of 42 items comprising 8 factors, namely "over-generalization, excessive effort for change, over-regression, polarization, holistic approach, absolutism, customization and excessive altruism". Ünal (2015) provided the validity evidences for the scale as the KMO coefficient from the exploratory factor analysis as 0.810, the Bartlett Test value as 3478.491 ( $p < 0.01$ ), the goodness of fit criteria from the confirmatory factor analysis as  $X^2/sd = 1.65$ , RMSEA= 0.046, SRMR= 0.078, CFI= 0.92 Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.876 as the reliability value. The response categories of the Likert-type scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The Self-Efficacy Scale for English was developed by Hancı Yanar and Bümen (2012) to measure students' self-efficacy beliefs as L2 regarding English. This scale consists of 4 sub-dimensions as "reading, writing, listening and speaking" and a total number of 34 items. Hancı Yanar and Bümen (2012) stated the validity evidence obtained from the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the scale as a KMO coefficient of 0.97, Bartlett test value as 8400.73 ( $p < 0.001$ ),  $X^2/sd = 1.57$ , RMSEA= 0.044, SRMR= 0.046, and CFI= 0.99. As proof of reliability, they calculated the Cronbach alpha value as 0.97. The Likert-type scale has been developed in response categories from 1 (Does not fit me at all) to 5 (Fits me perfectly). In the reliability analysis conducted in this study, high internal consistency was found in both surveys with .87 and .97 Cronbach's Alpha, respectively.

**Analysis of the Data**

In this study, descriptive statistics, Pearson moments product correlation and multiple regression were used to analyze the data. The analyses were performed with SPSS 23 software.

**Research Ethical Consent Information**

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions stated under the title "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were not taken.

**Ethics committee permission information**

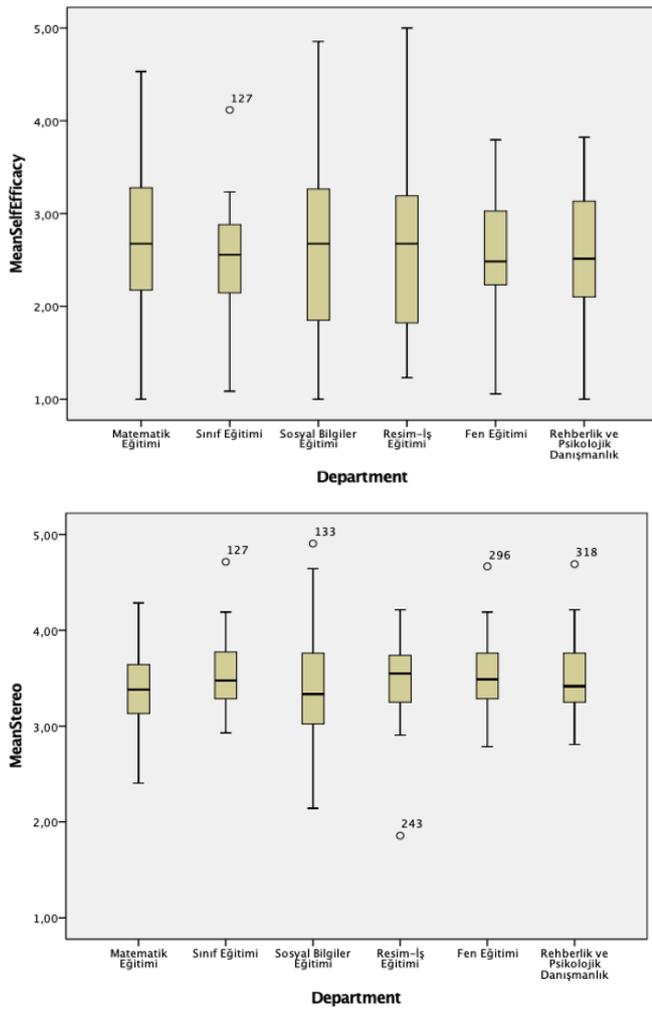
Name of the Board Performing the Ethical Review: Bartın University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee  
Date of Ethics Assessment Decision: 03.01.2019  
Ethics Assessment Document Issue Number:2019-005

**Findings**

To be able to direct the research questions, the data were checked for possibility of missing data and outliers prior to the analysis. A very small number of outliers were observed (see figure 1) while there were not any missing data. When the distribution of the data was checked through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, visual inspections of histograms and normal Q-Q plots, it is observed that the data are normally distributed ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage of the Participants According to Gender, Year of University, and Departments

Gender	Year of University	Elementary Mathematics Education	Primary Education	Social Science Education	Fine Arts Education	Science Education	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Total
n (%)								
Female	1	39 (11.1)	7 (1.9)	6 (1.7)	11 (3.1)	-	17 (4.8)	80 (22.7)
	2	3 (0.9)	3 (0.9)	26 (7.4)	4 (1.1)	-	4 (1.1)	40 (11.4)
	3	20 (5.7)	1 (0.3)	10 (2.8)	10 (2.8)	18 (5.1)	16 (4.5)	75 (21.3)
	4	17 (4.8)	12 (3.4)	23 (6.5)	-	10 (2.8)	2 (0.6)	64 (18.2)
Total		79 (22.4)	23 (6.5)	65 (18.5)	25 (7.1)	28 (7.9)	39 (11.1)	259 (73.6)
Male	1	7 (1.9)	4 (1.1)	2 (0.6)	6 (1.7)	1 (0.3)	4 (1.1)	24 (6.8)
	2	1 (0.3)	-	10 (2.8)	4 (1.1)	-	1 (0.3)	16 (4.5)
	3	5 (1.4)	2 (0.6)	3 (0.9)	4 (1.1)	10 (2.8)	4 (1.1)	28 (7.9)
	4	7 (1.9)	2 (0.6)	13	-	3 (0.9)	-	25 (7.1)
Total		20 (5.7)	8 (2.3)	28 (7.9)	14 (4.0)	14 (4.0)	9 (2.6)	93 (26.4)



**Figure 1.** Boxplots showing the normality of distribution of L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas.

The statistical analyses of the scores were carried out through Multiple Regression Analysis and Correlation Analysis. To be able to address third and fourth research questions standard multiple regression analyses were carried out following the inspections such as checking for standardized values, outliers, scatterplots, and also mahalanobis values were checked to be able to see if the data have any extreme outliers. For a model including three predictor variables, mahalanobis values are expected to be below 7.815 at the level of  $p= 0.01$ . Thus, values above this are regarded as extreme outliers and filtered out before the analysis. As the predictor variables have a low correlation between each other and the outcome variable and Tolerance and VIF values are between the expected values ( $VIF < 10$ ,  $Tolerance > 0.2$ ), it can be stated that there was no collinearity problem that might affect the results of the regression analysis.

For the first research question, descriptive statistics on students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and self-efficacy beliefs about English scores are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics on Stereotyped Ideas and Self-Efficacy

Variables	X	Sd	Min.	Max.
Stereotyped Ideas	144.4261	18.50	78.00	206.00
Self-Efficacy	89.2955	27.21	34.00	170.00

As can be seen from Table 1, it was determined that students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language ( $X= 144$ ) and self-efficacy beliefs about English ( $X= 89$ ) were at medium level. The minimum and maximum scores that participants can get from the scales of stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and self-efficacy beliefs about English are in the range between 42 and 210 and between 34 and 170, respectively. Since undergraduate students do not get extreme points from the scale of stereotypes about foreign languages, it is observed that student opinions do not differ much from each other. However, it can be stated that high variability in self-efficacy levels among students is observed, since there are also some participants having self-efficacy in L2 English at the extreme points. Similar results are obtained when standard deviations are analysed which can be another evidence for variability.

For the second research question, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign languages and their self-efficacy beliefs about English. The results obtained are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Stereotyped Ideas and Self-Efficacy

Stereotyped Ideas	Self-efficacy	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
	.328**	.342**	.241**	.341**	.258**

As given in Table 4 it has been determined that there is a low level positive and significant relationship between students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and their self-efficacy beliefs about English and its sub-dimensions.

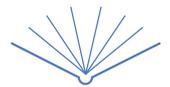
For the third research question, three models were created. As it was shown in Table 4, stereotyped ideas can account for almost 10% of the variance in L2 self-efficacy beliefs of participants ( $F= 37.016$ ,  $r^2= .098$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

**Table 4.** A Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis of Stereotyped Ideas, Year of University Education, and Gender on L2 Self-Efficacy

Model	Variables	$\beta$	B	SE B	t	p	$r^2$
1	Stereotyped Ideas	.314	.639	.105	6.084	.000	.098
	Stereotyped Ideas	.315	.642	.105	6.098	.000	
2	Year of Univ Education	-.022	.019	.035	-.608	.543	.099
	Stereotyped Ideas	.322	.657	.106	6.216	.000	
3	Year of Univ Education	-.035	-.024	.035	-.673	.501	.105
	Stereotyped Ideas	.322	.657	.106	6.216	.000	
	Gender	.072	.130	.094	1.385	.167	

As it can be observed from Table 3, only the first regression model is classified as a good model to explain variance in L2 self-efficacy beliefs of participants ( $F= 37.016$ ,  $r^2= .098$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

To be able to address the third research question and determine if there is a significant relationship between L2 self-efficacy beliefs and stereotyped ideas of students from different departments of an education faculty, a correlation analysis was conducted. The results of the correlation study revealed that there is a significant positive



correlation between L2 self-efficacy mean scores and mean score of stereotyped ideas towards English in Elementary Mathematics Education ( $r = .356, p < .0001$ ), Primary Education ( $r = .402, p = .025$ ), Social Science Education ( $r = .374, p < .0001$ ), Fine Arts Education ( $r = .345, p = .031$ ). On the other hand, the results showed that the relationship between L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas in Science Education and in Psychological Counselling and Guidance Education is not significant ( $p > .05$ ).

To be able to direct the last research question regarding the relationship between L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas on the basis of the year of education, another correlation study was carried out. The results of this correlation study illustrated that there is a significant positive correlation between L2 self-efficacy mean scores and mean score of stereotyped ideas towards English for the first year ( $r = .296, p = .002$ ), the second year, ( $r = .454, p < .000$ ), the third ( $r = .294, p = .003$ ), and the fourth year students ( $r = .300, p = .004$ ).

For the fourth research question, three models were created. As it was shown in Table 5, L2 self-efficacy can account for almost 10% of the variance in stereotyped ideas of participants ( $F = 37.997, r^2 = .099, p < .0001$ ). However, year of university education and gender are not predictors of stereotyped ideas of participants as there was not a significant difference in  $r^2$  when these predictors were included to the model ( $r^2$  change was .001 and .010 respectively,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 5.** A Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis of Self-Efficacy, Year of University Education, and Gender on Stereotyped Ideas towards English

Model	Variables	$\beta$	B	SE B	t	p	$r^2$
1	Self-Efficacy	.315	.181	.029	6.164	.000	.090
2	Self-Efficacy	.317	.182	.029	6.174	.000	.001
	Year of Univ Education	.025	.019	.010	.492	.623	
3	Self-Efficacy	.323	.185	.029	6.306	.000	.010
	Year of Univ Education	.031	.012	.019	.599	.549	
	Gender	-.100	-.100	.052	-1.947	.052	

As it can be observed from Table 5, only the first regression model is determined as a successful model to explain variance in stereotyped ideas of participants towards English ( $F = 37.997, r^2 = .099, p < .0001$ ).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to find out whether L2 self-efficacy/stereotyped ideas, year of university education and gender can explain variance in stereotyped ideas/L2 self-efficacy beliefs of participant from different departments at an education faculty. The results addressing the first research question shows that students' stereotyped thoughts about foreign language and self-efficacy beliefs about English were at medium level. The results of the study addressing the second research question suggested that there is a significant positive correlation at moderate level between L2 self-efficacy beliefs and stereotyped ideas of participants for four departments. Thus, it can be inferred that self-efficacy beliefs and stereotyped ideas are interrelated at a moderate level. However, it must be stated that no relationship between L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas was found in the students of Science Education and Psychological Counselling and Guidance

Education departments. The results of the study addressing the third research question revealed that only stereotyped ideas towards English is a significant predictor to explain the variance in L2 self-efficacy of the participants. The results from the multiple regression analysis addressing the fourth research question showed that only L2 self-efficacy beliefs are successful predictor of stereotyped ideas towards English. The findings from the study are supported by the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1989; 1991) as it suggests that self-efficacy beliefs affect many aspects of human behaviour including their choices, beliefs, and efforts. The current study has some implications for the language education at departments other than the Department of English Language Teaching. Since its effects on proficiency level has already been evidenced in the literature, self-efficacy beliefs of language learners can be utilized as one of the notions to consider while planning lessons or even curriculum (Kim, Wang, Ahn, & Bong, 2015; Raofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012). For example, language instructors may improve students' L2 self-efficacy by employing peer modeling method and positive feedback that can motivate them to learn as was suggested by Pajares (2008). To be able to change stereotyped ideas of students towards English, necessary changes should be initiated by the educators and program developers.

This study has some limitations, too. First, the study is only based on the perceptions of students about their L2 self-efficacy beliefs and stereotyped ideas. Thus, there can be some discrepancies between their actual L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas towards English. A further study is needed to explore these constructs in a longitudinal way to be able get a deeper understanding of the issue. Second, findings of the study may not be generalized easily because the sample of the study was limited to a state university where English courses are thought via distance education. Therefore, a further study may include a larger sample which is more representative of the population to able to generalize the results. Third, the current study had limited data available for faculty of the students to examine L2 self-efficacy and stereotyped ideas towards English thoroughly. A further study may include a varied number of different faculties from different institutions for a better understanding of the issue and more generalizable results.

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