

Influence of Self-Confidence on Saudi Primary Students' English Vocabulary Ability through Differentiated Instruction Strategies

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Received: December 8, 2024

Accepted: January 13, 2025

Online Published: January 16, 2025

doi: 10.5539/elt.v18n2p1

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v18n2p1>

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of self-confidence on Saudi primary students' English vocabulary ability through differentiated instruction strategies. The study took place in Al Jouf province during the 2023-2024 school year, with data collected through a survey questionnaire. The sample consisted of 60 primary school students. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant relationship between self-confidence, differentiated instruction strategies, and English vocabulary ability. Specifically, differentiated instruction strategies were found to mediate the relationship between self-confidence and vocabulary ability. Higher self-confidence levels encouraged students to adopt these strategies, thereby enhancing their vocabulary skills. Based on these findings, the study recommends that teachers implement differentiated instruction strategies, such as flexible grouping, collaborative learning, and brainstorming, to increase student engagement and interest in learning. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of fostering self-confidence in students, in alignment with self-efficacy theory, to support their vocabulary learning and academic growth.

Keywords: English vocabulary, vocabulary ability, differentiated instruction, self-confidence

1. Introduction

Low vocabulary knowledge of the English language is a significant challenge in primary schools in Saudi Arabia. This issue is particularly pronounced among primary school students, who often struggle with vocabulary acquisition, affecting their overall academic performance (Afzal, 2019; Mohamed & Shaaban, 2021). It is not only prevalent but also serves as one of the most significant dilemmas faced by primary teachers in the Saudi classroom (Afzal, 2019). As English proficiency becomes increasingly important, addressing vocabulary deficiencies in these students is crucial for their success across various subjects (Barakat & Hamed, 2023). Contributing factors include insufficient vocabulary acquisition and the need for investigating diverse strategies aimed at enhancing these capabilities, alongside challenges in the learning process.

Moreover, students face several challenges in the learning process, such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom, lack of personalized support, and difficulties in mastering new words, all of which hinder their vocabulary development. This issue is of grave importance, as the findings indicate that student participants utilized vocabulary strategies ineffectively, predominantly relying on bilingual dictionaries and seeking assistance from others to ascertain meanings, among other methods (Altyari, 2017). Furthermore, the absence of self-confidence and inadequate understanding of semantic and communicative vocabulary skills, along with passive vocabulary usage, are additional factors contributing to students' poor English vocabulary ability (Afzal, 2019; Alqahtani, 2015; Rohmatillah, 2017). This study aims to explore the factors contributing to low vocabulary ability among Saudi primary school students and identify effective differentiated instruction strategies to improve their vocabulary development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vocabulary Ability

It is of paramount importance to enhance the vocabulary ability of students, as this serves as a critical indicator of their English language acquisition capabilities (Ozan & Kınca, 2018). This proficiency plays a vital role in the overall process of language acquisition and assists students in navigating the complexities of communicative competencies (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). Vocabulary ability can be categorized into various types, including semantic vocabulary, instructional vocabulary (encompassing both active and passive types), communicative vocabulary (which is further divided into receptive and productive), as well as incidental and intentional vocabulary (Firwana, 2017).

The term "semantics" refers to the study of the meanings inherent in words and language, which includes notional words that comprise nouns, adverbs, numerals, verbs, and adjectives, while functional words consist of prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections (Alsayed, 2020). Conversely, communicative vocabulary is divided into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary pertains to the comprehension of words through reading or auditory processing. This category includes the words that a reader encounters during reading and listening activities (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019).

Instructional vocabulary is described as encompassing both active and passive vocabulary types. Active vocabulary refers to the lexicon that students can comprehend and use spontaneously when circumstances require verbal or written expression (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). In the context of intentional versus incidental learning, intentional learning is orchestrated by the student or educator, while incidental learning emerges as a byproduct of engaging in an alternative activity. Incidental vocabulary acquisition specifically refers to the vocabulary that develops through reading-based activities (Webb, 2020). Therefore, this study attempts to explore whether other factors, such as self-confidence and differentiated instruction strategies, influence students' English vocabulary abilities.

Teaching is a complex process, and as professional educators, teachers must be familiar with various strategies that align with students' learning styles and interests. However, these strategies are only effective when applied by knowledgeable teachers (Andante & Limpot, 2023). Additionally, teachers are expected to create opportunities for active student engagement in the classroom. According to Feng (2023), educators play a vital role in implementing diverse vocabulary acquisition strategies through contextual teaching environments, which foster English language proficiency. Students demonstrate improved vocabulary skills when participating in activities like flexible grouping, cooperative learning, and brainstorming, which significantly enhance their English vocabulary and boost their self-confidence (Firwana, 2017).

2.2 Self-confidence

Likewise, self-confidence plays an important role in English vocabulary ability. It has four indicators: ability, assurance, confidence, and communicative competency (Kanza, 2015). The ability of self-confidence refers to the suitability and necessary actions to manage difficult situations (Sugiarto et al., 2020). Assurance refers to the temporary emotional reactions and experiences while practicing the English language, which enhance competence and proficiency in the English language (Muqorrobin et al., 2022). Confidence is the main indicator of self-confidence, associated with both outer and inner confidence (Tiara, 2022). Communicative competency is the last aspect of self-confidence when students face problems communicating in the English language (Ginosyan et al., 2019).

Studies have also shown the influence of self-confidence on English vocabulary ability (Suryadi, 2018; Sumardi et al., 2022). Students exhibiting high levels of self-confidence in their proficiency in the English language are more inclined to acquire a second language proficiently (Ghafar, 2023). However, several factors affect this relationship, such as differentiated instruction strategies. Hence, students may be demotivated to participate in vocabulary learning. According to Grave (2022), differentiated instruction improves English proficiency, as it provides students with varying vocabulary levels within the same class, as highlighted in research on vocabulary instruction.

This study is fundamentally grounded in the Self-Efficacy Theory articulated by Albert Bandura (1977). This theoretical framework pertains to an individual's conviction regarding their capacity to execute tasks, achieve goals, or yield specific outcomes (Andante & Limpot, 2023). Furthermore, self-efficacy can be construed as an individual's confidence in their competencies, skills, and attributes to regulate their motivation and conduct (Ghafar, 2023). Consequently, a student possessing a robust belief in their capabilities is likely to serve as a positive determinant in the enhancement of vocabulary proficiency.

2.3 Differentiated Instruction Strategies

Differentiated instruction strategies play a vital role in language learning and in increasing students' vocabulary acquisition, self-esteem, and academic performance (Barni et al., 2019). Additionally, the strategies used to learn vocabulary teach students to become more responsible for their learning. These learners are considered to have strong self-confidence skills. It is an important pedagogical approach in which teachers tailor instruction to meet the student's learning needs (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). However, low vocabulary ability in English learning is also a major concern, and without sufficient knowledge of vocabulary, learners will have difficulties in learning the target language (Nurkhasanah et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, aside from the relationship between differentiated instruction strategies and English vocabulary ability, vocabulary also plays an important role in language skills development. Language skills are crucial for our careers, and a large vocabulary is especially helpful in reading and listening (Andante & Limpot, 2023). A study also confirms the relationship between differentiated instruction and English vocabulary ability (Siddiqui & Alghamdi, 2017). Similarly, a lack of differentiated instruction strategies hinders mastery of English vocabulary (Firwana, 2017).

On the other hand, Tomlinson (2005) developed a model for differentiated instruction that addresses the individual learning needs of students by assessing their requirements in the classroom. This model encourages teachers to provide essential resources and tailor assignments to enhance students' talents and thinking skills (Hogan, 2014). Furthermore, the English vocabulary ability model, also used in this study, is connected to students in acquiring and understanding words for effective learning (Li, 2022). It also explains how key components contribute to effective vocabulary acquisition and usage. This model emphasizes a comprehensive approach to vocabulary development, integrating various teaching strategies and assessments to support learners effectively. This research has three variables that correspond to the problem of the study: self-confidence, English vocabulary ability, and differentiated instruction strategies as mediating variables.

Differentiated instruction strategies are considered a pedagogical process through which educators provide opportunities for students to meet their individual needs and engage in learning activities (Convery & Coyle, 1999). There are three main strategies, according to Tomlinson (2005): flexible grouping, cooperative learning, and brainstorming strategies. The flexible grouping strategy refers to grouping students according to their skill levels (Rochester, 2021). Cooperative learning is the strategy used to share information among students, which is useful for enhancing mutual learning and motivation (Ismail & Al Allaq, 2019). The brainstorming strategy involves expanding thinking capacity by discovering and using ideas (Ngunvava & Meremo, 2021). This research also uses differentiated instruction strategies as mediating variables in the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary ability.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationships between (1) self-confidence and English vocabulary ability, (2) differentiated instruction strategies and English vocabulary ability, and (3) the mediating effect of differentiated instruction strategies on the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary ability.

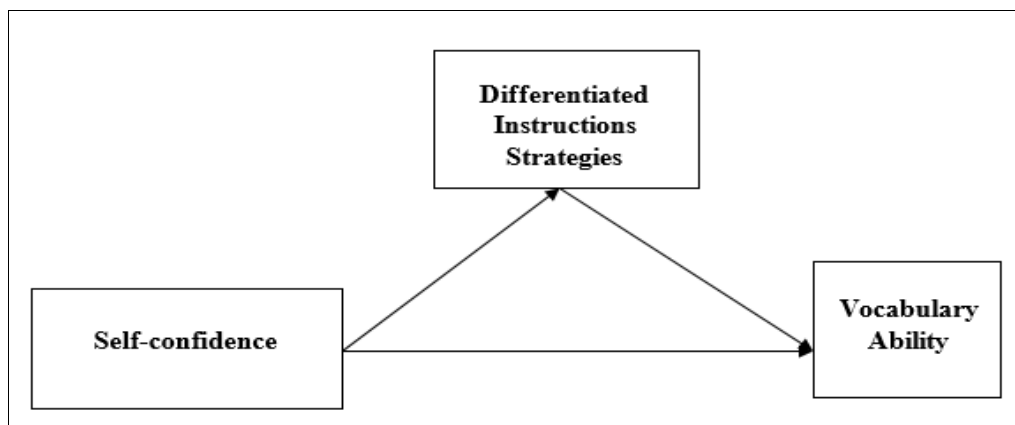


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This research used four methods to identify the mediation of differentiated instruction strategies in the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary ability. Path (a) shows the direct effect of self-confidence on differentiated instruction strategies as a mediating variable; path (b) shows the direct effect of self-confidence on students' English vocabulary ability; and path (c) shows the indirect effect of self-confidence on students' English vocabulary ability, using differentiated instruction strategies as a mediating variable. While there may be many studies on differentiated instruction strategies, students' English vocabulary ability, and self-confidence, this study focuses on the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary ability through differentiated instruction strategies. It is crucial to conduct this study, as we need to consider the interests and learning needs of students. Therefore, the results of this study will be highly beneficial in improving students' English vocabulary ability, especially in Saudi Arabia.

The objective of this research is to present the mediating effect of differentiated instruction strategies on the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary. Specifically, this study aims to determine whether there is no significant relationship between self-confidence, differentiated instruction strategies, and English vocabulary ability at the 0.05 level of significance, and to examine whether differentiated instruction strategies, as a mediating variable, have no significant effect on the relationship between self-confidence and students' English vocabulary. Consequently, the null hypotheses for the quantitative inquiries in this study are derived from the stated research objectives and research questions.

H1: There is a significant relationship between sixth-grade students' self-confidence in English learning and their vocabulary ability in English.

H2: There is a significant relationship between differentiated instruction strategies and vocabulary ability in English.

H3: There is a significant relationship between sixth-grade students' self-confidence in English learning and differentiated instruction strategies.

H4: The differentiated instruction strategies mediate the influences of sixth-grade students' self-confidence on their vocabulary ability in English.

3. Methodology

3.1 Respondents

This research targets sixth-year students from a school in Sakaka City, Al-Jouf province, selected for their prior exposure to differentiated instruction in first grade. Participants must have a basic understanding of differentiated instruction. The total number of sixth-year students in Sakaka City is 2,058, with teachers playing a key role in implementing strategies to improve English vocabulary proficiency (Ministry of Education, Sakaka City, Al-Jouf province). The questionnaire was distributed to 60 sixth-grade students from one school to assess the validity of the interrelations among the variables and to empirically examine them using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). While PLS-SEM does not require a large sample size, the typical minimum ranges from 30 to 100, as noted by Chin (2000).

3.2 Research Instrument

This study uses a questionnaire adapted from web sources and modified by the researcher with the help of validators. The questionnaire focuses on self-confidence, differentiated instruction strategies, and English vocabulary ability. The first part of the questionnaire consists of differentiated instruction strategies, using 8 items adapted from Tomlinson (2000). Vocabulary ability is measured as a one-dimensional construct, using an index of five vocabulary ability measures adapted from Gu (2020). Consistent with Griffiee (1997) and Darasawang and Reinders (2021), self-confidence is operationally measured as a one-dimensional construct with 7 items. The survey has already been validated by experts in the field to ensure its reliability and relevance. Additionally, it has been carefully translated into Arabic to ensure cultural appropriateness for the target audience.

Table 1. Measurement Instruments

No.	Measurement Instrument of Self-confidence
1	I always try my best to use the methods in my English class.
2	I feel comfortable with the vocabulary part of the English class.
3	I get good grades in English.
3	I can speak English easily.
4	I can show an English native visitor around the campus and answer.
5	I feel comfortable sharing my ideas/feelings/opinions with my friends/teachers in English
6	In general, I find communicating in English in the classroom.
Measurement Instrument of Differentiated Instruction Strategies	
1	I like the teaching methods in English class.
2	I enjoy the review activities I do in English class when I use the following teaching methods.
3	I enjoy the discussion part of English class when I use the teaching methods
4	I enjoy the English class, especially with the use of teaching methods.
5	I like to get the same improvement in the program in the future which uses the teaching methods.
6	Once the English words of all my native language meanings have been remembered, English is learned through the use of teaching methods.
7	A good memory is all you need to learn a foreign language well through the use of the teaching methods.
8	I can only learn a large vocabulary by memorizing a lot of words through the of use the teaching methods.
Measurement Instrument of Vocabulary Ability	
1	When I try to remember a word, I write it again and again.
2	I create a picture in my mind to help me remember a new word.
3	To help me remember a word, I try to “see” the spelling of the word in my mind.
4	I intentionally study how English words are formed to remember more words.
5	I put words that sound similar together to remember them.

3.3 Research Design

This research was conducted using a quantitative non-experimental design. English vocabulary ability is the dependent variable, while self-confidence and differentiated instruction strategies are the independent variables. In this study, a descriptive correlational survey and quantitative data were used to analyze the relationship between two or more variables and to explore the mediating effect of differentiated instruction strategies on self-confidence and English vocabulary ability.

Additionally, the descriptive correlational method is designed to describe the relationship between two variables. Therefore, the data collection method used by the researcher is the best fit for the study. After verifying the questionnaire, data were gathered to secure a certificate from the university and approval from the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 30 students. The students responded to the survey, and the results indicated that the questionnaire was reliable for the intended purpose.

To account for potential biases like social desirability, measures were taken to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the participant’s responses. This approach helped reduce the influence of social desirability and ensured that students felt comfortable providing honest feedback. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the questionnaire was reviewed for clarity and appropriateness before the final data collection in a public school in Sakaka City, Saudi Arabia.

4. Analysis

For data analysis, PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 3 was used to obtain the t-values and p-values for the relationships between the variables. To test the hypotheses specifically, to examine if there is a significant mediating effect of differentiated instruction strategies in the relationship between sixth-grade students' self-confidence in English learning and their English vocabulary ability data analysis was used to calculate the t-values and p-values for the relationships between the variables. Moreover, PLS-SEM analysis in this study was employed to determine whether the mediating variable significantly influences the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Furthermore, the Composite Reliability values obtained in this study surpass the recommended threshold of 0.7, underscoring the robustness and reliability of the measurement instruments employed (Table 2).

Table 2. The reliability of the measurement instruments

Variable	Composite Reliability
Differentiated Instruction Strategies	0.849
Students' Self-confidence	0.716
Vocabulary Ability	0.863

For further confirmation of discriminant validity, the study utilized the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) indicator. In Table 3, values below 0.85 for constructs are considered conceptually distinct, indicating good discriminant validity. This threshold is crucial in determining the uniqueness of each construct and ensuring that they are not measuring the same underlying concept.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable	HTMT Criterion		
	DIS	SC	VB
Differentiate Instruction Strategies (DIS)			
Self Confidence (SC)	0.570		
Vocabulary Ability (VB)	0.501	0.26	

After the first part, the next step in the Smart-PLS model study is the assessment of the inner model or the assessment of the paths. The collinearity assessment is the first evaluation conducted within the structural model, where two or more constructs are highly correlated with each other. In this assessment, it is recommended that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) be less than 3.3 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 presents the VIF values, and it is noted that all of them are below the 3.3 threshold, with the highest value being 1.000 for self-confidence and differentiated instruction strategies.

Table 4. Collinearity Assessment

	DIS	VB
Differentiate Instruction Strategies		1.000
Self Confidence	1.000	

An inner model is tested via the R² value. The R² test defines how much the dependent variable is influenced by the explanatory variables. According to Cohen (1988), R² values of .27, .13, and .02 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak relationships, respectively. The results in Figure 4.1 show that the R² value for differentiated instruction (0.231) is substantial, while the R² value for vocabulary ability (0.20) is slightly substantial. The R² value in the current research is 0.371, indicating that the independent variables have a strong impact on the dependent variable (vocabulary ability).

In the context of evaluating structural models, another important assessment is the examination of the f² impact, which specifically elucidates the effect of a latent variable within the model. When the f² value is at or below 0.02, it signifies a minimal or slight impact of the latent variable on the model. Conversely, an f² value of 0.15 suggests a moderate or medium impact, while a reading of 0.35 denotes a substantial effect. In the present study, the f² value exceeds the threshold of 0.15, signifying that the latent variables exert a medium level of influence, as illustrated in Table 5. Consequently, the effect size for self-confidence was found to have a substantial impact

on differentiated instruction strategies. The result also indicates that differentiated instruction has a substantial effect on vocabulary ability as an endogenous construct.

Table 5. Effect Size

	Effect Size Value	Effect Size
Self Confidence -> Differentiate Instruction strategies	0.301	Large
Differentiate Instruction strategies -> vocabulary ability	0.588	Large

4.1 Results of Hypotheses and Discussion

Table 6 shows the relationships between variables, with English vocabulary ability as the dependent variable and self-confidence and differentiated instruction strategies as the independent variables. The results show that self-confidence has an insignificant relationship with vocabulary ability in English ($\beta = 0.103, p > 0.05$). The results also show that self-confidence has a significant relationship with differentiated instruction strategies ($\beta = 0.481, p \leq 0.05$). This supports the idea that vocabulary learning, especially when it is facilitated through differentiated instruction strategies, can increase students' self-confidence.

In addition, differentiated instruction strategies have a significant relationship with vocabulary ability in English, as shown in the table with a coefficient correlation of $\beta = 0.918, p \leq 0.05$. This emphasizes that vocabulary learning strategies are essential for acquiring new words necessary for reading comprehension and developing language skills (Abujarad & Othman, 2019).

Lastly, differentiated instruction strategies, as a mediating variable, have a significant relationship with students' vocabulary ability in English, with a result of $\beta = 0.292, p \leq 0.05$ (see Table 6 and Figure 2). This supports the idea that differentiated instruction strategies are important in teaching vocabulary, as they serve as a new educational approach that caters to diverse student needs and enhances academic performance in the classroom (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

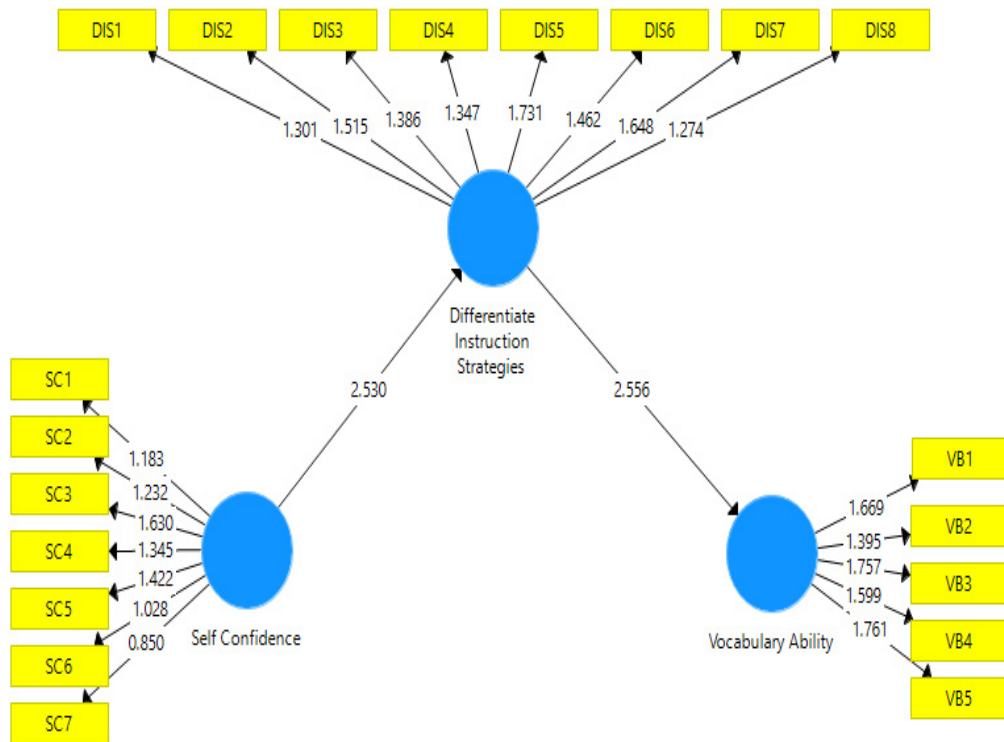


Figure 2. Meditation structure model

Table 6. Results of the Structure Test

	Relationship	Path	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Statistics	P Values	95%CI		Decision
							LL	UL	
H1	Self Confidence -> Vocabulary Ability	0.103	0.110	0.931	0.175				Not Supported
H2	Differentiated Instruction -> Vocabulary Ability	0.918	0.091	2566	0.000				Supported
H3	Self Confidence -> Differentiate Instruction Strategies	0.481	0.190	2.530	0.005				Supported
H4	Self Confidence -> Differentiate Instruction Strategies -> Vocabulary Ability	0.292	0.152	1.925	0.027	0.147	0.444		Supported

Note. CI=confidence; LL=lower limit, UL=upper limit.

Vocabulary ability plays a crucial role in learning a second language, as it not only enhances comprehension and expression but also boosts motivation. Choosing the right strategies for learning new words—like flexible grouping, cooperative learning, and brainstorming can make a big difference. Self-confidence is equally important; it encourages learners to engage actively and take risks in using the language. Differentiated instruction, which tailors learning experiences to individual needs, benefits from strong communication and collaboration, allowing learners to feel supported and empowered in their language journey.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results show that the high-level implementation of differentiated instruction strategies can significantly enhance vocabulary skills by catering to diverse learning styles and needs. There is also a significant relationship between the variables, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. Self-confidence is significantly related to differentiated instruction strategies, and similarly, differentiated instruction strategies are significantly related to English vocabulary ability. Furthermore, the results indicate that differentiated instruction strategies mediate the relationship between self-confidence and English vocabulary ability. Thus, language skills development mediates self-confidence, contributing to an increase in the student's English vocabulary ability.

Furthermore, the self-efficacy of Albert Bandura (1977), the model of differentiated instructions (Tomlinson, 2005), and the English Vocabulary Ability Model (Diaz & Orjuela, 2010) were emphasized in this study as it anchors on it. According to these theories, students achieve greater success in school when they believe in their capacity and skills. The model of differentiated instruction by Tomlinson (2005) is also used as a basis in this study, as it illustrates the relationship between differentiated instruction strategies and English vocabulary ability. Therefore, the results of this study support the theory that self-confidence has a significant relationship with differentiated instruction strategies, which, in turn, influence students' English vocabulary ability. However, language self-confidence is essential, as it helps differentiated instruction strategies enhance students' English vocabulary ability.

We acknowledge that the socio-linguistic environment in which the study was conducted plays a significant role in shaping students' language learning experiences and outcomes. In this case, the study was conducted in Sakaka City, Saudi Arabia, where English is taught as a second language in a predominantly Arabic-speaking society. This context influences not only students' exposure to English but also their attitudes toward learning the language.

The educational environment, including the use of differentiated instruction strategies, may also affect the students' vocabulary acquisition and self-confidence. In future studies, it is important to consider how cultural norms, educational policies, and language practices in Saudi Arabia shape students' English learning experiences. For example, students' self-confidence in using English may be influenced by their previous exposure to the language, societal attitudes towards bilingualism, and the availability of resources for language learning.

In general, the researchers suggest that to increase students' English vocabulary ability, teachers should implement differentiated instruction strategies such as flexible grouping, cooperative learning, and brainstorming. Additionally, to develop language skills, students can set aside time each day to practice and master speaking,

reading, listening, and writing. More importantly, to enhance students' English vocabulary ability, teachers can provide activities that students find exciting and useful in real-life situations.

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