

CORRELATIONS AMONG LEARNERS' MINDSETS, SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND EFFORT IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF FINAL-YEAR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how mindset relates to two pivotal facets of foreign-language learning – self-confidence and learning effort – among 163 final-year English-pedagogy majors at Tay Nguyen University in a Vietnamese EFL tertiary context. Grounded in Dweck's mindset theory (2006), the research employed a survey measuring growth- versus fixed-mindset beliefs, perceived confidence, and effortful study behaviours. Descriptive statistics (means, percentages) first profiled students' mindsets, confidence levels, and effort patterns. Pearson's correlation coefficients then quantified the links among variables. Results reveal that a growth mindset correlates positively and significantly with both self-confidence ($r = .46, p < .01$) and sustained effort in learning English ($r = .52, p < .01$), whereas fixed-mindset scores show negative or negligible associations. Students who reported high confidence and effort also cited three recurrent strategies: using gamified language-learning apps, engaging in real-world communication, and following personalised, goal-driven study plans. These findings underscore the pedagogical value of fostering growth-oriented beliefs to bolster resilience and autonomous practice. The study recommends embedding mindset-enhancing interventions – regular goal-setting, constructive feedback framed as progress cues, and reflective journals – into English-language curricula. Such practices can strengthen learners' belief in malleable ability, thereby boosting motivation and persistence. Future work should triangulate self-report data with classroom observations and longitudinal achievement scores to clarify causal pathways. Overall, cultivating a growth mindset appears instrumental not only for individual learner success but also for institutions striving to raise national English-proficiency targets and prepare graduates for an increasingly global workplace.

Key words: *growth mindset, self-confidence, learning effort, learning strategies, English pedagogy students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of *mindset* has received growing attention in the field of education, particularly due to its implications for learner motivation, engagement, and achievement. Carol Dweck's (2006) theory of mindset distinguishes between a fixed mindset – where individuals believe that abilities are innate and unchangeable – and a growth mindset, in which individuals view intelligence and skills as qualities that can be developed through effort and learning. Within the context of second or foreign language acquisition (SLA), this distinction holds particular significance. Learning a new language is a complex, long-term process that requires not only cognitive ability but also emotional resilience, sustained effort, and confidence in communication (Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Hariri, 2021; Bai, & Wang, 2023; Sharafi, 2024)

For university students majoring in English

pedagogy, especially those in their final year, self-confidence and persistence are essential for successful language use in both academic and professional settings. However, many students experience anxiety, fear of failure, and a lack of sustained effort – factors that may be deeply influenced by their underlying beliefs about learning ability. While prior studies have explored the role of mindset in general education, relatively few have examined how mindset interacts specifically with self-confidence and learning effort in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts in Vietnam at the tertiary level (Hoang & Wyatt, 2021).

This study addresses that gap by investigating the relationship between mindset, self-confidence, and learning effort among final-year English pedagogy students at Tay Nguyen University. By employing descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, the research seeks to answer the following

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questions:

1) What is the relationship between students' mindset orientation and their self-confidence in English learning?

2) What is the relationship between students' mindset orientation and effort they invest in learning English?

3) What strategies are commonly used by students with higher confidence and sustained effort?

Understanding these relationships is essential for designing effective pedagogical interventions that support learner autonomy and foster a growth mindset. The findings aim to provide insights for language educators and academic administrators seeking to improve the learning environment and help students develop the resilience and motivation needed for long-term success in English language acquisition.

2. CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research content

This study focuses on examining the relationship between students' mindset orientation (growth or fixed) and two essential factors in foreign language learning: self-confidence and learning effort. Specifically, the research investigates:

- The correlation between students' mindset and their self-perceived confidence in using English;
- The correlation between mindset and the degree of effort students invest in English language learning;
- The learning strategies commonly adopted by students who exhibit higher confidence and persistence in their English study.

Through the findings, the study aims to highlight how fostering a growth mindset can enhance motivation, increase learner autonomy, and improve English language outcomes.

2.2. Scope of the study

The research was conducted with final-year students majoring in English pedagogy at Tay Nguyen University during the academic year 2024–2025. These students were selected because they are at a critical stage in their academic journey, preparing for graduation and future professional teaching careers that require a strong command of English. The focus was limited to measuring mindset, self-confidence, and learning effort in the context of English language learning.

2.3. Research methods

The study adopted a quantitative research design. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 163 final-year English pedagogy students via Google Forms. The instrument included four main components:

- Beliefs about language learning, targeting growth and fixed mindset orientations;
- Self-assessment of confidence in using English (e.g., speaking, writing, and class participation);
- Effort-related behaviors, including persistence, motivation, and study frequency;
- Commonly used learning strategies (e.g., use of technology, peer communication, personal goal-setting).

All responses were measured using Likert-scale and multiple-choice formats. Prior to data collection, students were informed of the research purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of their responses. The scales used in the questionnaire were adapted from established mindset and EFL self-belief instruments (Dweck, 2006), and internal consistency was acceptable, with Cronbach's alpha values of .84 for the mindset scale, .87 for the confidence scale, and .82 for the effort scale.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the frequency and percentage of responses related to mindset, confidence, effort, and learning strategies. To determine the strength and direction of relationships between mindset and the two key variables (confidence and effort), the study used Pearson's correlation coefficient. This method was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying linear relationships between continuous variables in educational research. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (version 25). Statistical significance was interpreted at the .05 and .01 levels ($p < .05$; $p < .01$).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Descriptive statistics

The survey was completed by 163 final-year English pedagogy students. The descriptive data showed that a majority of participants demonstrated a growth mindset orientation. Specifically, 70.5% of students agreed or strongly agreed that challenges are opportunities to grow, and 65% believed that intelligence can be developed through effort. Conversely, 58.3% of students also expressed occasional fear of failure and avoidance of difficult tasks, reflecting lingering fixed-mindset tendencies (See figure 1).

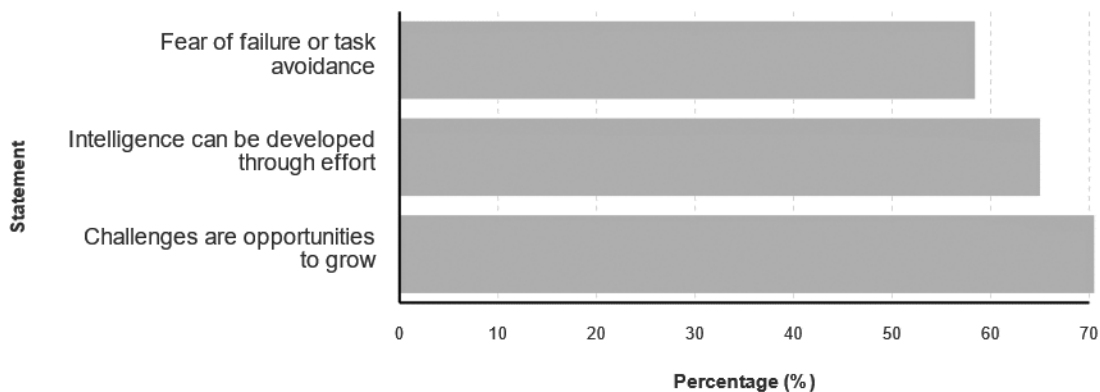


Figure 1. Student beliefs related to mindset

In terms of self-confidence, 50.3% of respondents reported feeling confident when responding to teachers in English classes, and 47.9% viewed

corrective feedback as a helpful tool for improvement (See figure 2)

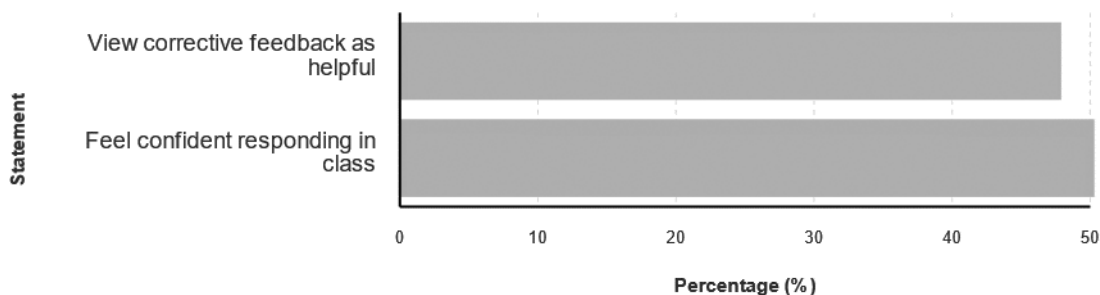


Figure 2. Students' self-confidence in English learning

Regarding effort, 54% of students stated that they continue practicing when facing challenges,

and 48.5% reported spending additional time to complete difficult assignments (See figure 3).

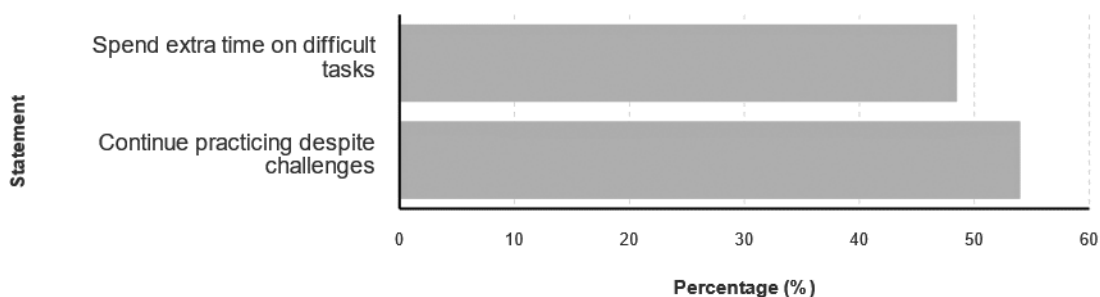


Figure 3. Students' learning effort

Common learning strategies included using gamified apps (60.1%), engaging in real-life com-

munication (42.9%), and creating personalized learning plans (38%) (See figure 4).

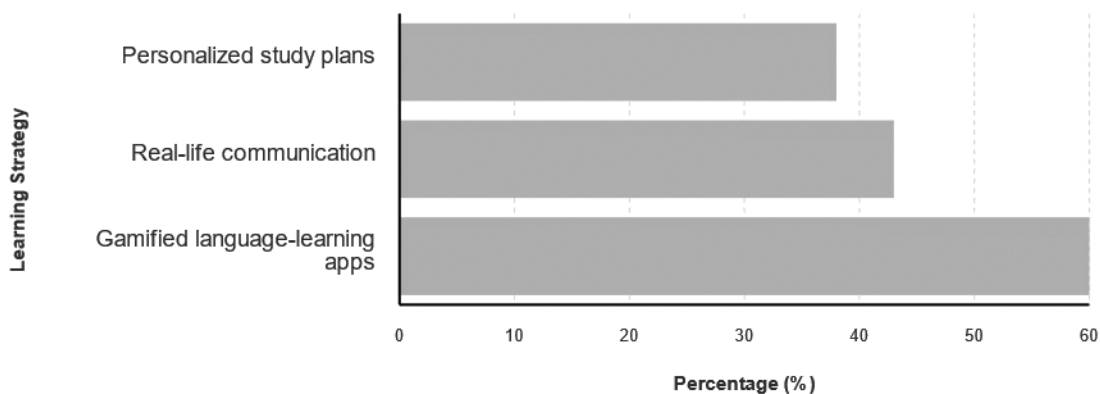


Figure 4. Common learning strategies used

3.2. Correlation between mindset and confidence

This section provides an overview of how students’ growth-mindset orientation relates to their self-confidence in English learning. The analysis examines whether students who endorse stronger growth-mindset beliefs also tend to report higher levels of confidence when us-

ing English in academic settings. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. The figure below illustrates the overall pattern of association between growth mindset and self-confidence among the participants.

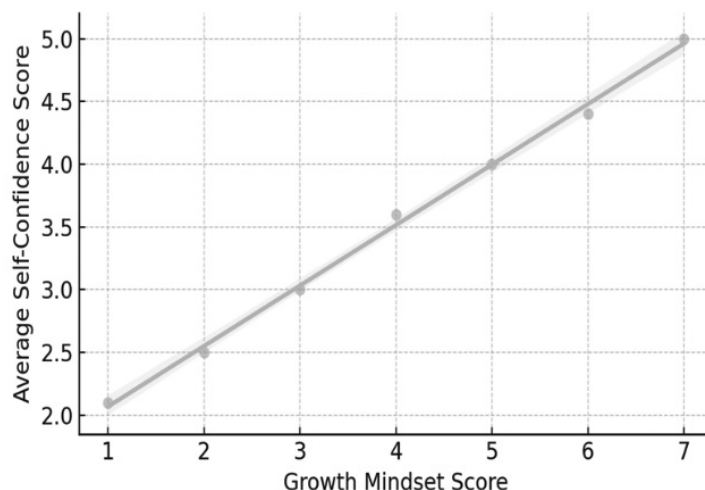


Figure 5. Correlation between growth mindset and self-confidence

3.3. Correlation between mindset and learning effort

A stronger correlation was found between growth mindset and learning effort ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher growth – mindset scores are associated with greater persistence and more robust study habits. Students who believed their English skills could improve through practice were more likely to engage in active learning, seek feedback, and dedicate

time to independent study. This result supports findings by Lou, & Zarrinabadi (2022) and Bai, Zhang, & Wang (2025), which suggest that learners with a growth mindset apply metacognitive strategies, set goals, and adjust their learning methods when facing challenges. In contrast, fixed-mindset students often demonstrated passive or avoidant behaviors, such as skipping speaking practice or copying assignments without real engagement.

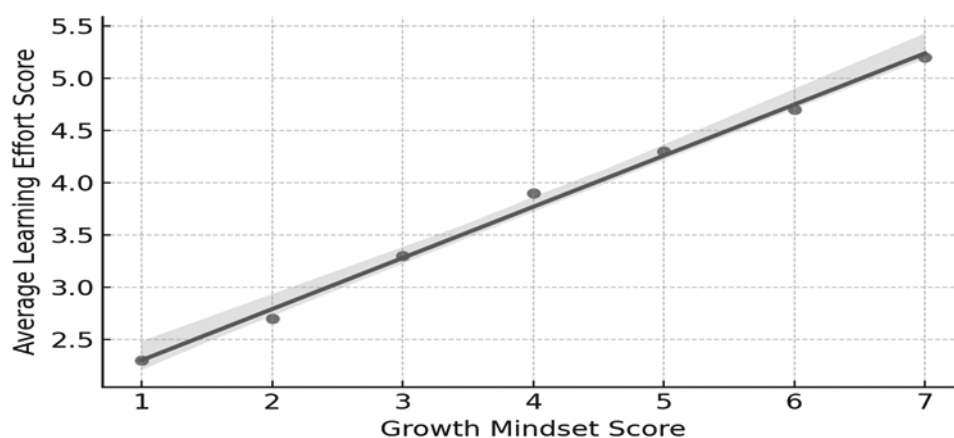


Figure 6. Correlation between growth mindset and learning effort

In the Vietnamese educational context, cultural expectations such as respect for teachers, concern about “losing face,” and a long-standing exam-oriented tradition may shape how mindset translates into effort. Students who endorse growth-oriented beliefs may need to invest additional effort to move beyond memorisation and accuracy-focused learning towards more communicative and autonomous practices. From the perspective of multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983), such sustained effort may also contribute to the development of linguistic intelligence (e.g., vocabulary range, discourse skills), interpersonal intel-

ligence (e.g., collaboration, classroom interaction), and intrapersonal intelligence (e.g., self-reflection, self-regulation). These forms of intelligence are highly relevant to foreign language learning and help explain why students with stronger growth-mindset beliefs tend to display both higher confidence and more persistent effort.

3.4. Summary of key correlation statistics

To consolidate the correlation results presented in sections 3.2 and 3.3, table 1. summarizes the key statistical indicators, including Pearson’s *r*, significance levels (*p*), and the interpretations of each relationship.

Table 1. Summary of key correlation Statistics

Variable Pair	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Growth mindset – Confidence	0.46	<.01	Moderate, statistically significant positive correlation
Growth mindset – Learning effort	0.52	<.01	Strong, statistically significant positive correlation

Note: r = Pearson’s correlation coefficient; p-values indicate statistical significance at the .01 level.

As shown, both correlations were positive and statistically significant, reinforcing the main findings reported earlier.

3.5. Effective strategies among high-effort learners

The analysis of student-reported strategies revealed three key patterns among those with high confidence and sustained effort:

1) Use of gamified learning tools: Apps like Duolingo and Quizlet helped students stay motivated and track their progress. These tools also provided immediate feedback, which reinforced self-efficacy.

2) Participation in real-life communication: Speaking with classmates or native speakers allowed students to practice English in low – pressure, authentic contexts, improving both fluency

and confidence.

3) Goal – oriented study planning: High-effort learners often maintained schedules, set targets, and reflected on their progress. This aligns with Yang, Cai & Song (2024), who argued that self-regulated learning improves long-term retention and motivation.

In addition to these three dominant patterns, a smaller number of students also reported using peer-support activities, systematically reviewing teacher feedback, keeping vocabulary or grammar notebooks, and engaging with English media (e.g., news, podcasts, or academic videos) as complementary strategies.

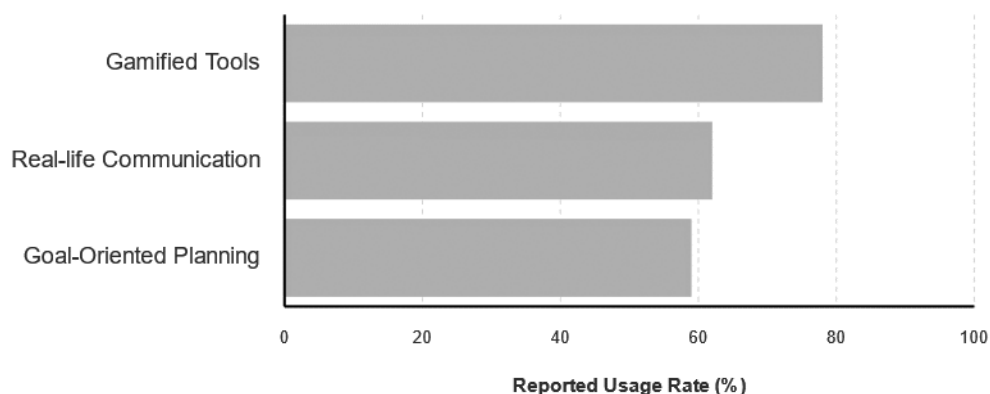


Figure 7. Reported strategy usage by high-effort learners

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Main findings

This study reinforces the significance of growth mindset in shaping learners’ confidence and effort in acquiring English as a foreign language. Among final-year English pedagogy students at Tay Nguyen University, a clear positive correlation was found between growth mindset and both self-confidence and learning effort. Learners who believed in the malleability of intelligence were more likely to persist through challenges, engage actively with learning tasks, and apply effective strategies such as gamified tools, real – life communication, and self-directed planning.

Many of these strategies also map onto specific intelligences in Gardner’s framework, particularly linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences, which are central to effective English language use.

4.2. Pedagogical implications

These findings offer practical implications for English language instructors and curriculum designers. Incorporating mindset-focused interventions - such as goal setting, reflective learning journals, and constructive feedback - can help create learning environments that nurture confidence, resilience, and autonomy. Explicitly introducing students to the concept of mindset may also enable them to take greater ownership of their

learning journey. For institutions like Tay Nguyen University, integrating mindset education into English pedagogy programs can help strengthen adaptability and perseverance among future teachers.

4.3. Limitations and future research

The study is limited by its reliance on self-report data from a single institutional context, which may constrain the generalisability of the findings. Future research could adopt mixed-methods designs, incorporate classroom observations, or track students’ development longitudinally to explore causal pathways more robustly. Triangulating survey data with performance-based assessments may also offer deeper insights into how mindset interacts with confidence and learning effort over time. In addition, future studies could systematically incorporate multiple intelligences theory to examine whether different types of intelligence mediate or moderate the relationships between mindset, confidence, and learning effort among Vietnamese EFL learners.

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MỐI QUAN HỆ GIỮA TƯ DUY NGƯỜI HỌC VỚI SỰ TỰ TIN VÀ NỖ LỰC HỌC TIẾNG ANH: NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP SINH VIÊN NĂM CUỐI NGÀNH SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này khám phá mối liên hệ giữa tư duy (mindset) và hai yếu tố then chốt trong quá trình học ngoại ngữ: sự tự tin và nỗ lực học tiếng Anh của sinh viên năm cuối ngành Sư phạm tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Tây Nguyên. Dựa trên lý thuyết của Carol Dweck (2006), nghiên cứu áp dụng phương pháp định lượng với 163 sinh viên tham gia khảo sát qua bảng hỏi trực tuyến. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên có tư duy phát triển (growth mindset) thường tin vào khả năng cải thiện qua luyện tập và kiên trì, từ đó thể hiện mức độ tự tin cao hơn và nỗ lực nhiều hơn trong học tập. Bên cạnh đó, nghiên cứu cũng xác định các chiến lược học tập hiệu quả được sinh viên áp dụng, bao gồm: sử dụng ứng dụng học tiếng Anh có yếu tố trò chơi (gamified apps), tham gia giao tiếp thực tế và xây dựng kế hoạch học tập cá nhân. Các phát hiện mang lại cơ sở thực tiễn cho việc thiết kế môi trường học tích cực, tạo điều kiện để khuyến khích tư duy phát triển và nâng cao hiệu quả học ngoại ngữ. Nghiên cứu khuyến nghị giáo viên và cán bộ quản lý giáo dục tích cực lồng ghép tư duy phát triển vào giảng dạy tiếng Anh nhằm giúp sinh viên phát huy tối đa năng lực cá nhân trong bối cảnh giáo dục hiện đại.

Từ khóa: tư duy phát triển, sự tự tin, nỗ lực học tập, chiến lược học tập, sinh viên sư phạm tiếng Anh.

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