

CHINESE HIGH-PERFORMING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-PRIDE IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Both self-efficacy and self-pride play an important role in second/foreign language learning. Yet, they have seldom been researched simultaneously in the same context in relation to language learning. The current study aimed to examine Chinese high-performing university students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride and their predictive effects on their English performance.

Methodology: 520 Chinese high-performing university students completed the 5-item Self-Pride Scale, the 3-item English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale and a background questionnaire, 14 of whom were interviewed.

Findings: Major findings were: a) the participants generally had a high level of English learning self-efficacy and self-pride, b) female students had significantly greater English learning self-efficacy and self-pride, c) English learning self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with self-pride, d) both English learning self-efficacy and self-pride were significantly positively correlated with and predicted the students' English performance, and e) the participants identified several causes for their English learning self-efficacy and self-pride.

Contributions: This study was one of the few that explored the relationship between English learning self-efficacy and self-pride and their predictive effects on students' English performance. The findings thus provide insights for developing self-efficacy and self-pride in students to improve their learning of a second/foreign language.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, self-pride, English performance.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy, an individual's belief in his/her ability to fulfil an aim, has been much researched in relation to second/foreign language (SL/FL) learning in recent decades (e.g., Alipio, 2020; An et al., 2021; Bai et al., 2020; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Chao et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Often measured by questionnaires, self-efficacy has generally been shown to have a positive effect on SL/FL learning (e.g., Alipio, 2020; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2015; Shin & Kim, 2021). But what factors affect self-efficacy is open for discussion and needs to be examined with qualitative data.

As positive psychology was introduced to second language acquisition in early 2000s (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012), positive emotions in SL/FL learning have caught increasing attention of researchers (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2020). According to Fredrickson (2003, 2004), negative and positive emotions co-exist but function differently. Negative emotions narrow thought-action repertoires, while positive emotions broaden these repertoires, enabling learners to draw on a wide array of possible cognitions and behaviors in response to emotional stimuli. Self-pride which is a feeling of pride in oneself, is believed to be related to greater self-regulation and higher performance (Pekrun et al., 2002). Yet, as a positive emotion, it has been rarely researched in relation to SL/FL learning.

All these reasons justify the present mixed-method research, which aimed to examine self-efficacy and self-pride in Chinese high-performing university students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program. This Program admits only a few high school graduates who do exceptionally well in the National Matriculation Examination to train them to be future leading talents in basic disciplines like mathematics, physics, philosophy and computer technology. These students generally have more priorities in using learning resources than

other students of the same university, including English learning resources. For example, they are more likely to be taught by renowned lecturers and have more opportunities to participate in regional and international projects and activities. Nevertheless, not much research has been done on these students in relation to second language acquisition since China's Ministry of Education granted 15 top universities to have the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program in 2009.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Broaden-and-Build Theory

The broaden-and-build theory was proposed by Fredrickson (2001, 2003) as a way to address the lack of research on positive emotions and the greater emphasis on negative emotions. According to this theory, negative emotions (e.g., regret, anger, shame, sadness, anxiety and boredom) and positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, happiness, pride, love and enjoyment) co-exist, and positive emotions build resources to cope with negative emotions. It argues that while negative emotions narrow an individual's thought-action repertoires, positive emotions broaden these repertoires, enabling individuals to build a range of physical, social, and intellectual resources. These resources may subsequently serve the individual later in life. As implied by this theory, both positive and negative emotions affect SL/FL learning but in opposite directions: negative emotions debilitate while positive emotions facilitate language learning (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

2.2 English Learning Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgment of his/her ability to achieve a certain goal (Bandura, 1997). It heightens concerns to the extent to which an individual develops behaviors that allow him/her to persist within potentially stressful situations (Graham, 2022) and the individual's commitment to a certain task and resilience to accompanying difficulties (Teng, 2021). In school contexts, self-efficacy determines students' resilience, efforts and calmness in the face of challenging goals, regardless of their actual abilities (Bandura, 1990). According to Bandura (1990), self-efficacy plays an important role in the close relationship between motivation and attainment by raising individuals' expectations for success, making them value more challenging tasks and thus driving them to put greater effort into pursuing more challenging goals. It is affected by the individuals' mastery experiences, which refer to their perception that "such success has been achieved on a challenging task through their own efforts

and actions, whereby they have dealt successfully with any problems that arose” (Graham, 2022, p. 190).

Self-efficacy in SL/FL learning is often measured by questionnaires, such as the Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy Scale (QESE) developed by Wang et al. (2013), the Language Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Wong (2005), and Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) in Midgley et al. (2000). These scales, adopted or adapted, together with interviews and other self-reported measures, have been applied in empirical research (e.g., Alipio, 2020; An et al., 2021; Bai et al., 2020; Bandura, 2006; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Chao et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2015; Shin & Kim, 2021; Wang et al., 2021), which shows that self-efficacy generally has a (significant) positive impact on SL/FL learning. Administering Klobas et al.'s (2007) Academic Self-Efficacy Scale to 12,452 Philippine first-year college students, Alipio (2020) revealed a significantly positive influence of self-efficacy on the students' self-reported academic performance, supporting the finding in Chao et al.'s (2019) study of 1092 eighth to eleventh graders in Hong Kong. Cabrera-Solano et al.'s (2019) mixed method study revealed a positive relationship between foreign language learning performance and self-efficacy beliefs in 257 first to fourth-graders in an Ecuadorian elementary school.

Research also shows that self-efficacy positively affects students' learning of specific language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing) (e.g., Li & Liu, 2013; Sardegna et al., 2018; Sun & Wang, 2020; Teng & Wang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). For example, Zhang et al. (2020) found that 82 American undergraduates' greater Spanish-speaking self-efficacy led to greater willingness to communicate and more active participation in classroom talk, which might ultimately result in higher Spanish proficiency. Sardegna et al.'s (2018) study of 704 Korean secondary EFL (English as a FL) learners revealed that the students' self-efficacy had a positive effect on their attitudes towards pronunciation and efforts to improve their pronunciation skills. Nasrollahi-Mouziraji and Birjandi (2016) found a significantly positive effect of listening self-efficacy on English listening comprehension of 289 intermediate to high-level students in an Iranian language institute. The finding was supported by Du and Man's (2022) study of 330 Chinese EFL sophomores and pre-service teachers. Goetze and Driver's (2022) meta-analysis of 37 studies further confirmed the role of self-efficacy in SL/FL learning.

As reviewed, self-efficacy generally has a positive effect on SL/FL learning, which might be because great(er) self-efficacy provides motivational support for learners to adopt a wider range of strategies and achieve greater success in learning (Teng, 2021). Yet, specific causes for English learning self-efficacy need to be empirically researched.

2.3 Self-Pride in SL/FL Learning

As the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2003, 2004) has been increasingly applied in educational psychology, positive psychology was introduced into second language acquisition in early 2000s (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Since then, researchers in second language acquisition began to examine both negative and positive emotions in language learning (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2022, 2023; Dewaele & Li, 2021). Of various learner emotions, foreign language anxiety and enjoyment are the two most researched emotions, followed by boredom (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2022; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Coşkun & Yüksel, 2022; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2017; Li et al., 2020). Research on other emotions like grit, subjective happiness, self-pride and peace of mind can hardly be found. For example, Barrios and Acosta-Manzano's (2022) study of 594 Spanish adult foreign language learners found that participants with a higher level of foreign language enjoyment reported higher subjective happiness.

Pride is “a positive, self-conscious emotion as it requires people to be able to reflect upon and evaluate themselves and their actions” (De Hooze & Van Osch, 2021, p. 2). Self-pride refers to pride in one's achievement (De Hooze & Van Osch, 2021). Research shows that pride motivates people to continue the valued behavior and stick to difficult goals, provides valuable information about people's social status and acceptance, and encourages people to pursue greater status and acceptance (e.g., Bollo et al., 2018; De Hooze & Van Osch, 2021; Wilcox et al., 2011; Williams & DeSteno, 2008). Yet, most of the research centers on psychology and emotions, and little research is available on pride in relation to SL/FL learning. For example, Yin's (2021) review showed that students who were more satisfied with themselves tended to exhibit higher self-efficacy and that pride could promote intrinsic and extrinsic inspiration and develop or maintain self-regulation, positively affecting educational outcomes. Even so, no empirical studies on the interplay of enjoyment, hope, pride and self-regulation were cited or discussed in the review.

As self-pride appears to concern feelings of achievement and motivation of valued behavior (De Hooze & Van Osch, 2021), it is necessary to study how it is related to SL/FL learning.

2.4 Rationales for the Present Study

As reviewed, both self-efficacy and self-pride may affect SL/FL learning. Considering the huge number and diversity of the learner population, research on self-efficacy is still inadequate, and research on self-pride is hardly available, let alone the relationship between the two and their predictive effects on students' SL/FL learning outcomes. Targeting Chinese high-performing

university students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program, an under-researched population, the present research aimed to explore these students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride and their predictive effects on the students' English performance. The following research questions were of particular interest:

- 1) What are the levels of the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride?
- 2) Are there any significant differences in English learning self-efficacy and self-pride between male and female students?
- 3) How are the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride correlated with each other?
- 4) How are the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride related to their English performance?
- 5) What factors contribute to the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride?

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Participants

The participants were 520 (406 male and 114 female) students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program from two prestigious state-owned universities in Beijing, China. With an average age of 19.84 (SD = 1.226) years and an age range of 18 to 23, the participants had learned English for an average of 12.43 (SD = 2.59) years, used English for an average of 1.73 (SD = .905) hours per day, and scored 5.93 out of 10 on self-rated overall English proficiency (scale of 1-10). They were from different years of study: 163 (31.3%) first-year, 118 (22.7%) second-year, 187 (36%) third-year and 52 (10%) fourth-year.

Of these respondents, 14 (8 female and 6 male) volunteered to be interviewed, of whom 5 were first-year, 4 second-year, and 5 third-year students. They reported an average range of 10 to 18 years of learning English, an average range of 0.5 to 5 hours spent in learning English per day, and an average range of 4 to 7 on self-rated overall English proficiency on a scale of 1-10. More detailed information about the interviewees is reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic information of the interviewees (N = 14)

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Major	YOS	LOLE	ATUE	SREP
Lin	18	F	Economics & Management	1	10	0.5	7
Ge	18	F	Physics	1	11	≤1	7
Wei	18	F	World Literatures	1	11	1-1.5	6.5
Qi	18	F	World Literatures	1	13	3-5	7
Xiang	21	M	Physics	2	13	≤1	6
Yan	21	M	Philosophy	3	10	1-3	6
Bo	21	M	Physics	3	12	2-3	7
Jie	21	M	Physics	3	13	3	6
Xuan	20	F	World Literatures	3	18	4	7
Yi	20	F	Philosophy	2	10	≤1	5
Xin	21	F	Philosophy	3	14	1.5-2	7
Chang	19	F	Economics & Management	1	12	≤1	4
Jian	21	M	Computer Technology	2	12	3-4	6
Rui	21	M	Philosophy	2	12	1	7

Note. F = female; M = male; YOS = year of study; LOLE = length of learning English (years)
 ATUE = average time of using English per day (hours); SREP = self-rated English proficiency

3.2 Instruments

Data in this study were collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as detailed below.

The Self-Pride Scale. This 5-item Self-Pride Scale (SPS) ($a = .765$) (see Appendix I) was adopted from that of Shiota et al. (2006), aiming to measure students' dispositional tendency to feel proud. Examples of these items were 'I feel good about myself' and 'I am proud of myself and my accomplishments'.

The English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale. This 3-item English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale (ELSES) ($a = .851$) (see Appendix I) was adapted from that used in Xu and Liu (2023), intending to measure students' belief in learning English well. To better fit the present research, the expression 'interpreting' in the original items was changed to 'English'. Example items were 'I have the ability to learn English well' and 'I have the ability to speak English well in my English class'.

All SPS and ELSES items were placed on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’, with values of 1-7 assigned to each descriptor respectively. The higher the score, the greater self-pride/self-efficacy the students had.

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire had 7 items, aiming to collect information about the participants as age, gender, university, year of study, length of time in learning English, average time spent in using English per day and self-rated English proficiency on the scale of 1-10.

Semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview was employed to elicit students’ inner perceptions of and feelings about themselves and their English learning. Example questions (see Appendix II) were ‘what do you think of your English language class?’, ‘what do you think of yourself?’, ‘are you proud of yourself?’, and ‘do you believe you can learn English well?’.

English performance. The students’ English performance was measured by their scores in a standard English test they took in the recent two weeks.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

After approval by the Department Research Committee, the study was conducted in weeks 8 and 9 of the 16-week fall term in 2022. The questionnaires in both Chinese and English, together with a consent form, were distributed to students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program in the two universities by their course teachers in week 8, who answered them in around 5 minutes during class break. Then, during weeks 8 and 9, students were interviewed individually in the researcher’s office in Chinese, which was recorded and lasted about 15 minutes per se.

The survey data was analyzed via SPSS 22. Means and standard deviations were computed to reveal levels of English learning self-efficacy and self-pride; correlation analyses were conducted to examine relations among English learning self-efficacy, self-pride and English performance; and multiple step-wise regression analyses were run to investigate predictive effects of English learning self-efficacy and self-pride on students’ English performance. All interviews were transcribed, double-checked for accuracy, and then subjected to thematic content analysis, which coded and analyzed the data according to themes (Richards, 2009). With an inter-rater reliability of .932, all the interview transcripts were read and analyzed by the first researcher and a research assistant. The identified themes were then grouped and regrouped axially to build relations among the themes. Example themes were ‘self-efficacy in learning English’, ‘reasons for high self-efficacy in learning English’,

‘attitudes towards English’, and ‘perceptions of oneself’. To protect interviewees’ privacy, a pseudonym was used for each interviewee when their remarks were cited in the paper.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings of Survey Data

4.1.1 Levels and Correlations of English Learning Self-Efficacy, Self-Pride and English Performance

As shown in Table 2, the participants scored 5.32 (SD = 1.12) on ELSESES and 4.45 (SD = .98) on SPS, above the scale midpoint 4, indicating that the participants generally had a high level of English learning self-efficacy and self-pride, as found in Wang et al. (2021) and Kim et al. (2015). Meanwhile, they scored 83.54 (SD = 8.30) on English tests, reflecting that they were intermediate to advanced learners of English.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and correlations of the measures (N = 520)

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	SPS	EP
ELSESES	5.32	1.12	-.663	.241	.466***	.398***
SPS	4.45	.98	.081	.177	1	.305***
EP	83.54	8.30	-.810	.673		1

Note. ELSESES = English Learning Self-efficacy Scale; SPS = Self-pride Scale

EP = English performance; *** = $p < .001$

As reported in Table 2, ELSESES was significantly positively related to SPS ($r = .466, p < .001$) and English performance ($r = .398, p < .001$), SPS was significantly positively related to English performance ($r = .305, p < .001$) as well. These findings meant that the greater English learning self-efficacy a student had, the greater self-pride he/she had, and the better he/she performed on the English test. The students with greater self-pride tended to score higher on the English test.

4.1.2 Gender Differences in English Learning Self-Efficacy and Self-Pride

Independent sample t-tests on the ELSESES and SPS were conducted to examine the differences in English learning self-efficacy and self-pride between male and female students. The results are reported in Table 3, which shows that male students scored lower on the ELSESES and SPS than their female counterparts. And the difference was statistically significant for both the ELSESES ($t = -5.034, p = .000, d = .544$) and SPS ($t = -4.163, p = .000, d = .427$), with a medium

to large effect size. These findings meant that compared with male students, female students had significantly greater self-efficacy in learning English and greater self-pride. This was probably because it was generally hard for students, especially female students, to be admitted into the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program. Hence, students of the Program, especially female students, tended to have a stronger belief in learning English and take greater pride in themselves. It would be interesting to explore whether it was the same for them when learning other subjects.

Table 3: Gender differences in English learning self-efficacy and self-pride

	Male (N = 406)		Female (N = 114)		Independent samples t-test results		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
ELSES	5.19	1.11	5.77	1.02	-5.034**	.000	.544
SPS	4.36	.93	4.79	1.08	-4.163**	.000	.427

Note. *** = $p \leq .001$; effect size of Cohen's d: small = $d \leq 0.2$; medium = $d = 0.5$; large = $d \geq 0.8$ (Cohen, 1988)

4.1.3 Predictive Effects of English Learning Self-Efficacy and Self-Pride on English Performance

A step-wise multiple regression analysis was run to examine the predictive effects of English learning self-efficacy and self-pride on English performance, with test scores as the dependent variable and ELSES and SPS as independent variables. The analysis yielded two models, as reported in Table 4, which shows that ELSES (English Learning Self-efficacy Scale) and SPS (Self-Pride Scale) were good predictors for students' English performance, accounting for 15.8% and 11.8% of the total variance, respectively. And both ELSES ($\beta = .326$, $t = 77.234$, $f^2 = .19$) and SPS ($\beta = .153$, $t = 3.394$, $f^2 = .22$) were positive predictors, as found in the existing literature (e.g., Alipio, 2020; An et al., 2021; Bai et al., 2020; Bandura, 2006; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Shin & Kim, 2021; Teng & Wang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

Table 4: Multiple regression coefficients and significance of predictors for English performance (N = 520)

	English performance				
	β	t	p	VIF	Cohen's f^2
ELSESES	.326	7.234***	.000	1.278	.19
SPS	.153	3.394***	.001	1.278	.22

Notes. *** = $p \leq .001$; effect size of Cohen's f^2 : small = $f^2 \leq .02$; medium = $f^2 = .15$; large = $f^2 \geq .35$ (Cohen, 1988)

4.2 Findings of Interview Data

To all interviewees, English, as the international lingua franca, was the means of becoming more professional and doing better in their respective fields. Understanding diverse cultures and perspectives and sharing ideas in this world was also an important skill. For example,

... On one hand, English is a very important instrument to gain more knowledge about my field. On the other hand, English is the means to translate our ideas and research results to more people in a wider area of the world" (Qi, female, 1st year).

... In my field, as a student of a top-notch program, I have to read more literature, do more research, and write more papers than others. I write more frequently as well, and I need to be involved in more research activities. English is essential in doing all these (Lin, female, 1st year).

4.2.1 Perceptions of English Language Classes

When interviewed about their perceptions of English language class, four interviewees commented that the classes were not good because a) the teachers dominated the classes and provided little chance for students to communicate with one another, b) the teachers did not motivate students to study English, and c) the classroom atmosphere was stressing which made students not dare to answer questions.

The other 10 interviewees remarked that the classes were good, that the teachers were qualified, and that there were different classroom activities. For example,

... The English classes at the university have a variety of activities and are quite interesting. We listen to TED talks and do communication tasks and presentations, through which we understand cultural differences and discuss international events and

affairs from different perspectives. This is fun. And we can develop our sense of English as well” (Jian, male, 2nd year).

Even so, one interviewee (Xiang, male, 2nd-year) confided that the class was too big with around 30 students and that the students were actually at different proficiency levels, which made the English class challenging for both the teacher and students.

4.2.2 Self-Efficacy in Learning English

The interviewees reported spending thirty minutes to several hours per day in reading, listening to and writing English, though they normally had little chance to speak English in their daily life. As they progressed in their years of study, they spent more time reading literature in English, attending lectures, seminars, and talks in English, and writing reports and papers in English. As they had more practice in doing these, they became more confident in learning and using English.

All 14 interviewees remarked that their English might not be so good but was good enough to enable them to communicate their ideas to others. More specifically, they were confident in reading, listening and writing because they often read textbooks and related literature in English, listened to lectures and talks, and wrote reports and/or course papers. They might not be so confident in speaking that they often have little chance to speak English with others. Yet, as they said,

... I might feel anxious and didn't know how to speak better English at the beginning, but as the conversation went on, I found it more and more natural to speak English. I might even forget that I was speaking English, because we all focused on the content and meanings” (Bo, male, 3rd year).

They were still confident because “others may not do better than me if they speak English” (Xiang, male, 2nd year), and “many students were poorer in English than me” (Xin, female, 3rd year). Also, one student stated that,

... There are times when I think I have no way to express my views fully in English. Yet, I am still confident that I can do this, I can make myself understood. For example, I don't know some difficult and special terms, but I can replace them with some simpler expressions that are understandable to others (Xuan, female, 3rd year).

Understandably, except Yan (male, 3rd-year), who was not interested in English and believed that it was hard to learn English well in a foreign language context like China, where

students had little chance to use English, all the other 13 interviewees reported that they had confidence in learning English well, consistent with the survey’s finding. This was because of the following reasons (see Table 5): a) It was not difficult to study English well as long as they made efforts to learn it (6/46.15%), b) they were willing to invest time to learn English (3/23.08%), c) they were confident in their learning ability (2/15.38%), d) they were talented for language learning (1/7.69%), e) they were interested in English (1/7.69%), and f) they had been learning English well all the time (1/7.69%). For example,

... English can be learned well as long as we keep on learning it. Take a schoolmate from my high school as an example. Since he was from the countryside, he didn’t understand English and couldn’t do English tests at the beginning of high school. Yet, he just kept on learning English hard. Every day, he memorized words, read several passages and did exercises. A year later, he made great progress in English and gradually caught up with other students. I don’t think he is a person with a high IQ, but he did it. Then I realize that as long as we keep on working hard on English we can learn it well however poor we are in English at the very beginning.” (Rui, male, 2nd year).

Table 5: Reasons for English learning self-efficacy (N = 14)

Having self-efficacy: 13 (92.86%)	
Having low/no self-efficacy: 1 (7.14%)	
Reasons for English learning self-efficacy (N = 13)	
--It is not difficult to study English well if they make efforts to learn it (6/46.15%).	--They are talented for language learning (1/7.69%).
--They are willing to spend learning English (3/23.08%).	--They are interested in English (1/7.69%).
--They are confident in their own learning ability (2/15.38%).	--They have been learning English well all the time (1/7.69%).

Clearly, the participants not only believed in their ability to learn English well, but they were also committed to learning the language, as implied by the definition of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Teng, 2021).

4.2.3 Self-Pride

4.2.3.1 Perceptions of themselves

When asked about their perceptions of themselves, eight interviewees reported that they felt very good about or very satisfied with themselves. As Lin (female, 1st year) said, “I think I’m

right now in a very good state. I'm very positive, I'm not anxious, and I don't fear anything". Jian (male, 2nd year) also reported that "... I'm healthy both physically and mentally. And I'm confident in myself. ...", and Bo (male, 3rd year) stated that;

On the whole, I'm very interested in what I'm learning. And I want to learn well. In fact, I invested my time in learning, and I indeed learned interesting things. And I have the balance between study and relaxation (Bo, male, 3rd year).

Four interviewees felt good about themselves. The following examples were excerpts from their interviews:

I feel good about myself. My major courses are not very difficult, and I have plans. Though I'm busy with many things, I feel I am quite strong (Xiang, male, 2nd year).

... I am relatively more outstanding than other students of arts and humanities. Also, I have clear goals for my future and have specific plans. I feel good about myself (Ge, female, 1st year).

Qi (female, 1st-year) reported that she could be better and that she could have worked harder. As she confided, "I think I haven't spent enough time in learning, or I haven't tried to fulfill the plans well. ...". And Jie (male, 3rd year) remarked that he was on the way to becoming a completely free person that he had desired.

As students of prestigious universities, they had outperformed most peers in the National Matriculation Examination. Understandably, they generally felt (very) good/satisfied about themselves, although they might not have done as well as they had expected in a certain aspect. Further, this feeling motivated them to persist in working hard, as stated by Xiang;

... I feel I am satisfied with myself. This is good. Because I think it is reasonable to feel satisfied with myself when I work hard on something and gain from it. This motivates me to go on working hard" (Xiang, male, 2nd year).

4.2.3.2 *Pride in themselves*

Twelve of the fourteen interviewees reported feeling proud of themselves, because a) they were more outstanding than many others and enjoyed more resources (4/33.33%), b) they had accomplished many things and met some of their expectations (3/25%), c) they had made some achievements and had higher expectations (2/16.67%), d) they were optimistic (2/16.67%), e) they could use English to do things that others could not (2/16.67%), f) they had been doing something meaningful (1/8.33%), and g) they had excelled in English learning (1/8.33%) (see Table 6). For example, the participants stated that;

I've been doing something meaningful" (Xin, female, 3rd year).

... Generally speaking, I have achieved what I want and feel satisfied with most things.

This may be because of a good family environment, family companionship and care, and good financial support. ... (Yi, female, 2nd year).

These interviewees felt good about themselves and proud of the accomplishments they had achieved, consistent with the survey items (Shiota et al., 2006) and the definition of self-pride (De Hooge & Van Osch, 2021). This was probably because, as high-performing students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program, they had been outperforming their peers in secondary and high schools. They were highly competitive in the university as well. They had the authority in learning and were respected by their peers. Moreover, they had accomplished many things and/or had been doing important or meaningful things. All these empowered them to be proud of themselves.

Table 6: Reasons for self-pride (N = 14)

Reasons for self-pride (N = 12)	-- They are more outstanding and enjoy more resources (4/33.33%).	-- They can use English to do things (2/16.67%).
	-- They have made many accomplishments and met expectations (3/25%).	-- They have excelled in English learning (1/8.33%).
	--They have made achievements and have higher expectations (2/16.67%).	-- They have been doing something meaningful (1/8.33%).
	--They are optimistic (2/16.67%).	
Reasons for low/no self-pride (N = 2)	--They have not reached the ideal state (1/50%).	-- Every student is outstanding (1/50%).

Two interviewees did not feel proud of themselves because a) they had not reached the ideal state (1/50%) and b) every student was so outstanding (1/50%) (see Table 6). Chang (female, 1st year) was satisfied with herself and was confident in her learning ability though she reported not feeling proud of herself. As for Rui, he stated that;

I know I am in the right state and on the right track. Yet I'm still kind of anxious. I feel I am not that outstanding. I feel I am a long way away from other students. ... (Rui, male, 2nd year).

This indicated that competition or peer pressure imposed great stress on Rui and students like him, which made them fail to evaluate themselves appropriately and underestimate their English proficiency.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The current mixed-method study examined Chinese high-performing university students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride and their predictive effects on their English performance. The study revealed that English was an important instrument for the participants to become more professional and do better in their respective fields, understand diverse cultures and perspectives, and share ideas worldwide. As high-performing students of the Top-Notch Basic Disciplines Training Program, the participants had great self-efficacy in learning English well for reasons such as talent for language learning, interest in and willingness to learn English well. Considering what they had achieved and what they would achieve, they generally felt satisfied with themselves and had high self-pride. Meanwhile, the study found that female students had significantly greater self-efficacy and self-pride in learning English than male students. The study also showed that the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride were significantly positively correlated with each other and significantly positively correlated with and predicted the students' English performance. These findings clearly attest to the importance of self-efficacy and self-pride in SL/FL learning. It is thus conducive to fostering learners' self-efficacy and self-pride, which can be done by praising, encouraging, setting challenging yet achievable goals, giving positive feedback and helping students complete tasks and projects with scaffolded difficulty levels. By accumulating experiences of successfully confronting challenges and accomplishing tasks, students gradually develop their self-efficacy and self-pride, which help maintain their persistence and resilience and ultimately lead to success in learning, as discussed in Bandura (1997) and Graham (2022).

The current study was one of the few that examined the relationships between English learning self-efficacy, self-pride, and English performance in high-performing Chinese university students, as well as the causes of the students' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride. The findings enrich the current literature and provide insights for a better understanding of self-efficacy and self-pride in SL/FL learning. Yet, the findings need to be confirmed with more empirical research. Self-pride, as an under-researched positive emotion, is worthy of more research on its relation with other learner emotions and its role in SL/FL learning. Moreover, since the participants in this study came from different years of study, it is difficult to generalize the findings to other similar contexts. Consequently, research on homogenous

populations is necessary to better understand learners' English learning self-efficacy and self-pride and their effects on learners' SL/FL learning outcomes.

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APPENDIX 1

The English Learning Questionnaire

University: _____ Age: _____ Gender: ① male ② female

Discipline: _____ Year of study: ① 1 ② 2 ③ 3 ④ 4

Length of time spent in learning English: _____ years.

Average time spent in using English per day: _____ hours.

Self-rated overall English proficiency: _____ 1 (very poor) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (nativelike)

The English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale							
1. I have the ability to learn English well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I believe I can find ways to learn English well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I have the ability to speak English well in my English class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Self-Pride Scale							
4. I feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I am proud of myself and my accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Many people respect me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I always stand up for what I believe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. People usually recognize my authority.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix II: The interview guide

1. Why do you study English? What does English mean to you?
2. What do you think of your English language class? Please explain it with details.
3. How do you rate your English proficiency (e.g., low, intermediate, advanced, etc.)? How do you rate your ability to use English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, writing, and overall English) (e.g., low, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
4. Are you confident when using English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing)? Why or why not?
5. How many hours on average do you spend using English every day (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing)? What do you mainly use English for?
6. Do you believe you can learn English well? Why or why not?
7. What do you think of yourself? Please explain it with details.
8. Are you proud of yourself? Why or why not?