

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY IN LEARNING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *Since its first proposal by the psychologist Albert Bandura in 1971, the social learning theory has become the most dominant theory of learning (Cherry, 2016) in which Bandura extended the scope of learning strategies by addressing observation. This research aimed to investigate whether Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) can be used in learning English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students. It also aimed to assess the possible consequences of incorporating the perspectives of this theory into English classes. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire which was administered to one hundred subjects in person. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were applied to analyze data by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that SLT could help EFL students to speak English fluently with confidence. Further, SLT could enhance the creativity, learnability, and attention of EFL students.*

KEYWORDS: EFL students, social learning theories, English speech.

INTRODUCTION

Although learning is agreed to be important, people have different views on the causes, methods, and consequences of learning (Shuell, 1986). Researchers have assumed many hypotheses and theories to describe how people acquire, modify, and organize knowledge. One example is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) which posits that people learn via imitation, modelling, and observation. Bandura's social learning theory is cited, to an increasing extent, as a critical part of natural resource management and the advancement of desirable behavioral change (Muro & Jeffrey, 2008). Several studies suggested that Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) plays an important role in the maintenance of the learning process. A study conducted by Horsburgh and Ippolito (2018) finds that Bandura's social learning model was useful to enhance the learning performance of medical students. Further, it is a widely held view that social learning theory can create environments that empower learners and motivate them to be more engaged in the learning procedure. Edinyang (2016), for example, claims that "exposing the learners to the right behavior in social studies classrooms will help in achieving the goals and objectives of social studies and build individuals who have the right attitude and values to live within the Nigerian society" (p. 44).

Bandura's social learning theory has more recently applied in many contexts such as care and clinical settings (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018), web-based learning (Hill, Song, & West, 2009), and for teaching motor skills (Ross, Bird, Doody, & Zoeller, 1985). However, far too little

attention has been paid to the implementation of Bandura's social learning theory in learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, this paper aims to determine the extent to which Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) is effective in learning English speaking skill among Saudi secondary school EFL students as well as to evaluate the possible effects of integrating the perspectives of this theory into English classes. This paper answers two main questions. The first is about the effect, if any, of Bandura's social learning theory on the learning of English speaking skill among Saudi secondary school EFL students. The second will discuss students' attitudes about incorporating Bandura's social learning theory into their English classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies for English Language Learning

Learning strategies are defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, as cited in Oxford, 2001, p.63). Learning the English language is a complex and long-term process which requires using strategies in order to master the language. It is a widely held view that effective learning strategies play a vital role in improving language performance. English language learners may employ these strategies differently based on a number of features such as motivation, the learning style, the personality type, gender, age, and the nature of the language task (Oxford, 2001).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT)

Hoffman (1994) stated that learning theories view the environment as the main force in development. Scholars classified learning theories as behaviorism, social cognitive learning theory, and social learning theory. Since its first proposal by Albert Bandura in 1971, the social learning theory has become the most dominant theory of learning (Cherry, 2016). In contrast to earlier learning theories, as Edinyang (2016) pointed out, "social learning theory refers to the reciprocal relationship between social characteristics of the environment, how they are perceived by individuals, and how motivated and able a person is to reproduce behaviors they see happening around them" (p. 40). This theory has often been called a bridge between behavioral and cognitive learning theories because it consists of attention, memory, and motivation (Muro & Jeffrey, 2008).

According to Bandura (1971), "man's capacity to learn by observation enables him to acquire large, integrated units of behavior by example without having to build up the pattern gradually by tedious trial and error" (p. 2). He emphasized that new patterns of behavior can be acquired by observing the behavior of others and then imitating or reproducing these behaviors, especially if there are rewards or positive consequences accompanying the observed actions (1971). Therefore, it is clear that the social learning theory is based on three concepts, namely learning through observation (i.e., observational learning), reinforcement, and modelling (Nabavi, 2012).

In 1961, Bandura with D. Ross and S. Ross conducted their famous experiment known as the

Bobo doll experiment on social modelling. In the Bobo doll experiment:

Twenty-four preschool children were assigned to each of three conditions. One experimental group observed adult models playing aggressively with an inflatable plastic Bobo doll; a second group observed adult models playing non-aggressively with a Bobo doll; and subjects in the control group had no exposure to the models. . . . Results revealed that children exposed to aggressive models reproduced considerably more aggressive behaviors resembling that of the models and that their mean aggression scores were significantly higher than subjects in the nonaggressive and control groups. (Bandura et al., 1961, as cited in Artino, 2007, p. 582)

The findings of the Bobo doll experiment suggested that observational learning can occur even in the absence of reinforcements to the observers (Artino, 2007). In this regard, Bandura (1986) believed that external reinforcement is not the only factor to influence learning and behavior. He emphasized that intrinsic reinforcement, which is described as a form of internal reward, plays a vital role in the learning process.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT)

Nabavi (2012) illustrated that the strengths and weaknesses of SLT can be divided into two categories when she stated:

The first one is positive reinforcement and it means the action mimicked by the observer is a positive one, therefore the action may be rewardable or commended by others. The second one is punishment and it uses when the action mimicked by the observer is negative and may offend or harm others, thereby leading to a form of punishment. Basically, according to the literature, the main strength and weakness of social/ observational learning depend on the model. (pp. 18-19)

Some Implementations of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT)

The concept of role modelling or imitative learning has stimulated a considerable amount of empirical research in recent years. Horsburgh and Ippolito (2018), for example, investigated the process of learning from role models in clinical settings. "To gain insight into medical students' and clinical teachers' understanding of learning through role modelling, a qualitative, interpretative methodology was adopted, using one-to-one semi-structured interviews" (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018, p. 1). The most interesting finding was that assigning roles to medical students such as taking a history from a patient proved to be a rich learning experience. In addition, their study showed that useful role models (i.e., clinical teachers) enabled medical students to understand the unfamiliar clinical language and improve their communication in clinical settings. However, clinical teachers mentioned that they seldom received direct feedback on the effect of their role modelling which may indicate that the process of learning from role models in clinical settings is still a skill to be worked at (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018).

Furthermore, the views of social learning theory have received considerable attention as preferable frames for practice and research in Web-based learning environments (WBLEs). Hill et al. (2009) examined how social learning perspectives can be used in the design and

application of online learning. The results of this study revealed that “social learning perspectives offer promising opportunities for extending and enhancing the design, development, and implementation of WBLEs” (Hill et al., 2009, p. 100). It was found that role modelling, for example, influenced online discussions in which an interactive model in WBLEs might encourage the class to effectively engage in the learning process. Further, Hill et al. (2009) mentioned some applications of social interaction in WBLEs such as “providing opportunities to create and share in-depth messages as well as enabling support by more knowledgeable peers” (p. 90).

In addition, Samsudin, Shamsudin, and Arif (2017) identified the pedagogical benefits of applying Bandura’s social learning theory to teach academic writing. Their experimental study was conducted in order to ascertain whether Bandura’s social learning theory is effective in developing students’ ability to write academic texts. The findings revealed that observational learning of sample texts enabled students to improve their writing as well as promote their positive attitude and confidence towards writing. It was also found that the emulation of sample texts helped both students and instructors to address the obstacles they experience in the learning and teaching of academic writing.

So far, however, there has been little research about the implementation of Bandura’s social learning theory in learning English as a foreign language. Hence, this study seeks to obtain data which will help to address these research gaps. It attempts to investigate the extent to which Bandura’s social learning theory is effective in learning English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students as well as to evaluate the possible effects of incorporating the concepts of this theory into English classes.

Research Questions

This research addressed two main questions:

1. What is the effect, if any, of Bandura’s social learning theory on the learning of English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students?
2. How do students perceive incorporating Bandura’s social learning theory into their English classes?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of the research is a quantitative design which involved a survey study analysis of the beliefs and attitudes of Saudi secondary school EFL students towards the views of Bandura’s social learning theory as well as the benefits of implementing this theory into their English classes. However, a full discussion of the effects of Bandura’s social learning theory lies beyond the scope of this study since there is a dearth of literature examining those effects on learning English as a foreign language.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at a public secondary school during the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019. Based on the 2030 Saudi vision, this school has applied the

perspectives of Bandura's social learning theory in order to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. It integrates this theory into classrooms by means of group discussion, imitation through real plays, reinforcement, and motivation.

Data Collection Method

For the aims of this research, it has been decided to conduct an opinion-based, closed-item questionnaire which was administered to one hundred subjects in person. The questionnaire contains 15 statements about the effects of the implementation of Bandura's social learning theory on learning English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students (see Appendix). These statements are Likert Scale based statements containing five values, namely (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. All students (100 respondents) were asked to respond to all of the fifteen items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was delivered and responded to in class time.

Questionnaire on the Attitudes towards the Efficacy of Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Dorenyei (2003) declared:

Borrowing questions from established questionnaires is one of the sources based on which researchers can choose the items intended for their studies. . . . Questions that have been used previously have most probably been piloted and the chances are that they possess the required quality. (as cited in Omidvari & Abedianpour, 2018, p. 52)

However, borrowing questions from previously constructed questionnaires was not possible since there is a dearth of literature investigating the topic of the current study. Still, the questionnaire design of this research followed some basic guidelines provided by Abdulkareem, Ashour, and Obaid's (2011) survey study.

The questionnaire data set of this research contains four dimensions to figure out the efficacy of Bandura's social learning theory in learning English speaking skill among Saudi secondary school EFL students. These categories are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. The four dimensions of the questionnaire concerning the efficiency of SLT

Number	The Dimensions	Expressions
1	Social learning theory and the improvement of social skills.	1 - 4
2	The attitudes of secondary school EFL students towards social learning theory.	5 - 8
3	Social learning theory and English speaking skill.	9 - 12
4	Social learning theory and the development of thinking skills.	13 - 15

The Subjects

The target population of this research was Saudi female secondary school students who have been studying English as a foreign language for about six years. They have lessons about the four core English skills, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking throughout their EFL study. All of the subjects were Saudi Arabians whose native language is the Arabic language. Their age was ranging from 17 to 18 years old. The sample was selected based on a

systematic sampling approach and the number of responses was 100.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to report the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) in order to specify the level of agreement or disagreement concerning the effectiveness of Bandura's social learning theory in learning English speaking skill.

RESULTS

As mentioned earlier, the research aims to answer two questions. The first is: "What is the effect, if any, of Bandura's social learning theory on the learning of English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students?", while the second is: "How do students perceive incorporating Bandura's social learning theory into their English classes?" Accordingly, an opinion-based, closed-item questionnaire that contains 15 Likert Scale based statements was administered to a systematic sample of Saudi female secondary school students who have been studying English as a foreign language for about six years.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were used to report the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the fifteen Likert Scale based statements of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the efficiency of SLT in improving the social skills of secondary school EFL students

Expressions		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1. I like speaking the English language with my classmates.	N	21	34	29	12	4	3.56	1.07609	4
	%	21%	34%	29%	12%	4%			
2. Group discussion encourages me to express my ideas.	N	44	34	11	4	7	4.04	1.16272	1
	%	44%	34%	11%	4%	7%			
3. Group discussion enables me to accept my classmates' opinions.	N	34	40	16	3	7	3.91	1.12002	2
	%	34%	40%	16%	3%	7%			
4. I enjoy competing with my classmates in group activities.	N	34	33	22	6	5	3.85	1.11351	3
	%	34%	33%	22%	6%	5%			
Weighted mean							3.8400		
Std. deviation								.76171	

As Table 2 presents, the highest average was assigned to the second expression (Group discussion encourages me to express my ideas) with (M= 4.04) and (SD= 1.16272), followed by the third expression (Group discussion enables me to accept my classmates' opinions) with (M= 3.91) and (SD= 1.12002), and then the fourth expression (I enjoy competing with my classmates in group activities) with (M= 3.85) and (SD= 1.11351). However, the lowest average was allocated to the first expression (I like speaking the English language with my classmates) with (M= 3.56) and (SD= 1.07609).

Moreover, the first dimension had (M= 3.8400) with (SD= .76171). Thus, the trend of the efficiency of SLT in improving the social skills of secondary school EFL students is agree since the average (3.8400) lies in the high-level interval [3.40 – 4.19].

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the attitudes of secondary school EFL students towards SLT

Expressions		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
5. Delivering school broadcast in the English language is an effective way to overcome my fears.	N	21	23	28	15	13	3.24	1.30361	4
	%	21%	23%	28%	15%	13%			
6. Group discussion makes me more interested in learning the English language.	N	48	27	11	10	4	4.05	1.16667	2
	%	48%	27%	11%	10%	4%			
7. Delivering presentations in English makes me feel more confident when I practice English speaking.	N	29	34	21	13	3	3.73	1.10878	3
	%	29%	34%	21%	13%	3%			
8. Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to learn and speak the English language.	N	78	10	4	4	4	4.54	1.02907	1
	%	78%	10%	4%	4%	4%			
Weighted mean							3.8900		
Std. deviation							.80035		

Based on Table 3, the lowest average was awarded to the fifth expression (Delivering school broadcast in the English language is an effective way to overcome my fears) with (M= 3.24)

and (SD= 1.30361). On the other hand, the highest average was assigned to the eighth expression (Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to learn and speak the English language), followed by the sixth expression (Group discussion makes me more interested in learning the English language), and then the seventh expression (Delivering presentations in English makes me feel more confident when I practice English speaking) with (Ms= 4.54, 4.05, 3.73 respectively) and (SDs= 1.02907, 1.16667, 1.10878 in order).

Further, the weighted average of the second dimension was (3.8900) with (SD= .80035) which indicates that the general tendency of the attitudes of secondary school EFL students is agree because the weighted average (3.8900) lies within the high-level interval [3.40 – 4.19].

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the efficiency of SLT in enhancing English speaking skill of secondary school EFL students

Expressions		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
9. Delivering school broadcast in the English language helps me to learn the right pronunciation of words.	N	26	25	20	18	11	3.37	1.33829	4
	%	26%	25%	20%	18%	11%			
10. Teacher positive reinforcement encourages me to be more attentive and active in the class.	N	66	22	7	2	3	4.46	.93657	1
	%	66%	22%	7%	2%	3%			
11. Delivering presentations in English helps me to speak more fluently.	N	36	27	20	12	5	3.77	1.20483	3
	%	36%	27%	20%	12%	5%			
12. I learn the pronunciation of English vocabulary by listening and then trying to repeat (imitation).	N	57	22	11	7	3	4.23	1.09041	2
	%	57%	22%	11%	7%	3%			
Weighted mean							3.9575		
Std. deviation							.78339		

According to Table 4, it can be inferred that the highest average was allocated to the expression number 10 (Teacher positive reinforcement encourages me to be more attentive and active in the class) which is then followed by the twelfth expression (I learn the pronunciation of English vocabulary by listening and then trying to repeat ‘imitation’) and the eleventh expression (Delivering presentations in English helps me to speak more fluently) with (Ms= 4.46, 4.23, 3.77 in order) and (SDs= .93657, 1.09041, 1.20483 respectively). However, the ninth expression (Delivering school broadcast in the English language helps me to learn the right pronunciation of words) had the lowest average (3.37) with (SD= 1.33829).

Furthermore, it is evident from Table 4 that the weighted average of the overall third dimension was (3.9575) with (SD= .78339). This, in turn, shows that the direction of the efficiency of SLT in enhancing English speaking skill of secondary school EFL students is agree due to the fact that the weighted average (3.9575) lies within the high-level interval [3.40 – 4.19].

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the efficiency of SLT in developing thinking skills of secondary school EFL students

Expressions		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
13. Group discussion is useful to obtain synthesis skill.	N	32	33	27	7	1	3.88	.97732	3
	%	32%	33%	27%	7%	1%			
14. Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to be more creative.	N	70	19	8	3	0	4.56	.76963	1
	%	70%	19%	8%	3%	0%			
15. I learn a lot from my classmates.	N	53	24	15	3	5	4.17	1.11060	2
	%	53%	24%	15%	3%	5%			
Weighted mean							4.2033		
Std. deviation								.70734	

As Table 5 demonstrates, the lowest average was allocated to the expression number 13 (Group discussion is useful to obtain synthesis skill) with (M= 3.88) and (SD= .97732) while the highest average was awarded to the fourteenth expression (Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to be more creative), followed by the fifteenth expression (I learn a lot from my classmates) with (Ms= 4.56, 4.17 respectively) and (SDs= .76963, 1.11060 in order). In addition, the tendency of the fourth dimension is strongly agree because of the weighted average (4.2033) which lies within the high-level interval [4.20 – 5.00] with (SD= .70734).

Research Main Findings

The main findings of this research can be summarized in two main points:

1. The subjects, in general, agree that applying the perspectives of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) positively affects their English speaking performance.
2. The principles of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) enable the subjects to play a greater role in achieving their own learning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present research are in agreement with Horsburgh and Ippolito's (2018) findings which demonstrated that the concept of role modeling proposed by Bandura enabled medical students to learn the clinical language and effectively participate in clinical teams. Furthermore, the present outcomes seem to be consistent with Gibson's (2004) findings which suggested that social learning theory is essential in the development of adults as they acquire appropriate behaviors from diverse models. The results also corroborate the ideas of Hill et al. (2009), who found that role modelling encouraged online learners to engage in the learning process.

Two research questions guided this study, each of which was explored in order to investigate the extent to which Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) is effective in learning English speaking skill among secondary school EFL students and to evaluate the possible consequences of incorporating the perspectives of this theory into English classes. The results of the current study revealed that applying social learning theory (SLT) appears to have a significant positive impact on learning English speaking skill. This will be further discussed below in terms of two dimensions. The first dimension deals with the attitudes of secondary school EFL students towards Bandura's social learning theory whereas the other demonstrates the effectiveness of this theory in enhancing the speaking performance of those students.

The Attitudes of Secondary School EFL Students towards Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT)

The most interesting finding was that most secondary school EFL students agreed that SLT enabled them to compete with other classmates as well as obtain critical thinking "synthesis" skills with strongly agree by percent (34%, 32% respectively). This can be attributed to group discussions or knowledge huddles in which students imitate, interact, and cooperate with each other. Further, social learning theory was found to enhance the creativity, learnability, and attention of EFL students. A possible explanation for this might be that peer work and positive reinforcement play a vital role in encouraging students to be more engaged and responsible for their own learning.

The Effectiveness of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) in Enhancing The Speaking Performance of Secondary School EFL Students

The results of this study indicated that there is a significant relationship between Bandura's social learning theory and English speaking performance of secondary school EFL students. It was clear that SLT could help EFL students to speak English fluently with confidence. This result may be due to the impact of active roles that students take when they, for example, deliver presentations or school broadcast in English language. In addition, a considerable

number of respondents recognized that role plays as well as observation allowed them to learn the right pronunciation of the English words with strongly agree by percent (26%, 57% in order). The observed correlation between social learning theory and English speaking performance may be related to the more practical and active experiences that Bandura's theory provides.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research examined the effects of integrating Bandura's social learning theory into English classes. The results of the study corroborate the idea that if social learning theory is employed systematically and thoroughly, it can naturally improve the speaking performance of secondary school EFL students since it provides more innovative and flexible learning experiences.

Limitations of the Research

This research has potential limitations. By virtue of consisting of Saudi female students alone, the sample was not sufficiently heterogeneous. In addition, this investigation was limited to include only secondary school students. Therefore, other research should be carried out in order to reveal more interesting findings.

Recommendations

The findings of this research should make an important contribution to the field of learning English as a foreign language. They might have important implications for developing the strategies English teachers apply in their classes. They also suggest that healthy competition and effective use of motivation can make the learning process memorable.

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Appendix**Questionnaire on the Attitudes of Saudi Secondary School EFL Students towards the Efficacy of Bandura's Social Learning Theory in Learning English Speaking Skill**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey investigating the the effectiveness of Bandura's Social Learning Theory in learning English speaking skill among secondary school EFL Students. This questionnaire asks about your PERSONAL beliefs and attitudes towards the efficacy of this theory in learning English speaking skill. It should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Be assured that your responses will be anonymous and will never be linked to you personally.

No.	Expression	Survey Scale				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I like speaking English language with my classmates					
2	Group discussion encourages me to express my ideas					
3	Group discussion enables me to accept my classmates' opinions					
4	I enjoy competing with my classmates in group activities					
5	Delivering school broadcast in English language is an effective way to overcome my fears					
6	Group discussion makes me more interested in learning English language					
7	Delivering presentations in English makes me feel more confident when I practice English speaking					
8	Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to learn and speak English language					
9	Delivering school broadcast in English language helps me to learn the right pronunciation of words					
10	Teacher positive reinforcement encourages me to be more attentive and active in the class					
11	Delivering presentations in English helps me to speak more fluently					
12	I learn the pronunciation of English vocabulary by listening and then trying to repeat (imitation)					
13	Group discussion is useful to obtain synthesis skill					
14	Teacher positive reinforcement motivates me to be more creative					
15	I learn a lot from my classmates					