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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Perceived Self-Efficacy in English Business Communication Skills for Students of Economics**

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**ABSTRACT**

The increasing use of English in international business and professional communication requires students to develop not only linguistic knowledge but also confidence to use the language effectively in different contexts. This study examines economic students' perceived self-efficacy in using English for Business communication at a Moroccan faculty of economics and law. Drawing on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, the study explores students' confidence in handling receptive, productive, interpersonal, and intercultural communication demands, using a quantitative self-report approach. The findings reveal considerable variation in students' perceived self-efficacy across these areas, with relatively higher confidence in receptive communication skills and comparatively lower confidence in some productive and adaptive communication tasks. The findings underscore the context-sensitive nature of Business English self-efficacy, with students' confidence shaped by the demands of particular communication tasks and situations. The study discusses the implications of these findings for Business English instruction, particularly the integration of authentic professional, interpersonal, and intercultural communication tasks, thereby providing learners with opportunities to develop greater confidence in applying English to the varied demands of professional communication.

**KEYWORDS**

Self-efficacy; Business English; interpersonal communication; professional communication; productive skills; receptive skills; intercultural communication

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### **1. Introduction**

In the domain of English for Specific Purposes, language learning has become closely connected to the particular needs and contexts in which students are expected to communicate effectively in specific professional settings. This approach extends beyond linguistic proficiency to include the ability to use English appropriately and confidently in response to the varied communicative situations encountered in academic and professional settings. This perspective is worth considering in the context of Moroccan higher education, where English is increasingly incorporated into university programs across different fields of study, particularly at advanced levels of education. The growing presence of English in Moroccan universities is particularly relevant in economics and business-related fields that require proficiency in English for effective participation in international and professional communication.

Against this background, business English requires students to apply their language knowledge and skills to a wide range of professional communicative practices, including exchanging ideas, presenting and interpreting information, writing professional documents, and interacting with diverse audiences from different cultural backgrounds. Research in the Moroccan business context has revealed a clear interest among students in developing English for professional purposes, with particular attention given to productive skills (El Arbaoui, 2023; Zaidoune and Chroqui, 2020). This focus on professional language development has emerged in recent research on English as a complementary module in Moroccan universities, highlighting the importance of connecting English course content to students' disciplinary and workplace-related needs (El Fallaki, 2026). These studies point to the significance of examining not only the language abilities students need to enhance but also their confidence in their abilities in using English across different communicative situations.

Within this context, perceived competence in using English effectively merits particular attention, as it can provide insight into how confident and prepared students feel to use the language in situations that extend beyond the classroom. These perceptions and beliefs are captured by the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to people's beliefs in their abilities to organize and carry out the actions required to attain given goals or performances (Bandura (1997). Accordingly, self-efficacy reflects individuals' perceived ability rather than their actual performance, providing a useful framework for examining how students perceive their competence to navigate different Business English communication tasks.

In response to these considerations, the present study aims to examine students' perceptions of their self-efficacy in using English for Business communication. Particularly, it focuses on how students perceive their ability to handle different communicative demands, including understanding and interpreting information, participating in discussions, communicating in professional settings, and adapting their communication to different audiences and cultural backgrounds. The study seeks to identify the communication areas in which students feel more or less confident, offering insights into the communicative demands that may benefit from greater attention in Business English instruction. The study may help inform the design of Business English courses that align language learning with the practical, interpersonal, and intercultural demands associated with students' academic and professional contexts.

## 2. Theoretical Background

This section will elaborate on the theoretical models that will be adopted in the present research. The first draws on empirical investigations in the domain of psychology regarding the concept of self-efficacy. This term was coined by Albert Bandura (1977 in Garrido 2026) and which is described as 'an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance outcomes. It's the confidence in one's ability to influence events and control over one's environment', (Garrido 2026). This definition reveals three important expressions: the belief in one's capacity to execute, which boosts confidence, and control. In other words, a positive belief will lead to positive outcomes when high self-confidence is exercised to control the situation and achieve the best results, and the converse is also true.

Garrido (2026) adds that according to Bandura, self-efficacy provides the basis for motivation, well-being and personal accomplishment. In a sense, these elements will lead to higher performance and achievement of objectives. That's the reason Bandura relates self-efficacy and performance in a mutual connection; that is to say, each one impacts the other both positively and negatively. Garrido (2026) and Weir (2025) mention that the concept of self-efficacy focuses on capabilities in particular domains, and that's why considerable research has applied this concept to various domains such as health care. According to Weir (2025), Robert Klassen applied this concept to the educational context, revealing a strong connection between self-efficacy and educational outcomes. A positive belief in academic abilities a learner holds helps (him/ her) in using more effective strategies in their own learning, setting meaningful goals and achieving higher academic performance compared to learners with low self-efficacy beliefs in their capabilities. Weir (2025) adds that even in the same domain of self-efficacy application, one context where a learner can be performing well, may lead to good performance in another context. For instance, an introvert learner who believes in his/her capacity to provide a speech in front of a mirror and imaginary audiences, can positively influence his belief in the same capacity in front of a real public.

Believing in the context- specific of the application of self-efficacy, Garrido (2026) and Weir (2025) report on variety of Bandura's sources of self-efficacy. The first is 'performance accomplishment' and that refers to the effect of the outcome of an individual's previous experience which can influence positively or negatively the present feelings and self-efficacy of the new experience. The second source is 'vicarious experience' and that refers to the act of seeing others accomplish a goal provides the belief that the witness can too. Third, 'verbal persuasion' which refers to the encouragements and assurances from others to help build one's own self-efficacy beliefs. The last source is 'emotional arousal' and that refers to positive feelings (excitement, happiness) about a certain goal for example boosting self-efficacy , while negative feelings (anxiety, stress) can decrease self-efficacy.

Regarding the present research, the context reveals some peculiarities of self- efficacy. The participants are learners of English not only as a foreign language in Morocco, but also as a minor subject compared to their core academic subjects in different economic affiliations. Therefore, it is expected that self-efficacy in English communication may not be strong, even though a considerable number of the participants and students of economics in general in Moulay Ismail University are aware of the importance of English as a Lingua Franca first and as a pertinent role player in the progress of their professional and academic careers in various economic specializations (Elyazale 2024). In addition, and in connection with the sources of self-efficacy advocated a priori, the participants may have undergone different English language learning experiences depending on the contextual framework of their own lives. It is also expected that some of the participants may have had this learning experience through one, some, or all of the suggested sources of self-efficacy. For instance, some may have experienced performance accomplishment and/ or vicarious experiences, and/or verbal persuasion, or none before attending higher education in the faculty of economics. It is; therefore, expected to find some participants with very high or very low self-efficacy.

The second part of this section involves a number of theoretical backgrounds related to (Business) Communication involving communication competence (to be named later intercultural communicative competence Byran 1997 in (Larsen 2026)) in a business context; a context that has integrated in the last decade notions such as multimodality and computer-mediated

communication, with the technological revolution attaining all life domains. Starting with communicative competence, a term coined by Dell Hymes in the late 1960s as a critical view of linguistic competence advocated that time by Chomsky (in Lillis 2005: 666). Communicative competence derives from the ground that the situation and context of interaction dictates a certain structure and vocabulary use to be in accordance with a certain interaction situation. Dell Hymes's view emphasized integrating real-life interaction situations, and that the interactors need to have knowledge not only of the grammar of the language but also the background of language use (in Lillis 2005: 669).

The Business context is considered part of different interaction contexts, each of which requires specific conditions for language use. Harley and Bruckmann (2007:1) describe the business place interaction as a context where 'different audiences may have very different perspectives on the same message' and so 'we emphasize the importance of clear language; and we emphasize the importance of careful planning and a clear strategy in formal communication'. Clarity and planning of how the message is to be conveyed are then, considered to be the main characteristics of language use in this context. Business interaction requires clarity because the treated subjects are about business; thus, there should be no room for misunderstanding or confusion. Planning for a business interaction plays an important role in attaining the desired outcomes, especially when it comes to negotiations, investors' presentations, etc., as an example of business external communication. Hartley and Buckmann (2007:3) note that clarity and planning are also essential in business external communication, stating that, 'managers recognize what information their employees need to have and make sure that they receive it in the most appropriate form'.

Another important concept that can be related to the communication in a business context is multimodality. Bezemer (2012) and Lyons (2016: 270) describe this concept as an approach to communication and representation that extends beyond language alone. It includes also visuals, aural, special aspects of interaction and the relationship among all these elements. In the business context, this is most apparent in business presentations, witnessing an interaction between digital, human, and the environment; all contributing to convey a certain message. Multimodality requires Digital competence and this is another aspect of business communication. Digital competence 'is considered as the vital factor for competency measurement of the professionals' (Almahmud and Houssain 2024: 1335). And this is a logical conclusion in a world immersed in technology, from the basic needs and entertainment of individuals to the technological uses for countries as a whole. Digital competence in the business context 'implies knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards the values of various digital equipment and being able 'to deal with the latest technologies and digital information' not only in terms of use but also in creation, manipulation and designing ( Almahmud and Houssain 2024: 1335). Therefore, digital competence is considered an integral part of professional competence, regardless of the particular business context in which it is applied.

Business communication involves intercultural competence as well. It refers to the ability to communicate with persons from different cultures to achieve (common) business goals. In a business setting, multinationals are a good example of companies that accommodate employees from different countries and cultures, involving different mother tongues, customs, beliefs, etc. Zheng (2015, p.197) emphasizes that intercultural competence has become a necessity in an increasingly integrated world, particularly given the close relationship between language and culture. Zheng (2015, p. 198) further argues that the adaptability skill helps in being interculturally competent, emphasizing that adaptability in a business context ' means learning what motivates others and how other cultural priorities inform the behavior, attitudes and values of business colleagues'; and that intercultural competence in a business context 'gives both business persons and their organizations tangible benefits, such as: quick problem solving, stronger decision-making, increased business relationships, enhanced professional image, and so on'.

Self-efficacy and communication in a business context are considered important components of professional success. Self-efficacy may be connected to the individual's view that helps augment work efficiency and productivity, while mastering the skills of business communication with all its aspects can increase revenue and expand the business for long-term growth. Therefore, perception of one's self-efficacy regarding (English) business communication skills is a part of (future) business success for students of economics. The next section will describe the methodology of conducting the present research.

### **3. Methodology**

This section outlines the different steps involved in conducting this research. It will describe the objectives, the research questions, the research design, participants, the research instrument, and the procedure for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Objectives and the Research Questions**

This study examines economic students' perceptions of their self-efficacy in English for Business communication at the Faculty of Economics and Law (Moulay Ismail University). As previously discussed in the theoretical background, perceived self-efficacy can affect the behavior, motivation, and thinking of individuals either positively or negatively. Students may possess the necessary language techniques and sub-skills for good business communication in English, but these techniques and sub-skills may not emerge without a positive belief in self-efficacy. Exploring this cognitive dimension would help instructors identify students with negative self-efficacy beliefs and provide them with appropriate instructional tools to develop more positive views of their own capabilities. The theoretical background also stresses that self-efficacy research is context-specific, which means that findings from a given study may not be directly transferable to other research contexts. The present study,

thus, would possess distinct specificities and merits investigation to address its unique contextual characteristics. Therefore, the present research aims at investigating the following research questions:

1. How do students of economics perceive their self-efficacy in English-language verbal communication in a business context?
2. How do students of economics perceive their self-efficacy in English-language written communication in a business context?
3. How do students of economics perceive their self-efficacy in English-language visual communication in a business context?
4. How do students of economics perceive their own self-efficacy in English-language interpersonal communication in a business context?
5. How do students of economics perceive their own self-efficacy in English-language adaptability in a business context?
6. How do students of economics perceive their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding the cultural aspect of communication in a business context?

Based on these questions, the following research hypotheses are generated:

1. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding verbal communication in a business context
2. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding written communication in a business context
3. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding visual communication in a business context
4. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding interpersonal communication in a business context
5. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding adaptability in communication in a business context
6. Students of economics have a positive belief in their own self-efficacy in the English Language regarding the cultural aspect of communication in a business context

### **3.2 The Research Design, Participants and the Instrument**

The present research follows a quantitative research design to meet the objectives. Administrating a questionnaire to the targeted sample participants would permit the researcher to construct a clear inclusive picture of the participants' views on their own self-efficacy regarding different aspects of business communication. More precisely, the broader the range of participants' perspectives, the more comprehensive the overall picture of self-efficacy beliefs can be within the context of this study. This would help identify the language subskills and techniques of business communication for which participants hold negative self-efficacy beliefs, thereby helping instructors adapt teaching resources to address negative perceptions and promote greater confidence in their abilities.

The participants include 289 Bachelor's and Master's degree students in the faculty of economics and law (Moulay Ismail University); Females represented 74% of the sample, while males accounted for the remaining 26%. Regarding the participants' age, 84% are between 18 and 23 as the highest age category followed by 12% for participants aged between 24 and 28, while age categories between 29 to 33 and 34 to 38 represent less than 5%. In terms of academic level, 67% of the participants are undergraduates, while 23% and 9% are enrolled in Masters of Excellence and regular Masters respectively. As for the economic Master affiliations, students of Digital Marketing represent the highest percentage by 27%, followed but the Auditing Master 25%, Taxation engineering 22%, and Banking affiliation 13%, while the lowest number of participants belong to Management 9% and Data science 2%. The selection of Economic students is based on the researchers' professional experience over many years of teaching at the Faculty of Economics, and which has revealed that Economic students' professional level in English and Business English is better, and even excellent for some, compared to law students.

The instrument used to gather data from the participants is a questionnaire. It is composed of two parts the first part includes basic information about the participants: age, gender, academic level, and economic affiliations. The second part involves sections about different aspects of communication in the business context. Thus, the questionnaire is divided into six sections, each comprising two or three questions focusing on different aspects of participants' self-efficacy. The sections investigate the participants' self-efficacy in verbal communication, written communication, visual communication, interpersonal communication, adaptability in communication, and the cultural aspect in communication. The questions under each section are measured by the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), which was developed by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem, each question rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), (in Garrido 2026).

### **3.3 Procedure for Data Collection and Analysis**

The participants were first informed about the purpose of the study and the objectives it sought to achieve. They were told that their participation would contribute to meeting these objectives and that their responses would help the researcher identify the language areas in which they had low self-efficacy. The participants were also informed that the information

obtained from their responses would help identify possible difficulties in business communication and provide useful insights to improve their professional language abilities, particularly from a cognitive perspective. They were further informed that they could complete the questionnaire at their own pace and were invited to ask for clarification whenever they encountered an unclear statement or question.

The questionnaire was administered during regular class time and typically required approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. For data analysis, numerical codes were assigned to the questions and responses options. These codes were used solely for statistical purposes and did not imply any hierarchical relationship or superiority among the response categories. All items addressing the various aspects of business communication was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The coded data were subsequently processed and analyzed using SPSS, with the results converted into percentages. The findings obtained from the analysis are discussed in the following section.

#### 4. The Results

This section describes the findings concerning the participants' self-efficacy across the various communication skills required in a business context. The first area addressed was verbal communication, which focused on the participants' perceived ability to communicate effectively in spoken business contexts.

##### 4.1 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Verbal Communication

Table 1 shows that the participants' perceived self-efficacy varied across the three verbal communication subskills. Regarding the ability to speak clearly in front of an audience, 33.2% of the participants rated themselves as *Not very good*, while 30.8% considered themselves *Good*. For participating confidently in group discussions, the largest proportion (34.6%) considered themselves *Good*, compared with 23.9% who rated themselves as *Not very good*. However, a less positive pattern was observed in terms of speaking English comfortably in formal settings. In this case, 33.6% considered themselves *Not very good*, while only 22.1% considered themselves *Good*. This suggests that speaking English in formal settings may represent a particular challenge for some participants and may be associated with lower confidence in such situations.

**Table 1** :Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Verbal Communication

| Verbal Communication                                  | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| Speaking with clarity in front of an audience         | 12.8%           | 33.2%         | 15.2%        | 30.8% | 7.6%      |
| Participating in group discussions with confidence    | 8.7%            | 23.9%         | 17.6%        | 34.6% | 14.9%     |
| Being comfortable speaking English in formal settings | 18.7%           | 33.6%         | 17.3%        | 22.1% | 8.0%      |

*Note.* Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

It is also worth noting that relatively few participants placed themselves in the *Very Good* and *Not good at all* categories. For example, only 7.6% of the participants rated themselves as *Very Good* for speaking clearly in front of an audience, 14.9% for participating confidently in group discussions, and only 8% for speaking English comfortably in formal settings. Similarly, the *Not good at all* category represented a smaller proportion of responses, although it reached 18.7% for speaking English in formal settings. These findings suggest that most participants perceived themselves as having a moderate level of competence in the verbal, rather than perceiving themselves as either highly proficient or considerably weak.

##### 4.2 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Written Communication

Table 2 presents the participants' views on their self-efficacy in written communication. The skill involves two rating statements: The ability to write clear and well-organized messages, and the ability to write professional documents with minimal errors.

**Table 2:** Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Written Communication

| Written Communication                                       | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| Ability to write clear and well-organized messages          | 10.0%           | 32.5%         | 14.5%        | 35.3% | 7.3%      |
| Ability to write professional documents with minimal errors | 15.2%           | 33.9%         | 17.6%        | 24.2% | 7.6%      |

Note. Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

Table 2 suggests that participants' perceived self-efficacy in written communication was generally moderate to low, particularly when the task involved producing professional and accurate documents. Regarding the ability to write clear and well-organized messages, 35.3% considered themselves *Good*, while 32.5% rated themselves as *Not very good*. Only 7.3% reported being *Very good*, whereas 10% felt they were *Not good at all*. The relatively close proportions of positive and negative responses imply that participants' confidence in writing clear messages varied considerably.

A lower level of perceived self-efficacy was reported for writing professional documents with minimal errors. Nearly half of the participants (49.1%) rated themselves as being either *Not very good* (33.9%) or *Not good at all* (15.2%) in this area. Meanwhile, only 24.2% considered themselves *Good* and 7.6% *Very good*. A further 17.6% chose *I don't know*, indicating that some participants were uncertain about their level of ability in this area. Overall, the findings reveal that participants' confidence was not consistent across the two areas of written communication, with lower perceived self-efficacy in writing professional and accurate documents than in writing clear and organized messages. Such a pattern may indicate the need to develop writing skills that extend beyond basic clarity to meet the demands of effective professional communication.

#### 4.3 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Visual Communication

Table 3 displays the findings related to visual communication. The participants were asked to rate their self-efficacy in explaining visual data in English and in using visuals effectively in business presentations.

**Table 3:** Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Visual Communication

| Visual Communication                                    | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| The ability to explain visual data in English           | 19.7%           | 29.8%         | 20.4%        | 23.2% | 6.6%      |
| The ability to use visuals effectively in presentations | 11.8%           | 23.9%         | 19.0%        | 33.2% | 9.3%      |

Note. Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

Participants' responses regarding visual communication reveal a generally mixed pattern across the two skills examined. With regard to the ability to explain visual data in English, almost one-third of the participants (29.8%) reported that they were *not very good* at this skill. This was followed by 20.4% who described themselves as being uncertain about their ability, as reflected in their selection of *I don't know*. A further 19.7% perceived themselves as *not good at all*. On the more positive end of the scale, 23.2% rated their ability at this task as *good*, whereas only 6.6% rated it as *very good*. Overall, the responses suggest that participants tended to report lower rather than higher levels of self-efficacy in explaining visual data in English, with close to half of the participants (49.5%) placing themselves in two lower categories.

A different distribution of responses was evident in relation to participants' ability to use visuals effectively in presentations. In this case, a larger proportion (33.2%) rated their ability as *good*, while 9.3% perceived themselves as *very good*. In contrast, 23.9% reported being *not very good* and 11.8% *not good at all*. Meanwhile, 19.0% expressed uncertainty by selecting *I don't know*. Considering these categories collectively, 42.5% of participants perceived themselves as *good* or *very good* at using visuals effectively in presentations, compared with 35.7% who rated their ability as *not very good* or *not good at all*. This distribution suggests that participants have more confidence in using visuals effectively in their presentations than in explaining visual data in English.

#### 4.4 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Interpersonal Communication

Table 4 below presents the findings on interpersonal communication. This skill involves being an active listener and empathetic when communicating with working teams, colleagues, and managers.

**Table 4:** Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Interpersonal Communication

| Interpersonal Communication                                              | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| Being active listeners                                                   | 3.1%            | 11.1%         | 7.3%         | 50.9% | 27.3%     |
| Being empathetic in communication in an academic or professional setting | 6.6%            | 19.0%         | 26.3%        | 34.6% | 12.1%     |

*Note.* Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

The findings on participants' self-efficacy in interpersonal communication reveal a noticeable variation in their perceived competence across the two skills under investigation, with active listening receiving more favorable assessment than empathetic communication in the workplace. For active listening, more than half of participants (50.9%) rated their ability as good and 27.3% as *very good*, while 11.1% were *not very good* at active listening and only 3.1% who perceived themselves as *not good at all*. A further 7.3% selected *I don't know*. Taken together, 78.2% of participants perceived themselves as *good* or *very good* at active listening, compared with 14.2% who reported lower levels of perceived ability, suggesting a relatively high level of perceived competence in active listening.

Responses regarding empathetic workplace communication were more varied, with 46.7% rating their ability as good or very good, compared with 25.6% who rated it as not very good or not good at all. A relatively substantial proportion (26.3%) selected *I don't know*, indicating greater uncertainty about this skill. Overall, the findings suggest greater consistency in participants' self-assessment of active listening and more uncertainty surrounding empathetic communication competence in the workplace.

#### 4.5 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Communication Adaptability

Table 5 presents the findings regarding the concept of adaptability in communication. It includes two rating statements: first, the ability to adjust the communication style depending on the present audience or interactors, and second the ability to use different and adapt oneself to different communication tools: e-mails, video calls, etc.

**Table 5:** Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Adaptability in Communication

| Adaptability in Communication                                           | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| The ability to adjust the communication style depending on the audience | 10.4%           | 20.4%         | 29.8%        | 30.8% | 8.3%      |
| The ability to use and adapt to different communication tools           | 7.3%            | 19.7%         | 23.2%        | 37.7% | 11.4%     |

*Note.* Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

The findings for adaptability in communication suggest some variation in perceived self-efficacy. Regarding their ability to adjust their communication style depending on the audience, 30.8% of participants rated themselves as *Good* and 8.3% as *Very Good*. In comparison, 30.8% rated their ability as *Not good at all* or *Not very good*, while 29.8% were uncertain about their level of ability. This implies that although a considerable number of participants felt confident in modifying their communication style according to the audience, a relatively similar proportion either reported lower confidence or remained uncertain.

A more positive pattern was observed for the ability to use and adapt to different communication tools. Almost half of the participants rated themselves as *Good* (37.7%) or *Very Good* (11.4%), compared with 27.0% who reported lower levels of self-efficacy and 23.2% who selected *I don't know*. These findings show that participants appeared to have greater confidence in their ability to navigate different communication tools than in adjusting their communication style in response to different audiences.

#### 4.6 Perceived Self-Efficacy in Intercultural Communication

The last aspect of business communication viewed in this study is the cultural side. The participants rated their view on their own self-efficacy regarding the ability to adapt their communication depending on the cultural background of their business interlocutor, and their understanding and awareness of the potential impact of cultural differences on business interactions.

**Table 6 :** Participants' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Intercultural Communication

| Intercultural Communication                                                  | Not good at all | Not very good | I don't know | Good  | Very good |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| The ability to adapt communication to different cultural backgrounds         | 9.7%            | 18.3%         | 29.8%        | 35.3% | 6.2%      |
| Understanding and awareness of how cultural differences affect communication | 6.9%            | 14.9%         | 16.3%        | 42.2% | 18.7%     |

*Note.* Percentages indicate the distribution of participants' responses across the five perceived self-efficacy categories.

The results provided in Table 6 demonstrate that participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy in intercultural communication varied across the two areas examined. Regarding their ability to adapt their communication to different cultural backgrounds, 35.3% of the participants described themselves as *Good* and 6.2% as *Very Good*. In contrast, 28.0% reported low levels of self-efficacy, while 29.8% were unsure about their ability. This suggests that although a considerable proportion of participants felt capable of adapting their communication, many were either less confident or uncertain about their competence to adjust their communication across different cultural contexts.

A somewhat more positive pattern emerged regarding participants' awareness of how cultural differences affect communication. In this respect, more than half of the participants (60.9%) rated themselves as either *Good* (42.2%) or *Very Good* (18.7%), whereas 21.8% reported low levels of self-efficacy and 16.3% were uncertain about their ability in this area. Thus, the findings suggest that participants seemed to have greater confidence in understanding the influence of cultural differences on communication than in adapting their own communication to different cultural backgrounds.

## 5. Discussion

The findings provide a differentiated pattern of participants' perceived communication self-efficacy across the different subskills examined. The responses fall broadly into three categories of communication, namely receptive, productive, and adaptive/interpersonal skills. This suggests that participants' confidence in communication depends largely on the nature of the communicative demand involved. This particular result aligns with Bandura's (1997) view of self-efficacy as domain and task-specific, given that individuals may feel more confident in certain areas or when performing particular tasks than in others. Building on this, this section draws on the three categories introduced earlier, which are used as a descriptive framework to organize and interpret the findings rather than as statistically confirmed factors.

### 5.1 Receptive Communication Skills

The highest levels of perceived self-efficacy were observed in receptive communication skills, particularly in participants' ability to listen actively and to understand cultural differences. In this respect, active listening received the most positive self-assessments across the examined communication subskills, with 78.2% of participants describing their ability as either *Good* or *Very Good*, while 14.2% rated themselves in the two lower categories and only 7.3% expressed uncertainty about their ability. This suggests that participants feel more confident in communication situations that primarily involve receiving and understanding information than in those requiring them to formulate and express their own responses. It should be noted that listening is not a passive act of receiving information; rather, it involves the ability to attend to, comprehend, interpret, and actively engage with a speaker (Goby & Lewis, 2000). Research on listening competence has also explored how students perceive their own listening abilities. For instance, Ford et al. (2000) examined how students evaluate their own listening competencies and found that these perceptions were shaped by listening instruction and increased awareness of their listening behaviors. In the present study, this perspective helps situate the high ratings for active listening as an indication of perceived confidence rather than direct evidence of actual listening performance. This perspective helps contextualize the findings, as the positive ratings for active listening suggest that participants felt confident in their listening abilities, without necessarily indicating their actual listening performance.

The receptive dimension also involves the ability to recognize and understand cultural differences, an area in which participants reported a relatively high level of self-efficacy. In light of this, 60.9% of participants described themselves as *Good* or *Very Good*, compared with 21.8% who placed themselves in one of the two lower categories. This finding suggests that many participants were aware of the importance of understanding cultural differences in professional communication settings. In the literature, cultural awareness is considered an important component of intercultural competence. In support of this perspective, Deardorff (2006) argues that knowledge and awareness of cultural differences contribute to effective interaction across different cultural contexts. Although participants reported high levels of confidence in understanding how cultural differences may affect communication, they were less confident in adapting their communication competence to different cultural contexts. Consequently, this result points to an interesting difference between being aware of cultural differences and acting upon this awareness, highlighting the complexity of translating cultural awareness into appropriate communicative acts.

## **5.2 Productive Communication Skills**

A more varied pattern emerges when communication requires participants to produce and present information. The productive communication category in this study includes spoken, written, and presentation-oriented skills. In other words, it focuses on students' competence to participate in discussions, speak in formal settings, produce written messages and professional documents, and use and explain visual information. Almost half of the participants (49.5%) rated their confidence in participating in group discussions as *Good* or *Very Good*. Comparable proportions reported positive self-efficacy in writing clear and well-organized messages (42.6%) and using visuals effectively in presentations (42.5%). These findings indicate that participants felt more comfortable with familiar communication tasks, especially when engaging in group discussions and writing clear messages. However, their perceived competence was less evident when communication required a higher level of formality, including speaking and using formal English in public, writing professional documents, and explaining information presented in visual forms.

This inconsistency suggests that participants' self-efficacy in their productive communication skills differed across situations, depending significantly on the specific demands of each task. This interpretation is reflected in previous research showing that self-efficacy can vary across different forms of communication and can be shaped by the demands of each situation. In this context, Frey and Vallade (2023) reported that students' writing and public speaking self-efficacy developed differently overtime, while Collado et al. (2023) found that self-efficacy was related to performance in both academic writing and oral defense tasks. These studies indicate that communication self-efficacy should not be viewed as unidimensional ability, as it varies depending on the specific communicative task. This may account for participants' greater confidence in some forms of communication than in others, particularly when the task requires a certain degree of formality.

Speaking in Formal situations appears to be one of the most challenging areas for participants. Only 38.4% described their ability to speak clearly in front of an audience as *Good* or *Very Good*, while 46.0% rated their ability as *Not good at all* or *Not very good*. Lower levels of confidence were reported in speaking English comfortably in formal settings, with only 30.1% indicating positive self-efficacy, whereas 52.3% rated their ability as *Not good at all* or *Not very good*. These results are consistent with Arquero Montañó et al. (2023), who found that students had higher self-efficacy in informal communication, particularly group discussions, than in more formal tasks, including presentations and job interviews. Similarly, Hartono et al. (2023) found that students' presentation self-efficacy differed across task formats, while Leone and French (2022) found that students' confidence can vary depending on the familiarity of the communication context. In the present study, participants' lower self-efficacy in formal speaking contexts may reflect the greater demands involved in using English appropriately in academic and professional settings.

The results for written communication showed a similar pattern. While 42.6% of participants reported positive self-efficacy in writing clear and well-organized messages, the figure dropped to 31.8% for producing professional documents with minimal errors. This variation demonstrates that participants were more confident in conveying ideas into writing than in producing formal texts that require higher levels of accuracy. This suggests that although the two writing tasks are closely related, they place different demands on the writer. In this respect, writing clear messages mainly involves conveying ideas in an organized way, whereas producing professional documents requires careful attention to accuracy, appropriate language use, and the conventions of professional writing. These findings align with Teng and Wang (2023), who found that writing self-efficacy varies across different aspects of writing, including language knowledge, organization, and overall writing performance. In a similar vein, Teng and Zhan (2023) found that the complexity of a writing task can affect writing performance, with self-efficacy playing a role in this process. Overall, these findings suggest that participants' confidence may vary depending on the type of writing task and the skills it requires, especially in a professional English context.

A similar difference was found in visual communication, as participants reported higher confidence in using visuals effectively during presentations than in explaining visual information in English. The findings demonstrate that 42.5% of participants

reported positive self-efficacy in using visuals effectively, compared with 29.8% felt who felt confident in explaining visual data in English. The distinction suggests that using visuals in presentations may be less challenging than verbally interpreting the information they conveyed. This finding can be understood alongside Chen (2025), who emphasized the complementary roles of visual and verbal skills in English presentations and found that developing these skills improved students' verbal fluency, visual mastery, and confidence in preparing and delivering academic English presentations. In this study, participants' relatively lower confidence in explaining visual information points to the need for more explicit instruction and practice in explaining, presenting, and describing visual resources within the Business English course. Therefore, addressing the two modes of visual communication skills can strengthen students' competence to convey visual resources effectively in academic and professional contexts.

### 5.3 Adaptive and Interpersonal Communication Skills

The adaptive and interpersonal aspects of communication in this study represent participants' competence in adjusting their communication to different people, situations, and contexts. They include four closely related dimensions: empathetic communication, flexibility in using various communication tools, adjustment of communication style to the audience, and adaptation to diverse cultural backgrounds. Regarding empathetic communication, the findings reveal a less consistent pattern of perceived competence among participants. While 46.7% of participants described themselves as *Good* or *Very Good* at communicating empathetically in an academic or professional setting, 25.6% reported lower levels of confidence, and another 26.3% were unsure of their ability, as they selected "I don't know." This substantial degree of uncertainty may point to the complex nature of empathetic communication, which involves not only recognizing and understanding others' perspectives but also responding to them in an appropriately sensitive and affective manner. In this context, Davis (1983) conceptualizes empathy as a multidimensional construct that encompasses both the cognitive ability to understand another person's perspective and the affective capacity to respond with concern for others. These findings suggest that participants may perceive empathetic communication as a relatively challenging communicative behavior, which requires greater cognitive and affective abilities to translate interpersonal understanding into contextually appropriate responses.

The findings concerning adaptive communication show a similar tendency. While almost half of the participants 49.1% reported high self-efficacy in using and adapting to different communication tools, only 39.1% expressed high confidence in adjusting their communication style to different audiences. This disparity may reveal that audience-sensitive communication constitutes a more socially and contextually demanding form of communicative self-efficacy than familiarity with different communication channels. Thus, communicative adaptability is not simply a matter of knowing how to use a particular medium, such as instant messaging, email, videoconferencing, and other digitally mediated forms of interaction; it also requires the ability to adjust how a message is expressed and conveyed to meet the target audience and context. This can be interpreted in relation to Canale and Swain's (1980) concept of sociolinguistic competence, which entails the ability to make appropriate language choices in response to social relationships, roles, expectations, cultural norms, and the level of formality required in an interaction. Therefore, the lower confidence in adjusting communication to different interlocutors may suggest a need for greater attention to the interpersonal and contextual dimensions of Business English in higher education.

The findings on intercultural adaptation point to a clear distinction between cultural awareness and the ability to apply this awareness in communication. In this regard, a significant proportion of participants 60.9% reported positive confidence in understanding how cultural variation can influence communication. In comparison, this proportion decreased to 41.5% when asked about their confidence in adjusting their communication to different cultural backgrounds. This particular finding is consistent with recent research on intercultural communication self-efficacy. For example, Ardi and Az Zahra (2024) found that intercultural communication self-efficacy was a significant predictor of sociocultural adaptation among international students in Japan. Similarly, Yang et al. (2026) showed that intercultural communication self-efficacy mediated the relationship between social engagement and adaptation among international students in China. In light of what was found in the present study, this research suggests that effective intercultural communication goes beyond understanding cultural differences, as it also requires the ability and confidence to adapt one's communicative behavior to different cultural contexts. This pattern points to a need for Business English instruction to create opportunities and integrate activities for learners to apply their cultural knowledge by adapting their communication across different cultural contexts.

### 6. Implications and Limitations

The present research suggests several theoretical and pedagogical implications for understanding communication self-efficacy in English Business contexts. From a theoretical perspective, the difference in perceived confidence across receptive, productive, adaptive, and intercultural aspects of communication reveals that communication self-efficacy may not be experienced in the same way across the studied dimensions, but may vary depending on the type and the level of difficulty of the communicative task. This pattern implies that effective communication in Business English instruction requires more demanding forms of language use, greater contextual and cultural adaptation, and more responsive interaction with others.

The present study also provides evidence of a distinction between knowing how to communicate appropriately and feeling capable of putting that knowledge into practice in different professional and cultural contexts.

The findings also have practical implications for Business English instruction. The relatively lower levels of perceived self-efficacy observed in formal speaking, professional writing, visual data interpretation, and intercultural adaptability suggest that these areas should be addressed explicitly in Business English courses. This could be achieved by incorporating activities that help learners use English in authentic professional situations, including presenting and interpreting visual information, participating in formal discussions, preparing workplace documents, and adapting communication to different audiences and cultural contexts. Integrating these activities may not only enhance learners' confidence in using English in diverse professional communication tasks but also help prepare them for the communicative demands of the workplace, thereby strengthening their employability.

Several limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, the study relied on perceived rather than objectively demonstrated communication competence, which does not necessarily reflect participants' actual ability and performance. Second, the study was conducted in a specific educational setting with a particular group of learners, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other populations and institutions. A further constraint of the present study concerns its cross-sectional nature, which makes it difficult to determine participants' perceptions over time and to establish causal relationships among the observed patterns. Therefore, future research could address these limitations by examining both self-reported and performance-based measures of Business English communication. Research involving participants from different educational and professional settings would further determine whether the patterns identified in the present study are evident in other contexts. In addition, using longitudinal designs would provide insight into how participants' communication self-efficacy develops over time and whether their perceived competence can be shaped by increased language knowledge and exposure to professional communication.

Similar to any existing research, the present study acknowledges some limitations among which, and given the specific context nature on self-efficacy perception, the findings may not be generalized to other research contexts. In addition, this study lacks investigating the sources of self-efficacy perception regarding economics and management students at the faculty of Economics and Law with the purpose to locate potential correlation relations between these sources and the specific negative and positive points of self-efficacy perception, though this idea warrants future investigation.

related to the context of self-efficacy perception research in higher education. Theoretically speaking, this study is the first of its kind conducted in the faculty of Economics and Law, making a positive contribution to the existing body of literature of self-efficacy by examining it within specific contextual framework. On a pedagogical level, the present research reveals what business language skills the participants hold a negative self-efficacy belief about, and which presents an opportunity for the instructors to take those negative beliefs into account in instructional practices focusing on motivating students and providing them with sufficient practice opportunities to alter these beliefs into positive self-efficacy thoughts.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study explored economic students' perceived self-efficacy in using English for Business communication across receptive, productive, adaptive/interpersonal, and intercultural aspects of communication. The findings showed variation in perceived competence, with greater confidence in receptive and interpersonal skills and lower levels of confidence in formal professional language use, including public speaking, professional writing, visual interpretation, audience adaptation, and intercultural competence. This distinction indicates that students' perceived self-efficacy is shaped not only by their general competence in English but also by the nature, demands, and context of the communicative task presented to them. The findings also support the context-sensitive aspect of communication competence in a business English setting and provide further insights into how students assess their ability to meet the diverse demands of English use in academic and professional contexts.

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