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SEMing the Causal Associations Between Teachers' Instructional Practice, Growth Orientations, and Learners' Vocabulary Development

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Abstract

This study explored the interplay between teaching practices (relevance, feedback/feedforward, and organization and clarity), and students' vocabulary achievement. Additionally, examining the mediating role of students' growth orientation (GO) in this interaction, we also analyzed how teaching practices (TP) interact with GO. A convenient sample of 1,105 tenth-grade high school students participated in the study by completing surveys including adapted measures of GO, TP, and a vocabulary test. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was used which consequently ended in the optimal fit of the overall research model that ensured the right path in the study. The findings revealed that students' perceptions of TP were closely linked to their GO and vocabulary development. It was also found that GO interacted with students' achievements. Furthermore, the results indicated that GO mediated the causal association between students' perception on TP and students' achievements. These results underscore the critical role of fostering GO among students while highlighting the influence of effective TP on shaping students' mindsets, growth goal-setting behaviors, and academic success. The findings further support the idea that targeted interventions aimed at enhancing GO can lead to improved educational achievements.

Keywords: EFL, growth orientation, vocabulary development, teaching practice

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Introduction

The acquisition of a foreign language is shaped by a complex interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, each exerting a profound influence on learners' academic trajectories. Drawing on Bandura's (1991) Social Cognitive Theory, language learning is conceptualized as an achievement of triadic reciprocity, where personal beliefs, behaviors, and contextual elements interact dynamically to inform and transform one another. Within this framework, teaching practice (TP) emerges as a pivotal environmental determinant, with empirical evidence consistently highlighting the central role of educators in guiding learners' socialization and academic development. Not only do specific pedagogical strategies matter, but the broader teaching style characterized by relevance, clarity, organization, and feedback mechanisms also significantly shapes students' vocabulary development in language learning contexts. Alongside environmental influences, personal factors such as growth orientation (GO) have garnered increased scholarly attention for their role in fostering vocabulary development. Recent research underscores the interconnectedness of growth mindsets, self-regulatory goals, and learner achievements, positioning GO as a core construct in educational psychology.

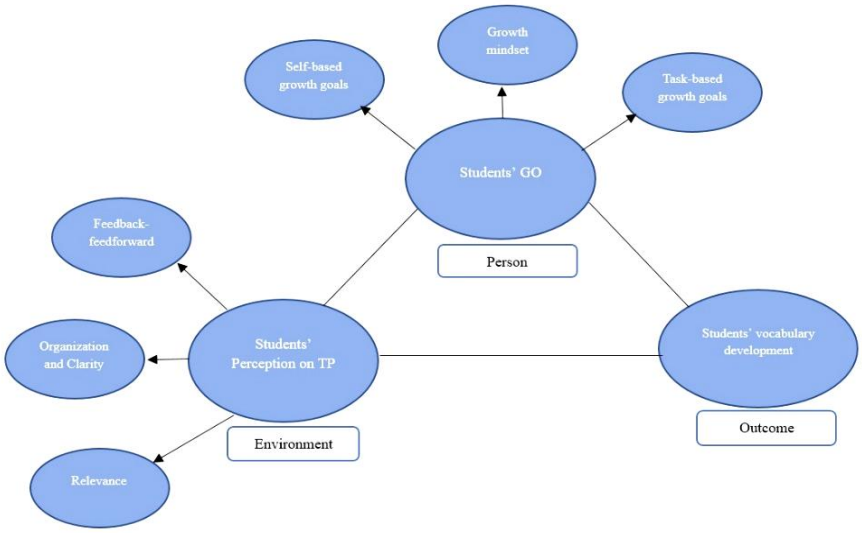
Despite the recognized importance of vocabulary development in educational success, particularly in ESL/EFL settings, the literature reveals a notable gap in understanding how the interplay between TP and learners' GO jointly influences students' achievements (See Figure 1 that shows how the main relationship/s will be examined.

While prior studies have examined the effects of TP and GO on student achievement independently, the integrative examination of the combined impact of these constructs on students' academic (e.g., vocabulary acquisition) achievement remains underexplored. This oversight is especially pronounced in the context of TEFL, where the newly conceptualized unitary construct of GO and its interaction with environmental and behavioral factors have yet to be thoroughly investigated.

The current research contributes to the growing body of research on the determinants of effective language education by systematically examining the interrelations among environmental (TP), personal (GO), and behavioral (vocabulary development) factors within the EFL context. By adopting a comprehensive framework, this research provides nuanced insights into the mechanisms driving student academic success. The findings have the potential to inform targeted interventions and instructional strategies that support the development of well-rounded learners capable of navigating academic challenges. Furthermore, by situating the analysis within the specific domain of TEFL, the study offers novel empirical evidence on domain-specific manifestations of GO, thereby advancing theoretical and practical understanding in the field. To build a comprehensive understanding of this topic, it is essential to examine the existing body of research and scholarly perspectives, which will be discussed in the following review of literature.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Model of Interaction between Different Variables



Review of Literature

To provide a solid foundation for the practical literature review, this study first outlines the relevant terms and theoretical underpinnings.

Theoretical Framework: Bandura's Socio-Cognitive Model

The current investigation is anchored in Bandura's (1986) triadic conceptualization of social–cognitive theory (SCT). This theory provides the foundational lens for understanding GO, teaching practice, and student achievements in language education. SCT posits that human functioning is developed by the continuous interplay of personal factors, behaviors, and environmental influences, with self-efficacy playing a central role in how individuals set goals, persist through challenges, and interpret achievements (Bandura, 1991). This reciprocal determinism is particularly relevant in educational settings, where teachers' beliefs and classroom practices interact with students' cognitive and affective processes to shape learning trajectories.

Growth Orientation

Recent research in psycho-education has been primarily directed towards examining the significance of growth constructs in the academic progression of students (Martin, 2015). Growth constructs, such as growth mindset, self-based growth goals, and task-based growth goals, are manifestations of an individual's dedication to self-improvement. While each of these constructs has its distinct origins and achievements, initial investigations have indicated a certain level of

conceptual and empirical commonality among them (Bostwick et al., 2017, 2019; Burns & Martin, 2018). These findings imply that students might inherently possess a fundamental inclination towards growth, a concept identified as GO (Bostwick et al., 2017, 2019).

GO comprises three firmly established growth constructs: growth mindset, self-based growth goals, and task-based growth goals. The concept of growth mindset revolves around individuals' beliefs regarding the changeability of their intelligence, skills, and abilities (Dweck, 2000). On the other hand, self-based growth goals involve learners' aspirations to surpass their previous achievements, focusing on personal progress rather than external comparisons (Martin et al., 2022). Task-based growth goals, however, center around improving performance against predefined task criteria, such as mastery-approach goals that seek to enhance an individual's competence in a particular task or subject area (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). These growth constructs are widely recognized as adaptive educational traits that foster positive academic achievements (Khajavy et al., 2021; Bostwick et al., 2020). Thus, alongside more distinct aspects of other growth constructs, GO captures a complex system of beliefs that benefits students' academic development.

Teaching Practice

Under SCT's triadic model, teaching practice is considered as one of the most pronounced antecedents of goal setting (Burns et al., 2018). On the other hand, teaching factors are found to be of major impact on students' achievements (Martin et al., 2021). Therefore, the study focused on students' perceptions on three key elements of teaching practice (i.e. relevance, organization and clarity, and feedback-feedforward) that are of thought to be of paramount importance in the educational context.

Within our research, the concepts of organization and clarity pertain to the instructor's systematic arrangement and lucidity of the subject matter and assignments, in addition to the effective management of instructional time to enhance learning achievements (Martin et al., 2022). The term feedback-feedforward encompasses corrective information and guidance aimed at improvement provided to students during the learning process (Basso & Belardinelli, 2006). Feedback offers students information about their current task, whereas feedforward provides them with directions for an upswing in their future performances. Together, these practices are essential for fostering self-efficacy, as they help learners recognize their progress and identify actionable steps for continued growth. In the framework of our research, relevance denotes the degree of personal connection and significance associated with the content and tasks presented. This concept builds upon prior investigations and theoretical frameworks that underscore the significance of content and tasks that are easily accessible to learners and that correspond with their existing experiences and knowledge base (Martin & Evans, 2018, 2019). Additionally, it highlights the importance of instructional strategies that involve delivering content and tasks that are both meaningful and pertinent (Lei et al., 2017).

Students' Vocabulary Development

Academic achievement in TEFL are the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners are expected to acquire or develop as a result of instruction (Brown, 2007). A critical component of academic success in language learning is vocabulary acquisition (Schmidt et al., 2015). This study specifically investigates learners' free productive vocabulary development as an indicator of academic achievement. This refers to the lexicon readily employed in spontaneous written expression as the indicator of academic achievement (Nation, 2001). According to studies (Hajabi et al., 2018; Duran & Kääntä, 2023), the integration of free vocabulary into language instruction can substantially advance the cultivation of communicative competence and encourage more genuine language utilization. Their adaptability permits the formation of innovative terms through processes such as compounding, derivation, and borrowing, thereby mirroring the fluidity of language and its ability to evolve in response to emerging concepts and technologies (Nation & Newton, 1997).

Review of Empirical Studies

A critical examination of the practical literature offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of research and application within this field. This section provides a comprehensive overview of the existing practical research relevant to the topic, highlighting key findings and identifying gaps that inform the present study. Zeng et al. (2019) identified growth mindset, perseverance, and well-being as direct predictors of work engagement in a sample of 472 Chinese secondary teachers. Their structural equation modeling demonstrated independent predictive capacities for each construct, advocating for targeted professional development programs to cultivate these resilience-related attributes. The findings align with Bostwick et al. (2019), whose longitudinal analysis of students' mathematics achievements established GO as a significant predictor of enhanced academic engagement and achievement.

Expanding this paradigm, Bostwick et al. (2020) employed multilevel modeling to analyze 1,414 students and 91 teachers, revealing positive cross-level associations between mathematics achievements and classroom/teacher GO. While student-level GO consistently predicted engagement and achievement, the study notes potential contextual moderators requiring further exploration, particularly regarding implementation fidelity in diverse educational ecosystems.

Granziera et al. (2022) conducted a cross-national investigation comparing 2,510 Singaporean high schoolers and 119 Australian elementary students. Instrumental (vs. emotional) teacher support exhibited stronger associations with academic buoyancy and engagement across both cohorts, with longitudinal Australian data further linking buoyancy to skill development and aspirational achievements.

In another notable study, Martin et al. (2022) analyzed 61,879 Australian secondary students to demonstrate instructional support's mediated effect on engagement through growth goal setting. Notably, growth goals attenuated socioeconomic and prior achievement disadvantages, with feedback-forward

practices and relevance-focused teaching emerging as key pedagogical levers. The study advances growth goal theory by positioning it as both a mediator of instructional quality and a buffer against systemic inequities.

In their seminal work, Bostwick et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between GO and mathematics achievements over a one-year period using a multilevel modeling approach that incorporated cross-level interactions. Their sample comprised 851 adolescents distributed across 71 classrooms, each led by a distinct teacher. The study revealed that GO positively influenced multiple tiers of mathematics achievements, including adaptive and maladaptive engagement as well as academic achievement. Importantly, classroom-level GO moderated the interaction between individual students' GO and their adaptive engagement, suggesting that cultivating growth-oriented environments at both student and classroom levels can enhance mathematics engagement and performance. These findings underscore the potential benefits of targeting GO across educational strata to improve students' achievements.

As the literature suggests, extensive research has established the foundational link between discrete growth constructs and academic progress; however, recent scholarship emphasizes a unifying construct, GO, as a critical determinant of student success. Despite its conceptual significance, GO has yet to be rigorously investigated as an integrated framework. Furthermore, the influence of GO on students' emotional well-being and vocabulary development has been underexplored, limiting comprehensive understanding of its role in fostering positive educational and psychological achievements. This gap underscores the need for research that elucidates the complex mechanisms through which GO operates within learning environments. Instructional practices, particularly those involving relevance, organization, clarity, and feedback-feedforward mechanisms are recognized within Social Cognitive Theory as pivotal antecedents to goal formation. Yet, empirical studies exploring how these pedagogical factors specifically facilitate growth-oriented goal setting and impact student achievements are scarce. Addressing this gap could inform more effective teaching strategies that promote GO and enhance academic engagement. Moreover, the dynamic interplay between GO, TP, and student achievements remains insufficiently understood. Investigating these interactions promises to clarify the pathways through which educational environments shape cognitive dimensions of learning. Finally, the prevailing literature predominantly adopts a domain-general perspective, with limited attention to domain-specific investigations. To date, no study has systematically examined the interrelations among growth constructs, TP, and student achievements within a distinct academic discipline. Filling this gap is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in specific fields of study. Accordingly, the subsequent research questions were formed to guide this investigation:

1) Does TP significantly predict learners' GO?

2) Does learners' GO significantly predict their vocabulary development?

3) Does learners' GO serve as a mediator between TP and students' vocabulary development?

Method

Participants

This study recruited a convenience sample of 1,105 Iranian 10th-grade students (727 females, 378 males; mean age = 15.58 years) from 150 classrooms across four cities in northwest Iran. The sampling frame included both urban and semi-urban public high schools, selected on the basis of teachers' and school principals' willingness to participate and accessibility to the research team.

To achieve a large sample size required for robust statistical analysis, we employed a two-stage convenience sampling strategy. First, school principals were approached for institutional consent. Second, English teachers responsible for 10th-grade classes were invited to administer the student survey in one of their 10th-grade classes, selected at the teacher's discretion.

To contextualize the findings, we collected data on students' prior English achievement (self-reported grades) and language exposure outside school. This information was used to characterize the sample and explore possible confounding variables. Ethical approval as well as written informed consent were obtained from the ministry of education and all students, respectively. Moreover, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of students' responses was guaranteed.

Instrument Development and Validation

In addition to demographics and background, the student survey consisted of psychometric inventories (28 items across two constructs of TP and GO and measures of vocabulary with 30-items). All instruments, except vocabulary test, were administered in Persian. For measures originally developed in English, a rigorous translation and back-translation process was conducted by two independent bilingual experts, followed by pilot testing that ensured semantic and conceptual equivalence. Prior to the main study, a pilot test involving 30 students, matched to the main sample in age, grade, and school type, was conducted to evaluate the clarity, validity, and reliability of the instruments. Feedback from pilot participants led to minor wording adjustments for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure internal consistency and construct validity was assessed via expert review.

Students' perceptions of teaching practice were assessed using an 18-item questionnaire across three dimensions: instructional relevance, organization and clarity, and feedback-feedforward. The adapted forms of the Teaching Relevance Scale (Martin et al., 2022), Organization and clarity (Blaich et al., 2016), and Feedback-feedforward (Martin & Evans, 2018), were used to evaluate instructional relevance, Organization and Clarity and Feedback/Feedforward. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha for the overall TP scale in the pilot was 0.90 (main study: 0.88). Subscale alphas ranged from 0.71 to 0.82. To minimize participant fatigue and ensure survey completion, we selected the highest-loading and most representative items from each subscale, based on expert consensus.

Three indicators of growth mindset, self-referential growth goals, and task-oriented growth goals were measured using a ten-item questionnaire. Growth mindset was assessed using 2 items adapted from Dweck (2000), assessing beliefs about intelligence malleability. Self-based growth goals with 4 items which were adapted from Martin (2006) covered specific, self-improvement, competitive, and challenging goals. Task-oriented growth goals were examined using 4 items adapted from Elliot and McGregor (2001), covering mastery/performance approach and avoidance. The inventory had a 5-point Likert scale format as above. Cronbach's alpha for the overall GO scale in the pilot was 0.72 (main study: 0.74). The growth mindset subscale, with only 2 items, had lower reliability ($\alpha = 0.67$); this is a noted limitation.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted separately for each theoretically derived subscale on the full sample (N = 1105) using principal axis factoring with promax rotation.

The 18-item Teaching Practice (TP) subscale showed excellent sampling adequacy (KMO = .93; Bartlett's test χ^2 (153) = 8431.41, $p < .001$). Parallel analysis supported a two-factor solution accounting for 44.4% of the variance (Factor 1 = 28.2%, Factor 2 = 16.2%). All items loaded ≥ .42 on their primary factor with minimal cross-loadings (Table 1). Cronbach's α for the full TP subscale was .91, indicating very good internal consistency.

Table 1

Factor Loadings for the TP Subscale (N = 1105)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	0.423	0.183
2	0.574	0.157
3	0.581	0.214
4	0.559	0.233
5	0.517	0.185
6	0.592	0.186
7	0.577	0.312
8	0.611	0.270
9	0.616	0.329
10	0.585	0.281
11	0.617	0.265
12	0.595	0.143
13	0.584	0.181
14	0.611	0.280

15	0.571	0.328
16	0.232	0.752
17	0.122	0.902
18	0.171	0.804

The 10-item Growth Orientation (GO) subscale also showed good sampling adequacy (KMO = .79; Bartlett's test $\chi^2(45) = 3128.70$, $p < .001$). Parallel analysis clearly indicated a single factor (initial eigenvalues: 3.61, 0.92, 0.84, …), explaining 36.1% of the variance. All items loaded between .44 and .76 on this common factor (Table 2). Internal consistency was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Table 2

Factor Loadings for the GO Subscale (N = 1105)

Item	Factor 1
19	0.69
20	0.62
21	0.76
22	0.68
23	0.64
24	0.59
25	0.52
26	0.44
27	0.56
28	0.61

Vocabulary development was assessed via a 30-item multiple-choice test developed for this study. Items were based on the 10th-grade English curriculum and reviewed by three experienced English teachers for content validity. The test was piloted with 30 students. The internal consistency of the vocabulary test was estimated using the KR-21 on a pilot sample of students. The KR-21 coefficient was 0.90 indicating very good reliability. Item difficulty and discrimination indices were also calculated, and poorly performing items were revised or replaced.

Data were collected over a four-week period in fall 2024. To maximize inclusivity and participation, both paper-based and online (Google Forms) versions of the survey were offered. The researchers endeavored to gather data from participants present at the time through the administration of paper questionnaires, while simultaneously accommodating those participants who exhibited a preference for engaging in the study via the completion of an online questionnaire.

For paper surveys, teachers were instructed to seat students as in examination conditions, allocate 45 minutes for completion, and emphasize the anonymity of responses. For online surveys, teachers distributed the survey link to students and guided students on how to complete it. To minimize data entry errors, paper responses were double-entered and cross-checked. Online data were downloaded directly from Google Forms. Incomplete or duplicate responses were excluded.

Data Analysis

Firstly, descriptive statistics were obtained to get a comprehensive view of data. In addition, prior to performing structural equations, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted; since the data distribution was not normal, via Smart PLS-3 software, the partial least squares structural equation modeling including measurement model fit, structural model fit, and overall model fit was used to test the proposed hypotheses. This model measures the casual association across students' perception on TP with students' vocabulary achievement considering the mediating role of students' GO.

Measurement of Model fit

The fit of measurement model was tested in terms of divergent validity, indicator reliability, and convergent validity.

Indicator reliability: The results of the variance inflation test were examined in order to assess the reliability of the indicator. Two tests of the PLS algorithm and bootstrapping were used to perform Factor loadings, t-values, and reliability of the determined components of the research model (see Table 3).

Table 3

Factor Loadings, T-Values, and Reliability of the Determined Components of the Research Model

Variables	Sub-scales	Item	Factor Load	t Value	VIF
Students' Perception on TP	Feedback-Feed forward	1	.621	22.565	1.264
		2	.767	50.618	1.567
		3	.737	46.816	1.462
		4	.773	48.174	1.572
		5	.674	30.929	1.310
	Organization and Clarity	29	.492	2.682	1.347
		30	.433	3.131	1.303
		31	.430	2.854	1.194
		32	.473	3.118	1.214
		33	.446	2.879	1.363
		34	.411	2.988	1.228
		35	.481	3.337	1.199
		36	.434	3.115	1.333
		37	.485	3.040	1.214
		38	.487	2.998	1.205

	Relevance	39	.815	57.076	1.444
		40	.843	69.742	1.567
		41	.706	30.465	1.245
Students' Go	Growth Mindset	6	.900	3.292	1.067
		7	.927	2.645	1.067
	Self-based growth goals	8	.519	17.910	1.056
		9	.781	49.643	1.353
		10	.734	37.365	1.281
		11	.588	22.740	1.112
	Task-based growth goals	12	.663	25.518	1.090
		13	.616	22.013	1.058
		14	.418	10.426	1.035
		15	.633	19.394	1.081
Students' vocabulary development	Students' vocabulary development	1	.450	3.695	1.182
		2	.476	2.675	1.180
		3	.476	3.089	1.107
		4	.441	3.310	1.232
		5	.451	4.565	1.398
		6	.580	6.368	1.500
		7	.402	2.783	1.279
		8	.499	5.309	1.090
		9	.484	3.403	1.368
		10	.584	6.591	1.483
		11	.498	3.118	1.120
		12	.425	3.395	1.184
		13	.537	5.420	1.414
		14	.469	3.368	1.351
		15	.428	3.339	1.198
		16	.403	2.996	1.170
		17	.467	4.955	1.142
		18	.470	2.747	1.164
		19	.484	2.944	1.159
		20	.433	4.001	1.569
		21	.468	4.294	1.508
		22	.578	7.258	1.391
		23	.446	4.185	1.144
		24	.471	2.702	1.185
		25	.479	3.501	1.241
		26	.497	5.121	1.439
		27	.429	3.292	1.646
		28	.465	5.599	1.302
		29	.536	5.626	1.521
		30	.475	7.350	1.288

According to Table 3, the absolute value of the standard factor loading for all items is higher than 0.4; also, the absolute value of their t-statistic is higher than 2.58. Accordingly, all items for the measurement of the research model have sufficient validity. Moreover, since the VIF value for the all items is not higher than 5, there is no problem of multiple collinearity for testing the first research model.

Convergent validity test. The results of composite reliability indices, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and average variance extracted (AVE) that are used to examine convergence are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Convergent Validity Test for the Model

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Feedback-Feed forward	0.761	0.840	0.514
Organization and Clarity	0.716	0.710	0.567
Relevance	0.797	0.832	0.625
Growth Mindset	0.713	0.701	0.525
Self-based growth goals	0.755	0.762	0.541
Task-based growth goals	0.765	0.775	0.548
Students' vocabulary development	0.740	0.785	0.549

As summarized in Table 4, the obtained values for composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha and for all research variables were greater than 0.7. Also, the mean variance extracted for all constructs (variables) was greater than 0.5; the constructs of the model thus have sufficient validity in terms of convergence and correlation.

Divergent Validity Test. Finally, the discriminant validity index was used to test the validity of the constructs (Table 5). The values on the main diagonal of this matrix represent the square root of the AVE. Table 5 shows that the values on the main diameter have the highest number of columns, which indicates the appropriate validity of the constructs. According to the results of this section, the research model is confirmed in terms of measurement. Next, the first research model is examined in terms of structure.

Table 5

Divergent Validity Test for the Model

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organization and Clarity	0.665								
2. Feedback-feed-forward	0.456	0.717	0.845						
3. Growth Mindset	0.444	0.664	0.677	0.725					
4. Relevance	0.386	0.421	0.577	0.578	0.790	0.813			
5. Self-based growth	0.476	0.331	0.480	0.288	0.376	0.664	0.822		
6. students' vocabulary development	0.175	0.139	0.195	0.204	0.235	0.529	0.386	0.537	
7. Task-based growth	0.314	0.257	0.300	0.234	0.254	0.235	0.354	0.590	0.796

Structural Model Fitting

Structural fit indices include the coefficient of determination or R^2 (i.e. a measure that indicates the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable), the Q^2 (i.e. or the Stone Geisser index determines the predictive power of the model) criterion, and the t value. The blindfolding test was used to perform this fit (Table 6*)*. Since R^2 and Q^2 are above 0.19 and 0.15, respectively, therefore the structural fit of the model can be trusted.

Table 6

Results of Structural Fit of the First Research Model

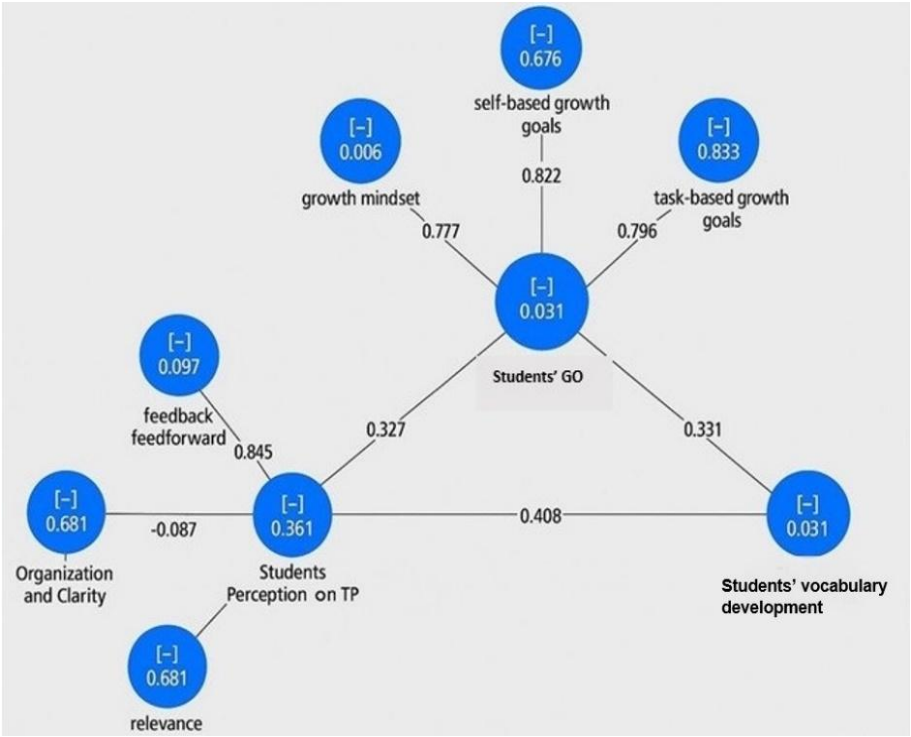
Variable	Communality (Q^2)	Redundancy (R^2)
Feedback-Feed forward	0.475	Exogenous variable
Organization and Clarity	0.225	Exogenous variable
Relevance	0.465	Exogenous variable
Growth Mindset	0.415	0.502
Self-based growth goals	0.497	0.594
Task-based growth goals	0.455	0.516
Students' vocabulary development	0.488	0.301

Overall Model Fit

In order to examine the overall model fit, the GOF criterion proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2004) was calculated. Three values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are introduced as weak, medium, and strong values for GOF. According to the formula, the GOF criterion was 0.407. Based on the aforementioned classification, the number indicates the optimal fit of the overall first research model. The high GOF criterion confirms the overall model with power. Therefore, it is concluded that the research model has sufficient validity in general. The results of the research hypothesis test related to the model were carried out using the bootstrap test, the results of which are presented in Figure *2* (model tested based on path coefficients) and Figure 3 (model tested based on t-statistics).

Figure 2

The Model tested based on path coefficients



In this study, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to determine the validity of the model. This coefficient of explanatory variance measures an endogenous variable by exogenous variables., The coefficient of determination for the variable "GO" is 0.107 (Figure 2). This means that about 10 percent of the changes related to this variable are explained by changes in the variable of students'

perception on TP. The coefficient of determination for the variable "student achievements" is 0.364. This means that 36.4 percent of the changes related to this variable are explained by changes in the variables of GO and students' perception on TP. The tested research model is also presented based on the t-statistic.

Figure 3

The Model Tested Based on T-Statistics

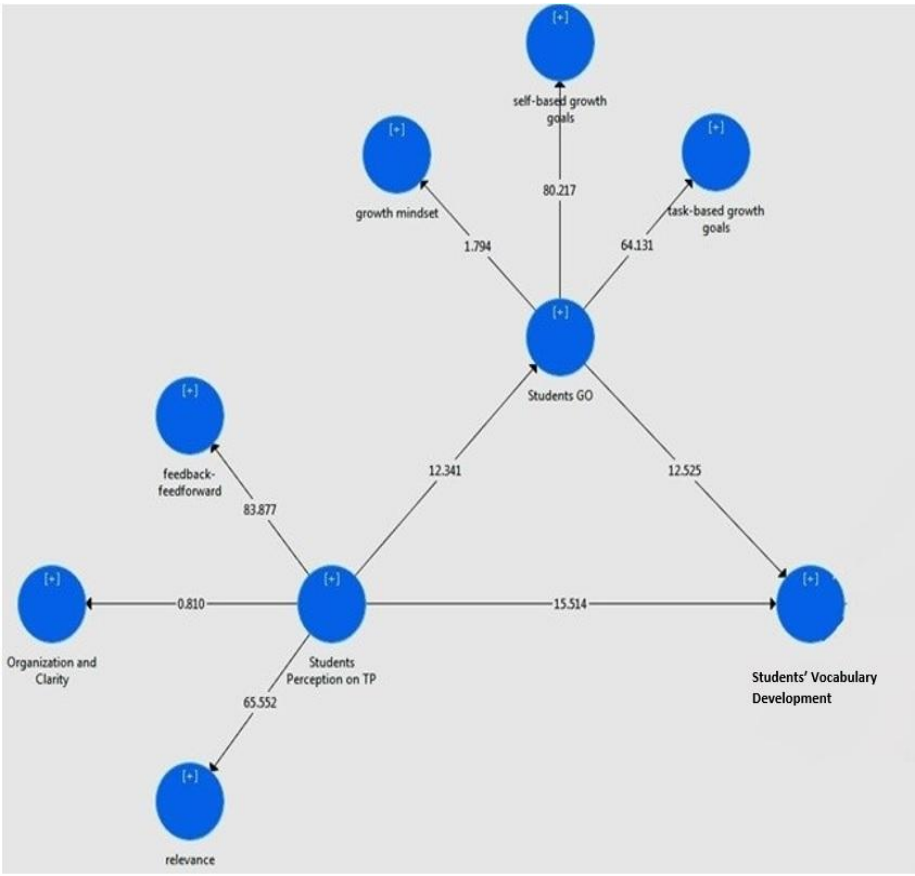


Figure 3 shows the significance of the relationship between the constructs based on the t-statistic. For this purpose, a bootstrapping test was used. According to this figure, if the t-statistic values are above 1.96, the relationship is significant.

Results

The results of the analysis depicting the causal relationship between students' perceptions of TP and GO are presented in detail in Table 7.

Table 7

The Path Coefficient and T-Statistic for the Casual Association across Students' Perception on TP and Growth Orientation

	The path coefficient (β)	t Value	Result
Feedback-feed Forward ↔ students'GO	0.179	2.313	Accepted
Organization and clarity↔ students'GO	0.190	2.336	Accepted
Relevance ↔ students'GO	0.129	2.313	Accepted
students' perception on TP↔ students' GO	0.327	12.341	Accepted

The first hypothesis of the research states that "there is a causal association across students' perception on TP and GO. According to Table 7, it is observed that t-statistic related to the causal association across different elements of teaching practice and the total students' perception on TP is higher than 1.96, at a significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a causal association across components of TP (i.e. organization and clarity, feedback-feedforward and relevance) and GO. Furthermore, it is observed that the path coefficient and t-statistic pertaining to the causal association across students' perception on TP with GO are equal to 0.327 and 12.341, respectively, which shows that there is a causal association across students' perception on TP and GO.

The results of the analysis of casual association across students' perception on TP and learner achievements are summarized in Table 8 in detail.

Table 8

The Path Coefficient and T-Statistic for the Casual Association across Students' Perception on TP and Learner Achievements

H02	The path coefficient (β)	t Value	Result
Feedback-feed Forward ↔ students' vocabulary development	0.255	2.371	Accepted
Organization and clarity↔ students' vocabulary development	0.185	2.579	Accepted
Relevance ↔ students' vocabulary development	0.106	2.053	Accepted
students' perception on TP↔ students vocabulary development	0.408	15.514	Accepted

The Second hypothesis of the research states that "there is a causal association across students' perception on TP and learner vocabulary development. It was found that the value of t-statistic is higher than 1.96 for the interaction between components of students' perception on TP and students' vocabulary development, at a significance level of 0.05. This finding suggests that there is a causal association across these components and learners' affective and vocabulary development. According to the path coefficient and t-statistic pertaining to the causal association across students' perception on TP with learner achievements there is a causal association across students' perception on TP and learner achievements ($P<0.05$). It is noteworthy that organization and clarity was found to have higher interaction with students' vocabulary development. Moreover, relevance was found to have higher rate of interaction with students' affective achievements. Table 9 represents the results of the analysis of casual association across students' growth orientation and learner achievements.

Table 9

The Path Coefficient and T-Statistic for the Casual Association across Sstudents' Growth Orientation and Learner Achievements

H03	The path coefficient (β)	t Value	Result
Growth Mindset ↔ students' vocabulary development	0.274	10.254	Accepted
Self-based goals ↔ students' vocabulary development	0.265	7.568	Accepted
Task-based goals↔ students' vocabulary development	0.284	7.542	Accepted

Table 9 presents the path coefficient and t-statistic pertaining to the causal association between different elements of GO with learner vocabulary development. The results show that there is a causal association between GO elements and learners' affective and vocabulary development ($t \geq 1.96$, $p < 0.05$). Collectively, Table 9 indicates that students' vocabulary development has stronger association with task-based growth goals.

The third hypothesis related to the model tests the causal association across students' perception on TP and student achievements, considering the mediating role of GO. The Sobel test was used to test this hypothesis. The Sobel test statistic is as follows:

Table 10

Results of Sobel Test for the Mediating Role of Growth Orientation in the Causal Association Between Students' Perception on TP and Student Achievements

Variable	β	Z	VAF	Result
a (students' perception on TP → students' GO)	0.327	8.933	0.210	Accepted
b (students' GO → students' vocabulary development)	0.331			
S_a	0.026			
S_b	0.026			
c (students' perception on TP → students vocabulary development)	0.408			

According to Table 10 and the results of the Z statistic, it can be said with 99% confidence that the causal association across students' perception on TP and student achievements is mediated by GO (with a Z value of 8.933 and a VAF value of 0.210). Based on the results of the VAF (variance inclusion) test, it can be concluded that GO can explain and mediate 21% of the causal association between students' perception on TP and students' achievements.

Discussion

The present study aimed to situate Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory of triadic reciprocal determinism in the Iranian EFL context. It examined how students' perceptions of TP, specifically instructional relevance, organization and clarity, and feedback/feedforward, interact with GO and possibly influence vocabulary development among secondary high school learners. Through partial least squares structural equation modeling on a large sample of 1,105 tenth-grade students, the results confirmed significant direct paths from TP to GO ($\beta = 0.327$, $t = 12.341$, $p < .001$) and from TP to vocabulary achievement ($\beta = 0.364$, $R^2 = 0.364$), with GO emerging as a significant mediator (Sobel $Z = 8.933$, $VAF = 0.210$). Notably, task-based growth goals within GO showed the strongest predictive power for vocabulary outcomes, while organization and clarity exhibited the most robust direct link to achievement. These findings not only validate the hypothesized model but also illuminate the dynamic interplay of environmental (i.e., TP), personal (i.e., GO), and behavioral (i.e., vocabulary development) factors, extending Bandura's framework by demonstrating its applicability in EFL setting.

Theoretically, the results refine SCT by specifying how instructional elements recalibrate personal factors in a culturally constrained environment. In Bandura's triadic model, reciprocal determinism posits that environmental influences shape personal cognitions, which in turn drive behavioral adaptation (Bandura, 1997). Here, feedback/feedforward emerges as the most potent environmental

antecedent, fostering incremental beliefs and mastery-approach goals that buffer against fixed mindsets prevalent in exam-oriented systems (Dweck, 2006). This aligns with Elliot and McGregor's (2001) achievement goal framework, where task-based growth goals, emphasizing competence improvement against criteria, proved particularly adaptive for vocabulary acquisition, a domain requiring iterative practice and self-regulation. The mediation effect (21% variance accounted for) underscores GO's role as a transformative personal mechanism, challenging the unidirectional environmental determinism often critiqued in SCT applications to non-Western contexts (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). By integrating growth constructs (mindset, self-based goals, task-based goals) into a unitary GO framework (Bostwick et al., 2017, 2019), the study advances Martin et al.'s (2022) growth goal-setting model, revealing how instructional clarity disrupts cycles of learned helplessness in EFL learners.

These patterns both replicate and extend prior research, while highlighting context-specific nuances. The direct positive associations between TP dimensions and vocabulary achievement corroborate meta-analytic evidence on instructional quality's role in language outcomes (Hulleman et al., 2017; Wisniewski et al., 2020), as well as Iranian studies showing clarity and relevance as predictors of EFL engagement (Khajavy et al., 2021). Similarly, GO's link to achievement echoes Bostwick et al. (2022), who found growth goals moderating adaptive engagement in mathematics, and Martin et al. (2020), who linked them to perseverance in secondary settings. However, the full mediation through GO diverges from direct-effect models in Western samples (e.g., Burns et al., 2019), where environmental influences often bypass personal factors. In the Iranian EFL context, this mediation may reflect cultural emphases on teacher authority and normative evaluation, where students' growth beliefs act as a necessary psychological filter for instructional benefits (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). Unlike studies in learner-centered systems (Granziera et al., 2022), where feedback effects are immediate, the amplified role of feedforward here aligns with feedback literacy models (Carless & Boud, 2018; Winstone et al., 2022), suggesting that Iranian learners, facing rote-heavy curricula, require explicit future-oriented guidance to translate feedback into growth-oriented action.

Conclusion

The findings hold profound relevance for EFL education system all around the world more particularly the Iranian EFL context, where secondary learners grapple with motivational and psychological challenges amid high-stakes national exams like the Konkoor, large class sizes, and a traditional emphasis on memorization over communicative competence (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018). In this context, where fixed mindsets and performance-avoidance goals contribute to widespread de-motivation and learned helplessness (Khajavy et al., 2018; Papi & Khajavy, 2021), the mediating power of GO offers a culturally attuned counter-narrative: even within resource-limited public schools, low-cost TP adjustments such as transparent lesson structuring and actionable feedforward can cultivate

incremental beliefs, reducing dropout risks and enhancing vocabulary retention critical for exam success. This is especially vital for female-majority samples like the present one (66% female), as Iranian girls often face compounded gender-based motivational barriers in STEM-adjacent EFL tasks (Derakhshan et al., 2023). By positioning GO as a bridge, the study addresses a key gap in Iranian SCT applications, where prior work has focused on self-efficacy without integrating growth goals (Fathi et al., 2023).

Practically, these insights inform targeted interventions for Iranian EFL educators and policymakers. Teacher training under the Ministry of Education should emphasize modular workshops on feedforward techniques (e.g., personalized progress prompts during vocabulary drills) to foster task-based goals without overhauling curricula. Materials developers could embed reflective prompts and relevance-linking activities, promoting self-based growth in under-resourced rural-urban divides. At the policy level, incorporating GO metrics into teacher evaluations could incentivize clarity-focused practices, mitigating burnout and enhancing equity for underrepresented learners (Fathi et al., 2021). However, certain limitations temper these conclusions and point to future directions. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference; longitudinal studies tracking TP-GO-achievement trajectories over a semester are thus essential. In addition, self-reported TP perceptions may inflate shared method variance, warranting multi-source data (e.g., classroom observations). Finally, the focus on vocabulary in Northwest Iranian public schools constrains generalizability; replications in diverse provinces and outcomes (e.g., speaking proficiency) are needed.

All in all, this study advances Bandura's (1986) SCT by empirically situating triadic reciprocal determinism in EFL secondary classrooms more specifically in Iran, revealing GO as the key personal mediator through which teaching practices drive vocabulary achievement. Amid myriad challenges in educational system, the pronounced effects of feedback/feedforward and organizational clarity offer a pragmatic blueprint for reform. Fostering task-based growth goals can empower learners to reframe instruction as mastery opportunities, enhancing communicative equity. By bridging international theory with Iranian realities, these findings not only enrich global EFL scholarship but also equip educators, textbook designers, and policymakers with actionable strategies to cultivate resilient language learners. Future interventions testing integrated TP-GO training can ultimately nurture a generation of agentic, growth-oriented EFL achievers.

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Appendix A

Growth Orientation and Teaching Practice Inventory

دانش آموز عزیز، سلام

خواهشمند است با اختصاص دقایقی از وقت خود، ما را در انجام این پژوهش یاری نمایید لازم به ذکر است که پاسخ های شما بصورت محرمانه و بی نام ثبت خواهد شد و نتایج آن تنها برای اهداف پژوهشی استفاده می گردد. پیشاپیش از همکاری شما صمیمانه تشکر می نماییم.

نام دبیر:	نام مدرسه:	جنسیت:
نام کلاس:	شهر:	سن:

جهت پاسخگویی لطفا دیدگاه خود را نسبت به درس زبان انگلیسی، کلاس درسی مدرسه و دبیر مربوطه در نظر گرفته و از راهنمای زیر کمک بگیرید:

کاملا مخالف:۱ مخالف: ۲ نظری ندارم: ۳ موافق:۴ کاملا موافق: ۵

ردیف	عبارات	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵
۱	وقتی مطلب جدیدی در کلاس آموزش داده می شود، معلم اطمینان حاصل می کند که در ابتدا با قسمت های آسان تر مبحث را شروع کند.					
۲	در حین کار روی تمرین ها و فعالیت ها در کلاس، معلم به خوبی به ما کمک می کند.					
۳	در کلاس انگلیسی معلم اطمینان حاصل می کند که قبل از وارد شدن به مبحث جدید به اندازه کافی مبحث قبلی را تمرین کرده ایم.					
۴	در کلاس انگلیسی معلم بازخورد های سازنده ای ارائه می دهد که در بهبود یادگیری و انجام فعالیت ها کمک می کند.					
۵	به محض اینکه متوجه مبحث شدیم معلم به ما این فرصت را می دهد که بطور مستقل روی فعالیت ها کار کنیم.					
۶	معلم انگلیسی توضیحات واضح ارائه می کند.					
۷	معلم ما از مثال ها و تصویر سازی ها برای توضیح دادن نکات سخت به خوبی استفاده می کند.					
۸	معلم ما به طور موثری مطالب را مرور و خلاصه می کند.					
۹	معلم ما بطور واضح مفاهیم انتزاعی و نظریه ها را تفسیر می کند.					
۱۰	معلم ما تکلیف هایی می دهد که به یادگیری ماده درسی کمک می کند.					
۱۱	ارائه مطالب توسط معلم کامل سازمان یافته است.					
۱۲	معلم در کلاس کاملا آماده است.					
۱۳	معلم ما از مدت زمان کلاسی بطور کارآمد استفاده می کند.					
۱۴	اهداف درس و پیش نیازهای آن کاملا واضح توضیح داده می شوند.					
۱۵	معلم روی مطالبی که تدریس می کند تسلط کامل دارد.					

					محتوای درسی مفید است.	۱۶
					محتوای درسی معنادار است.	۱۷
					محتوای درسی هدفمند است.	۱۸
					میزان هوش شما ثابت است و شما کار چندانی برای تغییر آن نمیتوانید انجام دهید	۱۹
					شما همواره به شکل چشم گیری قادر به تغییر میزان هوش خود هستید.	۲۰
					من هدف های مشخصی برای تکالیف مدرسه تعیین می کنم.	۲۱
					من هدف های چالش برانگیزی برای انجام تکالیف مدرسه برای خودم تعیین می کنم.	۲۲
					من بیش از اینکه با سایر دانش آموزان در رقابت باشم، با عملکردهای قبلی خودم رقابت می کنم.	۲۳
					سعی می کنم تکالیف مدرسه ام را بهتر از قبل انجام دهم.	۲۴
					هدف من در کلاس گرفتن نمره های بهتر نسبت به سایر دانش آموزان است.	۲۵
					گاهی اوقات از این می ترسم که شاید محتوی این کلاس را با آن دقتی که می خواهم متوجه نشوم.	۲۶
					من می خواهم به طور کامل بر مطالب ارائه شده در این کلاس تسلط داشته باشم.	۲۷
					ترس من از عملکر ضعیف در این کلاس اغلب به من انگیزه می دهد.	۲۸

Appendix B

Vocabulary Test

1 I can't understand why some people ..... or kill the animals.
a. protect b. save c. hurt d. lose
2 I think that shopkeepers will soon ..... the price from $50 to $60.
a. cut b. increase c. pay d. divide
3 I love Swiss chocolate, ... dark Swiss chocolate.
a. naturally b. hopefully c. especially d. orally
4 No one knows if they are alive or dead. We can only ..... and wait.
a. choose b. enjoy c. hope d. explain
5 These animals sleep in the day and ..... at night.
a. lose b. hope c. add d. hunt
6 Thanks for helping me with my homework; you ..... my life!
a. destroyed b. hurt c. finished d. saved
7 I read on a website that dinosaurs ..... about 65 million years ago. Is that true?
a. died out b. lost c. put out d. killed
8 Of course I make mistakes, I'm only ..... .
a. hunter b. plain c. human d. future
9 When they started their life together, they were young and full of ..... .
a. hope b. past c. family d. relatives
10 Firefighters came to ..... the fire in the city center.

a. pay attention b. take care c. cut down d. put out

11 There are lots of things in that shop, for ....., games, toys and flowers.

a. different b. future c. example d. recently

12 I'm free tonight. I'm going to read some ..... .

a. dangers b. poems c. types d. plains

13 Many houses, schools and offices were damaged and thousands of ..... people were taken to the hospital.

a. dangerous b. hopeful c. endangered d. injured

14 I really like to be a ..... because I enjoy visiting different places in the world.

a. tourist b. hunter c. pilot d. zookeeper

15 The children were saved but the fire ..... their home.

a. caught b. suffered c. destroyed d. injured

16 I don't feel like going to cinema. Let's take a walk ..... .

a. but b. instead c. rather d. short

17 They found the children ..... and well after being missing for several days.

a. brave b. regular c. alive d. injured

18 Every time an animal ....., we lose a part of our natural world forever.

a. puts out b. grows up c. dies out d. takes off

19 I think it's ..... for a mother to feel sad when her children leave home.

a. endangered b. natural c. wonderful d. amusing

20 It's important to .....care of your teeth.

a. grow b. make c. give d. take

21 The big panda is one of the world's most ..... animals.

a. hopeful b. divided c. extra d. endangered

22 Tom ..... his left knee during practice, so John had to play the game in his place.

a. hurt b. took c. gave d. left

23 She planned to work till she ..... the money to buy a new laptop.

a. reported b. ended c. saved d. protected

24 There are a lot of dark ..... in the sky. It's going to rain.

a. images b. sites c. clouds d. tickets

25 It is important to ..... your skin from the harmful effects of sun.

a. attract b. protect c. divide d. destroy

26 She'll be happy to ..... that she can leave hospital tomorrow.

a. hear b. describe c. lose d. increase

27 Like many young men, he does not ..... attention to his health.

a. do b. make c. get d. pay

28 We have a/ an ..... right now. Would you please wait here?

a. danger b. pattern c. average d. visitor

29 Everyone says Kate is very hard-working and will have a successful ..... .

a. idea b. past c. hope d. future

30 He isn't working today, so ..... he'll feel better tomorrow.

a. carefully b. recently c. interestingly d. hopefully

Authors' Biography

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