

# THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS' SELF EFFICACY AWARENESS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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*Self-  
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***Abstract** - This article reviews the importance of self-efficacy in learning English, and some ways to promote self-efficacy. Recently, self-efficacy becomes a well-known subject in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Some former researches have shown the positive impact of self-efficacy on academic performance, it is defined as a self-oriented perception in assessing his/her capability in learning English. Teachers may encourage students to enhance their self-efficacy through some approaches. They may employ student-centred learning, accommodate students' learning styles through varied teaching strategies and approaches, provide clear instruction, routine practice and feedbacks.*

***Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, English Students, Motivation*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Acquiring four skills is quite challenging for some non-native speakers who do not have sufficient lexical or grammatical knowledge. In spite of the urgency in acquiring the supporting elements, non-native speakers of English still have to overcome the influence of mother tongue or first language to become proficient in English. Indonesian language, for instance, has different pattern and structure from English; on top of that, Indonesian language is not the only language owned by Indonesian speakers. Some speakers tend to frequently use their mother tongue, and treat it as being the national language. The writer actually found the condition within the students of STBA Pontianak. The students of STBA Pontianak comes from remote areas of West Kalimantan which school curriculum do not prioritise the acquisition of English skills since their early age. Some students come from Pontianak usually have sufficient English ability, but it is unlikely to other students who are from other districts. It consequently generates the gap amongst students in terms of different English level and ability. The situation subsequently puts the teachers of STBA Pontianak to deal with varied students' learning needs. Students' general problems are not only found in STBA Pontianak, as Al-Nasser's study (2015:1612-1613) shown that some students' challenges in learning English in Saudi Arabia were interferences

of mother tongue/first language, educational regulation, absence of linguistics for teacher, conservative curriculum and teaching methods. Al-Nasser's findings are generally occurred in Indonesian learning environment, some English teachers still deal with these students' learning problems because lack of students' awareness in learning English as a foreign language.

Armstrong (2009:6) stated that Gardner's eight multiple intelligences includes linguistic intelligence as one of eight. Furthermore, he emphasised that people have distinctive acquisition of all intelligences; they may potentially improve their intelligences; they use some intelligences all together since the intelligences are related to each other, and; they have alternative learning strategies to incline toward certain intelligences. Hence, self-efficacy awareness may become a solution to enhance students' language performance, and the writer believes that teachers play a significant determinant in promoting the awareness of learning foreign language since they determine the learning discourse, they are also know students' potential competences. In addition, learning English requires students' full commitment for the process of language acquisition is actually a personal matter. The lesser the input quality should be balanced by the better teaching approaches. In other words, the teachers should be able to put their best efforts in enhancing students' ability. However, this ideal conception requires comprehensive commitment from the institution and its teachers, and it is likely attainable in a long-term teaching plan.

In addition, learning a foreign language is a personal and independent achievement; learners who have similar curriculum, teaching method and learning duration may generate different outcomes. Therefore, this conceptual based article aims to propose the idea that self-efficacy awareness should become mutual concern in order to accelerate English skill acquisition. This paper will be beneficial for students and teachers of STBA Pontianak. It is expected that the students may refer to this article to enhance their self-efficacy, and the teachers put this concept in practice.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. The Importance of Students' Self-Efficacy

To understand self-efficacy, it is necessary to elaborate the interrelatedness between English skills in learning English. Students must acquire productive and receptive skills altogether since these four skills are interrelated. Students should be aware that a good English speaker is also a great listener in order to create an interactive discussion, or to deliver messages in an effective and efficient way. They should also learn that a well-written article is obviously influenced by one's intensive reading activity. In other words, a student who learns English is expected to be a good speaker, an attentive listener, a capable writer and a thorough reader.

In order to actualise the expectation, students should have a high sense of self-efficacy. This term is actually queer for some people, while the word *motivation* seems to sound louder. However, some researchers have linked the impact of self-efficacy on students' learning performance. Fan, Lindt and Arroyo-Ginner et al. (2009:44-45) proved that students' learning achievement was influenced by their academic self-efficacy. They also stated that self-efficacy was developed through interpersonal relationship in which students' close friends, parent and teacher have each role in encouraging self-efficacy. Likewise, Bonyadi, Nikou and Shahbaz (2012:113) argued, self-efficacy determines the reasons why learners have different attitude although they have similar education. Sahile (2014:183) also found that the students with a high sense of self-efficacy may achieve better performance. He suggested the importance of self-efficacy awareness in learning, and recommended teachers to be able to interfere for the development of students' self-efficacy. In addition, Shiu, Lin and Chien (2012:37) concluded that students who have a high sense of self-efficacy are innovative in searching for solutions or techniques to deal with learning problems. According to Zuo and Wang (2016:84), adult learners should have self-efficacy to guide them in learning process. They also believed that a high sense of self-efficacy has an impact on learning acquisition as they can cope with the internal or external issues.

Recently, self-efficacy becomes a well-known subject in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. As stated by Kadim (2014) and MouiliFatiha,

BouhamidiSliman, Mustapha et al. (2014), two essential aspects in learning English are motivation and attitude. Dornyei (1998:117) emphasised that motivation becomes the foremost aspect in learning English. In detail, he believed that motivation is the key to students' learning accomplishment, not individual's outstanding competence nor teaching methods. As a cognitive process, Dornyei (1998:119), furthermore, mentioned the aspects to shape motivation under educational perspective are *attribution theory, self-efficacy theory and self-worth theory*. According to Dornyei (1998:119), "Self-efficacy theory refers to people's judgment of their capabilities to carry out certain specific tasks, and, accordingly, their sense of efficacy will determine their choice of the activities attempted, as well as the level of their aspirations, the amount of effort exerted, and the persistence displayed". Similarly, Raoofi, Tan and Chan (2012:60) cited Bandura (1986) in defining self-efficacy, it said that self-efficacy is an independent perspective about his/her capability which likely determines the success of assigned tasks. Raoofi, Tan and Chan (2012:66) found that the sense of self-efficacy highly influences second language acquisition in a short-term period; teachers' efficacy can significantly motivate students in coping with learning difficulties.

In short, self-efficacy is a self-oriented perception in assessing his/her capability in learning English. Some students who have awareness in learning English tend to have a high sense of self-efficacy, and are consistent to improve their English skills. Differently, students who lacks in motivation for learning English may have a low sense of self-efficacy which can impede their learning process and achievement.

#### **B. Promoting Students' Self-Efficacy Awareness**

To date, a specific research talking about the ways to promote self-efficacy has not been found. Therefore, after considering the importance of self-efficacy in learning English, the writer recommends teachers to take a part in promoting self-efficacy awareness. It is because a teacher is an influential part of learning process who designs and drives the learning objectives and outcomes. As stated by Cheung (2001:57), "As learning is a goal-oriented activity, the teacher's task is to involve their students in a search for meaning and importance in learning materials, and to make that search a pleasurable experience". It is strengthened by Lamb

(2017:301) who argued that English teacher is not only demanded to obey the educational system, but they are also required to entertain and educate. Piniel and Csizér (2013:539) concluded that learning environment which designed by the teacher may support the development of students' self efficacy, it seen from how students enjoy the learning process. Briefly, teachers have a potency of raising students' self-efficacy awareness by including it in the learning process or adjusting teaching materials.

Teachers' self-efficacy may raise students' awareness because the teachers should have passed the learning process and have overcome their difficulties in learning English. As Lu, Zhang, Wu (2017: 131-132) found, English teachers have some problems: teachers' knowledge in pronunciation, linguistic competence, cross-culture and research activities. Teachers who have possessed a high sense of self-efficacy can no longer cope with the aforementioned problems. Their experience in overcoming the problems may become students' reference in improving and using English properly since they are one of significant roles in motivating the students' learning. As strengthened by Zuo and Wang (2016:95-99), the source of self-efficacy as found in the Chinese learners who learn English are students' former experience from English examination ("past performance"), students' environment including friends or teacher as the role models ("peers' and advisors' influence"), positive feedback from educational milieu ("social persuasions"), personal preparedness in overcoming nervousness (emotional and physiological states), individual evaluation on learning performance ("self-awareness of English proficiency"), routine practice enabling familiarity ("difficult levels of tasks") and positive attitude and thinking toward English as a foreign language ("interest"). Furthermore, Cecal (2015:166) suggested three ways for teachers to promote students' learning motivation, they are routine practice, learners' autonomy and collaboration.

Sampson (2012:319) emphasised that one of Dornyei's motivational elements is the external factor (teacher, curriculum, teaching style and so on) which form the ideal learning outcomes. Sampson, furthermore, listed the following Dornyei's six broad categories for self-motivation in second language learning:

1. *construction of the ideal L2 self;*
2. *strengthening the vision of this self;*
3. *making the ideal L2 self plausible;*
4. *activating the ideal L2 self;*
5. *developing an action plan (such as goal-setting); and*
6. *counter balancing the vision of the ideal L2 self with consideration of failure.*

*Sampson (2012) cited Dornyei (2009, pp. 32–8)*

Sampson (2012) emphasized three elements of motivational self-system: individual's future desire, the prospect and positive learning outcomes, as well as learning experience from surroundings. In other words, external factors have capacity to change one's internal perception. Teachers, particularly, may empower students' self efficacy by giving vivid instructions. As Wang, Kao and Liao (2016:63) highlighted the significance of students' learning strategies and sense of self-efficacy, they also suggested teachers to introduce learning strategy and provide clear instruction.

Tseng, Gardner and Yeh (2016:25) showed that learner-centred approach highly motivates students in learning. Student-centred learning becomes an ideal approach to teach English in the recent years; it is designed to place the teacher as a facilitator or mediator in the learning process, and require students to be active. Likewise, Shamsavari (2014:279) studied the perspective of teachers and students toward learning autonomy, and she found that both participants agreed with the positive effect of learning autonomy in learning a language. However, the expected outcome of this approach seems unrealistic if the students still depend on teachers' instructions, and cannot determine their own action or decision. In order to make sure that student-centred learning is successful, students should have critical thinking and creativity before engaging in the learning process. It means that students should be self-confident, independent and reliable learners who have overcome their nervousness or negative attitude. This concern answered by Tseng, Gardner and Yeh (2016:18) who suggested the importance of enhancing students' critical thinking in education for developing a reasonable, rational and empathic individuals. It indicates that autonomous learning process should be balanced with

teachers' objective approach in order to enhance students' stable judgment in making decision and their positive aptitude.

Negahi, Nouri and Khoram (2015:1726) compared the sense of academic self-efficacy between humanities and engineering students. Although they only found the differences in the students' major and do not find any difference of self-efficacy in gender groups, they suggested the students to recognise their learning styles for improving the sense of self-efficacy. Their suggestion, however, is applicable if the students aware of their learning pattern and needs. It becomes impractical if they still cannot cope with the different patterns between the first language and English, because some non-native speakers tend to automatically process the language. In order to understand the context, some learners usually still have to use and translate from their first language. It is actually in line with Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky (1998) cited by Horwitz (2001) who said that language aptitude guides students in learning foreign language.

According to the aforementioned experts, the writer recommends English teachers and students to play their roles properly. Self-efficacy depends on students' perception toward the materials or tasks, and their awareness determines the level of their self-efficacy. In general, students should understand their motives of learning English (for level of competence, acknowledgement or personal goals) which support them in facing difficulties. At first, they should aware the difference of their mother tongue and English to make sure they learn (think) English from British or American perspectives, not their mother tongue. In addition, they should also learn their proper learning styles and approaches to optimise their learning process, usually learning preference facilitates students in facing learning obstructions. To enhance their abilities, students can refer to their former (failed/successful) experience; form a collaborative group consisting of preferred members; regularly assess or evaluate their speaking, writing, reading and listening skills; practice their skills individually by recording their performance, and; gather feedback from teachers or friends.

Some former researches have shown the positive impact of self-efficacy on academic performance. Self-efficacy is considered as task-oriented motivation; thus, a teacher should be able to accommodate students' varied learning styles. A

school which demands student-centred learning should have frequently evaluated teacher's roles and students' participation in classroom activity. Teachers should not only give exercises or quizzes to students, but they should also provide consistent feedbacks to students. Teachers should have verified that the instruction in the exercises or exam questions are valid and understandable; thus, the students can interpret the instruction and provide correct answer. Teachers, in addition, should also enliven learning environment by having varied teaching approaches, balancing the group and individual works, not accentuating certain learning strategy. Teachers may allow students to use gadgets or games for learning process yet in limited time.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Ideally, awareness of self-efficacy should initially come from the students, while teachers only direct them to appropriate course. The notion, however, probably works on students who learned English from an early age. Some students who have low English skills still should understand their internal motivation, find proper ways to learn and commit to improve their skills. In the meantime, teachers should promote the term self-efficacy to all students through some classroom activities.

This concept, however, still has to be actualised to see the impact of self-efficacy on students' learning performance; thus, the writer suggests the teachers of STBA Pontianak to promote the concept of self-efficacy through some learning activities to the students. Besides, the next researchers who are interested in self-efficacy awareness may assess students' self-efficacy, and its relation to their learning performance.

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