

Sources of self-efficacy as predictors of EFL learners' course performance

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Received for publication: 06 September 2016.

Accepted for publication: 22 December 2016.

Abstract

It is generally believed that self-efficacy as a psychological construct contributes to learning process and academic performance. The present study attempted to investigate the possible differences among self-efficacy sources as predictors of EFL learners' academic achievement in educational settings. To this end, a questionnaire of EFL self-efficacy sources together with Nelson English Proficiency Test were administered among 219 senior EFL learners. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that of the four sources of self-efficacy, only enactive mastery experience accounted for a statistically significant portion of the variance with course performance and, therefore, was a positive predictor of students' course performance. The results of the present study imply that when learners continue to develop self-efficacy, they will have better English performance scores. It is also concluded that what an educational system needs to consider, in addition to general teaching and learning process, is focusing on personality features of learners. The findings of this study can, therefore, provide implications for researchers, teachers, materials developers, and syllabus designers.

Keywords: Self-efficacy sources, Course performance, Language learning.

Introduction

Self-efficacy, as a variable investigated in the present study, is viewed as one of the powerful motivational constructs (e.g., Bandura, 1997a; Schunk, 1991). It is a context-specific perception (Bandura, 1986) and is defined as individuals' subjective convictions to learn successfully or fulfill a given task by the skills they possess (Pajares, 1996). According to social cognitive theory, cognitive abilities are used by human beings to self-organize, self-reflect and self-regulate according to the changes in the environment through which social destinies are determined (Bandura, 1986). In this regard, people need to be proactive in their progress and make things happen through their own effort. To do so, self-efficacy is said to be the key to this view of human agency (Pajares, 2009). Low self-efficacious people tend to avoid obstacles and difficult tasks (Schunk, 1990). While highly efficacious people take on challenging tasks, showing lower levels of anxiety (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1983).

So far, many studies have explored the impact of self related terms (e.g., Anastasi & Urbina, 2007; Banyard & Grayson, 2000; Bowling, 2009). However, few studies have been conducted to examine the effect of self-efficacy sources on learners' course performance, especially in EFL context; this justifies the need for further studies. The present study, therefore, sets out to measure the effects of the four self-efficacy sources as the mediating variables of EFL learners' course performance. Furthermore, it is intended to measure the importance of self-efficacy in the learning process and to analyze how they influence academic achievement, in general, and the acquisition of English as a foreign language, in particular.

Literature review

The construct of self-efficacy

The term 'self-efficacy' was first introduced by Bandura (1977a) and constructed under his social cognitive theory. He defined self-efficacy as "people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). He believed that self-efficacy can be equalized with perceived ability, which is the maintained confidence individuals hold in their ability to perform successfully (Bandura, 1997a). The efficacy perceived by individuals is considered as a determinant to speculate the amount of effort individuals might expend while being confronted with any probable problems and their chances of being successful (Bandura, 1977b). The effect of perceived self-efficacy, therefore, can be exercised by individuals over the events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994).

Furthermore, many more comprehensive studies were conducted, which resulted in alternative definitions. Despite some differences, the central focus of all the definitions is on self-efficacy not only as a contributing factor, but also as a good predictor of learners' success. Bandura (1986), for example, explained that the process of both creation and use of self-efficacy by individuals is intuitive.

Maddux (1995) sees self-efficacy beliefs as a potential which can be exploited to surmount obstacles through considering current circumstances and making good use of self-beliefs and expectations about personal abilities in order to adjust their behavior accordingly.

Pajares (1996) interpreted self-efficacy as individuals' subjective beliefs in accomplishing a given task successfully through applying a range of required skills. Derrington and Goddard (2008) interpreted self-efficacy as self-confidence and normal/sensible self-esteem which are two key elements of psychological well-being.

The importance of self-efficacy beliefs lies in the cognitive, motivational, affective and decisional processes through which human functioning is regulated (Bandura, 1994). They clearly affect the ways individuals think in, approaches they take and reactions they show when facing obstacles. These processes determine whether individuals are debilitated or take self-enhancing ways (Bandura, 1994). Furthermore, Bandura (1995) argued that the knowledge individuals acquire needs to be properly guided by a belief in the abilities individuals possess; this is crucial to make an effective use of them in proper settings. According to him, learning is significantly influenced not only by the knowledge individuals have, but also by their beliefs in their abilities to ensure effective practice.

It is undeniable that many factors have crucial roles in the learning process. According to Pajares and Urdan (2006), many aspects of human functioning such as motivation, learning, self-regulation and achievement cannot be well elucidated unless the key role of self-efficacy beliefs is considered.

Concerning the role of self-efficacy in educational settings, learners' thoughts and beliefs have received increasing attention by many researchers (e.g. Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Carmichael & Taylor, 2005; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Pajares, 1996, 2003; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Relich, Debus, & Walker, 1986; Schunk, 2003); Learners' realization of their full potential, known as self-efficacy, refers to personal beliefs related to accomplishing a task successfully and how competent they have proved to be (Bandura, 1977b). Hence, considering the main and influential factors behind the development of students' self-efficacy can be a major breakthrough for educational institutions to boost students' ego and self-efficacy.

Bandura (1986) takes the view that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs act as a mediator between individuals' knowledge and their performance. By considering the significant role of learners' beliefs and their motivation in the learning process, he argues that being competent will not

necessarily result in accomplishing the given tasks successfully. In this concept, success or failure of individuals depends on both knowledge and their judgment of their capabilities. In other words, the higher individuals' notion of self-efficacy, the greater the effort, elasticity and perseverance they show and, consequently, the higher their chances of being successful in course performance (Bandura, 1986). He believed that self-efficacy plays an essential role in learners' progress as it has noticeable effects on students' progress by either accelerating or hampering them (Bandura, 1984). It is also claimed that self-efficacy can be exploited to predict students' future achievements (Jungert & Anderson, 2013; Klassen, 2007; Lackaye et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-efficacy as a contextualized perception (Bandura, 1986) can be discussed in great detail and in different contexts as it has been proved to have a noticeable impact on academic achievement. In the academic context, forming a picture of successful performance and imagining the possible stages to be taken, known as self-representation, is referred to self-efficacy (Schunk, 1987). According to Schunk (1991), academic self-efficacy refers to individuals' deep-seated beliefs in their successful performance of expected academic tasks which are designated for special levels.

Self-efficacy was analyzed in more detail by Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons (1992). They classified self-efficacy into two subcategories including self-efficacy for self-regulation and self-efficacy for academic achievement; they emphasized that these two categories are interrelated with each other. These authors pointed out that "students' perceived self-regulatory efficacy would influence their perceived self-efficacy for academic achievement, and their efficacy should, in turn, influence their personal goals and grade achievement" (p. 665).

With all the studies carried out, it must be stressed that two decades of research have clearly established the validity of self-efficacy and confirmed its predictive power of students' motivation and learning (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-efficacy sources

According to social-cognitive theory of Bandura (1994), students' self-efficacy beliefs are derived from four principal sources of information. The first influential way to make a real success of a particular situation is through enactive mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997a). Bandura argued that enactive experiences are the most effective way of building a strong sense of efficacy. Individuals can establish a robust sense of self-efficacy through the successes they achieve or have it undermined by the failures they experience (Bandura, 1994, 1997a); this is especially true when learners' sense of efficacy is yet to be firmly established. Palmer (2006) is of the opinion that mastery experiences are the most influential source of self-efficacy as they provide learners with authentic evidence showing how capable they are of accomplishing a given task successfully. Students, therefore, develop their self-efficacy beliefs through interpreting the results of their activities.

The second approach through which self-beliefs of efficacy can be strengthened is vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997a). In this way, learners are exposed to some social models with recognized similarities in their capabilities and circumstances. This helps learners, who take the role of observers, in obtaining valuable information about their own capabilities (Schunk, 1987). This is due to the fact that observing models, students build up their confidence in accomplishing the same task successfully (Schunk, 1989), for which, the similarities between students and models are key to the success of this factor. Conversely, the exposure to the models' unsuccessful attempts can make students underestimate their capabilities, and consequently, their self-beliefs of efficacy will be undermined (Schunk, 1989).

The third way of reinforcing the beliefs of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion. Individuals' self-efficacy can be strengthened if they are verbally encouraged by emphasizing their abilities to fulfill a given task (Bandura, 1997a). The effectiveness of the social persuasion and the constructive

feedback have been proved to maximize if learners consider the sources of information as reputable and reliable ones and that these sources provide them with realistic information (Bong & Skaalvic, 2003). It is also mentioned that it is more difficult to inspire personal beliefs of self-efficacy through verbal persuasion than to weaken it (Bandura, 1994). The verbal encouragement needs to be realistic to have sustainable results on promoting learners' self-efficacy. Otherwise, they will end up with disappointing results. Likewise, undermining learners' self-efficacy through convincing them of not being capable of succeeding or fulfilling the given task, they might refuse to face challenges and consequently be unable to fully realize and develop their true potential (Bandura, 1994).

The psychological and affective state of an individual is the fourth way through which self-efficacy beliefs can be modified. In this regard, different feelings are interpreted as indications which can result in boosting or enfeebling self-beliefs of efficacy (Bandura, 1997a). For instance, a possibility of failure can be expected considering learners' negative signals such as nervous tension, fatigue, and excitement, which can cause excessive stress and failure (Pajares, 2002a). These states are partly used to estimate and recognize abilities by people (Pajares, 1997).

Beneficial cognitive processes in increasing self-efficacy

A number of beneficial procedures such as proximal and specific goal setting, information processing, social models, constructive feedback, and rewards are used to affect the process of developing and increasing students' academic self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk, 1995). Supplying any of these factors to students can result in raised self-efficacy and subsequently in being successful (Schunk, 1995). Schunk (1995) also believed that putting the strategy into words, which students apply to perform a task, can enhance their self-efficacy as it draws their attention to the predominant features of a task and also aids learners with strategy retention and encoding. Krashen (1994) explains that students with higher self-efficacy have more chances of being successful in language acquisition. It is also said that individuals who believe they have the required means to fulfil a given task successfully are usually more efficacious than others. Moreover, their progress made through drawing up successful strategies can enhance their self-efficacy (Schunk, 1995). Therefore, they will intensify their effort showing better perseverance and resilience (Bandura, 1986).

There have been many studies attempting to investigate self-efficacy in different fields and from different aspects. However, few studies have explored the possible relationships between self-efficacy sources as well as examining their predictive power on students' achievements, especially in EFL contexts. In one of these studies, Bandura (1997a) argued that mastery experiences are the most powerful sources of self-efficacy. The same findings have been found by other researchers (e.g. Klassen, 2004; Lent et al., 1991; Lent, Lopez et al., 1996; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Matsui, Matsui, & Ohnishi, 1990; Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Templin (2011) conducted a study to investigate the impact of four self-efficacy sources on ESL self-efficacy beliefs of the participants as well as the relationship between ESL self-efficacy beliefs and ESL proficiency. It was concluded that self-efficacy sources predicted both ESL self-efficacy beliefs and ESL proficiency. However, ESL self-efficacy beliefs did not predict ESL proficiency, nor were they found as mediators between self-efficacy sources and ESL proficiency.

Arslan (2013) attempted to study the possible relationship between individuals' opinions about the sources of self-efficacy beliefs and their gender, academic achievement, the grade level, socio-economic status, and learning style. The results showed a significant correlation between the participants' beliefs about self-efficacy sources and academic achievement.

Loo and Choy (2013) studied the possible correlation between four self-efficacy sources and academic performance. The findings revealed a correlation between self-efficacy sources and both students' scores on mathematics achievement and cumulative GPA of electronics-related

engineering diplomas. Moreover, the results showed enactive mastery experience as the main predictor of individuals' academic achievement in mathematics.

The findings of a study by Hamid Hassan et al., (2015) confirmed the predictive power of self-efficacy as well as its significant relationship with students' academic achievements.

As it was noted above, there appears to be a paucity of studies investigating the sources of self-efficacy as predictors of EFL learners' academic achievement. The present study is an attempt to partially bridge this gap. More specifically, this study addresses the following research question:

Are there any significant differences among sources of self-efficacy as predictors of EFL learners' course performance?

Methodology

Participants

In the present study, a sample of 235 Iranian senior high school students in Marand from different schools (both state and private) was selected. After the administration of The Nelson (350A) Test of English Language Proficiency and taking the results into account, the number of participants was reduced from 235 to 219. All the participants were female students and their age ranged from 17 to 18.

Instrument

To answer the research question, the following instruments were made use of:

First, Nelson English proficiency test (350A) (Fowler & Coe, 1976), which is a standard way of measurement for homogenizing intermediate level students, was administered to the participants to ensure their homogeneity regarding their proficiency level. It consists of 50 multiple-choice items in reading, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation sections.

The validity and reliability of Nelson Test have been assessed and confirmed by many researchers in different contexts, and it has proved to be a highly valid and reliable test of English proficiency (e.g. Anderson & Betz, 2001; Hampton, 1998; Klassen, 2004; Lent et al., 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Matsui et al., 1990). The reliability and validity of this Test has also been confirmed in Iranian context through many studies in recent years (e.g. HadiMahmoodi & TajBibiTalang, 2013; Shahivand & Pazhakh, 2012; Yaghoubi & Ahmadi, 2014). So, the validity and reliability of this instrument was taken for granted.

Second, the EFL Self-Efficacy Sources Questionnaire, adapted from Usher and Pajares (2006), was used to assess the participants' evaluations of the four sources theorized to inform self-efficacy beliefs. In this questionnaire, consisting of 21 items, six items (1, 6, 10, 12, 15, 17) addressed mastery experience (e.g., I get good grades in English), three items (4, 16, 19) addressed vicarious experience (e.g., People I admire are good at English.), five items (5, 8, 14, 18, 20) addressed social persuasions (e.g., My teachers believe I can do well at English.), and seven items (2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 13, 21) addressed psychological/affective factors (e.g., I get really nervous when using English.)

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire, as an established instrument, were also assumed because the instrument has been used extensively in different contexts to measure learners' self-efficacy. Some of the previous studies by Anderson and Betz (2001); Hampton (1998); Klassen (2004); Lent et al. (1991); Lopez and Lent (1992); Matsui et al. (1990), have reported Cronbach alpha values of .80 to .86 for enactive mastery experience, .76 to .87 for vicarious experience, .72 to .91 for social persuasion, and .76 to .91 for psychological/affective states. Still, to ensure the reported results in the context of this study, Cronbach's alpha was checked, which turned out to be .77 for enactive mastery experience, .78 for vicarious experience, .94 for social persuasion, and .87 for psychological/affective states, and .89 for the whole questionnaire.

The scale in this questionnaire has been modified to a 0-100 response format on the recommendation of Bandura (2006) as this format is more sensitive and reliable than scales with smaller ranges: four-interval, six-interval, etc.

Finally, in order to measure the students' academic achievements, their English grades, which were collected through the end of year school exam, were requested and obtained from the school principal. The exam and its contents were the same for all the participants set on the academic year 2015/2016. The minimum pass average grade was 10 out of 20. Therefore, all the grades collected were out of 20.

Procedure

The following procedure was followed in order to achieve the purpose of the present study.

First, in order to reduce anxiety and to help the participants to relax, all the participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Then, the Nelson English proficiency test was administered to ensure that there were no significant differences among the participants in terms of their proficiency level. The participants had 45 minute to complete the test.

To homogenize the participants, their scores on the Nelson English proficiency test was summarized, and the mean and standard deviation were computed. The scores of those who had scored more than one standard deviation away from (above or below) the mean were excluded from all subsequent analyses.

The students' self-efficacy was assessed through a multidimensional questionnaire. The participants had 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

While administering the questionnaire to the participants, it was clarified that the questionnaire is a set of statements aimed at finding out how students feel about themselves, in general, and in relation to school, in particular. The participants were also requested to provide the answers that best reflected their feelings and beliefs since there was no wrong, right or preferable answer.

The EFL Self-Efficacy sources Questionnaire was scored on a scale of 100 (definitely true) to 0 (definitely false). Moreover, questions 2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 21 were reverse-worded in the psychological and emotional states section (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Therefore, in the procedure of computing the self-efficacy sources questionnaire, the researcher took care to reverse the scores of these 7 questions by subtracting the participants' responses from 100. For instance, a score of 30 becomes 70 ($100-30=70$), 80 becomes 20 ($100-80=20$), and 50 remains the same ($100-50=50$).

Course performance, on the other hand, was obtained by collecting the participants' English course grades in their final written exam administered during the academic year of 2015-2016.

To analyze the collected data and to test the research hypothesis, SPSS software (version 21) was used for the statistical analysis. Multiple regression analysis procedure was run to investigate the predictive power of self-efficacy sources (as the independent variables) on the students' course performance (as the dependent variable).

Results and discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate which sources of self-efficacy are better predictors of learners' course performance. To this end, a stepwise multiple regression was used, Table 4 shows that of the four sources of self-efficacy, only enactive mastery experiences account for a statistically significant correlation with course performance ($p < .05$). The result also indicates that the other three sources, i.e. vicarious experiences, social persuasion and affective states, did not contribute to the regression model (Stepwise criteria: probability of $F \leq .05$).

Table 1: Variables Entered/Removed^a of Self-efficacy Sources

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Mastery	.	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).

^a Dependent Variable: Course Performance

Table 2: Model Summary^b on Self-efficacy Sources

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.373 ^a	.139	.135	3.11513	.139	35.025	1	217	.000

^a Predictors: (Constant), Mastery

^b Dependent Variable: Course Performance

Based on model summary (Table 2), it can be seen that enactive mastery experiences and course performance share over 13% of the variance. In other words, enactive mastery experiences explain around 13% of the total variance in course performance.

The ANOVA procedure was used to test the null hypothesis that the predictive power of the model is not significant. The results of the ANOVA (Table 3) indicate that the F-value is statistically significant ($F(1, 217) = 35.02, p < .05$). The results show that the predictive power of the model is significant.

Table 3: ANOVA^a Results on Self-efficacy Sources

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	339.881	1	339.881	35.025	.000 ^b
	Residual	2105.779	217	9.704		
	Total	2445.660	218			

^a Dependent Variable: Course Performance

^b Predictors: (Constant), Mastery

To find out how strong the relationship between self-efficacy sources and course performance is, the standardized coefficients and the significance of the observed t-value for the predictor was checked. Table 4 shows the results. The model shows that for every one standard deviation change in one's enactive mastery experiences, there will be about .37 of a standard deviation change in one's course performance. Moreover, the standardized coefficient is statistically significant.

These results indicate that enactive mastery experience is a positive predictor of course performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: Coefficients^a on Self-efficacy Sources

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.360	.671		15.438	.000
	Mastery	.075	.013	.373	5.918	.000

^a Dependent Variable: Course Performance

Discussion

The present study attempted to investigate the predictive power of self-efficacy sources on EFL learners' course performance.

Regarding the research question, it was found that of the four sources of self-efficacy, only enactive mastery experience accounts for a statistically significant correlation with course performance. The results also indicated that enactive mastery experience is a positive predictor of course performance. This result is in line with that of Bandura (1997a) and other researchers (Klassen, 2004; Lent et al., 1991; Lent, Lopez et al., 1996; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Matsui, Matsui, & Ohnishi, 1990), who provided empirical evidence to support the contention that mastery experience is the most influential source of self-efficacy. Moreover, the finding of the present study accords with that of Usher and Pajares (2006), who investigated the relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and female students' academic achievement. Their results revealed that of the four self-efficacy sources, mastery experience had the strongest correlation of .58 with learners' academic achievement. Further support for this finding comes from Templin (2011), who concluded that of all self-efficacy sources, only mastery experiences are significant predictors of overall ESL proficiency (accounting for 8% of variance), while vicarious and social persuasion showed negative relationships with students' course performance. Affective state, on the other hand, showed a weak correlation of .12 with academic achievement. This finding of the present study is also in line with Arslan's (2013) study, which was conducted among 984 secondary school students, indicating a significant correlation between participants' beliefs about self-efficacy sources and academic achievement. Furthermore, this finding seems to accord with that of Loo and Choy (2013), who reported a correlation between self-efficacy sources and students' academic achievements (GPA), stating enactive mastery experience as the main predictor of individuals' academic achievements.

Another finding of the present study was that of the four self-efficacy sources, three of them were excluded from the regression equation. However, affective states can be argued to show a better correlation with course performance compared to vicarious experiences and social persuasion. This finding differs from the results of a study by Usher and Pajares (2006), in which vicarious experience and social persuasions showed significant correlations of .25 and .34 with learners' academic achievement, respectively.

There may be some plausible reasons for the results obtained in the present study. Participants' level of proficiency can be one of the contributing factors, which was not controlled in this study. Templin (2011), for example, investigated English self-efficacy among university students, whereas the present study extended the investigation to senior high school students. Thus, the participants of the present study may not have been able to well self-monitor and self-evaluate themselves when responding to the required questionnaires. Moreover, according to Bandura (1997a), the notions of self-efficacy are task-specific and problem-specific. Thus, students' language acquisition in different educational levels may encounter different obstacles and, therefore, develop different magnitudes of language self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is also believed to be multidimensional (Bandura, 1997a) and, thus, different self-efficacy levels are developed in different learning environments. Consequently, students take on different learning tasks and show different levels of acceptance facing learning difficulties.

The test-oriented educational system can be another factor to which the obtained results of the present study and its differences with others can be partially attributed. Students in such a system are engaged in the fashion of force-feeding to obtain good marks in order to gain admission to their favorite universities. Thus, learning the language is considered as a way of testing and obtaining grades rather than for its intrinsic nature. In such circumstances, learners' self-efficacy, as their inner learning development, is probably ignored.

Another reason lies in the way of evaluating students' English academic performance. According to Bandura (1997a, p. 49), "the optimal level of generality at which self-efficacy is assessed varies depending on what one seeks to predict and the degree of foreknowledge of

situational demands". Accordingly, academic performance should be evaluated based on the situational demands, since a great deal of classroom time is spent on assignments, quizzes, and teacher-made tasks, which could be a determining factor in students' choice of behavior in the classroom, and such behaviors are associated with students' expected outcomes (i.e., outcome expectancies).

Conclusion

The results of the present study imply that when learners develop self-efficacy, they will have better English performance scores. Jinks and Lorschach (2003) state that self-efficacy leads to success by motivating behaviors and, therefore, is antecedent to academic success. It is believed that the relationship between self-efficacy, learning, and achievement can be explained through a framework for self-efficacy, engagement, and learning (Linnerbrink & Pintrich, 2003). In other words, learners' self-efficacy is in reciprocal relationship with behavioral, cognitive, and motivational engagements. However, Bandura (1986) argues that since self-efficacy is determined through situations and by the individual, tasks, conditions, and environments, its correlations with learning engagements can change over time.

The results of the present study provide further information explaining more specifically reciprocal correlations between English self-efficacy and English performance scores. The results showed that of the four subscales of English self-efficacy, only enactive mastery experiences affect learners' English course performance in Iranian EFL context. It may be concluded that if language teachers wish to improve their learners' academic achievement, one way of doing so would be through boosting their levels of enactive mastery.

To conclude, this study attempted to make a contribution to the understanding of the psychological functioning in English language learning in terms of correlations of English self-efficacy and its sources with English language achievement. However, it has to be acknowledged that more issues might have been arisen on this topic and thus more research studies are required to explore the effectiveness of other variables on English language. In short, it is hoped that the findings of the present study can provide insights for teachers as well as learners.

The results of the present study can have implications for researchers, teachers, materials developers, and syllabus designers. Because of the importance of mastery experiences, teachers may need some practical recommendations to help their students achieve mastery. To do so, a profound understanding of the elements of curriculum, i.e. needs analysis, goals and objectives, testing, materials, teaching, and program evaluation can be of great usefulness for teachers (Brown, 1994).

According to Locke and Latham (1990), in order to maximize learners' performance, learning goals need to be specific and challenging while care must be exercised to avoid setting non-existent, vague, easy, or too difficult goals. Large goals need to be broken down into objectives that are more manageable for learners in order to help them with attaining some mastery in the short term while maintaining their performance over the long term.

For low-scoring and failing students, it can be helpful for the teacher to let such students know that their poor performance was not the result of lack of ability; rather, their poor results were caused by a lack of effort, focus, and/or persistence. Learners' level of mastery will be increased if they increase their effort, focus and persistence. Learners may also need help in recognizing their success. Students with low self-efficacy may fail to notice their perceived successes; thus, neither their self-efficacy nor their course performance is improved by their successes. It seems teachers should find ways to help each student recognize their own improvement in mastery.

Materials, teaching, and program evaluation can also be designed for maximum mastery: learners' academic performance is believed to be raised through class self-efficacy in which

personalized instruction in a cooperative environment plays a more dominant role compared to uniform structure in a competitive environment (Bandura, 1997a). Group work is a common classroom activity in English course. However, Bandura (1997a, p. 175) suggests that “sorting students into ability groupings further diminishes the perceived self-efficacy of those cast into lower academic tracks”.

Linnerbrink and Pintrich (2003) emphasize the role of self-efficacy as a facilitator in relation to cognitive engagement and academic performance. This implies that learners’ confidence should be built up during their past learning experiences as it can lead to more cognitive engagement in the learning process. It is advisable that English teachers provide students with task-specific and evaluative feedback because, according to Chambliss and Murray (1979), evaluative feedback can provide learners with reasons about their confidence to fulfill given tasks.

Instructions given in classes also need to be well designed in order to help learners with their self-efficacy as they concern students’ future experiences (Hackett & Betz, 1989). Morgolis and McCabe (2004) suggest providing moderately challenging tasks for learners so that students will be more willing to devote time and energy to schoolwork and develop persistence. Brown (2000) suggests that sequences of techniques from easier to more difficult can get students more involved in learning. Moreover, English teachers can help learners by encouraging them to give it a try (Morgolis & McCabe, 2004) while appropriate instructional and independent levels of materials are needed to help students believe that effort, persistent, and correct use of strategies will help them in achieving their academic successes.

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