Students’ Self Efficacy in Learning English: A Case Study at a Vocational High School

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Abstract—Students have different motivation in learning particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. One that motivates students in learning the target language is their self-efficacy. To optimize the English learning process, this study aims to find out the level of second-grade senior high school students’ self-efficacy. The study which was conducted to a class also investigated the factors affecting their self-efficacy in learning English. To achieve the objectives, a case study design with multiple instruments was employed in this study. Data analysis showed that the students’ self-efficacy levels were varied encompassing low, moderate and high level. The data also revealed that there were several factors influencing students’ self-efficacy. Relevant pedagogical implications to increase students’ self-efficacy in learning English are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: EFL, self-efficacy, vocational school

1. INTRODUCTION

In understanding and learning English, in Indonesia students particularly at the context where English is used as a foreign language. Students employ different ways on learning depending on individual’s learning styles. El Hmoudova (2015) assert that learning style is one of the concepts that are postulated by researchers to depict learners’ differences and varied needs. When learning something, the ways that students go about collecting, interpreting and proceeding information can be surprisingly different. Different learning style can influence students performance (Shaw, 2011). Although Shaw (2011) research was in e-learning subject, but the situation also happen in another subject. Moreover, worldwide research shows that people do have different preferences sometimes referred to as learning styles and are used to describe and help teachers understand the ways in which different students learn (El Hmoudova, 2015).

Raoofi et al (2012) state that individual differences predict success in language learning. Individuals learning a foreign language have many differences in their rate of learning and the ways to develop their skills.

Students learn the target language better when they are motivated. One of the things that motivates the students is their self-efficacy in learning. Albert Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy was developed as part of a larger theory. Izyn and Parilah (2015) state that self-efficacy refers to the belief that individuals hold about their ability to accomplish certain tasks. This belief will influence their performance on those tasks. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in predicting human performance and thus, helping them to succeed in the tasks given to them. A person with strong self-efficacy will be motivated and is likely to perform better in the task given. Conversely, a person with low self-efficacy is more likely to become frustrated when they encounter difficult challenges or tasks which they perceive as something that should be avoided rather than mastered (Idrus & Salleh, 2011: 62). Moreover, Bandura as cited in Bryant (2017) elaborates that there are four sources to develop students’ self-efficacy. Those sources of self-efficacy are enactive mastery experience, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and physiological.

The first and most prominent source, mastery experience, develops over time as students experience successes and failures. Mastery experience, or personal performance accomplishments, is considered as the most effective way to create a strong sense of efficacy. The second source is social persuasion. It develops as students interact with the individuals around them. Social persuasion is a further means of strengthening people’s beliefs that they possess the capabilities to achieve what they seek. For instance, verbally encouraging parents and teachers can raise student’s self-efficacy. The feedback that teachers give to students and the manner it is presented are considered as an important source of self-efficacy.

The third source, vicarious experiences, occurs as students view the successes and failures of others. A student’s sense of self-efficacy is more positively impacted by others who experience
success, if common characteristics are shared such as age, gender, and perceived similar abilities. The vicarious source where students may increase self-efficacy through modeling has the highest volume of research. The Vicarious/Model sources encompass different types of modeling such as cognitive modeling, confident and pessimistic modeling, coping and peer modeling, self-modeling and group modeling.

A person's physiological and emotional state is a source of information that can be used to provide an assessment of one's abilities. A person's ability can be known from somatic information that appears from his physical and emotional state. Somatic indicators of one's efficacy are especially relevant in the realm of relating to physical achievement, health functions and how one can deal with stress.

In regard to English, most Indonesians do not actively use it in daily interactions or in academic settings. In vocational schools, students learn English only for about 2 hours in a week. Then at the end of high school level, students have to take National Examinations developed by the Ministry of Education and English is one of the subjects examined at the National Examinations. The English examination includes listening and reading comprehension, but excluding speaking and writing skills. Despite the decades of teaching and learning EFL at schools, the English competence of Indonesian graduates is considered low.

There are different goals between vocational schools and senior high schools. The Education and Culture Ministry of Indonesia develops a different curriculum for both schools. The curriculum used for vocational schools tends to contain fewer functional materials than the one developed for ordinary high schools. However, similar to the other kinds of high schools, English teaching in vocational high school identifies four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing as an integral aspect. In vocational school where the study conducted, the source of material given to the students mostly from authentic material. According to Pitriana, Khadijah, and Lestari (2018), authentic material refers to those taken from real-life sources, and they do not design for teaching and learning purposes. Some examples of authentic material used in learning activity are newspaper article, a rock song, a novel, a radio interview, and traditionally fairy stories. Pitriana, Hadijah, and Lestari (2019) argued that one of the main purposes of using authentic materials in the classroom is to “expose” students to as much real language as possible.

However, even though the teacher has tried to use authentic material in learning to increase students understanding in English lesson, the results have not been maximized. For this reason, researchers try to find the reasons why English learning has not yet reached the learning objectives. Among several causes, researchers tried to obtain information about students’ motivation in learning English. A person's motivation in learning can be sourced internally or externally. The self-efficacy is an internal motivation that can determine a person's success in learning. As stated by Santrock (2008), that individuals who have high self-efficacy are usually assiduous and do not easily give up when faced with difficulties and challenges. Researchers assume this research is feasible to be carried out as preliminary research so that problem solving in student motivation can then be sought.

Based on the reason above, the important role of self efficacy in learning as well as the low English competence of students, this study attempts to answer the following questions: 1. What is the most common self-efficacy level of the 11th grade students at one vocational school in Garut in learning English? 2. What is the most important factors influencing students’ self efficacy in learning English?

II. METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted at a vocational school in Garut. The concerned site was chosen due to the convinience reason that the school gave the opportunity to the researcher to conduct the research. Participan dari penelitian ini adalah satu kelas 11 di vocational school yang terdiri dari 23 orang. Dari 23 siswa, hanya 11 orang yang memberikan respon dengan menjawab questionnaire.

In terms of data, the study utilized multiple data sources, those are questionnaire and interview. The multiple data sources follow the characteristics of qualitative design proposed by Creswell (2019) who states that qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interview, observations, documents, rather than rely on a single data source. The questionnaire was given to a class of 11th graders to gain information about their self efficacy level on their capabilities to accomplish certain task with English as their foreign language. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), a questionnaire is the participants respond to the questions by writing, more commonly it was done by marking the answer sheets. To ensure that the students understand the content of the questionnaire, the items of the questionnaire were given in Indonesian.

In the questionnaire, the statements covers four skills through which the self efficacy of the students are determined, those are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The questionnaire was administered online by using Google Forms (https://docs.google.com/forms). The answers of the questionnaire were then rated by rating scale designed by Bandura. students’ self-efficacy is categorized
into three levels; high, moderate and low. The scale of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura is explained in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Bandura’s Self Efficacy Scale

In addition to the questionnaire, the study also utilized interview. It was conducted to investigate the factors influencing students’ self-efficacy. It was given in form of open-ended questions. In this research, the participants were asked about their beliefs about their ability to engage successfully in interactions with native English speakers as well as their beliefs about their ability to learn English. The efforts that students make to interact in English can be considered to be within the same domain, whether those efforts involve attending classes or making opportunities to speak English to their friends in the class.

In analyzing the interview data, the researchers first transcribed the students’ answers. After that, the students’ answers were grouped to discover the factors influencing self-efficacy. Then, the answer were analyzed and interpreted to answer the second research question.

III. DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two sections based on research questions proposed in introduction section. Thus, the explanation begins with the findings on the most common self-efficacy level of 11th grade students at a vocational school in learning English and is followed by the factors influencing students’ self-efficacy.

A. The Most Common Students’ Self Efficacy in Learning English

From the questionnaire given to students, out of 25 students only 17 students responded. Statements are divided into four sections according to skills in language learning, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The result of the questionnaire shows in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Self Efficacy Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I understand the content</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of English song</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I understand the content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of English announcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I comprehend English material given by the teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I understand English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can introduce myself in</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can ask someone using</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can perform role play in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can answer teacher’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>questions in English</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can comprehend the</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>message within</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English narrative text</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I understand the message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within English short story</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- I can read English news</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>paper</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- I can read English novel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can write English text</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a paragraph</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can arrange sentences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>into paragraph</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- I can write English short</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can rewrite English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material given in a classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Result of Self Efficacy Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, the first part consists of some statements regarding listening skills. The propositions are concerned with students’ understanding about the contents of the song, understanding the contents of the announcement, understanding the subject matter, and understanding the commands given by the teacher. Of the 17 students, most students, namely eight students (47.1%), were at the moderate level, four students (23.5%) were at the low level, and five students (29.4%) were in the high level of self-efficacy.

In the questionnaire regarding speaking skills, statements include the ability to speak students in English. Propositions relate to students’ ability to introduce themselves, ask others, play roles, and answer teacher questions. Of the 17, mostly students, seven students (41.2%) were at the moderate level, five students (29.5%) were at the low level, and five students (29.5%) were at the high level of self-efficacy.

In the questionnaire regarding reading skills, the statement includes students’ confidence regarding their ability to understand English texts. Statements include understanding the contents of narrative text, understanding stories in short stories, understanding
the contents of newspapers, and understanding novel stories. Of the 17, most students, seven students (41.2%) were at the moderate level, seven students (41.2%) were at the low level, and three students (17.6%) were at the high level of self-efficacy.

In the questionnaire statement regarding writing skills, the propositions include students' confidence in writing English text, arranging sentences into paragraphs, writing short messages, and rewriting material taught by the teacher. Of the 17 people, nine students (52.9%) were at the moderate level, five students (29.4%) were at the low level, and three students (17.6%) were at a high level of self-efficacy.

From the grouping of self-efficacy questions based on the language skills as show in Table 1, we can observe that most students are at moderate self-efficacy levels, followed by low self-efficacy, and the lowest percentage is at the level of high self-efficacy. The result mean that most students feel capable, but are not entirely sure they can do the task in learning English and achieve the goals set. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire also shows that only a small proportion of students have a strong belief in self-competence or self-ability that he can manage his behavior in doing the task, overcoming obstacles, and achieving the goals set.

The response to the questionnaire shows that only a small proportion of students are at a high level of self-efficacy, which means that only a small proportion of students are confident and able to solve problems related to English language learning and feel able to achieve learning goals. This condition is crucial to be resolved because motivation has a strong relationship with academic achievement. Sembiring, et. al (2018) asserts that as a primary component of one's motivation, self-efficacy can affect people's learning behavior such as effort and persistence, achievement and also the environment.

B. Source of Self-Efficacy in Learning English

In this research, the second research question is asking about the source of self-efficacy in learning English. For this reason, this section answers the source of students' self-efficacy in learning English and the factors that influence it. To find the information students were asked to respond to questionnaires consisting of close-ended and open-ended questions.

According to Bandura (1997), there are four sources of self-efficacy. Those sources are an active mastery experience, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and physiological experience. To be able to answer the research objectives, the questionnaire grouped into four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997).

The responses given by students are as follows:

Enactive Mastery Experience

Some statements in connection with enactive mastery experience reveal the experiences of students when they are learning English. Enactive mastery experience provide genuine proof of whether students can manage his behavior in doing the task, overcoming obstacles, and achieving the goals set.

Furthermore, students with low self-efficacy tend to have low academic performance. Conversely, students who have high levels of self-efficacy usually have good academic performance. This is stated by Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) stated that there is a strong correlation between self-efficacy and academic expectations, thus students with low self-efficacy have a lower academic expectation and show a less academic performance compared to those with high self-efficacy. Besides, Shang (2010) states that individuals who expect success in a particular enterprise anticipate successful outcomes. In other words, students who are confident in their academic skills expect high marks on exams and expect the quality of their work to reap benefits. The opposite is also true of those who lack such confidence. Shang (2010) statement inline with Schunk(1991) that Low self-efficacy hinders learners' participation in learning activities while lack of learning strategies prohibits them from solving problems they encounter in language learning (Schunk, 1991).

Figure 2 shows the result of the questions asked about students’s English mastery. Out of seventeen students, six students (35.3%) answered they master English, whereas eleven students (64.7%) answered that they did not master English.
Figure 3. Students Understanding towards English Lessons

Figure 3 shows the result of next question in questionnaire, asking about students’ understanding towards English lesson. Out of seventeen, nine students (52.9%) understood the material given, whereas eight students (47.1%) think that they did not understand it.

Figure 4. Basic English

Figure 4 shows third question given in questionnaire. The question asked about the basics of learning English. Out of seventeen, eleven students (64.7%) answered that they had a good basic English that was obtained in junior high school or had attended an English course, while six students (35.3%) felt they did not have good basic English.

To get more information about the most common level of students’ self-efficacy, the questionnaire also asked about students’ experiences when they feel succeed in learning English. Some of students’ answers are as follows.

- I feel succeed in learning English when I was asked to give an example that the teacher was not taught the student.
- I feel succeed in learning English when I did storytelling in front of the class
- I think I'm succeed in learning English when I learn English, and English language films assist me.
- I think I'm succeed in learning English when I can speak English fluently.
- I think I'm succeed in learning English when I tried to write and convey some words and knew the purpose of what I said.

Vicarious Experience in Learning English

Some statements were given to students regarding students’ vicarious experiences in learning English. In addition to the enactive experience, self-efficacy is also influenced by one’s observations of the learning experiences of others and makes others who are considered successful in certain areas as a model to emulate. In the questionnaire there are several statements to determine the vicarious experience factor in students. According to Bandura (1997) modeling serves as another effective tool for promoting a sense of personal efficacy.

Figure 5. Friends as model

Figure 5. Friends as model

The questions asked about whether students took good examples from friends who had good grades in English lessons. Out of seventeen, nine students (94.1%) answered that took good examples from friends who had good grades in English lessons, whereas one student (5.9%) answered that s/he did not do that.

Figure 6. Friends as model

The second question in questionnaire still asking about student’s preference in making their friends as model. The question asking, if there are students who can answer questions in English, whether they want to be able to do so. Seventeen
students in total (100%) responded that they wanted to be able to do it.

Next point in questionnaire asking about teacher’s support. The question asking whether their English teacher support and helps them feel confident in learning English. Seventeen students (100%) answered that their teacher always enabled them to be confident in learning English.

**Verbal Persuasion**

In this section, several statements regarding social persuasion were given to the students. According Bandura (1997) verbal persuasion serves as a further means of strengthening people belief that they possess the capabilities to achieve what they seek. In order to fulfill those function, researcher make statements relate to verbal persuasion students received from some different sources.

Then also asked about friends’ comments regarding English language skills. Of the seventeen students, three students (17.6%) said that their friends said that he was proficient in English, while 14 students (82.4%) said his friend had never told that he was skill in English.

**Physiological aspect in learning English**

In the source of self-efficacy regarding physiological and emotion, students need to answer several questions. Among them are the following:
In questions about student resistance when they experience difficulties in learning English. Of the seventeen students, one student (6%) said that they gave up when facing challenges. Whereas, most of the students, sixteen students (94.1%) said that they did not give up and kept trying to learn when experiencing difficulties in learning English.

Besides, students are also asked about their feelings when the teacher gives assignments in English lessons. Some of them feel challenged to do it, while others answer that they feel worried that they cannot do it. Furthermore, in the question about their feelings when learning English, they answered that they enjoyed it, and it depends on the learning strategy adopted by the teacher.

Based on the answers given about the source of self-efficacy, the most influential in learning English is the enactive mastery experience of students in learning English. Previous learning experiences in English make students have the confidence to be able to do the tasks given and the achievement of goals in learning English. Examples of students’ previous learning experiences include their experiences when learning English in elementary school, high school, or lessons when they took an English course. The results of interviews with students show that previous experience in mastering English makes them more confident. Confidence allows them to actively participate in learning English. In conjunction with the vocational school where they study, this confidence in mastering English makes them have more confidence in school and dreaming. Among those dreams are to continue education abroad or work abroad as competent and skilled ready-to-use workers.

The findings of this study also in line with statements made by Bryant (2017), that students describe their self-efficacy based on the development of a source of self-efficacy that has occurred in the lives of each student, especially in the mastery experience students have completed. Moreover, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) elaborates that the most prevailing and powerful influence on efficacy is mastery experience through which successfully performing the behavior increases self-efficacy for that behavior. The perception that a performance has been successful enhances perceived self-efficacy and ensures future proficiency and success.

IV. CONCLUSION

This present study has investigated the level of students’ self-efficacy in learning English as well as factors influencing their self-efficacy. Based on the findings, this study generates several implications.

Self-efficacy is one of internal motivation that heavily influences students an important feature in learning activity because people regularly overestimate or underestimate their actual capabilities, and these estimations may have consequences for the courses of action they choose to follow and the effort they exert in those pursuits (Hoy & Spero, 2000).

In this study, most students are in the level of moderate self-efficacy, which means that most of the students have sufficient confidence that they can complete the task in English and achieve the goals set. After a moderate level, the following percentage is students who have the belief that they are unable to complete assignments in English and achieve their stated goals. The smallest portion is those who have a high level of self-efficacy. Only a few students have the confidence that they can complete the given task and are confident they can achieve the goals set.

In connection with the second purpose of research, it can be concluded that the factor that significantly influences the ability to complete assignments and achieve goals is prior learning experiences, both formal and non-formal learning experiences. This finding does not mean that other sources are not necessary. Even from the finding section, it shows that vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional sources play a role in one’s self-efficacy in their respective portions.

Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that the level of student self-efficacy greatly influences the learning process and how students achieve learning goals. The findings are in line with what was said by Bandura (1997) that a person with strong self-efficacy would be motivated in learning. Conversely, a person with low self-efficacy is more likely to be frustrated. We can see that the level of self-efficacy can change. In this study, it was found that the most influential factor was prior experience. This means that a successful learning experience determines the current level of student self-efficacy. No less important is another source of self-efficacy. Someone who is used as a model of success, social support, and one’s physical condition and emotions also play an essential role.

For this reason, for a teacher it is crucial to be a good model for students, provide support and enthusiasm for students to continue learning and provide constructive feedback. These things seem to have an effect on students’ confidence and confidence to continue learning despite the many difficulties encountered.

As stated at the outset, this research is a preliminary study. From the results obtained from this study, it can further formulate strategies, actions and activities that can improve student self-efficacy. Improving student self-efficacy is important because
it plays a large role in the learning process and outcomes. As we can see from the findings that answer the second research question, there are four sources of self-efficacy, namely the active mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state.

In the future students are expected to have a high self-efficacy level by means of students getting reinforcement from sources that can increase self-efficacy. Some actions are expected to increase students' level of self-efficacy. Among them, namely, facilitating a pleasant learning experience and full of meaningful knowledge, teachers and students strengthen themselves to become models for students, strive to always provide constructive feedback, provide reinforcement and encourage each other when finding obstacles in learning English. Constructive feedback from the teacher can increase student motivation and provide good constructive information. As stated by Hudson (2005) in Nguyen (2010) that the teachers' constructive feedback is an important factor in the mentoring process. These things are expected to increase the level of self-efficacy of students so that learning objectives can be achieved and students feel happy when learning English.

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