

## Improving Self-Efficacy of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah's Students in Foreign Language Acquisition

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### A B S T R A C T

Students with low motivation refer to students with low self-efficacy which means they do not believe in themselves in achieving goals. This research used the descriptive qualitative method where the author described the situation in the Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Miftahul Jannah. In developing students' self-efficacy. The finding showed that to improve the students' self-efficacy, the author conveys the steps the teacher can take to help students improve their self-efficacy through authentic learning. Authentic learning should be used in foreign language teaching instead of conventional activities. Using authentic materials can motivate students and help them feel comfortable using a foreign language. Thus, foreign language teachers should assist students in engaging in constructive learning environments with authentic materials. The use of authentic materials should be emphasized when training potential foreign language teachers so that future teachers can demonstrate the use of authentic materials by improving students' self-efficacy. Moreover, teachers can help students set clear goals in learning a foreign language and provide honest feedback. In that way, teachers had a chance to see the differences in students' self-efficacy in learning a foreign language. The aim of the present review of literature is to focus on the improvement of students' self-efficacy in foreign language acquisition.

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### Introduction

Teaching English to non-native speakers is quite challenging for teachers who are also non-native speakers. After five years of experience teaching English to Indonesian students in rural areas, the author found that students have low motivation to learn English. According to Lamb (2012), the results of a study conducted in Indonesia still offer strong evidence for the existence of regional differences in high school pupils' motivation to learn English, and in the progress they make. In short, Indonesian learners gaining mastery of English depend on where they live. Learners living in the city have a huge advantage in practicing more than those living in rural areas. Students who live in the city also need to be more motivated to learn English than students who live in rural (Lamb 2012, p.1017). For students who live in rural areas, some factors that do not help them learn English are related to their mindset. For example, they do not need to learn English after graduating high school, they will not be going to college, and they only taking English classes to complete the credit.

The motivation for learning a foreign language is related to the term self-efficacy. It is mainly a cognitive self-concept of an individual concerning his perceived capabilities in each task. It is worthwhile to note that self-efficacy is task specific. It means that individuals' prior experiences with the tasks help them identify their level of self-efficacy (Ersanli, 2015). Self-efficacy in the second language context influences learners' motivation and learning. Bandura (2006) noted, "Self-efficacy, as a central

element of human agency, mediates between learners' aptitude, past achievements, and subsequent performances" (p.61). Many students still have low self-efficacy in learning a foreign language, and teachers should take the role for them as an advisor to improve this lack of confidence by enhancing students' self-efficacy in learning English.

Self-efficacy is one of the most potent motivational predictors of how well a person will perform in almost any endeavor. Together with the goals that people set, a person's self-efficacy is a strong determinant of their effort, persistence, and strategizing, as well as their subsequent training and job performance (Heslin & Klehe, 2006). Helping students to configure it might not be as easy as expected.

Based on the previous background, the author is interested in conducting research in Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Miftahul Jannah which already succeeded in improving the students' self-efficacy in foreign language acquisition. In this research, the author will find out about how to build students' self-efficacy, and how teachers encourage students to develop self-efficacy.

## Literature Review

### 1. Definition of Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) invented the term self-efficacy, which explains performance in specific tasks of a) personal factors, b) environmental events, and c) behavior (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). It is what students infer from the information from these sources; it is the judgment they make about their ability to succeed on a specific task or set of related jobs (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Self-efficacy makes a difference in how people feel, think, behave, and motivate themselves in terms of feeling, a low sense of it, is associated with stress, depression, anxiety, and helplessness (Zulkosky, 2009). This is related to students who do not believe they can achieve a good outcome in learning English. The students with high self-efficacy levels can be seen from their ability to manage, carry out, and solve the problems related to the learning tasks, certainly with the belief that the functions can be completed successfully (Bandura, 1977). In addition, self-efficacy is not about the skills individuals possess to accomplish a task, but about judgments of what individuals can do with whatever skills they have (Gahungu, 2007).

Self-efficacy appears to play a vital role in predicting learners' performance in educational contexts, and it can predict performance even better than actual abilities or aptitude (Schunk, 1991). Some theories state that it has a connection with students' motivational problems. Students who give up easily and cannot complete some tasks because they perceived difficulty and have low self-efficacy (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Students might not realize the importance of self-efficacy in learning a foreign language. So far, most of them have focused on the semester's final grades, not on the importance of learning English itself. In doing a task, they cheated and found the answers to some exercises on the internet.

When learning complex tasks, high self-efficacy causes people to strive to improve their assumptions and strategies rather than look for excuses (Heslin & Klehe, 2006). Self-efficacy is not only helping students in increasing self-confidence and suggestions but also increasing their cognitive and affective levels. Schwarzer (1992) noted that self-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. Some of these efficacy-activated events are of interest rather than merely intervening influencers of action (Schwarzer, 1992).

A student's self-efficacy can be divided into two categories based on the theory described above: the first category is high self-efficacy, where they believe in themselves and strive to achieve a goal. In simple language, students are confident, able to do work, and content with the work they are given. The second category is low self-efficacy, in terms of low self-efficacy, there is a lack of confidence among students. For example, when a student is given the assignment to work on a problem, they will not do it because they are not confident that it can be done. Some factors that underlie his distrust are the student's lack of ability in English, not trying to learn, and thinking that they will not be able to learn English.

Reiss (2012) stated that psychologists “have put forth two kinds of motivation theories: dualism and multifaceted theory. Dualism divides human motives into two types, for example, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation” (p.152). Intrinsic motivation is when a person does something for no reason because they love it and want to do it, as when a student plays baseball because they want to. At the same time, extrinsic is the opposite, where a person does something for a specific reason, such as a student who must finish an assignment to get a good score (Robinson, et al, 2012). Therefore, motivating students is also part of the benefit of self-efficacy.

## 2. How to Build Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1977), another way that a person can build self-efficacy is by witnessing demonstrations of competence by people who are like them. A role model has a big impact on improving students' self-efficacy because, as an observer, students will be inspired and try to copy what their role model achieved.

The importance of diverse representation can be understood after considering the power of role modeling for inspiring self-belief. Nowadays, through the internet and other digital mediums, people (especially young people) are exposed to many potential role models. For example, one of the soccer players might come from a poor family who struggled with funds and opportunities but could be the most talented soccer player ever. Students must have a role model as well, like an actor, a soccer player, a musician, or a teacher who has the same background as them.

Social persuasion is part of developing self-efficacy. After mastery experience and social modeling, social persuasion is the third source of developing self-efficacy. Essentially, this involves convincing people that they can succeed at a particular task. When a person is told that they have what it takes to succeed, they are more likely to achieve success. The definition of a self-efficacy prophecy is a belief or expectation that an individual holds about a future event that manifests because the individual holds it (Ackerman, 2018). Social persuasion is sometimes missed by teachers before the class starts without knowing the big impact that a short motivational speech can have. According to the theories above, students can improve their confidence before they learn something through social persuasion by teachers so that students do not feel burdened and enjoy the class, especially in English.

While not as powerful as a mastery for strengthening in developing self-efficacy, the capabilities to achieve our goals will do more for us than dwelling on our deficiencies. Therefore, a good mentor or, in this case, a teacher can boost self-efficacy not only through role-modeling but by serving as a trusted voice of

encouragement (Moore, 2016). Teachers may also help their mentee to recognize opportunities in which they can demonstrate competence (without being overwhelmed) and persuade them to step into the ring. One study found that tennis players who gave themselves a motivational pep talk before practicing a particular swing performed significantly better than a group who did not give themselves a pep talk (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2008). This finding suggests that teachers can verbally persuade students to believe in their capabilities and strengthen their self-efficacy.

Psychological responses are also one of the sources that teachers can use to develop students' self-efficacy. According to Caprara, G. V., Fida, R., Vecchione, M., Del Bove, G., Vecchio, G. M., Barbaranelli, C., & Bandura, A. (2008), when people feel weary and in a low mood, it is harder to feel assured of their ability to succeed. This is especially true if people perceive these emotional and physiological states to be indicative of incompetence, vulnerability, or an inability to achieve a goal. Low mood can have a debilitating effect on self-efficacy and subsequent goal achievement, as people with chronically low moods are likely to give up on goals sooner and demonstrate a reluctance to even take up goals in the first place. Everyone has different mood conditions in learning and achieving something. Usually, before the class starts, a teacher will try to do an icebreaker to lift the students' mood so they can enjoy the class.

Psychological responses are related to *mens sana in corpore sano* which means a healthy soul resides in a healthy body. Psychological responses are important in increasing students' self-efficacy so that students can be ready to learn in the classroom. Lastly, people's emotions, moods, and physical states influence how they judge self-efficacy (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985). With a good psychological response, students will be confident and ready to achieve a good thing.

### Research Method

This study used the descriptive qualitative research. Creswell (2003: 18) stated that a qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.

This study also included descriptive which regards this, Gall and Borg (2007) as cited in Nassaji (2015:129) stated that the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Therefore, observation and survey tools are often used to gather data about students' self-efficacy. The research was conducted in Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah located in Rejang Lebong Bengkulu province with 50 students as respondents.

Furthermore, the researcher used interview as one of the data collection techniques. Boyce (2006: 3) mentioned, in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. In this study, in-depth interview was carried out to gain further information of students' responses in regard with the implementation of improving self-efficacy in foreign language acquisitions. There are some steps that teachers use in their classroom to help the students improving their self-efficacy. The researcher also displays the data narratively based on the finding in the research.

### Result and Discussion

This part deliberates the result of the research. The result shows that the teachers of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah help students to develop the self-efficacy. The result and discussion will be displayed in narrative. Before teachers obligate students to understand every object in a class, students' development of self-efficacy will make it easier to improve their academic skills and set goals for what they want to achieve. There are several steps implemented by teachers in how students apply academic self-efficacy in instructional practice the steps are based on (Artino, 2012), they are: The first step in applying academic self-efficacy in instructional practice is to set a clear goal. To achieve a specific goal, people must understand the importance of the goal itself. In a specific area with measurable outcomes, such as actions and timelines for achievement (Rowe et al. 2017). Sullivan and Strode (2010) mentioned the importance of learning to set goals for achievement. The attainment of goals provides students with the feeling of capability, which enhances self-efficacy in learning. Additionally, feedback on the progress of reaching the goal can foster self-efficacy and motivation in students, conveying that they are capable and making improvements with their hard work (Putwain, et al., 2018; Schunk, 2003). According to Bandura (2001), when goals have value and a sense of ownership is present, goals can increase meaning, purpose, and motivation in learning.

Students sometimes do not know what their future goals are after graduating from school. Teachers of MA Miftahul Jannah guide them to set their goals by showing step-by-step, what students want to achieve in the future. To do this, the teacher proposes a questionnaire where students write what their goals are in learning. After recognizing what their goals are, teachers work on the smallest step such as taking them to join communicative learning in English class. Teachers can structure through the following sequence of activities.

Conducting a quick survey of students' backgrounds can help in setting goals. The purpose of surveying these students is to find their backgrounds. Some students who live in rural areas may be unfamiliar with foreign languages. A quick survey questionnaire about students' backgrounds can help students set their goals. Knowing students' backgrounds allows teachers to use suitable contexts in learning. Discovering students' goals will be one of the first steps before using the appropriate learning method. A survey helps identify this information. A survey helps the teacher to find out students' goals in learning a foreign language.

After the survey, the teacher directs the students to design what they want to do in the future by setting goals and expectations. so that the goal of learning a foreign language will be arranged. Goals should be challenging but not outside the range of students' capabilities. Difficult but achievable goals allow students to put forth the effort and obtain feedback as they make progress toward goal completion. Goals that are too far beyond students' knowledge or skill level will likely lead to frustration and may degrade efficacy beliefs (Schrunk, 2003). Every student is challenged and struggles with lessons, and some of them struggle with English as a foreign language. To achieve students' goals, teachers take the role of facilitator in the teaching-learning activities to help students improve their motivation and self-efficacy to gain proficiency as a goal of language teaching.

Introducing the basic structure of language to students is the first step to improving self-efficacy, so students can predict what things they will learn. This introduction can be done with authentic learning so that students don't feel burdened with the material. Berardo (2006) identifies two types of materials, authentic

materials (unprepared teaching resources such as texts, photographs, video clips, etc.) and created materials (textbooks and other specially developed instructional resources). By using authentic materials, students feel comfortable learning a foreign language culturally without concerning the grammar context.

Setting clear goals is a condition where teachers help students take a small step to achieve a specific goal, teachers can challenge their students to do something related to a foreign language, especially in interpretive activities. Although the interpretive mode involves using critical thinking skills, the reference to "some tasks in English" is ambiguous and does not offer much guidance for classroom-based teachers. If the L1 is to be used in the FL classroom, we must carefully consider the kinds of critical thinking tasks in which L1 use might be appropriate (Huntington & Scoot, 2007).

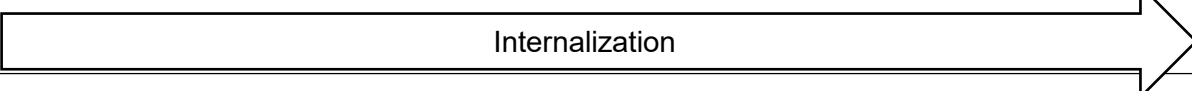
According to Van Patten (2013), there are two sides to communication – interpretation, and expression. A learner’s job in the early stages is largely interpretation. Some examples of interpretive activities that be used in the classroom are cultural understanding, TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling), movie talk, embedded reading, card talks, playing narration games, and storyboards. The activities might be varied depending on students' capabilities and time availability. Through these activities, students learn how to manage the lesson and it means the students recognize their future needs so they can set the goal and deal with the challenge to achieve better self-efficacy in the teaching-learning foreign language process. This is one small way teachers can affect students’ self-efficacy. By making English relevant to students, teachers can start to introduce the basic structure of language and tenses through authentic learning in the classroom.

Providing honest feedback is crucial in language learning. The effectiveness of feedback in the second language writing context becomes even more important as it has an impact on the whole process of language learning (Seker & Dincer, 2014). Honest, explicit feedback, in the form of verbal persuasion and/or rewards that are given contingent upon performance, provides efficacy information to learners and encourages their continued movement toward goal attainment (Artino, 2012). Artino (2012) also explained that without explicit feedback on the growth of their knowledge and skills, students will likely have a difficult time trying to change or regulate their behavior. For example, praising students indiscriminately for performing a task, regardless of how well they perform, can lead students to think they are good at a task when really, they are not (Titsworth, 2000).

Giving feedback on what students achieve is another level of educating them. Simple feedback helps students to understand what they achieve in finishing an assignment, whether it is an excellent or deficient score. Teachers tell them the truth. Instead of judging the deficient one, teachers also recommend other alternative ways to succeed. The process of developing students’ self-efficacy in Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah is displayed in the table below:

**Table 1**  
**The Process of Developing Students’ Self-efficacy**  
**In Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah**

Amotivation	How students develop self-efficacy		Goal
	Set a clear goal	Provide honest feedback	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of perceived competence</li> <li>• Lack of value</li> <li>• Lack of motivation</li> <li>• Low of self-efficacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick survey</li> <li>• Find out students' goals in learning a foreign language</li> <li>• Introduce basic language structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple feedback in assignments</li> <li>• Praising students for performing a task</li> </ul>	Improving students' self-efficacy
			

## Conclusion

Within the scope of the results obtained from this research, the following suggestions can be made to researchers and educators: the present study mainly aimed to identify and describe how students develop motivation in self-efficacy for foreign language acquisition, through main factors that will encourage students in selecting and weighing different sources of efficacy, are mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and physical responses. Students develop self-efficacy by setting a clear goal, encouraging the challenge, and providing honest feedback.

Developing self-efficacy for students with low motivation should not be focused on grammar and language structure by using conventional learning activities. There are some researches that have proven using grammar focus may fuel low self-efficacy. There is significant literature based on the benefits of communicative proficiency-driven language teaching, but an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

The ideas developed in this research hopefully can help teachers, especially for helping Indonesian students. As the writer experience, self-efficacy and motivation still become an issue that teachers have to struggle with. The steps mentioned above can be implemented and teachers should convert conventional learning to authentic learning to teach students with implicit grammar and reading activities. Finally, the researcher suggests other researchers and educators assist students in language learning, especially students with low self-efficacy.

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The bibliography can be sourced from various references in textbooks, textbooks summarized by editors, translation books, thesis/thesis/dissertation, journals, proceedings, and newspapers. The bibliography is written by following the style of Journey, as stated in the Guidelines of this journal (which ratified APA IV Edition).

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