

The Role of Self-efficacy in Foreign Language Acquisition

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate the impact of self-efficacy on Foreign Language Acquisition in secondary school students following a relatively recent shift of focus in the field, as the learner's needs, efforts and capacities have been placed at the centre of the learning process. Hence the need to address the existing research gap by proving that self-efficacy may be viewed as a significant indicator of foreign language proficiency. Apart from presenting the theoretical background, the article also reveals the empirical findings of the research carried out in a higher secondary school on 78 participants ($N = 78$). The study suggests that highly efficacious students receive the highest English mean grade, that they are competent foreign language users and are confident about their skills, and approach the FL learning progress more consistently, not being discouraged by taking risks in the foreign language acquisition context and confronting situations which cannot be foreseen. In stark contrast are learners scoring low levels of self-efficacy who are more likely to engage in procrastination, have a lower mean of English grades and are not eager to participate actively in the foreign language acquisition classroom. The article concludes with a number of implications and recommendations which may be implemented in the future teaching methodology, particularly indicating other research directions.

Keywords: self-efficacy, personality, Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA), academic performance, FLA success, foreign language proficiency, school grades, foreign language skills, self-assessment

1. Introduction: The Concept of ‘Self-efficacy’

Heraclitus’ famous quote “all things change, all things flow,” (2) may describe the constant change of human traits (2). This is all the more relevant when considering the ever-growing individualistic nature of modern man, who prioritises one’s own agency and by extension one’s self-efficacy (Bandura “Self-efficacy Mechanism” 122). By the same token, the traditional, teacher-centred instruction model that cultivates and maintains the teacher’s authority is gradually giving way to the student-centred approach which places importance on one’s own efforts. That is why self-efficacy has a huge role to play, particularly in the fields of education and Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA).

Since exercising control over one’s own life is of crucial importance (Adler 3), it is very empowering to feel that anyone can attain their target if they devote themselves to the task at hand. Therefore, taking initiative or designing plans “provides powerful incentives for the development” of one’s own abilities (Bandura, “Exercise of Personal” 1). Additionally, self-efficacy can be seen as a feature which is placed on a spectrum ranging from low to high and defined as a conviction of one’s competence and skills to fulfil the necessary chain of actions to complete any potential undertaking (Bandura, “Self-efficacy in Changing Societies” 5). Consequently, Albert Bandura lists four distinct processes that activate self-efficacy: 1) cognitive, 2) motivational, 3) affective and 4) selectional.

To begin with, the cognitive process of self-efficacy is to be understood as employing advanced cognitive resources to confront and handle the unexpected strain successfully and remain consistently concentrated. In this way, the possible challenges that

are encountered in the course of one's life may be confronted confidently (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 2-3). The next process, motivational, involves designing a plan of action to accomplish one's desired target of ambition stemming from high levels of motivation. Consequently, these levels of motivation are linked to a positive perception of any output undertaken by the individual, whereas defeat is considered a result of insufficient dedication or initiative and not a fault or one's shortcoming (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 6-8). The affective process is described as the extent to which the individual has influence over one's emotional state, especially with regard to the presence of stressors, as well as the manner in which these feelings are cognitively interpreted and processed (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 8-11). Finally, the selection process may be defined as "selection of environments known to cultivate certain potentialities and life-styles" (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 10-12). It is this selection process that may explain why individuals stay close to a setting which enables them to show competence and refrain from interacting in surroundings that far surpass their skills or aptitude. Consequently, the levels of self-efficacy may differ, depending on which social group one belongs to and on the degree of support received from its members (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 13).

2. Literature Review of Self-efficacy in Foreign Language Acquisition

As pointed out in the previous section, self-efficacy enables individuals to competently fulfil a course of action by relying on their agency (Bandura, "Self-efficacy in Changing Societies" 1-2). A high level of self-efficacy (Zimmerman 69) is seen as facilitating many students' perception of taking risks, which require learners in the foreign language context to contend with situations which cannot be foreseen (Lu et al. 12-13). By reacting spontaneously, students show that they handle the foreign language successfully (Piniel and Csizér 536-37). As a consequence, a high level of self-

efficacy is related to the employment of self-regulated learning strategies (Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons 56-57), metacognitive strategies (Mills et al. 434-35), and to achievement among learners (Üner et al. 793-94). Furthermore, self-efficacy is responsible for decreasing anxiety by facilitating foreign language achievement and helping students overcome frequent stressful and demanding linguistic circumstances (Piniel and Csizér 536-37). Thus, self-efficacy has an undeniably advantageous effect on fostering one's creativity as it does on self-perception in the area of foreign language acquisition (Yeh et al. 8-9). As a result, such students are more motivated to master and express their ideas in L2 in a more innovative and unconventional manner, thereby demonstrating their linguistic competence.

However, students scoring low in self-efficacy do not view creativity as a useful tool in foreign language acquisition (Zhu et al. 2343). On the contrary, these students' degree of commitment to foreign language acquisition declines once they become aware of the frequency of their mistakes and thus feel exposed and vulnerable in front of others (Code et al. 14). Additionally, learners scoring a low level of self-efficacy are found to struggle with seeking counsel from others less frequently, in stark contrast to students with high levels of self-efficacy who are more apt to tackle their foreign language difficulties — what they got wrong and how they may correct potential shortcomings (Kim et al. 141). As a result, language learners with lower self-efficacy scores perceive mastering languages as disheartening or unfair, having to put additional effort into the process.

Nicole Mills, Frank Pajares, and Carol Herron evaluated the relationship between self-efficacy and foreign language acquisition among college students (425). The research included 303 intermediate learners of French. The following instruments were introduced to measure the students' own perception of their French language skills: an Academic Self-Description Questionnaire (Marsh qtd. in Mills et al. 428), the Children's Multidimensional Self-efficacy Scales (Bandura qtd. in Mills et al. 428) and a Student Attitude Questionnaire (Eccles qtd. in Mills et al. 428), and they

were employed so as to yield tangible and accurate research outcomes. The study found that a high level of self-efficacy was regarded as a key indicator of not only foreign language accomplishment, prompting students to use metacognitive strategies to attain foreign language proficiency, but also of having a positive influence on decreasing the current level of anxiety among foreign language students, which enabled them to fulfil their foreign language potential (Mills et al. 434-36). To conclude, a high level of self-efficacy is positively related to a successful process of foreign language acquisition among learners, helping them to navigate the challenges of foreign language learning.

Additionally, Katalin Piniel and Kata Csizér (531) examined the complex relationship among the concepts of self-efficacy, anxiety and foreign language achievement. The participants were 236 Hungarian learners of English attending a variety of secondary educational institutions. The following instruments were employed so as to gain a comprehensive and measurable selection of results from the researched sample of students: Bandura's General Self-efficacy Scale (Bandura qtd. in Piniel and Csizér 533) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz and Cope qtd. in Piniel and Csizér 533-34). The study revealed that a high level of self-efficacy neutralised the negative outcomes caused by anxiety and crucially led foreign language students to draw satisfaction from learning. Self-efficacy was reported to have sustained high levels of motivation, which prevented students from losing interest in a foreign language (Piniel and Csizér 536-38). To sum up, a high level of self-efficacy is shown to be positively linked to reducing the detrimental consequences of anxiety and facilitating the foreign language accomplishment expressed among FL students.

What is more, Yuichi Todaka (360) aimed to identify whether self-efficacy was correlated with establishing students' autonomy in their pursuit of a foreign language, especially the learners' listening skills. There were 101 Japanese university students being actively involved in this research study, with English as their FL. The Test in Practical English Proficiency (Backman

and Palmer qtd. in Todaka 361), together with the General Self-efficacy Scale (Bandura qtd. in Todaka 361) were employed as the instruments in the research study. The research showed that a high level of self-efficacy was substantially linked to the foreign language students' advanced listening skills and predicted developing learners' autonomy in foreign language acquisition (Todaka 362). To sum up, a high level of self-efficacy is identified as a factor facilitating students' autonomy in foreign language acquisition, with the listening skills as the most significantly influenced of all language skills.

Moreover, Gene Thompson, Ikuya Aizawa, Samantha Curle, and Heath Rose aimed to investigate whether self-efficacy showed a positive relationship with students' achievement in completing a business course in English (being a foreign language) (8). There were 139 Japanese university students who served as active participants in this study. The study employed a whole range of instruments in order to measure the findings: Bandura's based Self-efficacy Scale (Bandura qtd. in Thompson et al. 9) and a wide array of interview questions, together with foreign language tests measuring the level of English proficiency (Thompson et al. 9). The study revealed that a high level of self-efficacy was closely associated not only with foreign language learners' dedication to an academic course, but also with students' perception that attending such courses was worthwhile, and the learners were committed to making long-term investments in both the field of foreign language acquisition and in the business course (Thompson et al. 9). To sum up, the study concludes that a high level of self-efficacy is regarded as a key indicator of students' performance, viewing academic courses in foreign language acquisition in practical terms.

Furthermore, Ayça Üner, Athanasios Mouratidis, and İlker Kalender (784-85) examined whether self-efficacy had a positive impact on language students' achievement in the area of foreign language acquisition when being faced with stressful, challenging and demanding circumstances. The research sample was composed of 1009 Turkish university students with various levels of English proficiency. The instrument of the Motivated Strategies for

Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich and De Groot qtd. in Üner et al. 786) was used to measure and assess students' perception of their self-efficacy, test anxiety, self-worth, effort regulation, and, ultimately, critical thinking, showing their current levels of academic competence. The research successfully found that a high level of self-efficacy was responsible for foreign language students' achievement in situations which require the learners to confront stressful and demanding circumstances, as well as to demonstrate that self-efficacy was a helpful tool in decreasing anxiety levels among foreign language students. To conclude, a high level of self-efficacy is regarded as a key indicator of the manner in which students approach anxiety, and of the way it impacts the acquisition of the foreign language.

Table 1. The summary of selected empirical research on self-efficacy in foreign language acquisition

Mills et al. (2007)	to evaluate the relationship between self-efficacy and the process of acquiring mastery in a foreign language among college students	self-efficacy is regarded as a key indicator of not only foreign language accomplishment propelling students to use metacognitive strategies to attain foreign language proficiency, but also of having a positive influence on decreasing the current level of anxiety among foreign language students which enabled them to fulfil their FL potential
Piniel and Csizér (2013)	to examine the complex relationship among self-efficacy, anxiety, and foreign language achievement.	self-efficacy is in position to neutralise the negative outcomes caused by anxiety and leads foreign language students to derive satisfaction from learning. Self-efficacy

		sustains a high level of motivation, which prevents students from losing interest in a foreign language
Todaka (2013)	to investigate if self-efficacy is correlated with establishing students' autonomy in their pursuit of a foreign language, especially learners' listening skills	self-efficacy is substantially linked to the foreign language students' listening skills and predicts learners' increased autonomy in acquiring a foreign language
Thompson et al. (2022)	to evaluate whether self-efficacy shows a positive relationship with students' manifested achievement in completing a business course in a foreign language.	self-efficacy is associated not only with foreign language learners' dedication to an academic course, but also with students' perception that attending such courses is worthwhile. Learners are committed to making long-term investments in the field of foreign language acquisition.
Üner et al. (2020)	to show whether self-efficacy has a positive impact on language students' achievement in the area of foreign language acquisition when dealing with stressful, challenging, and demanding circumstances, and to evaluate the power of self-efficacy in diminishing anxiety	self-efficacy is responsible for foreign language students' achievement in situations that require learners to contend with stressful and demanding circumstances. The study demonstrates that self-efficacy is a helpful tool in decreasing anxiety levels among foreign language students

3. A Case Study

As the empirical studies described above suggest, self-efficacy plays an important part in foreign language acquisition. In what follows, I will describe an experiment carried out in June 2023 at one of the secondary schools in Opole. The aim was to determine the impact of self-efficacy levels on academic records, as well as on the self-assessed FL skills among secondary students. The initial hypothesis that prompted the research was that learners with a high level of self-efficacy have better academic records and have better self-assessment skills than students with lower self-efficacy scores. Hence, it is possible to formulate the following research question: what is the profile of a student scoring a low, medium and high level of self-efficacy?

3.1 Participants

There were 80 participants in this study ($N=80$), all of whom were foreign language students attending a comprehensive secondary higher school in Opole in Poland. However, two participants were excluded right from the outset ($N=78$), since their responses, such as “stop monkey!” or “I’m doing nothing, just throwing that person out of the window” were deemed not appropriate since the answers suggested that the respondents did not approach the questions seriously. The age of the respondents ranged from 15 to 19 (mean age: 16.4, $SD = 1.13$). In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 55 (70.5%) girls, 21 (26.9%) boys, and 2 learners choosing the option of the other gender (2.6%). In terms of residence, 38 participants lived in the city (48.7%), 32 students came from neighbouring villages (41%), and 8 participants (10%) lived in mid-sized towns. It is noteworthy that 74 of them (94.9%) claimed that they enjoyed their English classes, and only 4 (or 5.1%) learners claimed they did not like the classes. All participants of the research sample learnt English as a foreign language at their higher secondary school. What is more, only a small percentage of the respondents, 5 (6.4%), declared they did not learn any other,

additional foreign language. Throughout the study, the learners attended from three to six hours a week of compulsory English classes. The participants' level of linguistic proficiency ranged between intermediate to upper intermediate (Council of Europe "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment" 24).

3.2 Instruments

The basic instrument applied in this study was a questionnaire. The first part of the online questionnaire contained socio-demographic data. The next part of the questionnaire contained the 10-item scale General Self-efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer and Jerusalem, "Generalized Self-efficacy Scale" 37). The socio-demographic section collected data on age, gender, and residential background, providing context on potential socio-demographic influences on foreign language acquisition. Students were also asked to rate their English speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills, offering a holistic view of their self-assessed linguistic competencies.

The second section focused on obtaining data on learners' self-efficacy, their confidence in managing in the FL context, providing answers on the trait on a 4-point Likert scale, consisting of items ranging from 1, meaning the lowest point, to 4, representing the best one. The items included "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough," "I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events," or "When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions." Their aim was to measure students' confidence in their foreign language skills. High scores were interpreted as a high level of self-efficacy. Additionally, this section required learners to state their grades in English at the end of the previous semester, the last academic year, and at the end of primary school. The answers were measured on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 was the lowest value possible and 6 the highest. Similarly, the learners' self-assessment of speaking, writing, reading, listening was also measured against a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being the lowest and 6 the highest score.

3.3 Procedure

Prior to the experiment, the headmaster's consent was obtained. Then, the participants in the study were informed that the research was to be carried out in absolute confidentiality and were notified that it was possible for them to withdraw from the study without binding consequences at any time, should they choose to do so. Next, students were informed on the general aim of the research, and they received instruction to make certain that they understood all of the questionnaire's parts correctly. After sharing the link to the Google Forms questionnaire, the participants proceeded to complete it. The whole process took from 15 to 45 minutes, and students were advised not to ponder for too long on the answers. The aim was to elicit answers that were as honest as possible.

In terms of variable categorisation, self-efficacy was the independent variable, whereas the self-assessed average school grades and the self-assessed average foreign language skills were dependent variables. The first step in the data analysis was a descriptive statistics that included values of minimums, maximums, means, medians, and standard deviations of both dependent and independent variables (Table 2). The low, medium and high levels of self-efficacy among the participants in the research were compiled into a table describing the tertiles, that is they divide a set of data into three equal parts, each containing one-third of the observations (Table 3). Additionally, a descriptive analysis was performed with a view to revealing the means of the self-assessed average school grades, as well as the self-assessed average foreign language skills split into appropriate tertiles of self-efficacy levels (Table 4).

In the following part, Pearson's correlation (Table 5) was employed so as to reveal the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship between the variables. The focus was directed towards correlations between the independent variable, self-efficacy, and the self-assessed average school grades and self-assessed average foreign language skills. The aim of two two-way ANOVAs was to follow and model the relationship between self-

efficacy and self-assessed average school grades (Table 6), on the one hand, and to analyse the impact of self-efficacy on self-assessed average foreign language skills for more extensive data (Table 7), on the other hand. The complete Post-Hoc comparisons were presented employing Tukey's Correction. The tables come as follows: Table 8 contains self-assessed average school grades, and Table 9 shows self-assessed average foreign language skills. The complete statistical analyses were carried out with the assistance of JAMOV 2.3.21 software.

3.4 Results

The results combine all of the accumulated and calculated data, revealing vital patterns, relationships, and outcomes. Originally, the descriptive statistics of self-efficacy, as well as of the self-assessed average school grades and self-assessed average foreign language skills, were presented. As far as the first step is concerned, self-efficacy was analysed, reporting the minimum and maximum values as 19 and 40 respectively. As for the mean, it equalled 31.74, which implies a comparably high level of self-efficacy among most participants. Furthermore, the self-assessed average in foreign language skills was calculated resulting in a mean value of 4.28, with the minimum value of 1 and 6 the maximum. As a result, the mean score of self-assessment suggests that the learners' grades are relatively high, proving their competence. The self-assessed average school grades had a minimum of 1 and maximum of 6, with the mean scoring higher than in the previous variable — 4.60. The reason behind the subtle, yet noticeable difference, may stem from the fact that foreign language learners may still perceive the foreign language as one of the more demanding and challenging school subjects. The analysis of the collected data is compiled into the table below (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of self-efficacy, self-assessed average foreign language skills, self-assessed average school grades

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
self-efficacy level	78	31.74	31.50	5.317	19.0	40.0
Self-assessed average F L skills	78	4.28	4.00	1.172	1	6
Self-assessed average school grades	78	4.60	5.00	0.972	1	6

Table 3 introduces tertiles, that is medium, low, high levels of self-efficacy so as to provide its comprehensive overview among research participants (Table 3).

Table 3. The low, medium and high levels of self-efficacy by tertiles

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Range of points</i>
low	30	38%	0-13
medium	22	28%	14-26
high	26	34%	27-40

Additionally, a descriptive analysis was performed, with a view to revealing the means of the self-assessed average school grades and those of the self-assessed average foreign language skills split into appropriate tertiles of self-efficacy levels (Table 4). As the empirical data suggests, the higher an individual's level of self-efficacy, the higher their corresponding means of grades.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of self-assessed average school grades and self-assessed average foreign language skills on three distinct levels of self-efficacy

		<i>self-assessed average school grades</i>	<i>self-assessed average FL skills</i>
self-efficacy level	low	3.67	3.30
	medium	4.06	4.05
	high	4.73	4.46

The next section introduces the results of Pearson’s correlation analysis. It was calculated to evaluate the linear relationship among self-efficacy, self-assessed average school grades and self-assessed average foreign language skills. The results are highly significant, statistically underscoring the fact that learners were successful in terms of the self-assessed average foreign language skills, ($r(86) = .15, p < .001$), as well as in what regards the self-assessed average school grades in English ($r(86) = .53, p < .001$), boosting one’s level of self-efficacy and having a significant impact on one’s own skills assessment in foreign language acquisition. Ultimately, a high level of self-efficacy leads one not only to obtain better results, but also to first understand and then to assess one’s performance in a more beneficial manner. All data is included in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5. Pearson’s Correlation

	<i>self-efficacy</i>
self-efficacy	–
	–
Self-assessed average foreign	0.15
Self-assessed average foreign	< .001
	0.53
Self-assessed average school grades	<.001

Another stage of the research was dedicated to performing multiple two-way ANOVAs, with a view to verifying whether self-efficacy influences self-assessed average school grades and self-assessed average foreign language skills. The ANOVA model indicates that self-assessed average school grades are statistically significant ($F = 2.94, p = 0.003$). Self-efficacy had a statistically significant effect on self-assessed average school grades ($p_{\text{self-efficacy}} = .004$). To conclude, the results of multiple linear regression revealed that self-efficacy is a potent variable, influencing average self-assessed school grades, meaning that this trait impacts one’s

grades in the context of foreign language learning. All data is compiled in the table below (Table 6).

Table 6. Two-way ANOVA – self-assessed average school grades

	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Overall model	2.94	0.003
Self-efficacy	3.72	0.004
Residuals		

Furthermore, a two-way ANOVA was performed to analyse the effect of self-efficacy on self-assessed average foreign language skills for more extensive data on the variables. The ANOVA model is statistically significant ($F = 3.51$, $p = 0.001$) in terms of self-efficacy ($p_{\text{self-efficacy}} = 0.001$) on self-assessed average foreign language skills, stressing the importance of the results mentioned in the previous section. All data is compiled in the table below (Table 7).

Table 7. Two-way ANOVA – self-assessed average foreign language skills

	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Overall model	3.51	0.001
self-efficacy	4.14	0.001
Residuals		

The next step required performing both ANOVA post hoc analyses. Tukey's Correction was used in all post hoc tests. It is worth emphasising that individuals scoring a high level of self-efficacy have a substantially higher mean of self-declared grades than those with a low level of self-efficacy ($M_{\text{low}} = 3.667$, $M_{\text{high}} = 4.731$, $p = 0.024$). Furthermore, those with a medium level of self-efficacy have a noticeably higher mean of self-declared grades than those with a low level of self-efficacy ($M_{\text{low}} = 3.667$, $M_{\text{med}} = 4.064$, $p = 0.662$). No substantially diverging differences emerged on the

axis from low-medium to medium-high levels of self-efficacy ($p_m = .162$, $p_{mh} = .493$). All data is presented in the table below (Table 8).

Table 8. Post hoc comparison on self-assessed average foreign language grades for self-efficacy results

Comparison						
	<i>self-efficacy level</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ptukey</i>
low	- medium	0.2940	0.339	69.0	-1.86	0.162
	- high	-0.0387	0.331	69.0	-1.17	0.024
medium	- high	-0.3327	0.292	69.0	-1.09	0.493

As far as the second post hoc comparisons on self-assessed average foreign language skills for self-efficacy are concerned, individuals scoring a high level of that trait have a substantially higher mean of self-declared grades than those with a low level of self-efficacy ($M_{low} = 3.667$, $M_{high} = 4.731$, $p = 0.013$). Ultimately, only a high level of self-efficacy has proven a positive link to self-declared grades (because of the p value). All data is included in Table 9.

Table 9. Post hoc comparison on self-assessed average foreign language skills for self-efficacy results

Comparison						
	<i>self-efficacy level</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ptukey</i>
low	- medium	0.564	0.376	69.0	1.501	0.297
	- high	0.292	0.368	69.0	0.795	0.707
medium	- high	-0.272	0.324	69.0	-0.839	0.680

3.5 Discussion and Limitations

The aim of this article was to reveal the relationship between higher secondary students' grades and skills. As a result, the original hypothesis – that students with a high level of self-efficacy achieve better school grades are more accurate in self-assessment than students possessing a low level of that trait – is confirmed. Consequently, the originally stated hypothesis is supported. It is noteworthy that highly efficacious students achieve better school grades in contrast to their peers who score low levels of this trait. The former also approach foreign language material demonstrating mastery, self-assuredness and competence.

As concerns the formulated research question about the profile of a student scoring a low, medium and high level of self-efficacy, the profile of a student with a moderate level of self-efficacy is triggered by their general academic achievement, which is lower than that of the learners scoring higher in self-efficacy, but substantially higher than that of the learners with a lower level of self-efficacy, as discussed below. The medium levels of self-efficacy are frequently viewed as the most adequate for language acquisition, as learners with a high score are prone to withstand the polar opposites of each trait, being able to perform better academically (Zhu et al. 2343). Consequently, moderately efficacious learners perceive their academic performance in much more positive terms, receive far better grades and assess their own foreign language skills significantly higher than students scoring low levels in both of these aspects.

Finally, students scoring low in self-efficacy do not view creativity as a useful tool in helping them to develop their linguistic knowledge in the context of foreign language acquisition (Yeh et al. 8). Moreover, these students' degree of commitment to foreign language acquisition declines after seeing how often they make mistakes, and thus they feel exposed and vulnerable in front of the others. Additionally, learners scoring a low level of self-efficacy are found to struggle with reading difficulties more frequently, in stark contrast to foreign language students with high levels of self-

efficacy who are more apt at tackling reading difficulties (Oranpattanachai 213). As a result, such foreign language learners perceive mastering languages as disheartening or unfair, having to put additional effort into the process.

This article attempted to fill in the research gap in the area of self-efficacy in foreign language acquisition. Nonetheless, a set of limitations has to be seriously considered. First, the number of participants, their places of origin, as well as their approach towards delivering adequate answers, should be stressed as key elements to reflect on. However, the process of gathering my empirical data proceeded without any interruptions or complaints of dissatisfaction. The field data successfully corroborated the empirical research hypothesis, that students with a high level of self-efficacy achieve better school grades and have a higher self-assessment score than students with a low level of self-efficacy. Following this, the findings verify the hypothesis since the results of performed analyses reveal positive, significant relationships among self-efficacy, the self-assessed average language skills, and the self-assessed average school grades.

To conclude, the study finds that there are positive correlations between a high level of self-efficacy and self-assessed average school grades, with an additional positive correlation between a high level of self-efficacy and self-assessed average foreign language skills. Such results indicate that scoring a high level of self-efficacy facilitates students to achieve noticeably better educational results, prompting these individuals to perceive their performance and abilities as competent individuals in charge of their educational pathway.

3.6 Implications

Self-efficacy, being an affective variable, plays one of the most influential roles in foreign language acquisition classrooms as it has the power to shape students' school grades and overall foreign language skills. In particular, the speaking skill was shown to be closely correlated with the emotional side of acquisition,

providing a point of departure for multitudinous ways of conveying new thoughts in a foreign language rather than in their mother tongue. This suggests that it is worth investing more effort in the foreign language classroom as far as the affective component of foreign language students is concerned. By devising more interactive exercises across the four basic foreign language skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, drawing on students' emotions will inevitably lead them to voice and expand on their new ideas since they will not feel constrained.

Another implication for future researchers to consider is the aspect of carrying out studies in smaller towns and in rural areas to gather more in-depth empirical evidence so as to compare it with the results collected from frequently researched larger and influential cities. This may enable researchers to devise improved knowledge about the interdependence between urban and rural areas, the variables affecting one's level of self-efficacy on the basis of one's place of residence revealing novel empirical evidence in terms of the actual patterns of distribution. Similar studies may be carried out on issues pertaining to gender and whether self-efficacy is more likely to occur in males or females, and the respective implications in terms of gender differences and similarities. In fact, there is at least one study indicating a pattern of the relationship between being a female, scoring a high level of self-efficacy and obtaining better academic grades (Abood et al. Gazo 126-27). However, the researchers debunk the myth of females essentially being better, stressing that the finding is correlated with females' more proactive, social behaviours which inevitably lead them to scholarly progress (not playing truant or missing classes) (Abood et al. 126-27). Ultimately, that finding should be a point of departure for future researchers in the ways how females and males may show differing preferences for academic subjects, resulting in more nuanced perceptions of the gender disparities in the foreign language classrooms.

A new method worth employing in future research is introducing more refined questions, or even extending the gathering of data in the form of direct interviews, to yield more tangible

empirical evidence. Consequently, such an approach would be highly recommended to modify the classroom atmosphere by relying on the learners' experience and their sense of self. This method may convince students that English is not only a collection of abstract notions, grammatical structures and a rule-governed subject, but a personalised one that will endow them with new means to express themselves. It would be worth combining this method with investigating what type of social media content attracts most foreign language learners and who the trend-setters are, in the form of social media influencers. As teenagers are constantly monitoring what their celebrities post and share on social media, this may have a highly motivating outcome on fostering a language skill-developing routine on a daily basis.

3.7 Recommendations for the Foreign Language Acquisition Classroom

Since more and more learning takes place in the digital environment, on online platforms, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom, it is vital to foster student agency, particularly in learners lacking in medium or high levels of self-efficacy. This may be realistically accomplished by discussing the course curriculum in the hope that all the programmatic expectations are clear to the language learners, for instance, by means of applied multimedia or even by inviting students to constructively change some of the core components of the syllabus (Code et al. 14). Additionally, it is highly advisable to use the technique of scaffolding to link and create a network of associations of what has already been learnt to convincingly demonstrate students that they owe their current fluence in their daily interactions to foreign language material that learners used to consider difficult.

Another way of practically addressing students scoring low in self-efficacy may be achieved by restraining from viewing social media platforms as trivial. These platforms may be harnessed and acknowledged as a space for sharing audio-visual foreign language materials in the form of voice-overs and/or videos featuring

students' vlogs to enhance students' engagement – especially for those who struggle with inhibition and are not likely to take active part in the activities of a foreign language lesson. For example, students could be prompted to produce a task in the form of written, visual or audio posts with other class-mates on a chosen social media site on a two-week basis. The details of such a cooperative arrangement could be discussed with the students depending on the FL content being covered at the moment – either as a necessary part of a remote homework (when the group struggles) or as a supplementary component (when the group excels in the foreign language) that might increase their total grade at the end of the academic year/term. Furthermore, the rules governing the learners' assessment should not be underestimated. The fact that there is a wide range of differences among individuals, particularly in their learning styles, may influence the manner in which students act in the foreign language classroom.

Consequently, the above-mentioned recommendations may facilitate smoother classroom cooperation among students with varying degrees of self-efficacy – low, medium, high. This study empirically confirmed that the students' levels of self-efficacy were relatively evenly distributed. This may point towards the advantage of employing cooperative tasks which could bring together students with different levels of self-efficacy with a view to balancing their foreign language skills and attitudes. Furthermore, foreign language teachers will need to introduce assignments which are flexible and inclusive – such examples may contain both free and open-ended challenges, as well as finely scheduled, organised and closed activities with a clear aim, relying on coursebooks during one lesson and changing to multimedia exercises in the next one.

Moreover, setting the assessment rules within a flexible and transparent framework will allow students to negotiate in terms of how much they are willing to contribute and perform within the foreign language setting. What is more, a creation and development of avenues for engaging casually with their peers in an immersive environment, drawing on the CLIL method, is key in shifting students' perception of the foreign language from one belonging to

the core curriculum which has to be crammed for the purpose of an exam and then swiftly forgotten, to one bearing practical implications in their daily lives. This attitude is rooted in the Vygotskian perspective, which relies on the conviction that learning occurs in a social environment via a rich layer of cooperative activities without the crushing vision of performing inadequately (Vygotsky 28-29). Ultimately, staying in touch with technological development, current students' idols, role models, or individuals they admire and imitate should stay at the centre of recommendations for the prospective implementation of foreign language settings, for teachers and learners alike. The same applies for the current line of studies within the methodological framework of foreign language acquisition research.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Brygida Lika (PhD, Opole University) for her valuable suggestions and ongoing support.

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