

Conference Paper

Students' Self-efficacy in Learning Foreign Language during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ORCID:Lilis Afifah: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1941-7450>**Abstract**

It is believed that COVID-19 is the biggest disruptor of this century, educational activity being one of the most affected lines. Face-to-face learning must be replaced by virtual meetings with all its limitations. Doubts about students' mastery of learning materials often arise. This article aims to describe the results of studies conducted on the self-efficacy of students in taking online foreign language learning classes during this pandemic. The data in this study were obtained using questionnaires that were filled by the students of the German Department at the Universitas Negeri Malang, and then analysed qualitatively. The results showed that the students had high self-efficacy. This is built on the good ability of students in completing assigned tasks with different levels of difficulty (level), student confidence in their abilities (strength), and the ability of students to carry out different activities with various situations (generality).

Keywords: student, self-efficacy, foreign language learning, COVID-19 pandemic

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1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is a person's belief or confidence in his ability to succeed in doing something (Bandura, 1987). Self-efficacy has a positive relationship with learners' performance because self-efficacy affects behaviour and directly impacts goals, expectations, attitude tendencies, and perceptions of obstacles and opportunities in the social environment. Efficacy also affects whether the person is thinking strategically, optimistically, or pessimistically. Tsai (2011) states that self-efficacy can be seen from various perspectives. There is academic efficacy (ASE) related to efficacy in learning, computer efficacy (CSE) related to self-confidence in using computers, internet efficacy (ISE), namely trust in using the internet, and self-efficacy in internet-based learning (IBLSE).

Internet-based learning becomes an unavoidable choice since the implementation of distance learning resulted from the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, which has spread so massively since the beginning of 2020. Interactions in internet-based learning can

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be carried out synchronously and asynchronously by utilizing various existing digital platforms, from simple ones like WhatsApp to platforms that require good mastery of technology such as Zoom users, Google Classroom, Edmodo, and so on. With this platform, it is hoped that discussions between learners and teachers and learners can continue to run by providing feedback, responding to each other, and arranging an online collaboration.

The lecturer's critical role in this kind of condition is to define and rearrange the learning assignments and formative assessments that will be given to students according to their abilities, situations, and needs. As is known, not all students have good internet access to participate in distance learning. Therefore, by their role as facilitators, lecturers should help students overcome difficulties and improve their skills. This matter goes hand in hand with Goulão's (2014) research findings, which state that the prerequisite for successful internet-based learning is good skills and interaction with technology so that high self-efficacy will emerge and affect learning success.

From various existing studies, it appears that the role of self-efficacy is increasingly essential in internet-based learning. The results of research by Moos and Azevedo (2009) and Tsai (2011) indicate a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the results achieved by students in internet-based learning. Students with high ISE have better search strategies and learn better from their peers. Another study conducted by Arunachalam (2019) states that self-efficacy affects the intention to use e-learning and e-learning learners' satisfaction. On the one hand, self-efficacy, intention, and learners' satisfaction are related to one another. On the other hand, gender is not a determinant of interest in using e-learning. When students feel able to take advantage of e-learning, they will have a positive desire to take advantage of this learning. The intention to behave using e-learning is influenced by self-efficacy.

How much a person's self-efficacy can be seen from three different dimensions (Bandura in de Noyelles, Hornik, & Johnson: 2014). These dimensions are level, strength, and generalization. The level (magnitude) describes a person's belief in completing the tasks that are received. The strength dimension reflects a person's opinion in doing various components of the task or task with different difficulty levels. The last extent (generalization) focuses on a person's ability to generalize self-efficacy from one task to another.

In research on self-efficacy and internet-based learning (IBL), Tsai (2011) created a framework that explains the role and changes in self-efficacy as described in the following table:

TABLE 1: Research framework related to self-efficacy and internet-based learning.

Category	Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2
	Role of self-efficacy in IBL	Alteration of self-efficacy in IBL
ISE (Internet Self-Efficacy)	To investigate relations between learners' ISE and learning processes or outcomes in IBL	To probe how learners' ISE may be altered in IBL
ASE & IBL (Academic Self-Efficacy and Internet-Based Learning)	To investigate the interplay between learners' ASE and learning processes or outcomes in IBL	To probe how learners' ASE may be altered in IBL
IBLSE (Internet-Based Learning Self-Efficacy)	To investigate relations between learners' IBLSE and learning processes or outcomes in IBL	To probe how learners' IBLSE may be altered in IBL

Source: Tsai, 2011.

Based on the framework above, this study seeks to investigate how self-efficacy students have during online pursuits during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in foreign language learning. The foreign language referred to here is German, taught in the German Department, Universitas Negeri Malang. This research is vital to do not only as an evaluation of the learning process that has occurred but also to determine the effect of online learning on the development of language skills possessed by students.

2. Method

There are two approaches to measuring efficacy; the first method is to collect an assessment of individual members of their personal ability to carry out the specific functions they perform in the group. The second method involves collecting members' ratings of their group's overall skills. The final holistic assessment includes the coordinative and interactive aspects of the group (Bandura, 2006).

The data in this study are the results of a questionnaire that has been filled in by 116 students majoring in German Department, Universitas Negeri Malang. They have taken all subjects related to learning German as a foreign language, both in terms of language skills and didactic methodical sides, such as *Deutsch II*, *Deutsch IV*, *Konversation*, *B1 Prüfungsvorbereitung*, and *Unterrichtsvorbereitung Deutsch*. Data collection was carried out in the second week of May 2020, right after they took the final even semester test for the 2019/2020 academic year or eight weeks after they took internet-based learning. The questionnaire was filled out online using the Google form.

By the theory discussed in the previous section, the questionnaire sheet instrument contains points about students’ opinions on the online learning process (including supporting materials and ability in operating learning facilities), learning progress, and self-reflection. The assessment uses a Likert scale of 1 - 5, scale 1 shows the lowest score (strongly disagree / very low / very dissatisfied). On the other hand, scale 5 reflects the highest score (very agree / very high / very satisfied). Apart from being in the form of closed questions, the questionnaire sheet also contains open questions that aim to dig more in-depth information from the respondents. The data that have been collected then are analysed using the percentage method and described descriptively. The following is the grid for the questions in the questionnaire sheet:

TABLE 2: Question grid for the questionnaire.

No.	Dimension	Topic	Sub-topic
1	Magnitude/Level	Learning Process	Learning materials
	Strength		Ability in operating learning facilities
2	Strength	Learning Progress	Competence before the application of IBL
			Competence after the application of IBL
3	Generality	Self-reflection	Personal student assessment
			Assessment of students as group members

3. Findings and Discussion

The discussion about self-efficacy possessed by students of the German Department, Universitas Negeri Malang in learning foreign languages begins with questions on their beliefs in their abilities at the beginning of internet-based learning and their mastery of the semester (Strength). Questionnaire results showed as many as 87.4% of respondents stated their abilities were getting better at the end of the semester. As stated by Talsma, Schüz, and Norris (2019), the assessment of a person’s self-efficacy is not related to whether he has high or low self-efficacy when compared to other people, but with the individual’s belief in his capacity, whether it is considered high or low. Based on the research findings that have been described, it can be said that students have high academic self-efficacy on their learning outcomes. Student answers like this can be examined one by one from the questionnaire results that have been filled in.

How can students be so sure of their excellent abilities at the end of the lesson? Although online learning is a new thing that is very urgent to do, only a few students (17.2%) stated that they have problems regarding the learning platform’s accessibility. Most of the students were satisfied because the platforms they chose, such as Zoom,

WhatsApp, Edmodo, and other social media, could be easily accessed and operated. Of course, this finding is not surprising because students are categorized as digital natives who have a better ability to adapt to technology (Afifah, 2020). Students already have strong self-efficacy towards the internet, which affects their appreciation of learning and their intention to use it in their next study (Hsu, Chang, & Chen, 2020).

The high students' confidence in self-efficacy can be seen from their answers to self-reflection (see Figure 1). More than 60% of students have a high motivation to study independently in online mode (Graph A). This result is supported by their statements, students are also required to have responsibility for themselves and be more disciplined with this independence. The transition of assigning tasks usually carried out face-to-face into an asynchronous online form with a specific time limit forces students to manage time well (Level). Besides, IBL also motivated them to expand their knowledge apart from lecturers (delivered by 79% of students - graph B). The availability of time, which is more flexible than face-to-face learning, makes this possible. Individually, 72% of students believe that IBL provides a high opportunity to learn according to their abilities and speed (graph D). Even in groups, students still have a high chance of having discussions/collaborations with their friends (graph C).

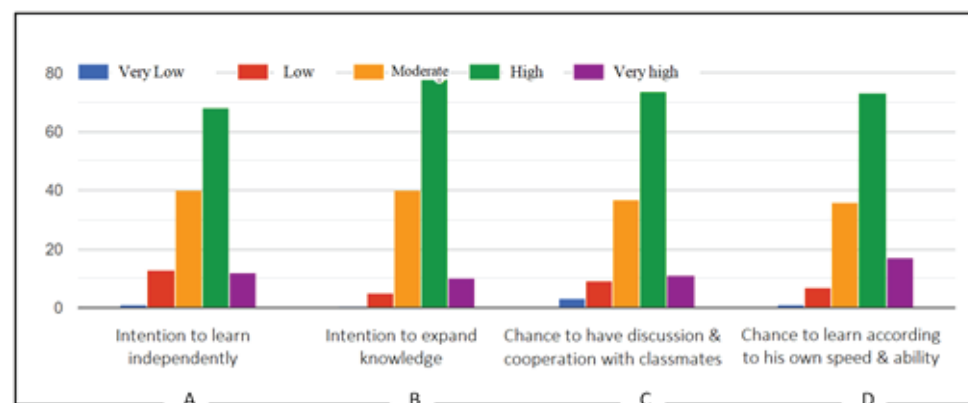


Figure 1: Students' self-efficacy related to Self-reflection.

An interesting fact found in this study as a student's statement is that he could be more open to express his ideas and opinions through online learning. Another student reinforced this by stating that he was surprised to see his friend, who usually tends to be silent when face to face, but becomes more outspoken and asks many questions when synchronous learning is carried out. This situation is stated by Leung & Lee (2016) as the effect of internet addiction symptoms. A person who experiences addictive symptoms to internet use can be sure that he has found pleasure while surfing in cyberspace. Because it is addictive too, slowly, the feeling of anxiety and fear when meeting with

that person can be eroded little by little. When courage and anxiety are replaced by courage, it can be said that a person's self-confidence has increased.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

The compulsion to change the learning mode from face-to-face to online learning during the COVID 19 pandemic did not initially get a good response from students and lecturers. As time goes by, this model is gradually accepted as a solution to continue the learning process. From the three dimensions of self-efficacy (magnitude, strength, and generality), the results showed that students' high self-efficacy had a significant role in learning success, including when they still had to practice their foreign language skills amidst their limitations. Therefore, it is essential to continuously improve self-efficacy to increase the perception of the ease of using the internet for learning, which in turn affects increasing learning outcomes. Internet-based learning environments need to be well designed to provide positive experiences and help students increase their capacity to learn independently and motivate them to face formal learning situations.

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