

Graduate Students' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Task-Based Learning

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Abstract

Self-efficacy is very important for graduate students and therefore has to be strongly instilled in order to encourage them to achieve their learning goals successfully including using English to communicate academically. Students are required to be studious and robust in learning and doing assignments. Nevertheless, many students feel anxious about their ability to perform their tasks moreover task-based learning. Conducted during the pandemic situation, this research aimed to investigate graduate students' perceived self-efficacy in task-based learning. One research question was formulated: How does self-efficacy assist English Education Master Students in TBL learning? This research employed a mixed-method utilizing survey and interview to gather data from English Education Master Students, who had experienced task-based learning in Sanata Dharma University. The result shows that the students' self-efficacy assisted them to be brave and confident in using the second language as the communicative tool in the TBL approach and achieve their learning goals.

Keywords: *Self-efficacy, Perception, Task-based learning, Graduate students.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language cannot be separated from reading and writing skills. Bria and Mbato (2019) stated that "Reading is a memory construction; it is essential for successes in the future." (p. 182). In learning, writing activities are as important as reading. Writing is an essential process of delivering thought that involves students' background knowledge, language proficiency, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Mbato & Cendra, 2019, p. 67).

Comprehending learning material and completing the assignments in both school and university is not easy. The students are asked to read and do the project in order to achieve the learning goals. It is essential that learning and knowledge should be long-lasting from the past, present, and future. It could be achieved through meaningful learning by having good self-regulation and good self-efficacy. Having good self-efficacy may lead the students to succeed in their performance.

Moreover, problems in comprehending materials and fulfilling assignments frequently occur in the Indonesian context, especially in EFL learning. Understanding texts in Indonesian is considered quite difficult, moreover reading and understanding a text

in English. They need to read successfully to complete a higher level of assignment and to achieve a higher level of understanding. It cannot be denied that graduate students also have difficulty understanding the material and doing their assignments. Bria & Mbato (2019) found that postgraduate students did not really make use of reading strategy when they found difficulties in a reading assignment (p. 191). The learner needs to develop knowledge and cognitive process to nourish problem-solving and meaningful learning (Mayer, 2002). There is a certain approach that is given in order to achieve a better understanding and performance, one of which is Task-Based Learning (TBL). This approach is chosen as it helps the students to be more active and skilful in learning (Sholeh, 2020) especially in the use of language as a communication tool in the class (Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu, 2011). In this case, TBL is used to assist the students to active participants and have the ability to communicate and use the language fluently through the discussion and presentation report in order to grasp the material.

Self-efficacy is a person's belief about their ability to influence events in their life (Bandura, 2010). Zimmerman (2000) stated that “self-efficacy varies conceptually and psychometrically by relevant motivational constructs as well as result expectations, self-concept, or area of control” (p. 82). Self-efficacy makes someone's initiative appear to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of difficulties. According to Akib, Haryanto, Iskandar, and Patak (2018) when students meet obstacles in their learning and they try to learn it or do not, then that is where student self-efficacy comes into the role. Self-efficacy is very important and needed to complete the given task. Anmarkrud and Braten (2009 as cited in Solheim, 2011, p.4-5) found that self-efficacy arises student's awareness of the importance of the task given for now and future goals and make the students find and directly involved in the task. Whilst, efficacy is not a fixed state, it is influenced by social circumstance (Day, 2018). To maintain self-efficacy, the teachers or lecturers in charge of the class should guide and help the students since they understand and have more experiences with the given task. This corresponds with Wijaya and Mbato (2020, p. 33), who assert that the teacher action makes the students “feel accepted, appreciated, and motivated” so the students keep going on the right way, and are in the conducive learning environment to achieve a successful learning outcome.

The other thing that the students need to have is the ability to regulate themselves. In order to complete the task properly, the student needs to undergo the three stages of self-regulation. Zimmerman (1998 as cited in Mbato, 2019, p.68) defined self-regulation as “the ability to control all aspects of one's learning, from planning ahead to evaluate performance afterwards.” In this research, the forethought stage is included in the task stage where on task-based learning the students prepare themselves by reading the materials from some sources and then discuss them with their friend in the group. The performance is in the form of worksheets in every material and creating a video lecture based on the decided group materials. The students are allowed to work with their group members. The last phase in self-regulation is self-reflection (Zimmerman, 2000). Here the students are allowed to reflect and evaluate their effort and ability after their task of performance.

In accordance with self-regulation theory, Thorndike, a behaviourist, develop three major aspects of learning that when the students prepare well on their task and achieve a satisfying result it will be repeated by itself (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2016, pp. 113-114). A better understanding of their reading leads them to get through difficulties and easily

complete assignments. The better self-regulation they have the more efficacious they are, which then leads them to the more satisfying result achieved. As stated in Mbato (2013) self-regulation entangles active participation and goal-oriented response with the activation skills and awareness (p.17.) The study from Jesen, Van Leeuwen, Jansen, Jak, and Kester (2019) found that there are some factors that predispose the usefulness of self-regulation as well as task motivation and time on task (p. 1)

Task-Based Learning (TBL) or also known as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach given whereabouts whirl over the fulfilment of essential tasks. Willis (1996,) stated that Task-Based Learning is used to encourage students to be more active by involving student's production of speech or written text on their assignment (p. 52). Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu in 2011 stated that this approach was firstly performed by Prabhu in 1982. They also asserted that TBLT "... giving learners the chance to communicate and interact and enhancing learners' ability to deploy the target language and sort out communicative problems." TBLT itself involves three stages, namely, are pre-task, task cycle, and post-task (Willis, 1996, p. 53). Zakime (2018) elaborate the pre-task as a process when the lecturer organizes the task, introduces the point of the lesson that is expected to foster student's enthusiasm and equips them to complete the task. The task stage asked the students to perform in small groups or pairs. In this approach, communication is essential among the pairs or group. Branden (2016) defined TBLT as a "learner-centred approach to language teaching" where the students are on a call of an active agent that expands their tacit and assertive second language knowledge, steadily grow more skilled grasping and create the target language toward significant purpose by the performance of their tasks (p. 164). TBLT becomes essential in this century to develop skills to get involved with society and learning through the discussion task. Sholeh, (2020) found some benefits of TBLT in teaching English for Indonesian students as follows: "makes the students connect precipitously, automaticity, allows language learner to master vocabulary, maximizes the communication scope, and provides experimental learning (pp. 6-7)." Besides, the TBLT approach can be used to increase students' participation if the teacher roundly engages the students in the teaching-learning process (Desmayenni, 2012). In carrying out this task, the lecturer should also provide guidance, support, and be available so that students can go through tasks that are deemed s difficult. Wijaya and Mbato stated that the teachers should patiently give the students motivation and guide (p. 33).

This research was conducted to investigate students' perception of their self-efficacy in Task-Based Learning. Self-efficacy is essential for the students in the TBL class in order to lead them to succeed in performing the task-cycle. Students may build their strategies and self-regulation to complete the tasks well regarding the main focus of the TBL, which is to communicate the student's idea. The previous studies view the use of TBL that results in an advanced improvement for student's understanding. Farizka, [Santihastuti](#), and Suharjito (2020) found that TBL that they used in a collaborative writing assignment drives the students to become active in the activity and understand the materials when they get clear instructions and meaningful learning. Costa (2016) concluded that TBL can be used as a valid option to 21st-century learning to nurture cognitive development and trains the students to be active learners through collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. However, none of the studies elaborates how graduate students exert efforts to nourish their self-efficacy in Task-Based Learning.

In this 21st century learning, the use of TBL is essential to expand student's skill in order to survive and be useful in society. However, in this pandemic situation, it seems that TBL is challenging to be applied in a learning class. It is even more difficult for the freshmen who never meet each other and are constrained by the lack of learning facilities. In this pandemic situation, students may be encountering anxiety and confusion in their transition from offline to online learning (Egbert, 2020). The problem that usually occurs is that the students may lack confidence and motivation in their long reading and completion of task-based learning assignments. To enrich research on Task-Based Learning, this research was conducted particularly aiming to know graduate students' general strategies to maintain their self-efficacy towards TBL. The researchers formulated a research question: "How do self-efficacy assist English Education Master Students in TBL learning?"

METHOD

This research involved 16 students of the English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. They were chosen since they underwent task-based learning in one of their courses from the beginning until the midst semester. To investigate the problem, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach integrating both quantitative and qualitative data (see, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2004). This research used two instruments, namely a Likert-scale questionnaire and interview". In order to investigate their perspective on their self-efficacy toward task-based learning, the researchers handed out ten statements in form of the Likert-scale questionnaire followed by the selection of five students to be interviewed. The interview aimed to gain deeper information about the way they maintained their self-efficacy in task-based learning. Then the questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis. The calculation of the percentage was formulated as below.

$$\Sigma x / \Sigma n. 100\%$$

where:

Σx : Number of the voters

Σn : number of all participants

Class Procedure in Task-Based Learning

The task-based learning that was implemented in the class comprised pre-task where the lecturer introduced the course materials briefly and explained the class activity. The tasks and the material were given by the lecturer aimed to encourage the students to express their idea using the English language and to promote critical thinking (see Suhandoko, 2019). Then the lecturer guided the students to create a small group consisting of three up to four students that would discuss a predetermined topic. In the task stage, the students were asked to read some sources of the material in order to gain more information. Then they were asked to write a summary of their reading based on the worksheet, which consisted of keywords, the similarity and differences between the readings and the conclusion drawn. They were allowed to discuss in the group and later create a video lecture based on the group topics. The other friends would do the same reading, plus watching the video provided by each group. The presenters were asked to do a self-assessment, gain peer-feedback from their friends and the lecturer. As the post-task in each

meeting class, the students were asked to share what they had learned as their reflection toward their learning process. This cycle was repeated for the half-semester.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section displayed the finding and discussion based on the data gathered using questionnaire and interview regarding the graduate students' perceived self-efficacy in Task-Based Learning. The first finding focuses on students' perceived self-efficacy in TBL. The second finding emphasizes students' strategies used in TBL. Both the questionnaire are findings presented in a form of a table with the percentage results. It is followed by the interview data result.

To know the level of students' self-efficacy and students' strategy in task-based learning, the researchers divided the mean level into three groups. They are: 1) 3,68 to 5,00, which is interpreted as a high level, 2) 2,34 to 3,67 interpreted as moderate level, and 3) 1,00-2,33 interpreted as low level.

Table 1. Questionnaire Result of Students' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Task-Based Learning

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
SE1	By knowing the course introduction and tasks explanation I believe that I can do my best work in this class.	-	-	3 (18.8%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (18.8%)	4.1
SE2.	When I attribute the course tasks as intriguing and interesting learning activities, I believe that I will be able to generate good works and presentation.	-	1 (6.3%)	2 (12.5%)	9 (56.3%)	4 (25%)	4.1
SE3.	When I can build a higher degree of self-efficacy in task-based learning, I will discover many kinds of strategies to finish my tasks.	-	-	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)	3.9
SE4.	I believe that my strategies help me to overcome the obstacle and to accomplish my task well.	-	-	1 (6.3%)	13 (81.3%)	2 (12.5%)	4
SE5.	After my effortful learning, I believe that I can pass this course very well.	-	1 (6.3%)	2 (12.5%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (18.8%)	4.1

The first data showed that there were ten students (62.5%) who agreed and three students (18.8%) strongly agreed that by knowing the course introduction and tasks explanation they believed that they could do their best in this class. It showed that in the

introduction section the lecturer had explained well and the students gained motivation and began to develop their self-efficacy and set their self-regulation. The TBL introduction part and the task to be given was important to be explained in detail by the lecturer so that the students could grasp the material and develop their motivation and judgement toward the tasks. The students who believed that they were able to work on the task well were the students who had a high self-efficacy. It would decrease their anxiety of failure and difficulties in communicating with their team and classmates and also in working on the task more easily. Nine students chose to agree (56.3%) and four students chose strongly agree (25%) they believe that they will be able to generate good works and presentation when they attribute the course tasks as intriguing and interesting learning activities. Most of the graduate students indicated positive attitudes and attribution towards their activity and project in TBL.

Students who have a positive attitude toward their study incline to operate various strategies to be implied in their learning process (Wijaya and Mbato, 2020). Three-quarter of the students of the class agreed (50%) and strongly agreed (25%) with the third statement that they would discover many kinds of strategies to finish the tasks when they were able to build a higher degree of self-efficacy in task-based learning. Self-efficacy is essential for the students in the TBL class in order to lead them to succeed in performing the task-cycle in a time of course. Students could build their strategies and self-regulation to complete the tasks well regarding the main focus of the TBL, which is to communicate their idea. Through students' experiences in doing tasks within limitations due to a pandemic, they often held discussions via video conferencing or telephone as a solution to keep discussing face-to-face. The higher degree of self-efficacy they have is used to reduce their doubt and fear in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 2010). Through the self-efficacy that students had, they started to develop the courage to initiate communication even though their speaking skills were not advanced. Mbato (2013) stated that "Being intentional and conscious of self-efficacy increased the students' risk-taking behavior regardless of the fear and their limited language learning capability" (p. 141). Thirteen students (81.3%) were agreed and two students (12.5%) chose strongly agree with the statement since they believed that their strategies could help them to overcome the obstacle and to accomplish their task well. It shows that almost all the graduate students planned a strategy to work on the project and evaluate their strategy when they met obstacles in their learning process. The finding was in accordance with Mbato (2013) that self-regulation should be constantly organized and evaluated in terms of achieving goals (p.18). In the last statement of this questionnaire, ten students (62.5%) agreed and three students (18.8%) strongly believed that their effortful learning would drive them to pass this course well.

As Bandura (1997) stated that a student who learnt from their failure and success gains more effort to reach their goal. It was in accordance with Boekaert and Corno (2005 as cited in Mbato, 2013, p.37) that volitional strategies such as time management and prioritizing goal were essential in class as well as in life beyond. This was in line with Bandura (2010), who stated that "development of resilient self-efficacy requires experiences in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort" (p.1). The result shows that on average, students have a high level of self-efficacy toward the task-based learning process in this class.

Table 2. Questionnaire Result of students' strategies used in TBL

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
S1	By knowing the course introduction and task explanation, I prepare and practice to present the task well.	-	-	4 (25%)	9 (56.3%)	3 (18.8%)	4
S2	I can understand what is being learned in class this semester well through the task-based learning process in this class.	-	-	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	4 (25%)	3.9
S3	I have an interest in the topic in this course, so I am able to communicate the task well as a graduate student.	-	1 (6.3%)	4 (25%)	11 (68.8%)	-	3.6
S4	The course tasks and presentation boost my speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills to be more fluent.	-	-	6 (37.5%)	7 (43.8%)	3 (18.8%)	3.8
S5	This task-based learning that implemented in this (Educational Psychology) is more motivating and challenging rather than other teaching-learning approaches.	-	1 (6.3%)	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	3 (18.8%)	3.8

The table shows the data related to students' strategies used while taking the course. Three-quarter of the students agreed (56.3%) and strongly agreed (18.8%) that they did preparation and practice to the task after knowing the course introduction and task explanation. In accordance with Sholeh (2020, p.3) in the pre-task stage, the lecturer gave an introduction of the course by setting down the detailed instruction to the students regarding what they needed to do for the task stage. Here the students could set their strategy and put their effort i.e., practicing and preparing for the task. Students agreed (37.5%) and strongly agreed (25%) that they were able to understand what was learned through task-based learning along this semester. Al Kandari and Al Qattan (2020) argue that the TBL outcomes indicate the aggregate skills that are provable and generate visible results. In this case, the students were able to do the assignments such as reading the journals and doing the worksheets, presenting the materials and giving response toward the presentation. When the students had an interest in the topic given in the course, they became able to communicate the related task well as a graduate student (68.8%). Putting their interest in the topic helps them to pay attention to what they are learning. Israel, Block, Bauserman, and Welsch (2006) stated that "directing their (student) attention is the first step toward metacognition." (p. 48). The tasks (i.e. reading journals, worksheet, and forum discussion) and the presentation boost the student's language skills. TBL approach itself is intended to stimulate the students' development at their agility and to process and

reconstruct their inter-language according to their level and interest (Sholeh, 2020, p.2). The interest in the topics has driven them to develop their curiosity by problematizing and delivering their opinion. They could ask, explain, and discuss with other students and the lecturer. There were students who agreed (43.8%) and strongly agreed (18.8%) that their speaking, reading, writing, and listening ability became better by working on the tasks. As stated by Sholeh (2020) TBL tasks equip the learners to employ and promote their language skills significantly. The students in this course were required to read one up to three journals per week and complete the worksheet related to the journal. They were asked to compare and contrast the information from each journal and notice the detailed information. Then, the students should focus on the material presented. The presenters needed to maintain their speech fluency and clarity so the audience could focus on what they were explaining and grasp it well. For the last statement, there were eight students who agreed (50%) and three students WHO strongly agreed (18.8%) that the TBL approach that was implemented in this class was more motivating and challenging rather than the approaches used in other courses. Student's activity through TBL involves "cognitive ability and communication skills" (Sholeh, 2020, p.6). Their cognitive ability was indicated by their curiosity, sense of control, language repair, and time management. Through the task, the students were challenged to communicate and perform strategically. From the data results, on average, the students applied strategy and self-regulation to support their learning process and to accomplish the desired results.

Besides the quantitative data gained from the questionnaire, this section elaborates the qualitative data results from the chosen interviewees. The introductory section of TBL was important for students to figure out and aware of the strategy they would undertake. The students needed to set their goals in the learning process as a source of motivation to learn. The introduction section was in accordance with the statements in the questionnaire where students were able to build their self-efficacy in undergoing the learning process. Students would build self-resilience in learning until they reached the goals set at the beginning of the class. This result excerpted from an interviewee:

"At first I was not sure whether I would pass or not but as time goes by I became aware of the suitable learning strategies and methods to pass the course. I also learned the course' pattern that helped me to comprehend the course well." (I4)

Through the interview, the researchers found that the students applied their self-regulation through TBL. The Task-Based Learning approach helped the students who had difficulty in understanding the learning material through the opportunity to discuss with their group. TBL improved student's participation and collaboration in learning. As the interviewee stated:

"I was difficult to learn by myself. I usually talked and discussed with my friends to complete a task. I was not very communicative to ask my friends to have a discussion. In dealing with the obstacle, I forced myself to ask my friend or I would just try my best to do it alone" (I2)

As written in Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011), through TBL, students used the language as a means of communication to open the way for the learning process to occur. Task-Based Language Learning gives the students an opportunity to explore more and get the meaning of learning through both spoken and written communications. By having good self-efficacy and self-regulation, the students have an inner desire and drive to gain and

master new knowledge and complete the learning tasks. This is in line with Branden (2016, p. 164) who states that the learner is an active agent capable of developing second language knowledge implicitly and explicitly through their assignments. The students seek help to overcome their difficulties, which is the part of self-regulation to attain their goals in learning. This is supported by Mbato (2019) who argues that students tend to seek help from a more knowledgeable partner (p. 68).

After their hard work on Task-Based Learning, some of the students felt satisfied and some other unsatisfied. They were satisfied because they could finish their assignment and submit it on time but unsatisfied since they did not get feedback from the lecturer; they did not know about their quality, what needed to be improved and to be maintained.

“Yes, I'm between satisfied and not. Satisfied because I can work on the assigned worksheet every week but I am not satisfied because there is no feedback and no value is known from the worksheet. I am happy with this course because two capable lecturers can explain the material well and summarize it into something that makes students interested in always learning.” (I3)

According to Li and Grion (2019), giving feedback and receiving feedback is essential in learning to advance student skills' quality and projects' quality. Although they seldom gained the lecturer's feedback, they already got the feedback through critical thinking questions from the audience after the presentation. Student's ability to work on the task and submit on time was the sign that they utilized self-regulation effectively. In sum, students who realized the course patterns with TBL learning was able to develop higher self-efficacy and employ self-regulation to cope with the obstacles in learning and achieve their goals. They became more resilient in gaining and mastering new knowledge through the communication they sought in the TBL approach.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to answer the following research question i.e., How does self-efficacy assist English Education Master students in TBL learning? The researchers gathered the data using the questionnaire and interview. From the data analyses, it was found that the student's self-efficacy was an essential foundation to aid them to set a series of self-regulation that they needed in learning. It was revealed in the data that student self-efficacy and self-regulation aided them in achieving their learning goals. In order to implement self-efficacy and self-regulation, students had to have good language skills and be fluent in their use. In carrying out the various types of tasks in task-based learning, they believed that the introduction process at the initial lecture meeting helped them to build their self-efficacy for future assignment completions. When students had a positive attitude and awareness toward their assignments and thought that the assignments was important and useful for them, they would have good self-efficacy and could carry out and complete their assignments more easily. They could develop awareness, strategies and self-regulation in the form of preparation, practice and discussions before working on or presenting the assignments. Then they could reflect on and evaluate the strategies and results they gained to face future tasks and obstacles. Through the assignments they received in task-based learning, students recognized that

they were increasingly able to use their English language skills well. The feedback session was important in the TBL approach to evaluate student's progress in performing their assignments. This research has implications for pedagogical learning in the form of the application of TBLT, which can be used both in offline and online learning as happened during the pandemic. TBLT can be used as a powerful learning approach in these two modes of learning on condition that students are at the same time assisted to develop good self-efficacy and self-regulation. Thus, graduate students will be better prepared to face the challenges of learning in the 21st century with all the advancements and sophistication of learning- technologies.

The researchers would like to give suggestions for the next researchers. In this pandemic situation, it will be interesting to study more about the use of task-based learning and investigate student's self-efficacy and self-regulation to improve the student's language ability in their learning respective contexts. They could invite more participants since this study involved a limited number of participants.

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