



The Effect of Academic Progression on EFL Learning Self-Efficacy among English Education Students in an Indonesian University

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Abstract. *This study examines the effect of academic progression on EFL learning self-efficacy among English Education students at a state university in Indonesia. Although self-efficacy has been widely recognized as a key factor influencing learners' motivation, engagement, and academic performance, limited research in the Indonesian context has explored whether confidence levels differ meaningfully across academic stages. To address this gap, the study compared the self-efficacy of second-year and third-year students using a quantitative comparative design. A total of 30 participants completed a validated Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, assumption checks, and independent samples t-tests. The results showed that both groups demonstrated moderately high self-efficacy, with third-year students reporting slightly higher scores; however, the difference was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that academic progression alone may not substantially influence learners' self-efficacy when instructional conditions and learning experiences remain relatively similar. The study highlights the need for providing meaningful mastery experiences and supportive pedagogical practices to strengthen self-efficacy development across students' academic journeys in Indonesian higher education.*

Keywords: *Academic Progression; EFL learners; English Education; Higher Education; Self-Efficacy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to plan, organize, and carry out actions required to achieve specific goals, is a core component of social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). Within educational contexts, especially in English Education or Tadris Bahasa Inggris programs, strong self-efficacy beliefs equip learners to regulate their study strategies, engage actively in classroom tasks, and persist through academic difficulties. For pre-service teachers, these beliefs play an even more crucial role, as they contribute to future professional competence in lesson planning, instructional decision-making, and classroom management (Schunk & Pajares, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Consequently, cultivating robust self-efficacy from the early stages of teacher preparation is vital for improving instructional quality and long-term career readiness.

Despite its importance, university students' self-efficacy often varies across academic stages due to differences in exposure to coursework, teaching practice, and academic expectations. Second-year students are typically still adapting to more advanced linguistic and pedagogical content, often with limited opportunities to apply theory in practical teaching situations. In contrast, third-year students generally have greater experience with classroom simulations, collaborative projects, and applied teaching activities, which may enhance their confidence in handling academic and pedagogical tasks. These developmental distinctions indicate that self-efficacy is not fixed but progresses alongside students' academic experiences,

learning environments, and strategy use (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019). Therefore, systematically comparing students across academic years is essential for understanding how their beliefs evolve and what forms of instructional support may strengthen them.

International research consistently highlights the influential role of self-efficacy in shaping language learners' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Zhang, 2022; Luo et al., 2024; Jia, 2022). Recent studies show that self-regulated learning strategies can substantially enhance EFL learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, creativity, and overall self-efficacy (Zhang, 2024). Additionally, learning supported by digital platforms and interactive tools has been shown to foster higher self-efficacy by providing accessible practice and feedback opportunities (Rafiq & Fitriani, 2023; Muslem et al., 2023). While these studies provide valuable insight into factors that shape self-efficacy, much less attention has been given to comparative analyses across different academic stages within English Education programs. Such comparisons can reveal whether increased exposure to coursework, teaching simulations, and collaborative learning indeed leads to stronger perceptions of capability.

Given the centrality of self-efficacy for both academic success and future professional readiness, this study aims to determine whether significant differences exist between students at different academic stages. Specifically, it focuses on comparing the self-efficacy levels of second-year and third-year students in an English Education Department at an Indonesian state university. This comparison is intended to identify whether more advanced academic exposure and early teaching-related experiences contribute to higher levels of self-efficacy among students.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions and hypothesis:

RQ1: What are the self-efficacy levels of second-year and third-year English Education students?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in self-efficacy between second-year and third-year students?

H1: Third-year students are expected to exhibit significantly higher self-efficacy than second-year students.

By integrating an internationally validated self-efficacy framework (Zhang, 2024) with empirical data from a local university context, this study contributes insights that may inform targeted pedagogical interventions, curriculum refinement, and strategies to enhance pre-service teachers' confidence and readiness for professional practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Self-Efficacy in Educational Contexts

Self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to complete tasks and achieve desired outcomes, is a central construct in Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). In educational settings, self-efficacy influences students' effort, persistence, resilience, and academic performance (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Learners with strong self-efficacy tend to engage more actively in learning, apply effective learning strategies, and respond positively to challenges. Conversely, low self-efficacy may lead to avoidance, anxiety, and decreased motivation. In language learning, self-efficacy has been shown to affect key skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019; Tarigan et al., 2022).

Academic Self-Efficacy in EFL Learning

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), academic self-efficacy plays an essential role in shaping learners' engagement and performance. Multiple studies highlight that EFL students with higher self-efficacy demonstrate stronger motivation, more effective strategy use, better communication skills, and improved task performance (Chen & Hsu, 2022; Zhang, 2024). Self-efficacy positively influences learners' willingness to participate in class activities, cope with linguistic challenges, and utilize learning technologies (Zhang, 2022). For example, Li (2023) found that collaborative digital writing environments enhanced both writing performance and self-efficacy among EFL learners. Similarly, Muslem et al. (2023) reported that the use of online learning platforms contributed to higher levels of learning self-efficacy.

Factors Influencing EFL Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy in EFL environments is shaped by several sources: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experience successful performance of academic tasks has been identified as the strongest predictor of self-efficacy growth (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019). Students who frequently complete challenging EFL tasks, receive constructive feedback, and engage in collaborative learning activities tend to develop stronger confidence.

Additionally, emotional well-being and engagement also predict learners' self-efficacy levels. Research by Jia (2022) and Liu (2022) shows that positive emotions, interest, and involvement significantly enhance academic self-efficacy, which in turn leads to better learning outcomes. The integration of technology is another important factor. Studies indicate that digital tools, online feedback, and CALL-based environments can strengthen self-efficacy by

providing accessible practice opportunities and immediate feedback (Chen & Hsu, 2022; Zhang, 2022).

Academic Progression and Self-Efficacy Development

Academic progression advancement through university semesters has been theorized to contribute to self-efficacy development due to increasing exposure to academic demands, instructional activities, and teaching-related experiences. Senior students often accumulate more mastery experiences through presentations, teaching simulations, group discussions, and academic projects (Tsao, 2021). These experiences can strengthen their sense of competence compared to students in earlier semesters.

Previous studies, however, show mixed results. While some scholars report that learners in higher academic levels demonstrate significantly stronger self-efficacy (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019), other findings suggest that academic level alone does not guarantee differences. Chang & Tsai (2022) found that emotional intelligence and motivation played a more dominant role than semester level in predicting self-efficacy. Maharani & Purnama (2023) also reported minimal differences in academic self-efficacy across semesters when instructional contexts were similar.

Gaps in the Existing Literature

Most existing studies focus on the effects of instructional strategies, affective factors, and technology integration on EFL self-efficacy. However, fewer studies provide comparative analyses of self-efficacy across different academic levels within the same program. While several international studies acknowledge the developmental nature of self-efficacy, empirical evidence on how academic progression affects EFL learners' self-confidence in Indonesian higher education remains limited. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies specifically comparing second-year and third-year English Education students, particularly using rigorously validated and reliable self-efficacy instruments (Zhang, 2024).

Thus, a research gap remains concerning whether students in later semesters indeed exhibit stronger self-efficacy as a result of accumulated academic exposure, practical experiences, and greater familiarity with EFL learning tasks. Based on the reviewed theories and previous studies, it is assumed that students in higher academic levels may demonstrate relatively higher self-efficacy than those in lower levels due to increased academic experience and learning maturity.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This section describes the research design, population and sample, data collection techniques and instruments, as well as the analytical tools used in the study. The method was structured to ensure clarity, alignment with research objectives, and adherence to ethical standards.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative comparative design with a cross-sectional approach, aiming to compare the levels of academic self-efficacy between second-year and third-year students in the English Education Department at a state university in Indonesia. This design is appropriate for identifying differences between existing groups without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Considering the limited number of participants, this study functioned as a small-scale pilot study to provide an initial exploration of year-level differences in self-efficacy.

Population and Sample

The population comprised undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Department. Using purposive sampling, a total of 30 students participated: 15 second-year and 15 third-year students who met the inclusion criteria of being active and willing participants.

Instruments

The study used the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) adapted from Zhang (2024). The instrument consisted of 30 items on a five-point Likert scale assessing five dimensions: completing academic tasks, peer interaction, technology use, communication with instructors, and collaboration. The adaptation process ensured linguistic and cultural equivalence through translation and expert judgment. The instrument demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .922$), exceeding the .70 threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating that the scale reliably measured the construct.

Data Collection

Data were collected online using Google Forms after obtaining official permission from the department. The researcher informed participants about the study's purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Each participant took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Data collection lasted one week.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using JASP software. Descriptive statistics were computed, followed by assumption testing (normality and homogeneity). Depending on

assumption results, either independent samples t-test or Mann–Whitney U test was performed to compare groups. Effect sizes (Cohen’s d or r) were calculated to interpret the magnitude of differences (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012; Lakens, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

The study obtained prior ethical approval from the English Education Department. Participants’ anonymity, confidentiality, and right to withdraw were respected throughout the process. All procedures complied with ethical guidelines for educational research (Cohen et al., 2018).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Profile of Learners’ EFL Self-Efficacy

The measurement of EFL learning self-efficacy in this study was based on data extracted from the JASP output file, which consisted of 30 valid cases. These data were used because they represent the most accurate results from the instrument administration and contain complete descriptive, reliability, and inferential statistics necessary to answer the research questions. As shown in the output, the overall mean score was 102.2, with a median of 104, indicating that most learners perceived themselves as moderately confident in managing their English learning tasks. The standard deviation of 12.54 suggests moderate variability in students’ self-efficacy beliefs, meaning the participants did not cluster too closely at a single level but differed in their perceived capacities.

Normality analysis further supported the suitability of this dataset. The distribution exhibited slight negative skewness (−0.166) and mild positive kurtosis (0.398), both of which fall within acceptable ranges for parametric assumptions. The Shapiro–Wilk value of 0.986, with a nonsignificant p-value of .949, confirmed that the self-efficacy scores were normally distributed. This supports the use of independent samples t-tests, which assume approximate normality of the dependent variable. Normality is a crucial foundation in inferential analysis because it ensures that obtained p-values and confidence intervals are valid (Lakens, 2022).

The analysis also identified the minimum and maximum scores of 72 and 128, respectively. This range indicates that while some students reported lower confidence in their abilities, others demonstrated very high self-efficacy. These differences mirror past findings showing that individual EFL learners vary considerably in their confidence depending on exposure, experience, and strategy use (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019).

Overall, these descriptive results align with previous research indicating that university-level EFL learners often possess moderately high self-efficacy as a result of continuous academic exposure (Li, 2023), skill practice (Rafiq & Fitriani, 2023), and ongoing engagement with digital learning tools (Zhang, 2022; Muslem et al., 2023). The descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Self-Efficacy (from JASP)

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	
	Total Self-Efficacy
Valid	30
Missing	40
Median	104.0
Mean	102.2
Std. Deviation	12.54
Skewness	-0.166
Std. Error of Skewness	0.427
Kurtosis	0.398
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.833
Shapiro-Wilk	0.986
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	.949
Minimum	72.00
Maximum	128.0

To provide a clearer comparison between the two learner groups, descriptive statistics for each cohort are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Group Descriptive Statistics of EFL Self-Efficacy

<i>Group Descriptives</i>						
	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
Total_Self-Efficacy	1	15	100.9	10.95	2.827	0.109
	2	15	103.5	14.23	3.673	0.138

Measurement Reliability and Justification of Using These Data

The reliability analysis showed that the self-efficacy instrument used in this study demonstrated excellent internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value of .922, supported by Guttman's $\lambda_2 = .931$ and a split-half coefficient of .943, confirms that the items consistently measured the same underlying construct. High reliability is critical because it ensures that observed differences in scores reflect true variance among students rather than measurement error. One negatively correlated item was removed to improve internal consistency before the final analysis.

The data from the JASP file were used specifically because they contained the complete reliability matrix, which is required to establish instrument validity before interpreting group differences. Previous studies on self-efficacy have emphasized the need for highly reliable instruments when comparing learner groups (Chen & Hsu, 2022; Golparvar & Khafi, 2021).

For example, Tsao (2021) noted that unreliable scales tend to inflate or obscure differences in writing self-efficacy, making valid comparisons impossible. Similarly, Takarroucht (2022) highlighted that high internal consistency is essential in studies that compare EFL learners' writing self-assessment outcomes.

In this study, the high reliability supports the argument that the slight differences observed between academic levels are genuine reflections of the learners' perceptions rather than artifacts of measurement. This justification ensures that interpretations in subsequent analyses rest on statistically sound foundations. The reliability statistics of the instrument are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics of the Self-Efficacy Scale (from JASP)

<i>Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics</i>				
			95% CI	
Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Coefficient α	0.922			
Guttman's λ^2	0.931			
Split-half coefficient	0.943	0.014	0.916	0.970
Average interitem correlation	0.288			
Mean	43.786	6.164	31.705	55.866
Variance	2659.417	452.769	1955.111	3828.962
SD	51.570	1.460	44.217	61.879

Comparison of Self-Efficacy Between Second- and Third-Year Students

To address the comparative aspect of the research, independent samples t-tests were conducted using the dataset from the JASP output. The comparison examined self-efficacy differences between second-year students (mean = 100.9) and third-year students (mean = 103.5). This difference of 2.6 points suggests that third-year learners perceived themselves as slightly more confident. Before running the test, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was established through Levene's test ($F = 2.426$, $p = .131$). Because the test was not significant, equal variances were assumed. This step is important because unequal variances would require adjustments in the t-test formula and interpretation.

The independent samples t-test yielded $t(28) = -0.561$, $p = .290$, with a Cohen's d of -0.205 , indicating a small, non-significant effect size. This means that although third-year learners scored higher descriptively, the difference was not statistically meaningful. Such non-significant findings are not uncommon in EFL self-efficacy studies. Chang & Tsai (2022), for example, found that self-efficacy did not always differ significantly by academic level when emotional intelligence and motivation were held constant. Similarly, Maharani & Purnama (2023) reported that students across different university semesters often show comparable academic confidence levels when instructional conditions are similar.

The small effect size may also be explained by the similar learning experiences shared by both groups. As modern EFL courses frequently incorporate technology, feedback tools, and student-centered instruction, learners across different levels often receive comparable exposure (Al-Mwzaiji & Alzubi, 2022). Furthermore, online learning platforms can reduce performance and confidence gaps between cohorts (Muslem et al., 2023).

Methodological considerations must also be acknowledged. With a sample size of 30 participants, statistical power is limited. Sullivan & Feinn (2012) noted that small sample sizes often fail to detect subtle differences even when they exist. Thus, the absence of significance does not negate the possibility that third-year students experience meaningful gains in confidence; it only suggests that such gains were not large enough to be statistically detected. The results of the independent samples t-test are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Independent Samples t-Test (from JASP)

<i>Independent Samples T-Test</i>					
	t	df	p	Cohen's d	SE Cohen's d
Total Self-Efficacy	-0.561	28	.290	-0.205	0.367

Note. For all tests, the alternative hypothesis specifies that the second-year group is less than the third-year group.

Note. Student's t-test.

Interpretation of Findings in Relation to EFL Self-Efficacy Research

Although no significant difference was found between the two academic levels, the descriptive advantage of third-year students is consistent with several theoretical and empirical expectations. Past studies such as Zhang & Ardasheva (2019) emphasize that accumulated mastery experiences strengthen self-efficacy beliefs over time. Third-year learners may have completed more presentations, writing tasks, or reading assignments, contributing to their slightly higher averages.

Self-regulation also plays a critical role. Learners who use strategic behaviors often report higher confidence (Wicaksono et al., 2023). If both second- and third-year students employ similar strategies such as planning, monitoring, and revising their self-efficacy levels may converge despite differing academic levels. The emotional dimension of learning further explains these patterns. Research by Jia (2022) and Liu (2022) shows that student well-being, interest, and engagement strongly predict self-efficacy. These affective variables operate regardless of academic year and may have contributed to the overall uniformity of scores.

The relationship between self-efficacy and language skills also informs the interpretation. Rafiqa and Fitriani (2023) found that speaking self-efficacy is closely tied to performance, while Tarigan et al. (2022) identified similar trends in reading comprehension. If

both groups in this study have comparable skill experiences, such as frequent speaking or reading tasks, their self-efficacy may naturally align.

Finally, the use of digital feedback, collaborative environments, and online tools frequently cited in Chen & Hsu (2022), Li (2023), Zhang (2022), and Zhang (2022) may elevate learners' confidence uniformly across years.

Discussion

The results of this study provide important insights into the self-efficacy levels of English Education students across two academic levels. Overall, both second-year and third-year students demonstrated moderately high EFL self-efficacy, which aligns with previous studies showing that university learners tend to develop stronger self-beliefs as they progress academically (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019; Li, 2023). Although the descriptive analysis showed that third-year students scored slightly higher ($M = 103.5$) than second-year students ($M = 100.9$), the independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. This indicates that academic level, in this context, does not substantially influence learners' self-perceived capability in completing EFL tasks.

The absence of significant differences may be attributed to several factors. Both cohorts were likely exposed to similar learning environments, instructional practices, and assessment methods. Prior research suggests that self-efficacy is shaped more strongly by mastery experiences, feedback quality, and social persuasion than by academic year alone (Bandura, 1997). If teaching approaches, course structures, and lecturer feedback remain consistent across levels, students may develop comparable confidence regardless of whether they are in their second or third year. Additionally, affective variables such as engagement, interest, and emotional stability may be equally distributed across the two academic levels, contributing to similar self-efficacy outcomes (Jia, 2022; Liu, 2022).

Another important aspect supporting the interpretation of the findings is the strong reliability of the instrument. The self-efficacy scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, evidenced by Cronbach's $\alpha = .922$, Guttman's $\lambda^2 = .931$, and a split-half reliability of .943, all exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The average inter-item correlation (.288) also falls within the optimal range recommended for psychological constructs. These indicators confirm that the scale measured a coherent construct and that the obtained scores are stable and trustworthy. Therefore, the non-significant differences between academic levels are not likely due to measurement error but rather reflect genuine similarities in students' self-efficacy.

The findings are consistent with several previous studies reporting no significant differences in self-efficacy between learners of different academic years when instructional conditions are relatively homogeneous (Chang & Tsai, 2022; Maharani & Purnama, 2023). However, other studies have shown that self-efficacy may increase in later semesters due to accumulated mastery experiences (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Tsao, 2021). The mixed evidence suggests that contextual factors such as curriculum design, learning culture, and classroom environment play a crucial role in shaping self-efficacy development.

Although this study offers meaningful insights, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The relatively small sample size reduces statistical power, making it difficult to detect subtle differences between groups (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Moreover, the study was limited to a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research may consider incorporating larger samples, longitudinal designs, or additional variables such as motivation, language proficiency, or learning anxiety to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of self-efficacy across academic levels.

Overall, the results highlight that self-efficacy remains relatively stable between second-year and third-year EFL learners, suggesting that consistent and supportive pedagogical practices may be more influential than academic level in shaping students' confidence in their English learning abilities.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined whether academic progression contributes to differences in EFL learning self-efficacy by comparing second-year and third-year English Education students at an Indonesian state university. The findings showed that both groups demonstrated moderately high levels of self-efficacy, with third-year students displaying a slight descriptive advantage. However, this difference was not statistically significant, indicating that academic year alone does not meaningfully differentiate learners' perceived capabilities in completing EFL-related tasks.

The results suggest that consistent instructional practices, similar learning environments, and comparable exposure to technology-enhanced learning may contribute to the stability of self-efficacy across academic stages. These findings align with previous research suggesting that self-efficacy is shaped primarily by mastery experiences, emotional engagement, feedback quality, and strategic learning behaviors rather than academic progression itself. The strong reliability of the measurement instrument further supports the validity of the observed patterns.

While the study provides empirical evidence from an underrepresented Indonesian context, its conclusions should be interpreted cautiously due to the limited sample size, which may reduce the ability to detect subtle differences between groups. Future research may benefit from involving larger and more diverse samples, employing longitudinal designs, and integrating additional variables such as motivation, proficiency, anxiety, or teaching experience. Such work would offer deeper insights into how self-efficacy develops throughout teacher education programs and which pedagogical interventions most effectively enhance learners' confidence and academic readiness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to extend gratitude to scholars and previous researchers whose works provided theoretical foundation and inspiration for this study. Appreciation is also addressed to colleagues and academic partners for insightful discussions that enriched the development of ideas throughout the writing process.

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