The Role of Academic Self-Efficacy as a Predictor of Students' Arguments in English Debate

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Abstract

This study measured the levels of Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) of senior high school debater students. The study also aims to explore the role of ASE as a predictor of participants' arguments in English Debate. As understood by Bandura, self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated performance levels. The study used a case study method. The data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations. The result of the questionnaire finds out that the students' ASE was high, with an average score of 116 from the maximum score of 160. The interview results showed that the student's self-efficacy affected the students in stating their arguments. The four factors from Bandura (1997), namely mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal or social persuasion, and emotional state, influence students' ASE in giving their arguments. Furthermore, the observation reveals that the students were affected by their ASE while preparing and giving their arguments. Overall, this study concluded that debater students have a high ASE, and it was one of the predictors that affect their arguments in English debates. However, further research still needs to explore more factors affecting debater students' arguments in English Debate.

Keyword: Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE); English Debate; Students' Arguments.

Introduction

Globalization has increased the demand for advanced speaking skills, and English public speaking (EPS) competitions have sparked an interest. Communication skills are critical for "intellectual development, career trajectory, and civic engagement" (Schreiber et al., 2012). Although self-efficacy is strongly associated with performance, there is still little study developed to investigate it. Grounded in Bandura's self-efficacy theory, the current study aims to find out how the academic self-efficacy of high school debater students is and how it functions as a predictor in students' academic achievement, in this case, is students' argument in English debate.

Within an academic context, SE is often defined in terms of Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE), which determines learners' decisions about achieving educational goals successfully (Elias & MacDonald, 2007). In other words, to achieve better results, students who have a high ASE may reflect and act on their learning experiences and change their academic behaviour accordingly. SE is

influenced by four significant factors: (a) experience (mastery experiences); (b) vicarious experiences; (c) social persuasion from others; and (d) physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). One of the most significant barriers learners have to deal with is public speaking anxiety in the EFL context. One of the public speaking activities that learners can use to enhance critical thinking is debate (Hidayoza et al., 2019). In an EFL environment, where learners have inadequate opportunities in real-life situations to practice public speaking, debating opens up opportunities for them to use the language in the form of expressing their thoughts with logic.

In the English debate, debaters practice many language functions: explaining, informing, justifying, debating, describing, classifying, proving, persuading, and evaluating. Moreover, they are often expected to state, discuss, question, and defend opinions (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Unfortunately, based on prior observation, it was shown that English debaters often get stressed and nervous during English debate competitions which affect their achievement in the competition. This situation may be affected by their self-efficacy, which is in line with the study by Gaythwaite (2006) that found self-efficacy as a predictor of informative speech.

Studies about SE concerning public speaking have been conducted in the public speaking context, especially concerning the correlation between speaking anxiety and English self-efficacy in the foreign language (Mede&Karaırmak, 2017; Paradewari, 2017; Zhang &Ardasheva2019). Nevertheless, the studies above are about SE in an academic setting in general. There is still no research regarding ASE in the debating context, specifically how debaters give their arguments. Moreover, there are also still a few studies concerning ASE in English debate in Indonesia. Also, the participants from the previous research primarily investigated college students' debaters. Therefore, the current study tries to investigate the role of self-efficacy as a predictor of the participants' researchers in the English Debate Competition (EDC). In this study, the participants will be senior high school students that joined the English debate club. This study aims to determine how students' academic self-efficacy is and how it functions as a predictor of students' academic achievement. In this case, it is students' argument in English debate.

Research Methodology

The present study used qualitative research and employed a case study method. Case studies were preferred when the relevant behaviours still cannot be manipulated, and the desire is to study some current event or set of circumstances (Yin, 1994). The case study itself is usually used if a researcher wants to focus on a particular unit to create an in-depth, rich and detailed explanation (Ary*et. al.*, 2010). Therefore, the researcher uses the case study method because this research focused on an exceptional interest. In this research, the particular interest is the predictor roles of ASE of debaters' argument in English debate,

Furthermore, the researcher purposively recruited the participants based on the aims of the research. The participants were senior high school students who joined the English debate club. The

reasons for selecting the students were because this study was intended to get a deep understanding of the self-efficacy roles as a predictor of the debaters' argument in English debate and their ASE itself. Therefore, investigations were targeted only for the senior high school debater students who can provide data to answer the research questions. The research was taken place was in an old high school in Bengkulu, Indonesia. This senior high school is one of the favourite schools in Bengkulu that has an active English club that always holds an English competition in various fields such as English debate, storytelling, scrabbles, etc., every year.

In this research, the data were collected using three research instruments, Questionnaire, interview, and Observation. The questionnaire was used to explore the ASE of the students. It was measured by adapting the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale by Gafoor & Ashraf (2006), which is based on the Self-Efficacy Theory of Albert Bandura (1977). The questionnaire was a 4-Likert scale consisting of 20 positive and negative statements in the entire 40 statements. To dig for more information, semi-structured interviews were employed. The interview was used to identify problems of English debaters respectively in public speaking (Hidayoza et al., 2019). The researcher interviewed the debaters to determine the role of ASE as the predictor of their arguments. The last instrument was observation. According to Lodico (2006), observation is a tool of research that requires systematic and careful examination of the phenomena being studied. In this study, the observation was conducted to understand how the students state their arguments both in practice and during competition. The researcher wanted to see the ASE of the student (it can be from their gesture, their vocabulary used, their fluency, etc.) in stating their arguments, and it was conducted in the school's classroom where the debaters practice. In this stage, the researcher had one co-researcher record the debate activity that was later analyzed by the researcher to gain every detail of the expected data.

In this research, the data were analyzed qualitatively using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). Firstly, the data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The collection of the questionnaire and interview were spread through an online platform. For the observation, data were obtained from the debaters' WhatsApp group and direct observations by co-researcher from their school practice. After that, the researcher creates codes and categories in data condensation to guide the data to research questions. The researcher makes an observation checklist and selects the interview data needed in the data analysis. Then, the data were displayed using a chart for the questionnaire results and the observation checklist result. The interview result was also shown in the form of a list after being simplified and specified. Lastly, the researcher describes the relationship between the results of the three instruments and answer the research question. In the end, the researcher draws a conclusion based on the results.

Findings

In this research, the researcher used 40 items of self-efficacy questionnaire that investigated the students' ASE. This questionnaire use 4-point scale items ranging from 'disagree' to 'strongly agree.' There are 20 positive and negative statements in the total 40 statements. The participants have to choose one of the four alternatives that represent their response best. For the positive statements, four scores were provided for '4' for 'strongly agree', '3' for 'agree', '2' for 'less agree' and '1' for 'disagree'. Negative statements were scored in the reverse order. The participants' scores ranged from a minimum of 40 if the students chose the value of 1 in all questions to a maximum of 160 if the students chose the value of 4 for all questions. The descriptive statistical analysis of the ASE questionnaire for the participants is shown below:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis of the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

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	N	Lowest	Highest	Mean
Academic Self-Efficacy	9	101	133	116

Based on n the table above, the result revealed that the lowest score of the participants' ASE was 101. Based on the categories in table 2, it was considered the medium level of ASE. The highest score gained by the participants was 133 and was supposed to be the high level of ASE.

Table 2. Academic Self-Efficacy Categories

Score	Category
40-63	Very Low
64-87	Low
88-111	Medium
112-135	High
136-160	Very High

Based on the ASE categories table above, the mean score of the participants' ASE was 116 from the maximum score of 160 that also considered high in the categories. Indeed, the participants relatively had a high academic self-efficacy. It was also supported by the result of the interview session where one of the participants claimed that she was confident with her English to join the English debate Club.

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> *"Saya cukup percaya diri dengan kemampuan bahasa Inggris saya sehingga mengikuti klub debat Bahasa Inggris. Saya merasa yakin karena melihat nilai bahasa Inggris saya di jenjang sebelumnya yang terbilang bagus."*

> "I was confident enough in my English skills to join the English debate club. I also feel confident because I saw that my English scores at the previous level were pretty good."

The statement above indicates that the student had a high ASE as she said that she was confident enough with her skill in English, and it became the reason she joined the EDC. The statement also indicates that the Mastery Experience (ME) was influenced her choice in joining EDC. Moreover, we were asked about the motivation she joining EDC. The participant confidently stated that the main reason was that she was confident with her English skill and wanted to improve them more through the debating Club. Overall, the result revealed that the academic self-efficacy of the participants was high. However, the results also showed the role of academic self-efficacy in the participant's arguments. Below is the interviewed result that supports the statement.

> *"Dalam menyampaikan argument, terkadang saya merasa gugup di awal. Tapi setelah saya mulai berbicara, saya tidak merasa gugup lagi. Yang membuat gugup terkadang jika saya tidak begitu menguasai materinya. Selain itu, pihak lawan juga memperngaruhi kepercayaan diri saya. Jika pihak lawan terlihat menguasai saat menyampaikan argument, disana saya juga merasa down lagi. Tetapi sebaliknya, jika saya mengusai materi dan pihak lawan terlihat tidak menguasai, saya menjadi percaya diri dalam menyampaikan argument. Yang saya rasakan, kualitas argument saya menjadi baik jika saya menyampaikannya dengan percaya diri, namun akan jelek jika saya menyampaikannya dalam keadaan gugup."*

> "In presenting an argument, sometimes I feel nervous at first. But once I started talking, I didn't feel nervous anymore. What makes me nervous is sometimes if I don't master the material. Apart from that, the opposing party also affected my confidence. If the other party seems to control when delivering an argument, I also feel down again. But on the other hand, if I master the material and the other party doesn't seem to be in control, I become confident in presenting an argument. I feel the quality of my argument will be good if I present it confidently, but it will be bad if I present it in a nervous state."

From the statement above, it can be inferred that the ASE of the students was, indeed, affecting their arguments' quality. Their mastery experience was found to interfere in the way they present their argument. Moreover, the social persuasion was also affecting them when the opposing party's performance affected their confidence. The participant was also aware that if she did a good job presenting the argument confidently, her quality of arguments would be good. Overall, the results showed that one's academic self-efficacy affected the way and the quality of their arguments in English Debate.

Discussion

Based on the findings described in the previous section, a theory can be generated. First, the academic self-efficacy of senior high school English debaters was high. Second, academic self-efficacy affects the way they started and the quality of the debaters' arguments. This theory is further justified in detail based on the theories and other relevant references.

Based on the questionnaire results, the academic self-efficacy of the debaters' students was found to be at a high level. It can be inferred that most of them had a high academic self-efficacy. This result was in line with a statement by Klassen & Usher (2010), which believed that ASE improves performance through various mechanisms: students with high levels of self-efficacy set more challenging goals, spend more effort, survive with challenges for more extended and show courage in the face of adversity.

Moreover, as revealed by the semi-structured interview, the results also found that participants' ASE influenced the way they stated their arguments. It is also affecting the quality of their arguments. Their confidence at the time was influenced by their performance. This was also proof that learners with high ASE tend to be more involved in the situation in performing a particular task. Those who fail in their work usually regain their ASE quickly after experiencing failures (Bandura, 1997). On the other side, those with low ASE prefer to avoid and stay away from the task. The students often avoid complex tasks as they do not believe in their abilities (Pajares and Schunk, 2001).

Further, the participants' quality of arguments was also affected by their mastery experience about the topic and the social persuasion from the opposing party. This finding was in line with the four factors affecting one's self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997). SE is influenced by four significant factors: (a) experience (mastery experiences); (b) vicarious experiences; (c) social persuasion from others; and (d) physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997).

Conclusion

The overall results of the study answered the aims of this study. It was revealed that the participants had a high self-efficacy, supported by the questionnaire results. So, the first aim of the study was answered. The next is, the interview results found out that most of the students' ways of presenting their arguments were affected by their academic self-efficacy. When the ASE is high, they tend to give a good performance. On the other side, if they feel anxious while presenting the arguments, they offer a terrible performance. Indeed, these results answered the second aim, which concluded that ASE was influencing the performance of the high school English debaters. However, this research is still limited on particular subjects. Therefore, future researchers were suggested to conduct similar research in a broader subject or context.

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