Academic Self-Efficacy and Prospective ELT Teachers' Achievement[*]

Arif Sarıçoban [a] [**], Bahram Mohammadi Behjoo [b]

[a] Hacettepe University, Ankara, 06800, Turkey
[b] Hacettepe University, Ankara, 06800, Turkey

Abstract

This study aims to scrutinize the possible relationship between academic self-efficacy beliefs and foreign language achievement among prospective ELT teachers. To do so, the data for the study were collected through a questionnaire, *College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* adapted from Owen & Froman (1988), consisting of 33 items measuring male and female ELT students' *Academic Self-Efficacy Beliefs* as a whole. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'very little' (1) 'quite a lot' (5). The reliability was found r= .827. In this study it has been observed that there is statistically a significant relationship between *academic self-efficacy beliefs* and *prospective ELT teachers' achievement* among male and female groups.

1. Introduction

With the population growth in the ever-changing world, the number of young people who continue their undergraduate studies and teacher training after the end of compulsory schooling at the age of 18 has increased as well. This is important not only for the supply of educated and trained labor for the economical and industrial development of the societies, but also for the future and well-being of the young people concerned (Payne, 2003). Within the schooling period student's beliefs of him/herself is the key issue to have control and personal efficacy, consequently this affects learner's academic self-efficacy (ASE) that is the level of confidence a student possesses to successfully perform particular academic tasks. Lent, Brown & Gore (1997) believe that developing cognitive skills causes to improve students' intellectual performance and on the other hand his or her perceived self-efficacy, which increases ASE.

Bandura (1997) stated that academic achievement is heavily affected by feelings of self-efficacy. Factors such as "level of cognitive ability, prior education preparation, attainment, gender, and attitudes towards academic activities", along with the level of perceived self-efficacy, influence academic achievement (p. 216). Developing short term goals helps students in a more rapid development of ASE. Students work more eagerly at accomplishing tasks when the goals are short term, instead of establishing long term goals that allow students to postpone difficult tasks until a later

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[**] Corresponding author. Tel.: 0532 327 78 55
E-mail address: saricobanarif@gmail.com

time. Bandura (1997) believes that using benchmarking methods and incentives to encourage students to set short time goals will help them develop ASE.

Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) found that there is a strong relationship between students' current ASE and future goal setting with previous grade attainment, but only when parental expectation of academic achievement was high for their respective students. Parents' goals for their children's academic achievement tended to be higher than the goals students set for themselves. Parental expectations were asserted to influence the type of academic expectations the students set for themselves. These students relied on their ASE and parental expectations in order to formulate and solidify goals for the future. To support this we can rely on some research findings obtained by Chemers, Hu, & Garcia (2001), Lent, Brown, & Larkin (1984), Mone, Baker, and Jeffries (1995), and Chemers et al. (2001) who reported that academic expectations were highly related to academic achievement.

There is a strong consensus between researchers about the factors that are highly effective in determining students' academic achievements. For example, Bandura and Schunk (1981) demonstrated that students with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy assume more challenging tasks; therefore, they expend greater effort accomplishing a given task (Pajares and Graham 1999). Lent et al. (1986) also believe that students persist longer in the face of difficulties, and according to Pintrich and De Groot (1990) learners engage in more effective self-regulatory strategies, process the learning material more deeply (Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons 1990), have higher academic aspirations (Zimmerman et al. 1992), are more mastery goal oriented (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2005), and report lower levels of anxiety than students with little confidence in their academic abilities (Pajares and Miller 1994). As a result, Pintrich and Schunk (1996) found out that academic self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic performance, even when the possible effects of prior knowledge and general cognitive skills are controlled for.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to determine if there is a correlation among ASE and foreign language academic achievement (FLA). Examining feelings of efficacy is important because the data may provide academic advisors and counselors at universities with information on domain-specific confidence levels of prospective ELT students. This knowledge can provide administrators with the foundation for the development of new programs to help ELT students gain more confidence or efficacy in foreign language achievement.

1.1. Research questions

This study aims to examine *the correlation between ASE and FLA achievement among prospective ELT students.* To do this the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the academic self-efficacy beliefs of the prospective ELT students?

2. Is there any statistically significant difference among the ASE beliefs in terms of gender?

3. Does academic self-efficacy have any significant role in FLA?

4. Is there any statistically significant difference between the academic self-efficacy and FLA in terms of gender?

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participants& Instrument(s)

A total of 100 male and female ELT freshman students at Hacettepe University in Ankara/Turkey enrolled in this study. The data for the study were collected through a questionnaire, *College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* adapted from Owen & Froman (1988), consisting of 33 items measuring male and female ELT students' *Academic Self-Efficacy Beliefs* as a whole. This scale is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'very little' (1) to 'quite a lot' (5). The internal consistency reliability coefficient, determined by the Cronbach's alpha value, for all items of the questionnaire was 0.827. The participants' academic achievement, based on their GPA in the previous semester, was used as the dependent variable. SPSS version 17.0 for Windows is used to obtain descriptive statistics in frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. FLA is assumed as a dependent variable and ASE Belief as an independent one.

2.2. Data collection procedures &Data analysis

As to the analysis of the results obtained in this study, the research questions have been analyzed as follows:

What are the academic self-efficacy beliefs of the prospective ELT students?

Table 1. Academic Self-Efficacy beliefs of prospective ELT students

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AS1	100	1	5	3.3000	1.04929
AS2	100	1	5	3.2200	1.02079
AS3	100	1	5	3.2100	1.10367
AS4	100	1	5	3.8300	1.04500
AS5	100	1	5	3.8800	.91320
AS6	100	1	5	3.2600	1.00121
AS7	100	1	5	2.9700	.96875
AS8	100	1	5	3.7500	1.05768
AS9	100	1	5	3.2100	1.12182
AS10	100	1	5	3.7900	.87957
AS11	100	1	5	3.4500	1.08595
AS12	100	1	5	3.2200	.92747
AS13	100	1	5	3.4900	.89324
AS14	100	1	5	2.8283	1.09768
AS15	100	1	5	3.0100	1.21018
AS16	100	1	5	3.3200	.98350
AS17	100	1	5	3.7700	1.12685
AS18	100	1	5	3.5400	1.10481
AS19	100	1	5	3.5600	1.07609
AS20	100	1	5	3.6900	.99184
AS21	100	1	5	3.8400	.89578
AS22	100	1	5	3.3400	1.12115
AS23	100	1	5	3.6700	1.27964
AS24	100	1	5	3.0100	1.26726
AS25	100	1	5	2.9200	1.33091
AS26	100	1	5	3.3100	.95023
AS27	100	1	5	2.8800	1.17448

AS28	100	1	5	2.9900	1.17632
AS29	100	1	5	3.3400	1.37231
AS30	100	1	5	3.5200	.98964
AS31	100	1	5	3.1900	.98160
AS32	100	1	5	3.2828	1.02061
AS33	100	1	5	3.1700	1.29533

As a result of the analysis of Table 1, it has been observed that the subjects of the study reported that they most frequently use 4. Answering a question in a small class (M=3.83). 5. Taking "objective" test (multiple choice, T-F, matching) (M=3.88). 8. Listening carefully during lecture on a difficult topic (M=3.75). 10. Explaining a concept to another student (M=3.79). 17. Attending class regularly (M=3.77). 18. Attending class consistently in dull courses (M=3.54). 19. Making a professor think you're paying attention in class (M=3.56). 20. Understanding most ideas you read in your test (M=3.69). 21. Understanding most ideas presenting in class (M=3.84). 30. Getting good grades (M=3.54) strategies to boost their academic self-efficacy beliefs.

Is there any statistically significant difference among the academic self-efficacy beliefs in terms of gender?

Table 2. Group Statistics for All Items of ASE

Items	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AS1	male	23	2.8696	1.05763	.22053
	female	76	3.4211	1.02324	.11737
AS13	male	23	3.0870	1.12464	.23450
	female	76	3.6053	.78450	.08999
AS17	male	23	4.3478	.64728	.13497
	female	76	3.6316	1.15288	.13224
AS19	male	23	4.0000	.90453	.18861
	female	76	3.4605	1.06384	.12203

The findings given in Table 2 below regarding the difference among the academic self-efficacy beliefs in terms of gender revealed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female scores in item 1 " taking well-organized notes during a lecture" , (M = 2.86, SD = 1.05 in males and M = 3.42, SD = 1.02 in females), t= -2.25, p = 0.027, p < 0.05, item 13 "studying enough to understand content thoroughly" , (M = 3.08, SD = 1.12 in males and M = 3.60, SD = .78 in females), t = -2.50, p = 0.014, p < 0.05, item 17 "attending class regularly" , (M = 4.34, SD = .64 in males and M = 3.63, SD = 1.15 in females), t= 2.84, p = 0.005, p < 0.05, item 19 "making a professor think you're paying attention in class" , (M = 4, SD = .90 in males and M = 3.46, SD = 1.06 in females), t= 2.20, p = 0.030, p < 0.05 (see table 2). However, no significant difference was found among groups in relation to the other remaining items.

Does academic self-efficacy have any significant role in foreign language achievement?

A careful analysis of Table 3 indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between ASE and FLA of prospective ELT students, r = .605, P<0.01.

Table 3. Correlation between ASE and FLA

ASE	FLA		
	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)
	100	.60**	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Is there any statistically significant difference between the academic self-efficacy and foreign language achievement in terms of gender?

The results, as determined by Pearson Correlation, also demonstrated that there is a significant positive correlation between the ASE of males, r = .70, P< 0.01 and females, r= .58, P < 0.01. The careful scrutiny of the results, however, revealed that males did better than females in the study because the higher scores were ascribed to males while females received lower scores. This means that, despite of the differences in degrees of correlation between variables, as the degree of ASE increases, the degree of FLA tends to increase as well (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation between ASE and FLA with special reference to Gender

ASE	FLA					
	Males			Females		
	r	N	Sig.(2-tailed)	R	N	Sig.(2-tailed)
	.70**	24	0.000	.58**	76	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3. Discussion and Conclusions

The present study was designed to explore **"The Correlation between Academic Self-Efficacy and Foreign Language Achievement among prospective ELT"** teachers at Hacettepe University, Ankara/Turkey. The research questions for this study were formulated from the conceptual framework of the study.

According to the findings of prominent researchers such as Pajares (1996) and Pintrich & Schunk, (2002), academic self-efficacy has been linked to a diversity of achievement-related outcomes, including grade point average (GPA), standardized test scores, persistence on difficult tasks, and enrolment in challenging courses. And the link between academic self-efficacy and academic performance can be considered as "reasonably secured", to borrow Pajares's (1996, p.563) words, if findings across different age groups and academic subjects tend to be robust.

Lorsbach and Jinks (1999) and Schunk (1991) state that academic self-efficacy indicates an individual's confidence to execute academic tasks successfully at selected level drawing upon his or her abilities, attitudes, and previous experiences. (Pajares (1996) and Schunk (1991) believe that individuals with high academic self-efficacy tend to approach difficult tasks and activities while learners with low academic self-efficacy tend to give up on a learning process when early efforts do not result in perceived or actual success (Schunk, 1984). Similarly Lorsbach & Jinks (1999) argue that low academic self-efficacy can result in less academic engagement, which could give rise to lower success, further decrease in academic self-efficacy.

In this study overall analysis of ASE, determined by Pearson Correlation, revealed that correlation is significant at level of 0.01 and r= 0.60. It means that there is a 60% significant correlation between ASE and FLA. As the students' level of ASE increases towards higher level, their GPA increases as

well. This study also examined the correlation between ASE and FLA in terms of gender. The findings showed that FLA varies according to gender, with males scoring higher than females.

The results obtained in this study revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between the ASE for males (70%) and females (58%). The findings, as mentioned earlier, indicated that males did better than females in the study because the higher scores were ascribed to males while females received lower scores. This means that, despite the differences in degrees of correlation between variables, as the degree of ASE increases, the degree of FLA tends to increase as well.

There are studies that directly and indirectly support the findings of this research. Studies on the subject reported that ASE promotes academic achievement directly by increasing academic aspirations and pro-social behaviour (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, 1996). It has also demonstrated that students whose self-efficacy is stronger and more accurate in their mathematics computation, show greater persistence on difficult items than do students with low self-efficacy (Collins, 1982).

In conclusion, according to the findings of previous researches, there has been a link between the ASE and learner's FLA. This implies that education officials and curriculum designers must pay more attention to plan appropriate programs depending on learner's cognitive and psychological demands. This will serve as an important factor in drawing learner's attention to course materials. As stated earlier, one of the significant factors which are closely related to academic self-efficacy is the achievement motivation of the learners that creates extra power to achieve their academic objectives. Due to high academic self-efficacy, learners can concentrate enthusiastically on their teacher. Moreover, the perseverance will be enjoyable and they will eagerly do their homework, feel good because of having intimate relationship with their teachers and do their best to satisfy them by understanding and benefiting from the learning activities and materials. Last but not the least, social accomplishments and parental satisfaction become important for them.

All mentioned above confirm the correlation between ASE and FLA to improve and promote learner's performance level in educational environments. They also emphasize on the educational curriculum designers, educational councilors and parents to take learner's personality components along with their other academic capabilities into account. Besides, the quality of self-efficacy differs in different stages of growth and development. Therefore, familiarity of educational officials with the fundamentals of developmental psychology in ASE domain is necessary and predicting it is considered one of the basic principles of educational planning.

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Akademik Öz Yeterlik ve Aday İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Başarısı

Öz

Bu çalışma, aday İngilizce öğretmenlerinin akademik öz yeterlik inançları ile dil başarıları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Veriler, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümünde eğitim gören öğrencilerden toplanmıştır. Çalışmada, Owen ve Froman (1988) tarafından geliştirilen akademik öz yeterlik ölçeğinden uyarlanan ve 33 maddeden oluşan beşli Likert ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Güvenilirlik r= .827 bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma, aday İngilizce öğretmenlerinin akademik öz yeterlik inançları ile başarıları arasında belirgin bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Akademik öz yeterlik, yabancı dil başarısı, aday İngilizce öğretmenleri

AUTHOR BIODATA

Dr.Arif SARIÇOBAN has been working as an associate professor of ELT at Hacettepe University since 1997 and acting as an editor-in-chief, an editor, and a reviewer for various national and international journals in the field of Language and Linguistic Studies. He has numerous national and international articles and also presented numerous papers at both national and international conferences. His main focus of interest is EFL, ESL, TEFL, ELT and recently the Teaching of Turkish as a Native Language (TNL) and the teaching of Turkish as a Foreign and/or Second Language (TFL/TSL). He has so far authored various ELT course books. He has recently acted as an editor on Instructional Technologies and Materials Design in which he also has two joint book chapters on the development and use of technology and another book on linguistics in ELT studies. He has many other book chapters in both national and international ELT course books.

Bahram Mohammadi Behjoo holds his Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature at Maku International Azad University/Iran and his masters of art degree in English Language Teaching at Hacettepe University, Ankara/ Turkey. He is doing his Ph.D. studies in teaching Turkish as a foreign language at Hacettepe University Ankara/Turkey and studies English Didactics for his second Ph.D degree at Humboldt University Berlin/Germany for a year.