

Speaking Self-efficacy Among Students of Kedah Matriculation College

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Abstract

One of the many predicaments faced by Malaysian workforce at all levels is the declining level of English proficiency which has not met the requirements of the employers. Many studies have been conducted on self-efficacy in secondary and foreign language learning settings; however research on self-efficacy with regard to speaking ability in second language learning, especially in Malaysia, is still lacking. Using a purposive sample of 169 participants, this study looked into the Self-efficacy among Malaysian ESL students from a matriculation college located in Changlun, Kedah, in their ability to speak in English. These students are majoring in Accounting. A questionnaire designed by Hairuzila and Subarna (2007) adapted from Bandura's (1990) and Mikulecky et al.'s (1996), was employed to access the speaking self-efficacy of the students on three dimensions: ability, activity perception and aspiration. The findings indicated that, in general, the students had identified to have quite high self-efficacy belief in their speaking ability on all the three dimensions. A series of independent sample t-test indicated significant gender difference in the first dimension, ability. Male students ($M = 2.89$, $SD = .50$) were reported to have high self-efficacy than the females ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .53$), however in activity perception and aspiration were insignificant. Besides that, the relationship between their Malaysian University English Test (MUET) speaking achievement and self-efficacy level was investigated and the result was significantly negatively associated. The results reported that affective factor influenced the students' speaking performance. Implications of these results were discussed with respect to the need to develop self-efficacy belief among students that could aid them in enhancing their speaking skills.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Speaking Self-efficacy, Malaysian University English Test (MUET), Speaking Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the Study

A nation's success depends fundamentally on the knowledge, skills and competencies of its people however, the pervasive view of the globalization of English and the decline in the standards of English in the country is seen as a "major obstacle to the aspiration that Malaysia be declared as a developed nation by 2020" (Juliana & Rohaida, 2009). The Malaysian education system has come under increased public scrutiny and debate, as parents' expectations rise and employers voice their concern regarding the system's ability to adequately prepare young Malaysians for the challenges of the 21st century (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2012). This is because the gap between the English proficiency of university students and the requirements of the industries has received increasing attention recently in Malaysia (Shah *et al*, 2011).

In second language learning, one of the biggest challenges for the students to improve is the lack of self-confidence in using the target language successfully. They tend to be reserved when it comes to communicating or expressing thoughts and ideas in public (Hairuzila & Subarna, 2007). This behaviour will not bring any benefit to the students especially when they are to further their studies at tertiary level where English is vital medium of instruction and communication. The importance of oral communication skills in mastering a second language is emphasized by Ellis (1985) when he pointed out that second and foreign language acquisition involves the ability to use the sound and grammar systems to communicate meanings. Oral communication means communicating orally in a manner which is clear, fluent, and to the point, and which holds the audience attention, both in group and one-to-one situations (Hairuzila & Rohani, 2008). Therefore, this paper attempts to address the level of self-efficacy in oral communication in relation to gender and performance of pre-university students at Kedah Matriculation College.

B. Statement of Problem

English has been widely accepted as the most widespread language used in the world and English as second language status in Malaysia has been complemented through wide use of English in the social setting as well as the education setting (Shekaran Nair *et al*, 2012). This language is the prime means for communication, and can often serve as the global language between two people from two different cultures, wherein English is not the native tongue. It is therefore very important for pre-university students to learn English and be able to master the language as it could help them a lot at tertiary level as well as in securing and keeping a job. Consequently, if students would like to be part of globalization, they must be able to communicate well in English.

This study focuses on matriculation students' oral communication skills which are essential for these students as it is one of the components tested in Malaysian University

English Test (hereafter MUET). The English language syllabus for pre-university programme colleges considers writing skills as vital skills for students' needs. The aim of the syllabus specification for English language in this programme level is to develop competent users of the language who can function effectively and efficiently in social and academic contexts. Furthermore, the students enrolling for pre-university programmes are required to sit for the Malaysian University English Test examination (MUET) as one of the important requirements for universities' entrance qualifications. In MUET exams, the students are tested on their receptive and productive skills. Besides that, these skills are needed in order for them to compete globally in future.

However, the recent studies have shown that the communicative competence in English of Malaysian workforce has not met the requirements of the employers. There are also concerns regarding the falling standards of English and this can be seen from the use of the target language, including matriculation and university students. In June 2012, a leading newspaper reported the Government's concern about the increasing number of unemployed graduates and a survey revealed that of nearly 72,000 graduates are unemployed due to poor English and communication skills ('Poor command of English key reason for graduates' unemployment', June. 19th. 2012, The Borneo Post). According to Shekaran Nair *et al* (2012), the new graduates in Malaysia are not proficient in English and still not widely marketable in the job market as the study shows they have inadequate soft skills. The declining level of English proficiency among students nationwide has brought about the need to find out how to tackle this issue. The irony of this is that students would want to be able to speak the target language, even more than to be able to read and write it.

Teachers are aware that many factors can affect language learning such as exposure, environment and opportunity. However, in addition to these, aspects related to the emotional development of individual, such as self-concept, self-efficacy and self-esteem also affect the learning process (Lopez Roman, 2006). In the case of communicating in the target language, self-concept, self-efficacy and self-esteem seem to influence learner's success as they are closely linked to humankind's socialization process. Bandura believes that the knowledge that a person has to carry out a task is not a good predictor of success, while the perceptions concerning self-efficacy are better predictor (Bentz, 2010). As a result of this, emotional aspects of the individual been given attention as they interact with the cognitive, thus educational research has expanded its focus to include both cognitive and affective process together to describe second language learning.

Many studies have been conducted on self-efficacy in secondary and foreign language learning settings, however research on self-efficacy with regard to speaking ability in second language learning, especially in Malaysia, is still lacking. Besides that, it should also be noted that most studies

examined the relationship between self-efficacy and performance in reading and listening skills, fewer studies have investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and speaking performance. One reason could be that reading and listening are more easily evaluated by objective tests and the evaluation is easy to handle for large populations (Raofi, Tan & Chan, 2012).

Thus, it seems necessary to examine self-efficacy beliefs in relation to these skills too. The aim of this study is to find pre-university students' self-efficacy level on speaking in relation to gender and speaking achievement.

C. Research Questions

This study is intended to address the following research questions:

- i) What is the level of self-efficacy of pre-university students of their speaking ability in the English language at Kedah Matriculation College?
- ii) How do male students differ from female students in their speaking self-efficacy at Kedah Matriculation College?
- iii) How does speaking achievement relate to speaking self-efficacy for pre-university students at Kedah Matriculation College?

D. Significance of the Study

From this study, educators especially the language teachers in Kedah Matriculation College, other matriculation colleges throughout the nation and higher learning institutions will get useful information and understand the manner in which pre-university students perceive their speaking ability. The information will also help the language teachers broaden the insight into the issue of why pre-university and university students are not meeting the requirements of employers. Furthermore, the study will enable the educators to design effective teaching methods that can help to reduce low self-efficacy in second language classroom which is an affective filter in language learning (Krashen, 1989). Research findings may help shape the ways in which instruction that promotes self-efficacy may be integrated in English language classroom. The findings from this research also can be used to facilitate students to find suitable strategies to overcome their low self confidence.

As the role that self-efficacy assumes in the language-learning process has not yet been adequately explored, however, the studies that have been conducted resoundingly suggest the existence of a strong and positive correlation between self-efficacy and performance. This study will, therefore, widen the theoretical scope of the self-efficacy paradigm.

E. Limitations of the Study

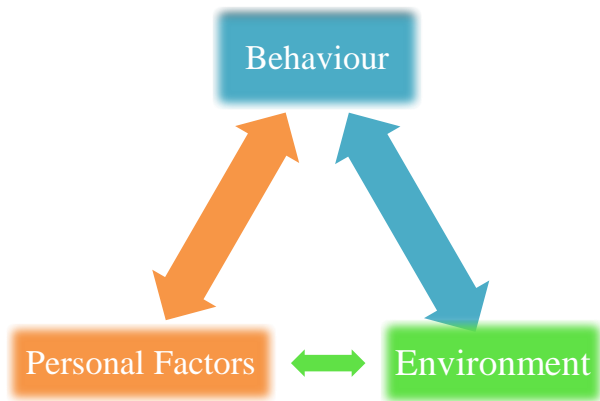
This study is limited to the analysis of self-efficacy in speaking among a group of students at Kedah Matriculation College, Changlun. It involves only 169 accounting students. The scope of the study is confined to the data collected using 24-item survey questionnaire, adapted from questionnaires designed by Bandura (1990) and Mikulecky et al. (1996) to access the self-efficacy perceptions of the students. The findings of this study could possibly be generalized to other pre-university students in matriculations throughout Malaysia.

F. Theoretical Framework

In Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, human functioning results from a dynamic interplay among personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. In this conception of *reciprocal determinism*, (a) personal factors in the form of cognitions, affects, and biological events, (b) behaviors, and (c) environmental influences, create interactions that result in a triadic reciprocity.

Social cognitive theory is rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are proactively engaged in their own development and can largely determine the outcomes of their actions. Individuals are imbued with certain capabilities that define what it is to be human. Primary among these are the capabilities to symbolize, plan alternative strategies, learn through vicarious experience, self-regulate, and self-reflect. For Bandura, however, the capability that is most distinctly human is that of self-reflection; hence it is a prominent feature of social cognitive theory. Through self-reflection, people make sense of their experiences, explore their cognitions and beliefs, engage in self-evaluation, and alter their thinking and behavior accordingly.

The reciprocal nature of the determinants of human functioning in social cognitive theory makes it possible for education, therapy, and counseling to be directed at personal, environmental, or behavioral factors. Strategies for increasing well-being can be aimed at improving emotional, cognitive, or motivational processes, increasing behavioral competencies, or altering the conditions under which people live and work. In school, teachers have the challenge of promoting the academic learning and confidence of their students. Using social cognitive theory as a framework, teachers can improve their students' emotional states and correct their faulty beliefs and habits of thinking (personal factors), raise their academic skills and self-regulation (behaviours), and alter the school and classroom structures (environmental factors) to ensure student success.



Social Cognitive Theory Framework

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Self-efficacy in Second Language Learning

It is widely believed that self-efficacy belief serves as a core cause of human actions; it makes individuals believe in their own ability to execute a given task (Bandura, 1997). According to Lopez Roman (2006), self-efficacy deals with a person's perception of what she/he can or cannot do concerning a task to be accomplished and this supports Bandura's theory - the stronger the individuals' sense of self-efficacy, the greater the capability they have to see difficult tasks as challenges than threats. In other words, self-efficacy is what people are capable of doing something as it involves perception of what an individual can do and how well he thinks he will do and individual self-efficacy enables them to find solution to difficulties.

In relation to academic setting, the belief in self-efficacy refers to how a student can carry out an academic task given at specific level (Shunck, 1991). The issue of self efficacy is under consideration in this study in the sense that individuals need to exercise control over their feelings, thoughts and actions in the various fields of life which includes acquisition of a second language, English. Bandura (1997) claims that students will engage in tasks that they feel competent and confident or then, they will avoid those tasks that they feel incompetent. Implicitly, this aspect of general self efficacy finds some kind of bearing in the students' abilities to plan, organize, carry-out and participate effectively in their English Language learning processes (Raooft, Tan & Chan, 2012). Thus, if a student of the English Language acquires high level of self efficacy, s/he tends to be competent in the use of English Language as they develop their capabilities with the knowledge and skills they have in the target language. This shows that they judge their capabilities more in terms of personal improvement.

Due to the predictive relationship between self-efficacy and performance has led to the recent application of self-efficacy

theory to academic settings. Within the educational domain, research has been centered largely on three broad areas - the link between self-efficacy beliefs and university major/career choice; how teachers affect learners' self-efficacy beliefs through their instructional practices; and how self-efficacy intersects with other motivational constructs and academic achievement (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996.). "performance" refers to one's ability to successfully perform a specific task at a designated level (Bandura, 1977). Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci (2011) found that self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of performance at all grade levels.

Besides, Momanyi, Shadrack & Misigo (2010) carried out a study to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance on 230 secondary school students in Lugari district at Kenya. The results showed that there was a positive significant relation, $r(228) = .30$ $p < .50$ between self-efficacy and academic performance in the science. In a study, Rahil *et al.* (2006) found that there was a positive correlation between the Form Four students' self-efficacy and their academic achievement in the English language ($r = 0.48$, $p = 0.001$). The perceptions that they have of their academic competence has a positive effect on their English language achievement. Self-efficacy has been found to have significant and positive correlation with learner's academic performance. Ho (2005) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and students academic performance in Taiwan, and concluded that self-efficacy was a significant predictor for Taiwanese middle school students' English and mathematic academic performance.

However, a negligible relationship is ascertained between self-efficacy and performance in English language which signifies that self efficacy per se does not directly impact on middle-school students' performance in the English language at Satri Si Suriyothai School (Anyadubalu, 2010). This shows that students' perceived self-efficacy level is not related to their performance in English language. This result seems to be contrary to the assertion that if students demonstrated high level of self-efficacy, they would likely perform well in different tasks. It is discovered that self efficacy directly impacts on English language anxiety which invariably affects students' performance in the English language negatively.

Another issue discussed widely in many studies is the nature of gender. Rahil *et al.* (2006) conducted a study on 1,146 Form Four students in Selangor and it showed that the level of self-efficacy among girls were higher than the boys in the English language ($t = -2.7$; $X = 35.5$; $SD = 4.5$; $p = 0.006$). Pajares and Valiante (2001) also reported a modest difference between boy's and girls' writing self-efficacy and girls showed to have higher self-efficacy than the boys as the process of writing is associated with a feminine orientation in part because writing is viewed by most students, particularly younger students, as being primarily within a female domain. This is supported by Pajares (1996) that girls are found to exhibit higher self-efficacy in areas related to language.

Min- Hsun & Pey-Chewn (2012) revealed a significant difference between male and female Taiwanese high school students' perceived self-efficacy. Female students showed significantly higher perceived self-efficacy than male students did. Similar findings were found in Mills, Pajares and Herron's (2007) study. When investigating the influence of self-efficacy on the achievement of college intermediate French students, they found that female students reported to have a higher sense of self-efficacy in learning both the French language and culture than the males students did. Pajares and Valiante (2001) also reported a modest difference between boy's and girls' writing self-efficacy and girls showed to have higher self-efficacy than the boys. In other studies, Pajares (2002), studied gender, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning. He discovered that female students were better than the male students in the use of self-regulated learning strategies. Nevertheless, in a study on gender differences in self-efficacy, which was carried out by Momanyi, Shadrack & Misigo (2010) on 230 secondary school students in Lugari district at Kenya, the findings showed that there was no significant difference in self-efficacy between male and female students, $t(228) = 3.6, p > .05$. It is clear that the results support the self-efficacy theory, which states that individual's attempt tasks in which they believe they will success.

B. Self Efficacy in Speaking

The self-efficacy beliefs differ from one particular domain of language to another one (Raofi, Tan & Chan, 2012). As Bandura (1997, 1986) noted that self-efficacy is generally considered as a task-specific construct. Self-efficacy in speaking refers to the perception of the students' capabilities to speak in the target language competently. An efficacious student may put more effort in using the target language as they feel competent and confident in it; however a low efficacious student may not be able to communicate in the target language as they feel incompetent.

Albeit, there are very few studies been carried out in this skill, Hairuzila and Subarna (2007) have begun to fill this gap with their study on the self-efficacy of pre-university ESL students at University Teknologi Petronas (UTP). This study has found that the students have high levels of self-efficacy regarding their ability to speak in English. Templin (2011) has claimed that vicarious and physiological variables are statistically significant predictors of self-efficacy in speaking as the more vicarious and physiological experiences, the stronger the self-efficacy beliefs in speaking. Besides that, the students also had high perceived self-efficacy in the oral communication activities. It was because the total mean score for this factor was 2.54. It showed that students enjoyed and were willing to participate in most of the activities like drama and discussion. Aspiration can defined as a strong desire to be able to become someone who could communicate well in English (Hairuzila & Subarna, 2007). The study had shown that the students were found to be highly efficacious on their aspiration to become good communicators in English. The total mean score for this factor was 1.97.

Another study which was conducted by Hairuzila & Rohani (2008) indicated that the t-test results on speaking self-efficacy level of female students were significantly higher than male students in terms of ability ($t=4.32, df=336, p<0.01$) and aspiration ($t=3.27, df=336, p<0.00$). These findings on gender differences were similar to several previous studies done on the relationship between gender and self-efficacy.

Furthermore, another study carried out by Hairuzila, Rohani & Mohammad Ridhuan (2011) indicated that 169 senior-year students in University Technology Petronas (UTP) had high self-efficacy in their oral communication ability in all three proposed constructs: aptitude (ability), attitude and aspiration. In other words, students' positive aptitude would result in positive attitude towards improving their oral communication ability and aspirations to reach the desired effect.

Moreover, Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan, (2012), conducted a qualitative study on students, of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, at National University of Malaysia, on participation in oral communication classroom. It was found out that the learners' were active and spoke more in the classroom as their level of efficacy was high. High efficacious students will be more confident and they tend to show higher interest in performing tasks in classroom (Rahil et al, 2006).

In a study done on 90 first year students at University of Puerto Rico, 64 students were identified as having high self-efficacy and 26 were found to be having low self-efficacy (Lopez Roman, 2006). One of the areas that had been examined was students' oral participation in classroom. The researcher determined the correlation between the students' self-efficacy and the frequency they participated in oral class activities. The result ($r = .523$) revealed that the correlations were moderately significant at the $p < .01$ level. Therefore, these result demonstrated that the high self-efficacy students in this study participated more in oral activities than the low self-efficacy students.

III. METHODOLOGY

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 13.0 was adopted in analyzing the data. The data was analysed using two types of statistics which were descriptive statistic and inferential statistic. The respondents of this study were pre-university accounting students of Kedah Matriculation College, Changlun, Kedah. The selection of the students was based on the researcher's teaching experience where it was noticed that accounting students were experiencing lower self-efficacy in speaking task compared to students taking Science module. Besides that, it was also found that the former performances in speaking were still in the lower score in the MUET. There were total of 300 Account students from the overall population of 2700 students. The number of respondents was 169 students and they were chosen using

purposive sampling. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2006), this type of sampling believed to be representative of a given population. In this study, two prime criteria were taken into consideration for the selection of respondents. Firstly, only pre-university accounting students chosen because this study specifically and purposefully focused on this target group of students in an attempt to understand their speaking self-efficacy in the target language. Most of the previous studies on speaking self-efficacy were being conducted among the technical pre-university students, thus a study such as this one, which involved non-technical students (accounts), should be aptly given due emphasis. The second criterion was based on the fact that this study intended to examine speaking self-efficacy among accounting students as the MUET results for the past two years had showed a decline, especially in the speaking component.

A 24-item survey questionnaire, designed by Hairuzila & Subarna, (2007) on self efficacy was used in this study. This instrument had been divided into three dimensions. The first aspect labelled *ability*, followed by *activity perception* and the third dimension was *aspiration*. At present study, the instrument was pilot-tested and the reliability level was identified at .91. It had been proved in a study done by Hairuzila & Subarna (2007) and Hairuzila & Rohani (2008). Another instrument was the students' MUET speaking test score which had been used as secondary data in order to find the relationship between their speaking self-efficacy levels and speaking achievement. For this study, the mean score of 3.0 and below signified higher self-efficacy while a mean of 3.1 to 5.0 signified lower self-efficacy.

Another instrument was the students' MUET speaking test score which had been used as secondary data in order to find the relationship between their speaking self-efficacy levels and speaking achievement. MUET is a standardized test of English Language proficiency, largely for university admissions.

IV. FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF SELF-EFFICACY OF PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF THEIR SPEAKING ABILITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

A. Speaking self-efficacy in terms of ability

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. It revealed that the students in the present study reported to have quite low self-efficacy belief in terms of their speaking ability. This was reflected in the total mean score (M = 3.01, SD = .53). They believed that they were able to communicate in English. However, they did not have very high self-efficacy in this ability since the mean score ranged between 2.47 and 3.65. This showed that students had a slight low self-efficacy in their effort to use English language in their communication.

The analysis also indicated that the accounting students had low self-efficacy in oral communication in English as the mean score and standard deviation of item 4 “*I do not have any problem to speak in English when I should*”, 6 “*I can speak well, fully in English with my Malay lecturers*”, 7 “*I am good at communicating with the international students and lecturers*” and 8 “*I can learn and use new English word in my conversation easily*” were (M = 3.19, SD = .85), (M = 3.47, SD = .84), (M = 3.65, SD = .77) and (M = 3.20, SD = .90) respectively.

The students also reported to have quite high self-efficacy on their effort to improve their speaking ability. For instance the mean score and standard deviation for items 9 “*I am able to keep speaking in English even when my friends tease me*”, 10 “*When I decided to say something in English, I go ahead and do it*” and 11 “*It is not difficult for me to concentrate while speaking in English with others*” were (M = 2.94, SD = .86), (M = 2.57, SD = .85) and (M = 2.92, SD = .81). Table 2 shows the results of the mean scores and standard deviations for ability.

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations for ability

No	Item	Mean	SD
Ability			
1.	I do a good job of participating in class discussion conducted fully in English	2.70	.59
2.	I am good at learning speaking skills	3.04	.68
3.	I have no problem learning speaking skills	3.01	.88
4.	I do not have any problem to speak in English when I should	3.19	.85
5.	I can motivate myself to speak in English	2.47	.78
6.	I can speak well, fully in English with my Malay lecturers	3.47	.84
7.	I am good at communicating with the international students and lecturers	3.65	.77
8.	I can learn and use new English word in my conversation easily	3.20	.90
9.	I am able to keep speaking in English even when my friends tease me	2.94	.86
10.	When I decided to say something in English, I go ahead and do it	2.57	.85
11.	It is not difficult for me to concentrate while speaking in English with others	2.92	.81
Total score		3.01	.53

B. Speaking self-efficacy in terms of activity perception

The analysis revealed that the students in the present study was reported to have high self-efficacy believe in the oral

communication activities because the total mean score was (M = 2.72, SD = .58). This study also indicated that the students enjoyed working in most of the activities, especially group activities. For example item 12 “I enjoy having group discussions in class when they are done fully in English” the mean score was (M = 2.57, SD = .89) and item 17 “Doing group oral presentation in class is enjoyable” was (M = 2.57, SD = .89). Besides, the students also reported to experience quite high self-efficacy when they communicate in the target language with others as the mean score for items 13, 14 and 15 were ranged between 2.59 and 3.00. Table 3 shows the results of the mean scores and standard deviations for activity perception.

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviations for activity perception

No	Item	Mean	SD
	Activity perception		
12.	I enjoy having group discussions in class when they are done fully in English	2.57	.89
13.	I do not find oral presentation hard to do	3.00	.66
14.	I enjoy communicating with others in English	2.59	.81
15.	I enjoy speaking in English with anybody	2.72	.84
16.	Doing individual oral presentation in class is enjoyable	3.12	.96
17.	Doing group oral presentation in class is enjoyable	2.57	.89
18.	Working on drama presentation is enjoyable	3.00	.66
	Total score	2.72	.58

C. Speaking self-efficacy in terms of aspiration

The students in this study seem to have very high self-efficacy on their aspiration to become a good communicator in English. This was shown by the total mean score of (M = 2.03, SD = .62) for this dimension, aspiration. They had set goals to achieve. For example, for item 22, “I would like to speak good English just like other students who are good speakers”, the mean score was (M = 1.68, SD = .85), which indicated very high self-efficacy, while for item 20, “One of my main goals is to be much better at speaking in English by next year”, the mean response for this goal was (M = 1.91, SD = .80), which also indicated very high self-efficacy.

Furthermore, for item 21 “Speaking well in English is one of my main goals in life” the score was (M = 1.82, SD = .79), for item 23 “I would like to be a fluent speaker so that I will be confident of myself” the total score was (M = 2.00, SD = .91) also indicated as high self-efficacy. For items 19 “I can speak English well when there are others who encourage me” and 24 “I would like to be a fluent speaker so that I will be respected by my friends” the students believed to have quite high self-efficacy as the score were (M = 2.40, SD = .86) and (M = 2.35,

SD = .98) respectively. Table 4 shows the results of the mean scores and standard deviations for aspiration.

Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviations for aspiration

No	Item	Mean	SD
	Aspiration		
19.	I can speak English well when there are others who encourage me	2.40	.86
20.	One of my main goals is to be much better at speaking in English by next year	1.91	.80
21.	Speaking well in English is one of my main goals in life	1.82	.79
22.	I would like to speak good English just like other students who are good speakers	1.68	.85
23.	I would like to be a fluent speaker so that I will be confident of myself	2.00	.91
24.	I would like to be a fluent speaker so that I will be respected by my friends	2.35	.98
	Total score	2.03	.62

RESEARCH QUESTION 2. HOW DO MALE STUDENTS DIFFER FROM FEMALE STUDENTS IN THEIR SPEAKING SELF-EFFICACY AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

With regard to the second research question, a series of independent sample test was performed between male and female students on their speaking self-efficacy in terms of ability, activity perception and aspiration.

A. Gender differences in speaking self-efficacy in terms of ability

The results of Levene’s Test indicated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated (p >.05). An independent sample t-test conducted showed a significant result, (t (167) = - 3.07, p < .05). In comparing the dimension between the two groups, t-test result indicated that the speaking self-efficacy level of the female students (M = 3.13, SD = .53) were significantly lower than the male students (M = 2.89, SD = .50) in terms of ability. Table 5 shows the results of the independent samples t-test on the speaking self-efficacy in terms of ability between male and female students.

Table 5: T-test Results on Speaking Self-efficacy in terms of Ability between Male and Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Sig.	t value	Sig (2-tailed)
Ability	Male	83	2.89	.50	.56	-3.07	.003
	Female	86	3.13	.53			

B. Gender differences in speaking self-efficacy in terms of activity perception

The results of Levene’s Test indicated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated ($p > .05$). An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the level of speaking self-efficacy in terms of activity perception for male and female students. However, the t-test results revealed that the efficacy level in terms of activity perception between both male and female was not significant, ($t(167) = -1.10, p > .05$). Table 6 shows the results of the independent samples t-test on the speaking self-efficacy in terms of activity perception between male and female students.

Table 6: T-test Results on Speaking Self-efficacy in terms of Activity Perception between Male and Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Sig.	t value	Sig (2-tail)
Activity perception	Male	83	2.67	.57	.99	-1.10	.272
	Female	86	2.77	.59			

C. Gender differences in speaking self-efficacy in terms of aspiration

The results of Levene’s Test indicated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated ($p > .05$). An independent sample t-test was carried out to compare the level of speaking self-efficacy in terms of aspiration for male and female students. The t-test results indicated there was no significant difference in aspiration between both male and female, ($t(167) = -0.99, p > .05$). Table 7 shows the results of the independent samples t-test on the speaking self-efficacy in terms of aspiration between male and female students.

Table 7: T-test Results on Speaking Self-efficacy in terms of Aspiration between Male and Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Sig.	t value	Sig (2-tailed)
Aspiration	Male	83	1.98	.59	.55	-0.99	.325
	Female	86	2.07	.64			

RESEARCH QUESTION 3. HOW DOES MUET SPEAKING ACHIEVEMENT RELATE TO SPEAKING SELF-EFFICACY FOR PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

The final objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between MUET speaking achievement and speaking self-efficacy among matriculation students. To achieve this objective, students’ MUET speaking band and speaking self-efficacy total scores were correlated. Therefore, the Pearson Correlation Coefficients was used. Table 8 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 8: Correlation Score between MUET Speaking Achievement and Speaking Self-efficacy

Variables	Pearson Correlation
MUET Speaking Achievement and Speaking Self-efficacy	-.27**

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

The result of the analysis showed there was a significant relationship, $r = -.27, p < .05$. It revealed that the students’ MUET speaking achievement was negatively correlated with their speaking self-efficacy scores. The result suggested that the students who scored high band in speaking exhibited low speaking self-efficacy, whereas those who scored low band had high speaking self-efficacy.

V. DISCUSSION

RESEARCH QUESTION 1. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF SELF-EFFICACY OF PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF THEIR SPEAKING ABILITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

Results obtained showed that the students were quite efficacious in their speaking tasks; however, they portrayed moderate level of self-efficacy in speaking in terms of ability. An earlier study conducted by Hairuzila and Subarna (2007) and Hairuzila, Rohani & Mohammad Ridhuan (2011) on pre-university students found that they were having considerably high self-efficacy levels regarding their ability to speak in English, contrary to the present. In this study, the students appeared to believe that they had some problems in speaking

the target language and not highly motivated to speak the language in classroom. Therefore, students had slightly moderate self-efficacy in their effort to use English language in their communication. This may be due to their education background as Arts stream students and the duration of having English as medium of instruction in school was limited. In addition, all Accounting subjects in Matriculation College were conducted fully in Malay language. Hence, accounting students had no opportunity to observe the more experienced lecturers or speakers to perform tasks through oral communication in the target language and also they themselves had less experience to communicate in English. This is because they have limited experience and still not fully confident of their own abilities, they tend to use others with more experience to become their model. Observing models according to Pajares, Johnson and Usher (2007), can powerfully influence the students' self-efficacy beliefs.

Besides, the students also had quite high self-efficacy in terms of activity perception and it was supported by Bandura (1986) who pointed out that self-efficacy could influence choice of and interest in the activities conducted in the target language. The findings suggested that the students had been exposed to in-class discussions as they were in their final semester of matriculation programme. Moreover, in the first semester, MUET speaking practices especially Task B, group discussion, had helped them to gain confidence in speaking activities. It was also very likely that they were often required to provide explanations regarding their work or project to the lecturers and other students through oral presentations. The findings also indicated that the students showed high self-efficacy in speaking when the activities were done in group than individual. This interesting result supported Slavin's (1990) statement that "group interdependence and cooperative activities build greater learner confidence...continuing need to demonstrate success".

The third dimension was aspiration and the findings revealed that students exhibited high speaking self-efficacy in this dimension. This finding was similar to the studies done by Hairuzila & Suparna (2007), Hairuzila & Rohani (2008) and Hairuzila, Rohani & Mohammad Ridhuan (2011) which reported pre-university students were highly efficacious in aspiration. The possible explanation to this was English had been a second language to most of them. From the researcher's vast experiences of teaching in English at Matriculation College, regardless of the students' level of studies, they always express their wishes to be better speakers of English. Students probably believed that aspiring to enhance their capability to communicate in English should help them achieve the outcome and become the person they desire to be. In Malaysia, most people see English language as having higher social status for the reason that being proficient in English especially in speaking will make others respect them (Hairuzila, Rohani & Mohammad Ridhuan (2011). Hence, they all had the aspiration to become proficient English speakers.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2. HOW DO MALE STUDENTS DIFFER FROM FEMALE STUDENTS IN THEIR SPEAKING SELF-EFFICACY AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

Secondly, the independent samples t-test analyses indicated that male and female students reported their level of speaking self-efficacy differently. Male students displayed higher self-efficacy in speaking compared to the female students and it was identified that there was a significant gender difference in terms of ability. The findings, however, interestingly indicated that difference between the two groups were not statistically significant in terms of activity perception and aspiration. In other words, the result revealed that both group had an equal efficacy level. These findings on gender differences were contrast to several previous studies done on the relationship between gender and self-efficacy. For instance, Pajares (1996) found that female students exhibited higher self-efficacy in areas related to language. This notion was also not consistent with a study done by Rahil *et al.* (2006) on the psychological factors in English language learning that concluded females have higher positive attitude towards the language. Nevertheless, the findings showed that albeit, accounting programme were dominated by female students, but when it came to speaking ability in English, the male students were identified to be more confident than the female students. This could also be concluded that affective factors seem to play a more important role in the performance of females than male students (Fakhri Mesri, 2012). Hence, this finding suggested the female students were suffering from language anxiety which was aroused by factors, such as unpreparedness for class; communication apprehension with teachers, teachers' questions and corrections in classroom environment; tests and negative attitudes towards English subject. This was supported by Templin's (2011) findings where the physiological variables, like anxiety are statistically significant predictors of self-efficacy in speaking.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3. HOW DOES MUET SPEAKING ACHIEVEMENT RELATE TO SPEAKING SELF-EFFICACY FOR PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT KEDAH MATRICULATION COLLEGE?

Correlation analyses indicated that the MUET speaking achievement was inversely related to self-efficacy. It revealed that students who had scored higher band were likely to have low efficacy beliefs, whereas those with lower band were likely to have higher efficacy beliefs. This result generally did not corroborate previous findings that there was a positive correlation between the students' self-efficacy and their academic achievement in the English language (Rahil *et al.*, 2006; Ho, 2005; Tilfarlioğlu & Ciftci, 2011). Conversely, Anyadubalu's (2010) findings supported the findings of present study that an insignificant relationship was ascertained between self-efficacy and performance in English language. This was because the findings signified that self-efficacy per se did not directly impact on students' performance in the English language. There were other factors which had influence the students' achievement, such as language anxiety (Horwitz,

Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The current findings revealed that self-efficacy in speaking did not appear to be the strongest predictor associated with speaking achievement. However, it was discovered that self-efficacy directly impacts on English language anxiety which invariably affects students' performance in the English language negatively (Anyadubalu, 2010).

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study yield several pedagogical implications for lecturers wishing to produce excellent and confident speakers of English language. According to Seo (2008), increasing students' self-efficacy might be useful as it involves a complex interaction of behaviours, cognitions and affect. Teachers and counsellors can assess the existing levels of self-efficacy in students. If the lower levels of self-efficacy are identified among students, appropriate measures should be taken to help raise the students' self-efficacy levels through verbal persuasion and encouragement (Pajares, 1996).

Persuasion is one of the four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), thus positive feedback and encouragement from the teachers can enhance students' self-efficacy in oral communication. Normally, students are often left to work independently. Hence, this can be a problem to them as they need to struggle to understand a difficult task. Failure to accomplish the task will lead to frustration and decrease self-efficacy. Therefore, having lectures and tutorials will help them to reduce the isolation as students will work in group and endeavor the task. Besides, when given a task, students should also be provided with positive and accurate feedback to help them develop positive perceptions.

Furthermore, students should be exposed to successful role models such as peers and teachers. Self-efficacy can also be developed through vicarious experience (Bandura, 1986). Templin (2011) has claimed that vicarious is statistically significant predictor of self-efficacy in speaking. Therefore, students should be provided with opportunities to observe their friends and classmates do task successfully, these opportunities help learners to foster positive beliefs about themselves (Raooifi, Tan & Chan, 2012). According to Shunck (1987), students learn more by watching successful peer role modeling than teacher role modeling because students can identify readily with their peers. This will also help to lower the affective filters, such as language anxiety.

Moreover, language teachers should realise that in order to enhance students' self-efficacy level in communicating in English, all three elements (ability, activity perception and aspiration) must be taken into consideration. Language and communication courses need to integrate each element in teaching and assessing students. This is vital because students with high self-efficacy in communicating in English may be better prepared to enter the job market in today's highly competitive job market (Hairuzila, Rohani & Mohammad Ridhuan (2011).

This study adopted a quantitative approach in order to gauge feedback from a large quantity of respondents. Thus, it would be desirable for future research to conduct a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach to get a more in-depth perspective on the topic. Besides that, this research should also be focused on other language skills, especially receptive skills, reading and listening. Nevertheless, the present study has made considerable progress in achieving the main aim of this research stated earlier. The findings could assist in providing the beginning of empirical work on the self-efficacy in the Malaysian context. What is important is that the weaknesses were recognized and acknowledged. Further research to fill the gaps left here would be a useful way forward.

VII. CONCLUSION

Competency in speaking in English is required in Malaysian tertiary institutions as students are expected to have a near-native competence (Juliana & Abu Bakar, 2013). In other words, oral communication is a skill that must be acquired by every student especially students at tertiary level. With this ability they will have a better future in their careers and lives as it is also considered as an important surviving skill in this era of globalization. Self-efficacy is hypothesized to affect individual's task choices, effort, persistence and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995). Compared with learners who doubt their capabilities, those who feel self-efficacious about learning or performing a task competently are apposite to participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, and eventually, achieve a higher level of self-efficacy (Hairuzila & Rohani, 2008).

As language educators, we must realise of the factors that would contribute to the perceived speaking ability of these students and the reasons behind them so that they can be helped in facing any problems in the future. Enhancing students' self-efficacy beliefs may aid them achieve more in the English language learning process. Hence, it is hoped that the findings of this study will grant the language educators with a better approach to comprehend the students in order to guide and mould them to be better speakers of English.

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