

# The Influence of English Teachers' Cultivation on High School Students' Development of Self-Efficacy in English Learning

Yuan Liu<sup>1\*</sup>, Yuxin Wang<sup>2</sup>, and Xinlu Xiong<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Taiyuan Normal University, College of Marxism, 319 University Street, Yuci District, Shanxi Province, China.

<sup>2</sup>Chongqing Normal University, College of Life Science, No.37 Middle University Road Shapingba District Chongqing, China

<sup>3</sup>University of Minnesota (twin cities), College of Education and Human Development, 240 Williamson Hall 231 Pillsbury Dr. S.E. Minneapolis MN 55455-0213, United States

**Abstract.** In modern China, there exists a notable emphasis on English language acquisition by both governmental bodies and stakeholders such as parents and educators, acknowledging its critical significance within an increasingly interconnected global milieu. Consequently, extensive research efforts have been directed towards identifying advantageous components within English language learning, with a particular focus on self-efficacy. This study undertakes an investigation into the interplay between high school English educators' instructional approaches and students' self-efficacy in English learning. Data pertaining to teaching materials, methodologies, plans, effectiveness, and recognition, alongside students' learning interests, strategies, outcomes, and confidence levels, were gathered through dual questionnaires. After analysis, it is found that although most teachers are satisfied with the class results, there are still some problems such as limited incentive methods, low attractiveness of homework and monotonous teaching design. These problems may be caused by the inadequate teaching level of teachers, and teachers need to improve by participating in more professional development activities and strengthening the stimulation of students' English use skills and interest in English learning. In the statistical analysis of students' questionnaires, it is found that most students' English learning information is low, and there is a significant correlation between students' English learning confidence and English learning effect. In order to improve the learning effect, teachers should attract students' attention through pre-class preparation and classroom activities to improve the efficiency of English learning.

## 1 Introduction

As of 2023, an astonishing 1,456,000,000 individuals are fluent in English either as their native language or as a second language [1]. Amidst global education discourse, English instruction commands resounding attention, capturing the focus of nations worldwide. This collective emphasis fuels an unceasing quest for effective pedagogical methods, each country seeking to empower learners with adept language skills. A striking instance lies in South Korea, where English pedagogy has undergone a profound transformation from yesteryears. Departing from traditional approaches, educators now zealously embrace English as the medium of instruction, catalysing a linguistic paradigm shift [2]. Likewise, India, the world's third-largest English-speaking nation, illustrates a captivating dynamic. Despite a substantial English-proficient populace, the nation's inhabitants exhibit a steadfast dedication to enhancing their

language competence. Through participation in English-speaking classes, individuals proactively refine oral proficiency, recognizing language prowess as a potent conduit for personal and societal elevation [3]. The object of this paper, China, has also made reforms in English teaching methods, and emphasized using technology in classroom teaching and self-directed learning [4]. This posed challenges for English teachers, requiring adaptation to new materials, student-centered teaching, and guiding autonomous learning. However, most of the Chinese students still find it difficult to learn English in their school life because of so many reasons such as the traditional education system, lack of opportunities to practice, and so on [5]. Therefore, numerous researchers have undertaken surveys and experiments in an attempt to discover effective methods for enhancing English education in China. After extensive exploration, it has been established that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the process of learning

\* Corresponding author: [xion2027@umn.edu](mailto:xion2027@umn.edu)

English. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments, which is a non-intellectual factor that is closely related to students' achievement motivation, goal setting, attributions for learning, and self-esteem [6]. With different levels of preparation for learning English in terms of psychology, there will be different attitudes towards learning. If students always believe that they are not capable in the process of learning, they will exhibit a passive and evasive learning state which will lead to a lack of self-efficacy in learning and a sense of learned helplessness. In such a situation, no amount of knowledge preparation by teachers can help students improve their academic performance. The factors that form students' self-efficacy are: experience of success, alternative experience, goal motivation, attribution of success or failure, physiological state, verbal persuasion and other aspects [7]. Obviously, these can significantly affect students' motivation to participate in English teaching and learning activities, the establishment of students' English learning goals, the exertion of students' original abilities and their enthusiasm for learning [8].

In recent years, experts have conducted a lot of research on English learning and self-efficacy, and studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and academic achievement, and there is a difference between genders, which may be caused by differences in the perceptions of different genders of their own abilities [9]. Different English learning strategies such as compensatory strategies and metacognitive strategies have an effect on self-efficacy in English learning [10]. In measuring students' self-efficacy in English learning, relevant experts have developed specialized scales, including agency for learning, agency for learning questionnaire, and so on. A range of related studies have been conducted with undergraduate students, parents, middle school students [11-16], etc. When analysing how to improve the consequences, some researchers find that teachers' burn-out status, psychological being and job satisfaction are related to self-efficacy [17]. In a word, past essays have done research on different aspects of English learning self-efficacy in many ways crossing different areas.

The existing research methods aim to ensure the reliability of the study, but they lack the necessary level of detail and depth when examining the effects of teaching on students' language outcomes. This research focuses on examining the impact of high school English teachers' cultivation on students' development of self-efficacy in English learning. To investigate this topic, this article applies both literature review and survey research methods.

Through analysing and exploring the relationship between teaching methods/styles and students' academic performance, motivation, and learning, this study aims to help teachers develop better teaching strategies to enhance students' self-efficacy in learning English. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to assist teachers in fostering students' self-efficacy, strengthening teachers' awareness of cultivating students' self-efficacy,

thereby helping students better improve their self-efficacy and promoting their English learning.

## 2 Methodology

The study collected the data from two versions of the survey: one for teachers and one for students. Researchers sent out the questionnaire to their schoolmates and teachers from high school through WeChat.

### 2.1. Questionnaire design

This study made two distinct questionnaires, one tailored for English teachers and another for students. Each questionnaire comprises 19 carefully constructed questions, each intended to elicit specific insights from the respective target groups.

In the teacher's questionnaire, particular attention is directed towards the teaching experience of educators, as it is intrinsically aligned with the overarching research objectives. Inquiry extends to teachers' years of teaching, the grade levels they instruct, the weekly class load they undertake throughout the academic year, and the size of their classroom cohorts. Furthermore, the questionnaire delves into educators' self-efficacy beliefs, recognizing their substantial influence on students' English language acquisition. As such, it encompasses inquiries regarding pedagogical approaches, lesson preparation considerations, and primary teaching methodologies.

On the other hand, the student questionnaire predominantly employs quantifiable queries, facilitating mathematical analysis of the data amassed. These inquiries encompass a range of topics, including the utilization of creativity and autonomy during English classes, as well as students' retrospective satisfaction ratings for English language learning during their high school years. Respondents are instructed to provide their responses on a 5-point scale, with 1 denoting the lowest level and 5 signifying the highest level of agreement or satisfaction.

### 2.2. Sample of teachers

This study collected data from a total of 40 high school English teachers, the majority of whom were based in Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province, China. As stated above, the research believes that the year of teaching is more important than the age of teachers. So, among the participants, 52.5% reported having 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, while 30% had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience, and 17.5% had 11 to 15 years of teaching experience. No gender data was gained.

### 2.3. Sample of students

This study gathered data from a total of 101 participants, comprising both high school and university students. The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of self-efficacy among high school students on their English language learning. To achieve this,

questionnaires were administered to college students, who were requested to answer candidly, reflecting on their experiences during high school. All participants were Chinese nationals, predominantly from Chengdu, Sichuan Province, Jiaying, Zhejiang Province, and Xinzhou, Shaanxi Province. Regarding the participants' grades, 0.99% of the sample was in grade 10, 3.96% were in grade 11, 2.97% were in grade 12, and the rest 92.08% were college students. Regarding gender, 37.62% of the sample were male and 62.38% were female. Moreover, the average age is slightly above 20.

## 2.4. Methods of analysis

The questionnaire distributed to students included various questions related to their English learning experience. Some of these questions were:

1. "How well do you feel your autonomy of learning has been utilized in your English class?"
2. "During your high school English studies, how confident were you in learning the language?"
3. "How satisfied were you with your English learning during high school?"

Students responded to these questions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing the least and 5 the most. By separating students' autonomy, self-confidence, and satisfaction into these three questions, this study can make quantitative analysis based on the data. Additionally, there were two other questions that directly addressed the effectiveness of learning English:

1. "Approximately what percentage of the points in your English classes were you able to fully absorb and master?"
2. "Where does your English grade rank compared to your classmates' grades?" The ranking options were categorized as follows: top 1% to 10%, top 11% to 20%, top 21% to 30%, top 31% to 40%, top 41% to 50%, and 50% and beyond.

The scoring for these two questions was as follows: choosing the first option would receive a score of 6, the second option a score of 5, and so on.

By quantifying students' autonomy, self-confidence, satisfaction, and achievement in learning English, this study aimed to compare and analyse the collected data to discover the correlation between self-efficacy and learning English with the use of ANOVA.

## 3 Results and discussion

### 3.1. Teachers' data

The analysis of the classes revealed that 17% of students had an average score of 80% or higher, 67% between 60% and 80%, and 17% below 60%, indicating that English teaching largely meets standards. Most teachers viewed their classes' academic performance as satisfactory, with only a small number expressing dissatisfaction or contentment. In terms of instructional strategies, teachers focused on classroom management, communication with parents and students, and designing

curriculum activities based on student interests and experiences.

Instructional management was emphasized, employing methods like discussion, questioning, lectures, and situational teaching. Teachers mainly prioritized English instruction, language skill development, and motivation through competitive mechanisms and rewards. After-class assignments had a significant impact on learning outcomes, though some repetitive homework practices persisted [13]. Difficulties encountered included selecting teaching methods, understanding students, and evaluation design. Teachers took varied approaches in supporting struggling students, with some providing individual counselling.

Teachers improved their teaching through frequent professional development activities, such as attending classes and conducting in-school teaching and research. Upon comprehensive analysis of the questionnaires, teachers' academic levels were considered moderate, with some facing challenges in finding a balance between traditional and innovative teaching. Classroom communication relied heavily on English, but strategic guidance for students' English learning and linguistic competence needed more focus. Hindrances included limited motivational techniques, unengaging assignments, and instructional design lacking multiple factors.

### 3.2 Students' data

Among all the 16 questions, there was one question asking about how confident the student felt about learning English. The results showed that 32.67% of students had average confidence, 37.62% were quite confident, and 16.83% expressed strong confidence. A small portion, less than 12%, lacked confidence in their English learning (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1** During your high school English studies, how confident were you in learning the language (Photo/Picture credit: Original )

The study aimed to investigate how confidence in learning English impacts students' knowledge mastery and interest in the subject. To analyse this, ANOVA data was utilized to rank the students' self-confidence and learning effectiveness in English. The statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between students' self-confidence in learning English and the effectiveness of

their English learning (see Table 1). The significance value was less than 0.05, indicating a strong connection (see Table 1). Students with higher self-confidence performed better in their English learning, highlighting the importance of nurturing students' self-confidence to enhance their English language skills effectively.

**Table 1.** ANOVA: Relation between academic achievement and students' self-confidence  
Criteria=Cilevel(0,95)

	Sum of squares	DOF	Mean square	F	p
Intra-Group	37.947	5	7.5890	10.585	0.0001
Inter-Group	66.679	93	0.717		
Total	104.626	98			

Self-efficacy is closely intertwined with an individual's confidence in accomplishing tasks. When someone possesses a positive belief in their ability to tackle a task, they tend to exert more effort and perseverance instead of easily giving up. This newfound sense of self-motivation contributes to an enhanced self-efficacy in the context of student learning.

Besides how confident the students are in English Learning, how they consider the importance of English Learning can also be one of the components consisting of self-efficacy. An analysis of this survey regarding students' overall mindset towards learning English reveals noteworthy insights. According to the survey results, 54.46% of students perceive learning English as highly important, 28.71% consider it important, and 14.85% regard it as generally significant. Within the current academic landscape, the majority of students recognize the importance of mastering the English language; however, a minority still underestimate its value. In light of this, educators ought to engage in pre-class preparation strategies to kindle students' intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The results of this analysis are similar to those of previous studies.

Furthermore, more than half of the students acknowledge the utility of teacher-initiated preparatory activities in aiding them to refocus amidst distractions. This aspect assumes great significance as it directly impacts students' concentration and efficiency in classroom learning. Consequently, teachers are advised to carefully assess the efficacy of their pre-class preparation, particularly in enhancing students' receptive skills. Offering constructive and affirmative suggestions can effectively bolster students' proactive engagement in their learning journey. In essence, this underscores the critical role that educators play in influencing students' attitudes and attentiveness, ultimately fostering a more productive learning environment.

Lastly, bolstering self-efficacy can effectively alleviate stress and anxiety, enabling the individual to approach tasks with a more relaxed and comfortable demeanor. Consequently, it becomes vital for teachers to prioritize the development of students' self-efficacy in their teaching methodologies. By doing so, students can more effectively complete their coursework and achieve

significant learning outcomes. While the development of student self-efficacy has also been emphasized in previous literature, this article also places more emphasis on getting teachers to understand the importance of developing student self-efficacy as a foundation for teaching and learning.

## 4 Conclusion

English learning is very important nowadays, but there are still many problems in the practice of Chinese high school students learning English. This paper investigates the teaching situation of some high school English teachers and the English learning situation of high school students in the hope of finding a breakthrough in students' self-efficacy in learning English.

This paper investigates the level of students' self-efficacy, the state of learning English, the learning effect of students when teachers are prepared to teach, and analyzes the psychological situation of students' learning in the state of low-level self-efficacy, and the general students' attention to English learning. Thus, the state of their learning English was studied to find out the reasons for their poor effect in learning English, and further to give teachers suggestions and improvement measures. In this paper, by distributing two kinds of questionnaires to teachers and students and referring to the literature, we studied and investigated the psychological situation of students' preparation for learning English, grasped certain characteristics of teachers' teaching and students' learning of English, and found that many students lacked self-efficacy in learning English, did not pay attention to English learning, and were easily distracted from their learning, and we also investigated the learning effects of students with different self-efficacy, and indeed found that self-efficacy was a key factor for students to learn English. It was found that self-efficacy is the basis for students to learn English well, and the effect of teachers' teaching preparation on students was also studied. After summarizing the results, we gave some suggestions on how to improve the traditional classroom and teachers' teaching methods so as to let the students improve their English learning ability better, and concluded that the teachers should adopt the exact teaching strategies to make the classroom more diversified, and make the preparation to stimulate the intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm of students to learn, and to let the students learn more in a better way. The paper concludes that teachers should use precise teaching strategies to make the classroom more diversified, make teaching preparations to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for learning, and make students more confident in learning.

The paper emphasizes the need for teachers to develop students' self-efficacy in English language learning in a timely manner and gives some suggestions and methods for improvement. However, there are still some factors to enhance students' self-efficacy that are not considered in this paper, and there are still many aspects that need to be improved by teachers, and it is

hoped that the article will give teachers and students a more comprehensive insight into the research.

#### **Authors Contribution**

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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