IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY OF VERBAL PERSUASIONS; A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH

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Article Info	**Abstract**
Article History *Received: June 2022* *Revised: July 2022* *Published: July 2022* *Keywords* *Academic English;* *Self-efficacy;* *Verbal persuasion;*	*Self-efficacy is a drive within students that affects their thinking, feeling, motivation, and learning activities to achieve what they need. It is said to be one of the predictors of academic success leading to its urgency put into research. The study is classroom action research aiming to improve the nursing students' scores in Academic English class by raising the students' self-efficacy through giving verbal persuasions. This action research was designed following Kemmis and McTaggarts' model, including Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. 42 participants were also active students in the class of Academic English. After completing the sessions, the students were given pre-and posttest and asked to reflect on their achievements. The findings indicate that the average scores increased by 25 points between pre-and-posttest, 83.33% of participants had increased self-confidence, and 90.47% were satisfied with their test results. Further, the study shows score improvement through review, restudy, and re-try, pointing out the emergence of self-efficacy, which is not instant. It is a result of consistency and belief through the verbal persuasion given by the teacher.*

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has promoted English use worldwide. Besides being nominated as the language of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), English is also called as the language of international medicine. The evidence is shown by the increasing numbers of medicine and healthcare literature written in English. As a consequence, several studies have suggested that English is of paramount importance for medical students including nurses not only to pass the course but also to equip themselves for career needs (Chan et al., 2022; Wahyuni, 2021). Specifically, the English skills mentioned is related to the communications among the healthcare profession and ultimately the patients.

The nursing profession is the frontline of healthcare in the hospital. They act as a caregiver and an advocator who need technical English and academic English during their studies. Studies show that nursing students believe that they need academic English for their academic career (Nurakhir, n.d.; Oducado et al., 2020; Riyani, 2016) Although nursing students believe that having English proficiency is beneficial for their career, they lack of motivation to improve their skill (Ching et al., 2020). Nursing students perceive that speaking English is not similar to being proficient in AE. Besides, most nursing schools do not put importance on academic skills but more on technical skills. Therefore, the nursing students lost their self-efficacy to study academic English.

Self-efficacy is first introduced by Bandura (1994), as a drive within people that affects their thinking, feeling, motivation, and behavior. The level of self-efficacy in a person will

determine how hard he will invest his time and energy. The higher one's self-efficacy, the more he will put effort into it. It is an area believed to play important role in academic success. Self-efficacy affects how someone approaches tasks and challenges. In relation to this, the author of the study finds that the student in her class has a low level of self-efficacy. As a result, this study explores to see whether exercising students' self-efficacy would help raise the students' academic English scores.

Previous research on nursing students in Indonesia rarely touches the areas of teaching and learning AE in the nursing context. Most, however, have presented different challenges in the areas of teaching difficulties (Daar, 2016; Handoyowati, 2010; Noviana et al., 2019; Riwasanti et al., 2021; Rochmawati, 2020)and material development (Burhan & Putra, 2021; Fadliah & Sugirin, 2019; Wahyudi, 2016)in English for Nursing as ESP. However, some of the teaching difficulties reported include students' motivation, interest, self-confidence, and very basic English skills (Daar, 2016). In addition, Noviana et al. (2019) agree that nursing students' language proficiency is the biggest challenge in learning English. Therefore, the effort has been centered on improving speaking mastery (Fadliah & Sugirin, 2019).

Interestingly, the findings of the studies conducted on nursing students have been contrasted. The study by Wahyudi (2016) finds that students only want to learn English related to the hospital, nursing care, and patient care. This finding is in line with most studies on teaching English to nursing students. However, these findings contradict the finding that highlights the students' interest in learning AE skills. Through interviews with nursing students, Burhan & Putra (2021) found that the respondents wish to study reading, grammar, and vocabulary, which are parts of the AE.

This study stands with research that highlights the importance of AE for nursing students. The reasons include internationalization that promotes mobilization and professional transfer. Internationalization is a growing trend that provides nursing students with challenges and opportunities (Tight, 2022). This trend can be seen clearly in how universities and nursing schools are trying to internationalize themselves to catch up with the ongoing trend. A study by Muller (2011) even highlights the importance of academic predictor tests of Academic English performance for international nurses. With this said, English is not only studied as ESP, focusing on speaking mastery but English is used as the medium of instruction. Therefore, this study calls for the teaching of AE to nursing students in preparation for internationalization.

In the nursing school where the researcher works, however, AE has been one of the main requirements for students to pass the degree because the institution has been aiming for an international nursing education standard. However, the students have not fully grasped this ambition and perceive that AE is less important than English for Nursing. The finding through class observation shows that students are actively participating in the class of English for Nursing but have less interest in AE class. This finding is supported by the percentage of mid-term and final term scores which are always lower than English for Nursing.

Based on the observation done in the online classroom in the past two years, the students are lacked in self-efficacy to study AE. Self-efficacy drives the students' motivation to reflect their confidence, which allows the students to advocate what they need. It is one of the main factors in students' academic success. The students' self-efficacy is found to significantly influence the students' academic performance in English (Meera & Jumana, 2015).

Bandura (1994, p.2) defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives." Self-efficacy drives how one thinks, feels, motivates, and behaves, which are processed through four main important stages, including cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. As a result, once a student has a high self-efficacy to succeed in a particular thing, he will likely invest his time and energy.

In an academic situation, self-efficacy drives the student to achieve the academic assignments and learning goals at the set standard. Students are also able to complete their tasks successfully. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the more likely the students are to succeed despite difficulties and limited time given. Meanwhile, the lower the level of self-efficacy, the more likely the students are to fail, regardless of the complexity and time. Basith et al. (2020) argue that self-efficacy predicts students' academic achievement.

There are four models of self-efficacy sources (Bandura, 1994): mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). Artino (2012) describes the terms as follows. *Mastery experiences* create a sense of resilience in one's self-efficacy. If one experiences success at one event, he will persevere and believe that he will pass a similar situation and come back stronger from adversities faced. *Vicarious experience* is through model people who succeed in doing the same assignment. Certain people inspire them to succeed, and others' similar failures will build their self-efficacy. The more the similarity, the more the model people persuade them to do the same. A study of Lee et al., (2021) proves that role-modelling gives positive effect on the ability of the flow state. *Verbal persuasion* is strengthening one's belief that one can succeed. They are convinced that they can face anything if they willingly mobilize efforts. Koopman-van den Berg & van der Bijl (2001) indicate that verbal persuasion is the most used among other types in the self-efficacy enhancing method. The last one, *psychological and affective states*, are the beliefs on physical performance and stamina. When one feels that he is in the mood, he believes that he will likely succeed, and on the other hand, if they feel that they are physically weak, they believe that they will likely fail.

Previous studies have looked into many dimensions of self-efficacy in language learning. Gan (2019) scrutinised self-efficacy influencing time management and strategy use and Chen (2020) found that that students with high self-efficacy have higher English scores. Similarly, Nguyen et al., (2022) also found the positive correlation between achievement in English performance and self-efficacy. Though several studies have looked into the English scores and self-efficacy, none has examined the self-efficacy through the lens of action research through the use of verbal persuasions. This study utilizes verbal persuasion during this study because the researcher believes that students can succeed in the AE if they give their all to the assignment. The students are capable and can have a high level of self-efficacy. Although it is criticized for working the same way with giving discouragement that is any of the words given will create their behavioral validation, the researcher considers that this is the most relevant type of self-efficacy that can be harbored in the current online situation. Verbal persuasion was given to students during the action research (AR) period to examine whether it promoted differences in students' academic performance.

This study was begun with a question from the researcher about challenges and issues faced in the class in the last two years. The researcher found that the students had less interest in studying AE and the scores decreased exponentially compared to the students from years before. Therefore, as a subject teacher, the researcher intended to examine the aspects of the teaching and learning of how the scores could be improved. The researcher's wish to improve the class resonates with the definition defined by Burns & Kurtoglu-Hooton (2016, p.10) that action research is conducted by the teachers who wish to "explore various in-depth aspects of teaching and learning in the class."

AR has now been advocated to gain more significant insights by practitioners aiming to create fresh breath in their teaching approaches and accommodate the changes in teaching methodologies. Through the close engagement between students and teachers, AR enables continuous investigation, questions and answers, and support. The proximity and real support given by the teacher enhanced the students' achievement. Borg (2013) states that AR can create class engagement and improve the conduct of theories of practices in the classroom over a long-

term period. To sum up, it is safe to say that the time and effort given through AR lead to improving the teaching and learning in the classroom. It is a safe investment teacher can make in their classroom. AR is an inquiry process that is democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing (Stringer, 2007). It is both finding new approaches and solving problems at the same time.

After the consideration mentioned above, the researcher decided to adopt AR in her classroom to investigate the cause of students' disinterest in AE and invent a new way to initiate engagement in AE class. This research, however, was designed as Individual action research (IAR) (Burhan & Putra, 2021; Stringer, 2007) because the classroom teacher conducted the research. In addition, the choice was based on the purpose of the research to analyze the decrease in the AE in the researcher's class.

This AR followed Kemmis and McTaggart's (Kemmis & Mc. Taggart, 1988)Action research model due to its feasibility. This AR consists of four stages encompassing Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect. The stages are as follows: 1) developing a plan which is critically doable to solve what has happened already, 2) acting to execute the plan; 3) observing the effect of the act implemented critically; and 4) reflecting on the effects critically for replanning and repetition if the stages have not succeeded.

Summing up, this research sought to answer whether self-efficacy improves nursing students' academic English grades. The answer to the questions was provided by looking at the comparison of pre-and-posttest and through students' reflection. The self-efficacy in this research was specifically verbal persuasion which its extent was not measured because the design of this was action research.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted through half of the term/semester of learning Academic English (AE) in a Faculty of Nursing in a private university. This research followed the action research design as the author is eager to facilitate the students and at the same time improve the students' scores in academic English. The participants recruited were the students in a class of an ongoing term. The participants of this study were 42 nursing students who were studying academic English. They were chosen as the participants because there was a surge decrease in students' achievement in the AE mid-test.

Research Design

This research is designed as action research where the researcher acting both as the teacher, conducted individual action research to seek the solution and approaches that might help in the future. The phases following Kemmis and Mctaggart's model (Kemmis & Mc. Taggart, 1988) of conducting the research were explained below.

In the first step, **planning,** the teacher compiled the final test at the beginning of the second half term. The final test was compiled based on the materials taught from meeting nine to meeting 15. The test was designed as a 22-multiple choices test which was given in meeting nine as a pre-test and in meeting 16 as a posttest. The verbal persuasions that were going to be used in the class and how they were to be used were also planned. The students were persuaded to have higher self-efficacy by believing in themselves. The teacher-researcher also emphasized using AE in their future career, including the topic learned – academic writing. Besides, the students would also give their reflections at the end of the class to examine whether they found their scores were satisfying.

In the second step, **action,** the teacher gave the pre-test at the beginning of the second half term, at meeting nine. The score was recorded and was shown to each of the students privately. The students got to know their achievements and were given verbal persuasion along with the eight meetings on how the students were able to exceed the expectation at the end of the class. The teacher also told the students the availability of help if they needed one. During

meeting nine to fifteen, the teacher-researcher delivered the materials through synchronous and asynchronous class and was always present to answer inquiries. The teacher-researchers provided explanations, quizzes, and games by presenting the materials. The students were made aware that the test tested at the beginning of the second half term was the same test that would be tested at the final test and that they could surely pass it if they gave effort. Finally, the test was tested again as their final test at the end of the class.

The observation was done as the third step, where the teacher-researcher paid close attention to the students' responses to the materials and the verbal persuasion given to them. The teacher-researchers took anecdotal notes about the classroom implementation, including what was heard and seen related to answering how to improve the Academic English score. The teacher-researcher input the scores collected from the pre-and-posttest and made a table to categorize the data analysis.

Finally, the last step, **reflection,** was done. The extent of the pre-and-posttest was gained and discovered whether the strategy of giving verbal persuasion had worked. During this step, the teacher-researcher could decide whether to repeat the processes for the second cycle. The new findings would be disseminated to other teachers who wished to solve the same problem. On the other hand, the students also gave their reflections on their scores, and this reflection would be analyzed as qualitative data to support the claims made by the researcher.

Instruments

There were several instruments used in the study to help achieve the data. First, the final test quiz was compiled and tested on the students at the beginning and at the end of the term to see the improvement in their scores. Second, the student's reflection notes at the end of the term to gather the written reflection regarding the students' perspective on their achievement and their self-efficacy. Reflection is said to increase self-efficacy and is a valuable tool for the research (Guleker, 2015). Third, is the teacher's observation sheet where the teacher evaluated the class performance during the teaching and learning.

Data Analysis

The data collected were classified to qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was the students' academic English score during pre-and-posttest which were tabulated and compared its average. The students' satisfaction level was also presented in the table. At the other hand, the qualitative data was coined from the students' written reflection. The pool of data was categorized and some excerpts are quoted to support the explanation. The data of qualitative data were analyzed in qualitative ways which are condensation processes, data display, and drawing conclusion (Miles, Huberman, & Sadana, 2014). In the phase of condensation, the researcher selects the data of students' satisfaction relating to learning activities of continues verbal persuasion. The collected data were abstracted in the form of sentences. Then, the data were displayed in line with the students' satisfaction. These data were organized assembly of information that allows the researcher to take conclusion action. Finally, the researcher interprets each collected data into a conclusion of what activities showing students' satisfaction in facilitating them to develop their self-efficacy and academic English achievement.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

The findings reported in this session included the data from the pre-and-posttest and the reflection from the students. From the data pre-and-posttest, there is a significant improvement in the scores, around 25% between pre-and-posttest. The passing grade for the AE set by the faculty is 70%, indicating that in the pre-test there were around 40% of students passed the test. Meanwhile, after the given verbal situation during the class situation, almost 96% of the students passed the examination, thus improving their scores.
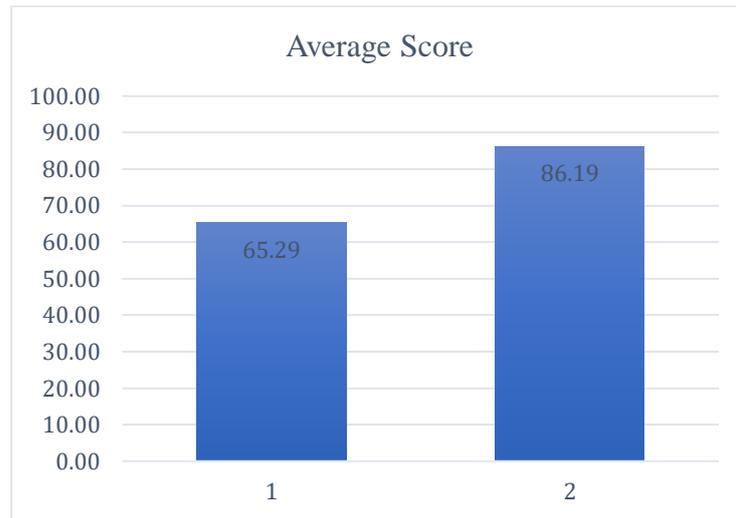
Figure 1. Mean score between pre-and-posttest

From the data shown in the graphic, it is concluded that verbal persuasion is effective in raising students' self-efficacy in learning AE. Meanwhile, the data reflection was presented in two categories: Confidence in answering the test and satisfaction with their effort.

Table 1.
Students' reflection, n=42

Th	Categories	
	Confident	*Unconfident*
Confidence in answering the test	35 (83.33%)	7 (16.66%)
	Satisfied	*Unsatisfied*
Satisfaction with the test result	38 (90.47%)	4 (9.52%)

From the data in the table, students exercise their self-efficacy during the second half term of the lesson. The students have had high self-efficacy (83.33%) and feel confident in answering the test. As a result, 90.47% of students are satisfied with the test result.

In addition, the qualitative data shows how the students exercise their self-efficacy during the study process through verbal persuasion by the classroom teacher-researcher. In general, the students were able to tackle the difficulties faced during the study session by repeatedly studying the material given and trying to solve the questions until they got the correct answers. The students are found to believe that if they keep trying, they will be able to get higher scores on the final test. Below are some excerpts from the students' reflections,

(1) "I repeatedly tried and reviewed the material so I can answer the questions correctly."
(2) "I reviewed the quiz and paid more attention to my mistakes, then I tried answering the questions carefully."
(3) "I reviewed the material given so I can better understand the material and know which area I need improvement."
(4) "I keep trying and do not give up focusing on the answers I still doubt."
(5) "I keep repeating the questions from each meeting carefully and avoid making mistakes."
(6) I repeated the materials several times by using the internet to help me find the correct answer and using google translate to help me interpret some words I don't understand."

In fact, the data reflection highlights three major keywords, "repeated," "review," and "trying." These words appear almost in every student's sentence proving that students actively self-motivate themselves to self-study the materials given in the classroom. The intentional verbal persuasion in the class meets the objective of this research; improved academic English scores at the end of the term.

Discussion

This research is action research aiming to seek the solution to why the students' academic English (AE) scores decrease significantly in the first half term of the semester. Aiming to raise the students' self-efficacy in learning AE, the teachers gave verbal persuasion to the students actively through each class session. The teacher acting as a researcher then decided to conduct this research during the class session, and thus, this research served in two ways; seeking solutions and aiming for new insights. The AR was then implemented in the second half term of the semester. Eventually, the study's findings appeared to a positive finding where students were found to increase their AE scores and were satisfied.

The finding from the pre-and-posttest shows an increase in the average score between the two tests, where the pre-test score average was 65.29, and the posttest was 86.19, respectively. The score increase indicates the students' emergence of self-efficacy during the research. Thus, it shows that the students positively accept the verbal persuasion given by the teachers to use them to motivate themselves to achieve higher scores. The students surpass the minimum passing criterion (70) that the faculty set. Self-efficacy built-in themselves through the verbal persuasion treatment given by the teachers drives their beliefs on their capability. As a result, they believe that they can change how they think and feel about themselves in relation to the AE. In the end, they motivate themselves and behave toward their set goals – passing the AE. In this study, the students prove the theory that says once students have high self-efficacy, they will dedicate their time and energy to achieving their goals (Bandura, 1994). In fact, this finding is not entirely new. A previous study has shown that self-efficacy significantly influences the score of AE of 520 secondary school students in India. In terms of Action research, the study succeeded its primary goal by finding the solution and insights to the teaching of AE in nursing classes. The research sheds light on the area of teaching and learning that AE is always worth trying when the teachers find problems with the students' scores and motivation in the class. More insights and improvements to the class could be promoted (Burns & Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2016).

In addition to the improvement in the test scores, self-efficacy is also seen in students' reflections, where students have increased confidence in answering their tests. Around 83.33% of students have increased self-confidence, while around 16.66% are still unconfident. Meanwhile, around 90, 47% of the students feel satisfied with their test results, meaning that around 7% of the students were not confident at first but found to be satisfied with their test results. Although only four students were not satisfied with the test results, it remains unknown whether they come from the confident or unconfident categories.

The finding of the research point to the awareness that confidence is also influenced when students have high efficacy. This finding is in accordance with Cramer, Neal, & Brodsky (2009), which show the difference between self-efficacy and self-confidence, but both terms confirm each other. Students whose belief has been set to achieve certain scores will, at the same time, have strengthened confidence. The students in this study were led to believe that they can if they want, so they invest their time beyond class time. The encouragement given by the teacher and validation given through verbal persuasion works effectively within the students. This research shows that the emergence of self-efficacy simultaneously fuels confidence. Therefore, self-efficacy can be said to be the predictor of success in students' scores (Ahmed et al., 2011; Basith et al., 2020).

Using the verbal persuasion model of self-efficacy, the students are led to exercise their focus into believing that they can achieve higher scores if they set their mind to it. Teachers' support as a facilitator undoubtedly plays an important role here. Through the teacher's continuous support, the students invest their time and energy in studying academic English. The finding of the research is in line with the findings from previous research where self-efficacy is found to have a positive relationship with English performance achievement (Chen, 2020; Ching et al., 2020; Gan, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022)

Further, the qualitative data findings are very appealing in a way that students do not gain their self-efficacy freely and easily. The keywords found in the reflection are, "try, review, and repeat." Through consistency and persistence, they get to improve their test scores. Students in this study reveal that there are many repeated studies, reviews, and trials through the process of improving the ELT scores. The students also indicate a lengthened self-study beyond the class they invest in getting the set goals or scores they wish. The students receive the materials and an intentional addition of verbal persuasions in the class, which awaken their self-efficacy. As a result, they go beyond studying in class because of the encouragement the teachers provide to them. It may not be new to the area of teaching and learning, yet it is mostly forgotten by most teachers that they need to tell their students that they believe in them. In other language skills, the results showed the same results (Mahalinggappa et al., 2018; Sumarsono et al., 2020; Cave et al., 2018; Choi & Lee, 2018), in which self-efficacy can foster students in developing their learning achievements. Guleker (2015) reminds teachers to strive in providing a fostered environment to support the students' persistence and performance.

This research offers a new perspective on the improvement of scores through action research. As many of studies have usually examined self-efficacy through experimental studies (Chen, 2020; Ching et al., 2020; Guleker, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2022), this study gives fresh breath from the dimension of the action research. Through action research with various learning activities, teachers have the access to scaffold the students through their day-to-day learning by providing them with the support needed. Students' self-efficacy is crutial aspect that affect students' ELT achievements (Mak & Wong, 2018; Ruegg, 2018; Zilka et al., 2019). The result of the study shows that score improvement is at the heart of the teaching practices each day namely verbal persuasions. Ultimately, the students, beyond any of the sophisticated teaching tools and strategies, need sentences that encourage them and believe in them.

The findings of this research may focus on the teaching of AE; however, the same verbal persuasion can be given to students studying other subjects. At the same time, class action research is also paramount to be implemented in the classroom. Through its implementation teachers can evaluate how the teaching and learning have been done, what needs improvement, what insights can be taken to enhance the current teaching and learning situations, and what technologies be used in the class. The continued reflection from teachers through AR is indispensable to future improvement.

CONCLUSION

This research is action research that seeks self-efficacy in increasing 42 nursing students' academic English scores. The self-efficacy referred in this study is verbal persuasion given to the students during the implementation of the research. The finding reveals that the students increase their scores between pre-and-post-test by around 26 points. The average on the pre-test was 65.29, while in the posttest, becoming 86.19. In addition, it is found that students are mostly confident doing their tests and at the same time feel satisfied with their test results. Finally, the data reflection findings indicate that the students 'self-efficacy does not emerge as a one-time process but through repeated commitment through review, restudy, and re-trying. These findings remind the teachers that verbal persuasion can enhance students' engagement and involvement in the class, thus increasing their academic performance. This research calls

for similar classroom action research examining the self-efficacy from the other three aspects to complete the gap within this research and give more dimensions to the study of self-efficacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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