

The Effect of Self-Assessment on EFL Learners' Self-Efficacy

Sasan Baleghizadeh and Atieh Masoun

This study investigated the continuous influence of self-assessment on EFL (English as a foreign language) learners' self-efficacy. The participants, divided into an experimental and a control group, were 57 Iranian EFL learners in an English-language institute. The participants' self-efficacy was measured through a questionnaire that was the same for both groups. Additionally, the participants in the experimental group completed a biweekly self-assessment questionnaire throughout the semester. The obtained data were analyzed through an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The findings showed that the students' self-efficacy improved significantly in the experimental group. This suggests that applying self-assessment on a formative basis in an EFL setting leads to increased self-efficacy. This study thus highlights the pedagogical implications of self-assessment in EFL classrooms.

Cette étude a porté sur l'influence continue de l'auto-évaluation sur l'auto-efficacité des apprenants en ALE. Les participants, 57 Iraniens étudiant l'ALE dans un institut de langue anglaise, ont été répartis parmi un groupe expérimental et un groupe témoin. Le même questionnaire a été administré aux deux groupes et a servi d'outil pour mesurer l'auto-efficacité des apprenants. Les membres du groupe expérimental ont en plus complété un questionnaire d'autoévaluation chaque deux semaines au cours du semestre. Les données ont été traitées par une analyse de covariance (ANCOVA). Les résultats indiquent que l'auto-efficacité des élèves s'est améliorée de façon significative dans le groupe expérimental, ce qui porte à croire que la mise en pratique d'une auto-évaluation formative dans les cours d'ALE entraîne une amélioration de l'auto-efficacité. Cette étude fait donc ressortir les incidences pédagogiques de l'auto-évaluation dans les cours d'ALE.

Assessment is a matter of paramount importance as it affects the whole process of instruction. Regarding the significant role of assessment, Paris and Paris (2001) argue that we need to know both the product and process of learning so that we will discover what is learned, what additional effort is required, and what skills are effective. Owing to the fact that learning and assessment are intertwined, the growing demand for lifelong learning has led to a reevaluation of the relationship between learning and assessment. This reevaluation has influenced the development of the "new era of assessment" according to Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans (1999).

According to Chen (2008), traditional assessment is often regarded as "the realm of the teacher." Chen further argues that the inadequacies of traditional

assessment attracted the attention of scholars and triggered a shift toward alternative assessment. Alternative assessment includes performance assessment, portfolio assessment, students' self-assessment, peer-assessment, and so forth (Huerta-Macias, 1995).

Self-assessment, as one form of measuring learners' language competencies, has attracted significant attention in foreign language education. Oscarson (1997) advocates learner-centred ways of determining learning. In line with this argument, he observes that self-assessment is based on the idea that effective learning is best achieved if students are actively engaged in the process of learning. Thus, all other forms of assessment are subordinate to it.

An advantage of self-assessment is that it may lead to more confidence while performing a task (Oscarson, 1997). It is hypothesized that this sense of confidence and perceived self-mastery resulting from self-assessment would contribute to learners' self-efficacy. As defined by Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is an individual's judgement of his or her capabilities to complete a task successfully. Graham (2011) also relates self-efficacy to individuals' beliefs in their capacity to accomplish specific tasks, assumed to have a strong influence on levels of persistence and the choices individuals make. Regarding the importance of self-efficacy, Bandura (1984) considered self-efficacy to have a major role in language learning by fostering or impeding learners' progress. In this vein, Bandura (1986) proposed that self-efficacy is more powerful than knowledge, skill, and prior attainment.

With respect to self-assessment and self-efficacy, Bandura (1977) argues that the sense of perceived self-mastery resulting from self-assessment contributes to learners' self-efficacy. Ross (2006) also contends that "a few studies have demonstrated that asking students to assess their performance, without further training, contributes to higher self-efficacy, greater intrinsic motivation, and stronger achievement" (p. 4). Consistent with this, McMillan and Hearn (2008) suggest that self-assessment promotes both self-efficacy and motivation. In the present article, we focus on the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' level of self-efficacy, which we believe is an important area of inquiry in language learning and teaching. Seen in another light, the critical role of self-efficacy in language learning highlights the need for more research on the effect of self-assessment on self-efficacy in EFL contexts.

Literature Review

In the 1970s, there was a shift of focus from learning to the learner in language teaching pedagogy, and the learner was considered to possess an active part in the learning process and to be responsible for his or her own learning (Anderson, Reinders, & Jones-Parry, 2004). Similarly, LeBlanc and Painchaud (1985) have argued that learners should have an active part in the learning cycle; this active involvement includes participation in assessment since assessment is regarded a basic component in the educational process.

Oscarson (1997) found that students' involvement in all phases of learning process, learner autonomy, the development of the concept of lifelong learning, and increased motivation are some of the benefits of self-assessment. Self-assessment is defined by Boud and Falchikov (1989) as the process by which students make judgements about their learning, particularly their learning outcomes.

Past research has shown the impact of self-efficacy on learners' achievement and proficiency (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). The construct of self-efficacy has a relatively brief history that began with Bandura's (1977) seminal work "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change." Bandura (1986) introduced self-efficacy as one of the components of social-cognitive theory. Bandura's (1977, 1986) social-cognitive theory is a theory of human functioning that states that humans can control their behaviour. In other words, Bandura's social-cognitive theory follows the notion that human beings are able to regulate their behaviour.

Self-efficacy was also explained by Bandura (1977) as the beliefs and the confidence that one has in performing a domain-specific task at a designated level. Bandura (1993) defined self-efficacy as "students' beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their own learning, master academic activities and determine their aspirations, level of motivation, and academic accomplishment" (p. 117).

The study of self-efficacy is important inasmuch as it appears to powerfully influence various behaviours such as attributions, choice of tasks, effort, emotions, cognition, goals, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura and Locke (2003), no mechanism of human agency is more central or pervasive than belief in personal efficacy. "Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects; otherwise one has little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties" (p. 87). In this vein, Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2006) suggest that beliefs of personal efficacy are not dependent on one's abilities but on what one believes may be accomplished with one's personal skill set.

One of the most consistent findings thus far is that self-efficacy for the target language in general appears to be positively associated with achievement as defined by course grades in the target language (Hsieh, 2008; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007). Hsieh (2008) found that self-efficacy was a good predictor of language learning achievement. In her study, students with high self-efficacy reported that they were more interested in learning foreign languages, had more positive attitude, and possessed higher integrative orientation.

An individual's belief in his or her efficacy to accomplish a given task, according to Bandura (1977), can be developed through four primary sources: (a) enactive mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional states. Enactive mastery experiences refer to direct experience with the task in question. They are considered to be the strongest source of self-efficacy, according to Schunk (1991), who

introduced an individual's own performance as the most reliable guide for assessing efficacy.

Although not as strong as mastery experiences, but still influential, are vicarious experiences. When peers succeed, learners believe they can succeed, too. When others fail, learners believe they will also fail. In the case of social persuasion, learners have been convinced by an authoritative figure that they are capable of developing high self-efficacy. Finally, through physiological and emotional states, learners who tend to have low anxiety while performing a task are led into high self-efficacy.

Over the past 20 years, self-assessment has been increasingly used in educational settings, according to de Saint Léger (2009). Blanche and Merino (1989) argue that since 1976, when the first reports on self-assessment were published, self-assessment has continued to develop as a distinct field of study in second language (L2) learning and education.

Studies of self-assessment have investigated the rationale and methods of using this kind of assessment as an instrument for assessing second/foreign language learning. Most of the studies in the field of self-assessment deal with the accuracy of students' self-assessment. In other words, studies on self-assessment have mainly researched the correlations between teacher assessment and self-assessment intended to discover the precision of self-assessment (Blanche & Merino, 1989; Boud & Falchikov, 1989; Carr, 1977).

Since the 1990s, there has been a tendency to investigate the application of self-assessment in classroom settings to enhance learning. A number of researchers (e.g., Duke & Sanchez, 1994; McNamara & Deane, 1995; Rivers, 2001; Yang, 1998) were motivated to examine improving learner autonomy through self-assessment. As self-assessment is regarded as an alternative means of assessing learners' ability, most of the studies in this field are quantitative in nature and aim at investigating the validity and reliability of self-ratings rather than the learning process in which students are involved (de Saint Léger, 2009).

Another line of research has been geared to investigate the application of self-assessment in English language classes. As de Saint Léger (2009) reports, self-perception evolves positively over time in relation to L2 fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence in speaking. Her study emphasized the potential pedagogical advantages of self-assessment at both cognitive and affective levels. In the same vein, Butler and Lee (2010) examined the effectiveness of self-assessment among young EFL learners. They found that the learners' ability to self-assess their performance improved over time. Their results revealed positive but marginal effects of self-assessment on the learners' English performance and their confidence in learning English. Recently, Brantmeier, Vanderplank, and Strube (2012) also examined skills-based self-assessment across beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English language instruction. Their study offered evidence to validate the relationship between the self-assessment instrument and the advanced learners' achievement.

There is some evidence that self-assessment can promote self-efficacy. For example, Paris and Paris (2001) reviewed studies suggesting that self-assessment is likely to promote monitoring of progress, stimulate revision strategies, and foster feelings of self-efficacy. Similarly, Ross (2006) argued that self-assessments that focus students' attention on a particular aspect of their performance contribute to positive self-efficacy beliefs.

Despite the large body of self-efficacy research found in other academic disciplines, there are few studies that have examined the self-efficacy of foreign language students (Mills et al., 2006). Given that the role of students' self-efficacy is significant in their persistence and success, it is important to recognize ways to help learners develop high self-efficacy in language learning contexts. Hsieh (2008) suggests setting concrete and realistic goals and providing positive but accurate feedback in order to develop self-efficacy. Schunk (1991) also concludes that feedback for prior successes is apt to increase learning efficacy. As setting concrete goals and providing feedback are both requisites of self-assessment, it can be concluded that applying self-assessment is likely to result in improved self-efficacy.

The Present Study

To date there has been little empirical evidence concerning the effect of self-assessment on self-efficacy. The present study is an attempt to investigate whether or not experiencing self-assessment would foster EFL learners' self-efficacy. To this end, the study aims to answer the following research question: Does introducing self-assessment techniques significantly affect EFL learners' self-efficacy level?

Method

As stated above, the purpose of the present study is to find out if incorporation of self-assessment techniques in an EFL classroom would enhance students' self-efficacy. In order to achieve this goal, a quasi-experimental study using two intact classes and a pretest/posttest control group design was conducted. The independent variable manipulated in this study was a classroom self-assessment component and the dependent variable was self-efficacy beliefs.

In order to improve the research design of the study, the following steps were taken. First, the treatment was withheld from the control group. In the other words, the self-assessment component was introduced only to the experimental group. Next, the self-assessment component did not carry a grade in order to avoid the threat of an interaction of the experimental treatment and testing. Thus, the students did not take the self-assessment questionnaire as part of the ongoing graded evaluation of the course and therefore as part of the final grade, and they did not feel compelled to raise their scores

to please the instructor or to improve their final grade. Besides, the experimental treatment was not affected by the application of a pretest because the self-efficacy scale measured a different construct from self-assessment. The two instruments had different layouts, each one eliciting different information from the learners.

Participants

The participants in the present study were 57 female adult intermediate students who were learning English as a foreign language at an English language institute in Yazd, Iran. The participants were selected through administering the Preliminary English Test (PET). The participants' average age was 26, with a standard deviation of 3.28. They were members of four intact classes, randomly assigned to an experimental ($n = 27$) and a control group ($n = 30$). Only the participants in the experimental group received the treatment, namely the self-assessment component.

Instruments

In this study, three different instruments were employed: (a) a self-assessment questionnaire adapted from Blanche and Merino (1989) (see Appendix A); (b) an English as a foreign language self-efficacy questionnaire derived from Pintrich and De Groot (1990) (see Appendix B); and (c) a mock PET, in order to investigate the participants' general English proficiency level. The PET used in this study included 67 items, consisting of 4 sections: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The questionnaires were translated, and the translated versions were then checked for accuracy through eliciting the judgement of a number of experts. They were then piloted to verify their reliability.

English as a Foreign Language Self-efficacy Questionnaire

The self-efficacy items (Appendix B) were adapted from Pintrich and De Groot (1990). The 9 items ask how confident students are in their ability in their current class, or their capability to complete and concentrate on EFL courses. The items also focus on students' self-efficacy about their overall performance in the English classroom, namely their confidence in attaining a certain goal by mastering the tasks involved in performing certain language functions. Finally, their self-efficacy toward the EFL course as a whole is measured. The items are scored using a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all true of me*) to 7 (*very true of me*). One overall English as a Foreign Language Self-efficacy score is obtained, and total scores range from 0 to 63. Higher scores equate with higher self-efficacy related to English as a foreign language.

The accuracy of the translated version of the questionnaire was verified by three English language experts. The 9 items of the scale were initially translated into Persian. The next step involved an independent back-transla-

tion of the Persian version into English by three MA students of TEFL. The newly developed English version and the original one were compared and checked by the researchers for any incompatibility. Among the psychometric properties of the scale, the Cronbach's alpha was obtained separately by the researchers in order to test the adapted instruments' internal consistency reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the EFL self-efficacy questionnaire was 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency for this instrument.

Self-assessment Questionnaire

The self-assessment questionnaire adapted from Blanche and Merino (1989) was used in this study. In this questionnaire, students are asked to identify classroom topics (whether grammatical, functional, or lexical) they consider important, the main difficulties they think they had while learning the topics, and strategies they believe may overcome these difficulties. This instrument allows students to focus on their assets as well as their shortcomings and makes students reflect on all the various aspects of the course (Blanche & Merino, 1989).

The self-assessment questionnaire includes 10 items that students should answer, covering different aspects of the course. The first section asks for details about the topics the students find important in the past lessons, requires them to rate how important they believe each topic is, and how well they believe they can learn the topic. A 5-item scale ranging from *not at all* to *thoroughly/extremely* is used for ratings.

In the next section, students are asked to write down the vocabulary they have learned since the last self-assessment and then are asked to rate how important they believe each word is, and how well they believe they can use the word. A similar 5-item scale is used for these ratings. In the third section, students are asked to rate their general evaluation of their gained learning using a 5-descriptor scale ranging from learning *nothing at all* through *a lot* in the last two weeks. In the last section, students are asked to describe their weaknesses and the changes they would make to their study habits. They are also asked to give their suggestions about the focus of instruction during the following self-assessment period.

Procedure

The following procedure was followed while collecting the data. As a first step, a Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to measure the participants' English language proficiency and to make sure that both control and experimental groups were homogeneous. Then the participants in both groups were exposed to the same instruction, as they were learning English in the same institute. The system of instruction was homogenized based on communicative language teaching. The learners were taught by the same teacher based on the same textbook and syllabus and received the same test as well as the grading system decided by the institute. Thus, it can

be concluded that both groups were in the same condition. The only difference between the two groups was that the students in the experimental group received self-assessment training.

In the next stage, all the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire designed to identify their level of self-efficacy. The self-efficacy questionnaire was first completed and handed in during the second week of classes by all the participants. The next part of the research involved students in appraising their own learning in common foreign language education contexts. The self-assessment techniques were utilized just for the experimental group through the self-assessment questionnaire. The self-assessment instrument consisted of items where learners situate themselves in a language task and then evaluate their own performances. The participants were introduced to self-assessment for the first time. The aim was to familiarize them with self-assessment through explanation of related issues such as organization, content, and grammar. Examples were given to explain how they could deal with the content of the questionnaires. Moreover, the participants were asked to self-assess for about 30–35 minutes at the end of each unit on a biweekly basis throughout the semester (i.e., three times from the beginning of the course, which lasted for seven weeks). They were also told that they were not going to receive any score.

For both groups, the second self-efficacy questionnaires were completed and handed in during the final week of classes. Once all posttest questionnaires were collected and coded, the researchers keyed in the data for analysis.

Results

The first step in data analysis was providing a more comprehensive view of the sample in both groups. Descriptive statistics including mean, range, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum scores are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Experimental group						
Pretest	27	44.40	7.58	26	31.00	57.00
Posttest	27	48.96	6.98	24	36.00	60.00
Control group						
Pretest	30	43.86	7.99	26	32.00	58.00
Posttest	30	44.63	9.03	34	22.00	56.00

As Table 1 shows, the level of learners' self-efficacy in the experimental group improved. However, to demonstrate that this is a significant improve-

ment, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. The ANCOVA was used to standardize the pretest self-efficacy scores on both groups (i.e., pretest self-efficacy scores served as the covariate). The use of ANCOVA provides researchers with a technique that allows one to more appropriately analyze the data. In other words, a quasi-experimental design leaves a study more vulnerable to threats of validity than a full experimental design; this vulnerability can be minimized by applying an ANCOVA (Dörnyei, 2007). Dörnyei further argues that a special case of the use of ANCOVA occurs in quasi-experimental designs when the posttest scores of the control and the treatment groups are compared while the pretest scores are controlled as the covariate.

Prior to conducting data analysis, the assumptions for an ANCOVA were examined. There are a number of assumptions associated with ANCOVA (Pallant, 2001). The data were screened for violations of normality, linearity, homogeneity of regression slopes, and homogeneity of variances.

To investigate normality of distribution, the self-efficacy scores were subjected to the application of One-Sample Kolomogorov-Smirnov (K-S) tests for each group. This assesses the normality of the distribution of scores for the two groups. The normality of distribution is one of the essential and fundamental assumptions of parametric tests such as ANCOVA. The results of the application of K-S tests—in this case significance values of 0.2, 0.2, 0.2, and 0.9 for the groups—suggest that the assumption of normality is not violated. (A non-significant result, sig. value of more than .05, indicates normality.)

The second assumption is the linear relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate. ANCOVA assumes that the relationship between the dependent variable and each of the covariates is linear. Another assumption is homogeneity of regression slopes. This assumption requires that the relationship between the covariate and dependent variable for each of the groups be the same. There should be no interaction between the covariate and the treatment or experimental manipulation. The assessment of this assumption involves investigating whether there is a statistically significant interaction between the treatment and the covariate. If the interaction is significant at 0.05 alpha level, then the assumption is violated. Table 2 shows that the sig. or the probability value is 0.52, which is above 0.05. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes is not violated.

Table 2
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III sum of squares	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	sig
Treatment	69.86	1	69.86	2.00	.16
Pretest	1712.68	1	1712.68	49.03	.001
Treatment ^a	14.14	1	14.14	.40	.52

^aInteraction between treatment and the covariate (pre-test score).

The last assumption, test of homogeneity of variances, was also checked. Using Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances, we examined whether the variances in scores are the same for each of the groups, checking that the assumption of equality of variances has not been violated. If the value is smaller than 0.05 (and therefore significant), this means that the variances are not equal and the assumption has been violated. In this case, the sig. value is 0.78, which is much greater than 0.05, so the assumption has not been violated.

To answer the research question of this study—namely whether introducing self-assessment techniques significantly affects EFL learners’ self-efficacy level—an ANCOVA was used to compare the posttests (Table 3). As the sig. value for the independent variable (treatment) is .001, which is less than 0.05, the result shows that the scores obtained by both groups on the dependent variable (self-efficacy) differ significantly. In other words, there is a significant difference in the self-efficacy scores for participants in both groups, suggesting that the self-assessment training had a significant impact on the participants’ level of self-efficacy in the experimental group. The eta squared value for the independent variable (treatment) is 0.3 indicating that 30 percent of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable.

Table 3
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III sum of squares	<i>df</i> eta square	Mean square	<i>F</i>	sig	Partial
Pre-test	1766.53	1	1766.53	51.13	.001	.48
Treatment	769.03	1	769.03	22.26	.001	.29
Error	1865.39		54	34.54		

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners’ self-efficacy. To investigate the research question “Does introducing self-assessment techniques significantly affect EFL learners’ self-efficacy level?” an ANCOVA was used. Table 3 reveals that implementation of a self-assessment component on a formative and regular basis enhances EFL learners’ self-efficacy. This was one of the major findings of the study, which demonstrated that the participants in the experimental group had a significantly higher level of self-efficacy compared to their peers in the control group at the end of the treatment period.

These results are consistent with the theoretical and empirical studies that contribute to the significance of self-assessment in language teaching. The results extend the findings of previous studies (Butler & Lee, 2010; de Saint Léger, 2009). The results of the present study confirm the findings of de Saint Léger (2009), who claims that as a result of self-assessment, self-perception

evolves positively over time in relation to fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence in speaking in L2. Her study emphasized the potential pedagogical advantages of self-assessment at both cognitive and affective levels. These results are also in line with the findings of Butler and Lee (2010), who found that learners' ability to self-assess their performance improved over time as they concluded that self-assessment left a positive but marginal effect on English learners' performance and confidence.

One explanation for the beneficial effect of self-assessment on self-efficacy is the belief that self-assessment may lead to a comfortable approach to specific-related materials and more confidence while performing a task (Oscarson, 1997). In other words, self-assessment may have helped students with respect to their self-efficacy through the sense of self-mastery. As Bandura (1977) argues, the sense of perceived self-mastery resulting from one's self-assessment leads to learners' self-efficacy. Thus, it can be concluded that this sense of confidence and perceived self-mastery as the result of self-assessment contributes to increasing the learners' self-efficacy.

In the self-assessment questionnaire used in this study, students were asked to state the topics they had learned and how much they had learned in relation to each topic covered during instruction. As students restated what and how well they had learned, they were apt to increase the level of enactive mastery experience, often defined as the learner's own performance and direct experience, which is also considered the main source of self-efficacy. These effects of self-assessment are likely to make students interpret their performance as a mastery experience, which is the most powerful source of self-efficacy according to Bandura (1977).

Ross (2006) also argued that self-assessment can contribute to self-efficacy through mastery and vicarious experiences. He explains that self-assessment focuses students' attention on particular aspects of their performance, redefines the standards students use to decide whether they were successful, and structures teacher feedback to reinforce positive reactions to the successful performance. Because the questionnaire used in this study made learners focus their attention on particular aspects of their performance by requiring them to identify and state the goals and important topics and to redefine the criteria by evaluating themselves against these goals and criteria, the learners were led to heightened self-efficacy. Consequently, the teacher provided positive feedback for successful performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the self-assessment questionnaire in this study has been effective in learners' improved self-efficacy based on Ross's argument.

With respect to vicarious experience, Bandura (1977) argues that self-assessment can also contribute to self-efficacy through classroom discussion of exemplars, and providing examples of successful experience by students' peers. These procedures were done in this study while the instructor was conducting the self-assessment process; she presented the students' performances, especially the successful ones. Therefore, these successful examples

could be regarded as the source of vicarious experience. Finally, Bandura (1977) concludes that the willingness of teachers to share the control of assessment gives students a sense of ability and responsibility. Thus self-assessment can be considered as an important source of positive efficacy.

In this study, self-assessment was done as formative rather than summative assessment. As Geeslin (2003) contends, evaluation should present regular feedback, not in the summative form, but as the formative part of the procedure. This idea is based on the fact that applying self-assessment as a formative tool helps learners recognize their strengths and weaknesses and hence improve specific aspects of their performance.

Moreover, providing regular feedback and focusing on improvement are also significant for improving the level of self-efficacy. Schunk (1991) observes that feedback for prior successes is likely to increase learning efficacy. Regular implementation of self-assessment on a formative basis provides the opportunity for discussion of the performance itself, clarification of the behaviours associated with successful performance, and development of individual work. Finally, it should be noted that this questionnaire also enhances interaction between the instructor and learners, as a result of which learners receive feedback for further improvement of their work.

Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to investigate the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' self-efficacy. The findings confirmed the pedagogical value of self-assessment. Because self-efficacy is regarded as a significant element in the process of language learning, the issue of improving this element through self-assessment is addressed in the present study. To investigate the hypothesized pedagogical value of self-assessment, this study examined the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' self-efficacy to see if the participants' self-efficacy would improve at the end of the treatment period. The findings revealed that EFL learners' self-efficacy level indicated a significant improvement due to applying the self-assessment component over time. This result showed that applying regular self-assessment as a formative assessment technique heightens the learners' level of self-efficacy in an EFL context. In other words, students' perceived capability to learn English as a foreign language increases by assessing themselves on a regular basis.

The most direct implication of the findings of this study is related to language teaching. Given the positive findings of the present study, language teachers are strongly recommended to include comprehensive self-assessment in their teaching practice. They can integrate various kinds of self-assessment practice (such as the one applied in this study) in their instruction. Teachers can also make use of this strategy as a scaffolding tool. In the other words, they can apply self-assessment means after each unit of work in order to focus the learners' attention on a target issue in the process of instruction.

The use of various kinds of self-assessment techniques along with appropriate instructional feedback can improve students' self-efficacy. As a matter of fact, self-assessment can satisfy pedagogical promises if conducted appropriately. Comprehensive guidelines are presented in the literature by Oscarson (1989) and Brown and Hudson (1998). Lastly, among the available assessment tools, self-assessment is the one that fosters opportunities for interaction among the teacher and the learner. Therefore, this form of assessment is regarded as an optimal method of measurement for authentic communication.

Further research, however, needs to be conducted to shed further light on the beneficial effects of self-assessment. For example, self-assessment might be related to an individual's cultural background. Thus, it will be worthwhile to investigate self-assessment data collected from learners in different cultures and compare them with each other. Similar studies can be conducted with learners from different social backgrounds. Finally, the effect of self-assessment on self-efficacy for different language skills can be investigated in order to learn more about the nature of reading self-efficacy, writing self-efficacy, listening self-efficacy, and speaking self-efficacy.

The Authors

Sasan Baleghizadeh is an associate professor of TEFL at Shahid Beheshti University (G.C.) in Tehran, Iran, where he teaches courses in applied linguistics, syllabus design, and materials development. He is interested in investigating the role of interaction in English language teaching and issues related to materials development. His published articles appear in numerous international journals including *TESL Reporter*, *TESL Canada Journal*, *ELT Journal*, and *Language Learning Journal*.

Atieh Masoun holds an MA degree in TEFL from Shahid Beheshti University (G.C.) in Tehran, Iran. She has many years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language. Her research interest is exploring the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' classroom achievement.

References

- Anderson, H., Reinders, H., & Jones-Parry, J. (2004). Self-access: Positioning, pedagogy and future directions. *Prospect*, 19(3), 15–26.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215.
- Bandura, A. (1984). Recycling misconceptions of perceived self-efficacy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 8(3), 231–255.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117–148.
- Bandura, A., & Locke, E. A. (2003). Negative self-efficacy and goal effects revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 87–99.
- Blanche, P., & Merino, B. J. (1989). Self-assessment of foreign-language skills: Implications for teachers and researchers. *Language Learning*, 39(3), 313–338.
- Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (1989). Quantitative studies of student self-assessment in higher education: A critical analysis of findings. *Higher Education*, 18(5), 529–549.

- Brantmeier, C., Vanderplank, R., & Strube, M. (2012). What about me? Individual self-assessment by skill and level of language instruction. *System*, 40(1), 144–160.
- Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), 653–675.
- Butler, Y. G., & Lee, J. (2010). The effects of self-assessment among young learners of English. *Language Testing*, 27(1), 5–31.
- Carr, R. A. (1977). The effects of specific guidelines on the accuracy of student self-evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 2(4), 65–77.
- Chen, Y. M. (2008). Learning to self-assess oral performance in English: A longitudinal case study. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(2), 235–262.
- de Saint Léger, D. (2009). Self-assessment of speaking skills and participation in a foreign language class. *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(1), 158–178.
- Dochy, F., Segers, M., & Sluijsmans, D. (1999). The use of self-, peer and co-assessment in higher education: A review. *Studies in Higher Education*, 24(3), 331–350.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Duke, C. R., & Sanchez, R. (1994). Giving students control over writing assessment. *English Journal*, 83(4), 47–53.
- Geeslin, K. L. (2003). Student self-assessment in the foreign language classroom: The place of authentic assessment instruments in the Spanish language classroom. *Hispania*, 86(4), 857–868.
- Graham, S. (2011). Self-efficacy and academic listening. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(2), 113–117.
- Hsieh, P.-H. (2008). Why are college foreign language students' self-efficacy, attitude, and motivation so different? *International Education*, 38(1), 76–94.
- Huerta-Macias, A. (1995). Alternative assessment: Response to commonly asked questions. *TESOL Journal*, 5(1), 8–11.
- LeBlanc, R., & Painchaud, G. (1985). Self-assessment as a second language placement instrument. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19(4), 673–687.
- McMillan, J. H., & Hearn, J. (2008). Student self-assessment: The key to stronger student motivation and higher achievement. *Educational Horizons*, 87(1), 40–49.
- McNamara, M. J., & Deane, D. (1995). Self-assessment activities: Toward language autonomy in language learning. *TESOL Journal*, 5(1), 17–21.
- Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2), 276–295.
- Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2007). Self-efficacy of college intermediate French students: Relation to achievement and motivation. *Language Learning*, 57(3), 417–442.
- Oscarson, M. (1989). Self-assessment of language proficiency: Rationale and applications. *Language Testing*, 6(1), 1–13.
- Oscarson, M. (1997). Self-assessment of foreign and second language proficiency. In C. Clapham & D. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Language testing and assessment* (Vol. 7, pp. 175–187). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Pallant, J. (2001). *SPSS survival manual*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Paris, S. G., & Paris, A. H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(2), 89–101.
- Pintrich, P. R., & De Groot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(1), 33–40.
- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (1996). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rivers, W. P. (2001). Autonomy at all costs: An ethnography of metacognitive self-assessment and self-management among experienced language learners. *Modern Language Journal*, 85(2), 279–290.
- Ross, J. A. (2006). The reliability, validity, and utility of self-assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 11(10), 1–13.

Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3-4), 207-231.

Yang, N.-D. (1998). Exploring a new role for teachers: Promoting learner autonomy. *System*, 26(1), 127-135.

Appendix A Self-Assessment Questionnaire

1. In the past few lessons (days, weeks), we/I have studied/practiced/worked on:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____

Tip: Fill in the empty spaces with topics and areas of study that are relevant to your case, for example:

- a) Pronunciation of words containing the sound /ð/
- b) How to greet people
- c) Questions with do/does

(The “new words” you have used will be covered under items 3 and 4, so please don’t include vocabulary in this section.)

2. In your estimation, how well can you deal with the topics you listed in Section 1?

	Not at all	To some extent	Fairly well	Very well	Thoroughly
a) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
b) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
c) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
d) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
e) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
f) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

3. On reflection, to what extent do you find the topics you listed in Section 1 important in relation to your own needs?

	Not at all important	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
a) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
b) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
c) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
d) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
e) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
f) -----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

4. We/I have also come across new words of the following type, or within the following type, or within the following subject areas(s): (write down your native language equivalents if it's easier for you.)

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

5. In your estimation, how well do you know the vocabulary/areas you mentioned in Section 4?

- | | Not at all | To some extent | Fairly well | Very well | Thoroughly |
|----|------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| a) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| b) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| c) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| d) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |

6. On reflection, to what extent do you find the vocabulary/areas in Section 4 important in relation to your own needs?

- | | Not at all
important | Not very
important | Fairly
important | Very
important | Extremely
important |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| a) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| b) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| c) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| d) | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |

7. Summarizing the past few lessons (days, weeks) we/I feel that we/I have learned:

- | Nothing at all | Very little | A little | Enough | A lot |
|----------------|-------------|----------|--------|-------|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |

8. Looking back, I realize that I should change my study habits/learning approach/priorities in the following way:

9. Overall, I think my weaknesses are:

10. I would want to see instruction in the next few lessons (days, weeks) focused on the following points/skills/areas:

Appendix B

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

1. Compared with other students in this class, I expect to do well.
2. I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course.
3. I expect to do very well in this class.
4. Compared with others in this class, I think I'm a good student.
5. I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class.
6. I think I will receive a good grade in this class.
7. My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class.
8. Compared with other students in this class, I think I know a great deal about the subject.
9. I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class.

Adapted from Pintrich and De Groot (1990).

Scale ranges from 0 (*not at all true of me*) to 7 (*very true of me*).