

An evaluation of third-year student teachers' self-efficacy in English second language communicative competence

Atrimecia Hass



Central University of Technology, South Africa

E-mail: ahass@cut.ac.za

Emmanuel Vogt



Central University of Technology, South Africa

E-mail: evogt@cut.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The significant decline of the English language proficiency levels amongst language students have aroused concern amongst university language teachers. Although studies have been conducted on self-efficacy in second language environments, minimal research has been conducted on students' self-efficacy and their communicative competence in English as a second language. The study aims to investigate how students' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their English language proficiency impacts their communicative competence, and how this relationship differs across various language proficiency levels among education students at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT). This study draws from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory and Hylands' (2002) discourse

analysis as theoretical lenses to explore the link between language and the purposes it uses to perform in education contexts. The study employed a quantitative research design to collect data through a survey which was distributed and collected from third-year education students majoring in English. The findings of the study indicated that there is a positive correlation between students' self-efficacy in their English language proficiency and their communicative competence. The study reveals that factors such as past language learning experiences, language anxiety, and teacher feedback can significantly impact students' self-efficacy and communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative competence, education, English second language, self-efficacy, teachers

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1. Introduction

Given the stratified history of the South African education system, issues such as language, access and funding are impediments which might affect students' self-efficacy (Sesant et al., 2015). Although more students from previous disadvantaged backgrounds have been granted access to universities, many students, particularly first-year students, still struggle with the transition from high school to university because the higher education setting necessitates self-efficacy through determination and perseverance (Joynt & De Villiers, 2019; Umar & Bello, 2019). Language persists in being a major barrier for student success at South African universities. This is mainly because African languages have not been developed as academic languages and "the majority of students entering higher education are not fully proficient in English and Afrikaans" (Department of Education, 2002, Section 5). This gives an interesting context for the study, as most respondents in the study are from African language backgrounds who will become either English Home Language (HL) or English First Additional Language (FAL) teachers. Only 1% of the respondents are English home language speakers, whilst 8% have Afrikaans as a home language, and 91% of students are from African language backgrounds (Central University of Technology [CUT], 2023). However, despite coming from African language backgrounds, African students prefer to be part of the English 'default' as English is even encouraged as the medium of teaching and learning at school level (Mdzanga, 2021).

Self-efficacy is described as a person's belief in their capabilities to successfully complete a given task (Bandura, 1997; Bachman & Palmer, 2010) while communicative competence is the skill of using language correctly and effectively in various contexts. The most recent definition put forward by Setiawati, Ikhsanudin, and Riyanti (2023) describes self-efficacy as an individual's self-perception of their confidence to accomplish a particular task, which is distinct from the level of self-esteem attached to that role. Some researchers noted an important connection between self-efficacy and listening, reading, and writing skills (Sun & Wang, 2020). Others such as Zhang, Ardasheva, and Austin (2020) stated that self-efficacy does not have any direct or indirect impact on English public speaking (EPS) achievement among students. Despite research conducted on English language self-efficacy principles in the field of second language acquisition, very few researchers have linked English self-efficacy with the communicative competence of student teachers from African language backgrounds. Against this backdrop, this study aims to address this gap in research by evaluating the connection between students' English language self-efficacy and positive communicative competence. For this study, the concept 'teachers' refers to registered students in the Teacher Education programmes at the institution while the concept 'lecturers' refer to the researchers conducting this study and preparing students at university to become teachers.

2. Research questions and objectives

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Is there a link between students' confidence and aspirations in self-efficacy of English language proficiency and their communicative competence?
- 2) To what extent do skills, motivation and lecturer assistance contribute to the self-efficacy of communicative competence'?

The research questions led to the following research objectives:

- 1) To explore how self-efficacy of confidence and aspirations relates to the communicative competence of English students.
- 2) To evaluate the extent to which skills, motivation and teacher assistance contribute to the self-efficacy of communicative competence.

This article is structured as follows: Firstly, background information on the South African education system is provided, followed by different definitions of self-efficacy. In addition, the study acknowledges the research conducted on self-efficacy and identifies the gap that the present study hopes to address. Secondly, this article presents discussions on self-efficacy in Second Language (L2) communication competence and the role of lecturers in developing students' self-efficacy. Thirdly, the article discusses Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Hyland's (2002) Discourse Analysis and their relevance to the study. This is followed by a discussion on the research design, methodology and ethical considerations applied. Lastly, this article presents the findings, discussions and conclusions of the study.

3. Literature review

This section examines key research findings on self-efficacy and its influence on second language communicative competence, with particular attention to the role of teachers in developing student confidence and performance.

3.1 Self-efficacy in second language communicative competence

Self-efficacy plays a significant role in motivating L2 students to achieve communicative competence in L2 (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Numerous studies in the field of second language acquisition have established a positive correlation between students' self-efficacy in English as a Second Language (ESL) and their communicative competence (Lin, Zhang & Zheng, 2017; Woottipong, 2022; Setiawati et al., 2023). Yousefabadi and Ghafournia (2023) found that students' confidence in communicating in English can have a positive impact on communicative competence. Mtholeni and Barnes (2021) demonstrated that African students

whose first language is not English tend to prefer receiving instruction in English at the university level given the high prestige and status of English. However, in the field of English language teaching, most L2 learning takes place in formal classroom situations requiring long hours of preparation to be successful in examinations.

The limited exposure to use L2 suggests that learners have few opportunities to use the second language beyond getting good grades (Joe et al., 2017). Other studies found that reluctance to communicate in English is a major issue among Chinese college students (Wei, 2009; Xu & Xu, 2007). These limitations indicate that low self-efficacy might be a significant barrier to effective communication.

Reddy, Naidoo & Ross (2025) noted that L2 students are often seen as ‘at risk’ due to the cognitive, linguistic, and social adjustments required for smooth transitioning into higher education. Factors such as language anxiety, lack of confidence, and low self-efficacy can hinder students from practicing the target language. Chao *et al.* (2018) argue that understanding the factors affecting students' performance and success is crucial because they are linked to academic achievement rather than communication. Native English speakers use communicative methods and inquiry-based activities to motivate students to speak in class (Xu et al., 2022). This can be achieved through interactive group work, debates, presentations, and role play.

3.2 Teachers' role in developing students' self-efficacy

The work of some researchers has confirmed that teachers play a pivotal role in developing students' self-efficacy (Viviers, De Villiers & Van der Merwe, 2022) and communicative competence (Lee, Song & Kim, 2018). Apart from teacher support, the successful acquisition of a language also depends on the flexibility of self-efficacy (Klassen, 2004; 2006) which can be improved in the classroom (Shih & Alexander, 2000) with teacher quality also playing an important role (Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). Rachmawati and Fadhilawati (2020) argue that the teacher's belief in students' ability to proficiently communicate in ESL has a positive impact on students' self-efficacy and communicative competence. Similarly, Bong, Cho, Ahn, and Kim (2012) believe that teacher feedback and encouragement foster students' self-efficacy and communicative competence. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that teacher feedback and motivation play a crucial role in determining students' self-efficacy and communicative competence (Bong et al., 2012). Woodrow (2011) supports the view that teachers play an important role in encouraging students to communicate and in decreasing their nervousness. By nurturing students' self-efficacy beliefs in their English language proficiency, teachers can help them foster the skills and confidence they require to achieve their academic and personal goals and flourish in a progressively globalised world. When teachers offer constructive feedback that is precise,

relevant, and timely, students are more likely to develop a growth mindset which nurtures a belief in their ability to improve through determination and practice (Choi & Lee, 2016). This feedback can assist students to identify areas where they surpass and areas that needs improvement, which in turn can enhance their self-efficacy. Furthermore, when teachers offer positive feedback, students will feel motivated and will confidently participate in the learning activities. This can result in an increased sense of self-efficacy, as students notice that their efforts are appreciated and rewarded (Bong et al., 2012).

Setiawati et al. (2023) suggests that, to develop students' communicative competence, teachers must frequently provide feedback on their language use, pronunciation, and fluency, which can assist students to enhance their language skills and confidence. Chao, McInerney, and Bai (2018) claim that teachers can foster a supportive and inclusive classroom setting that encourages students to take risks and engage in communication with each other, thus enhancing their communicative competence. Similarly, Woottipong (2022) states that teacher feedback and encouragement have a remarkable impact on students' self-efficacy and communicative competence. By offering useful and positive feedback and creating a supportive classroom environment, teachers can assist students in building the skills and confidence required for academic and social success. The literature recommends that there is an intricate link between students' self-efficacy and communicative competence in English language proficiency (Cong & Li, 2022). The connection is influenced by factors such as anxiety, motivation, teacher beliefs, feedback and encouragement, and willingness to communicate. It is thus important for teachers to recognise these factors when developing interventions to improve students' self-efficacy and communicative competence.

4. Theoretical framework

This study employs Halliday's (1993, 1994) two main theories, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Hyland's Discourse Analysis (2002), which will focus on English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The SFL approach is used worldwide and regards language as its main function. SFL plays a major role in language education and is used for several purposes, such as discourse analysis (Ammurashi, 2016). SFL is concerned with understanding how language is used to serve multiple purposes across a wide range of contexts and situations, consequently acting as a communicative drive in the learning of a language (Ammurashi, 2016). For purposes of this study, the impact of students' self-efficacy beliefs on their communicative competence in the learning of a second language is investigated. This suggests that the purpose of acquiring a language is not only to produce or recognise the "correct" linguistic structures, but to communicate the intended meaning and achieve specific social purposes with the language (Endarto, 2017).

The significance of language structure lies solely in its role of fulfilling a function; devoid of function, the structure becomes entirely meaningless. Fontaine (2013, p. 5) enunciates that “anyone who has tried to communicate with someone in an unfamiliar language or with a two-year-old will know that being grammatically correct is almost irrelevant”. This proves that in many communicative cases, function is more important than structure. The SFL framework is interconnected with genre theory due to its broadening range of applications, extending from the well-known English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which includes fields such as business, medicine, and law. Discourse analysis in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) traditionally focused on examining the features of texts and their rhetorical goals to develop teaching materials. This approach has largely been shaped by Systemic Functional Linguistics, a comprehensive linguistic theory that explores the relationship between language and its functions within social settings. According to this perspective, language comprises various systems, and speakers or writers select from these systems to convey their intended messages efficiently. This framework aligns well with the objectives of ESP, which seek to clarify the structures and conventions of academic and professional discourse, thus empowering learners to succeed in their chosen careers.

4.1 Relevance of theories to this study

Both Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and genre theory are pertinent to this research due to their efficacy in comprehending the complexities of professional genres. Both these theories offer a framework to examine or support the development of language competence in authentic teaching and learning contexts, which is critical for assessing their self-efficacy levels when using ESL. The self-efficacy of students relates to how well they may cope with discourses by engaging their fellow learners and expressing ideas clearly. The approach by Hyland is useful as it can be used to examine written and oral tasks to comprehend how students use English and view their personal competence. The emphasis on genre and context assists assessment of communicative proficiency in real-life teaching scenarios. In this study, it is important for students to consider the purpose of communicating in English for specific English contexts - and more importantly - for examining how language functions in educational and professional settings such as delivering lessons and engaging learners.

This study coheres with ESP's aims to explain the academic and professional genres that will enhance students' career opportunities (Halliday, 1994). This theory assists students to make the correct linguistic choices when communicating with lecturers, peers, and the learners they will be teaching to effectively express their intended meaning. Students should be able to understand instructions and respond to questions to communicate discipline-specific knowledge such as literary themes and comprehension in English. This study therefore demonstrates the relevance of SFL to the purpose of language which includes the use of the

language instead of what the language structure entails and the way in which it is composed (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). Genre theory is useful in analysing the discursive realities of the social world, as learning a new language cannot be isolated from the social context. A study of this theory demonstrates that, through discourse, students actively negotiate meaning, establish norms, and construct an understanding of what is considered acceptable within their context. This approach offers a profound understanding of the interaction between language use, teaching practices and self-efficacy, contributing to valuable insights for improving the development of teacher education.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design

The study utilised a quantitative research approach to gather data by means of a questionnaire to measure the self-efficacy beliefs of education students regarding their understanding, goals and aspirations in relation to their communicative abilities. The questionnaire was distributed during an English class after students conducted presentations which formed part of their coursework mark for semester two. A link to the questionnaire was distributed to all registered students through the web-based virtual teaching and learning platform, e-Thuto. Students were able to access the link through their cellular phones to complete the questionnaire after they made their presentations. The questionnaire was administered after students' presentations to confirm that their self-efficacy beliefs were shaped by their practical experience with English communicative tasks, instead of theoretical knowledge alone. A quantitative method was deemed suitable for this study, as self-efficacy can be calculated by employing verified Likert-scale questionnaires, and it allows for standardised comparisons between participants. Such quantitative studies have noted a key correlation between student's self-efficacy beliefs and academic success and decisions, and their English proficiency and learning abilities in Second Language Contexts (Viviers et al., 2022; Noorollahi, 2021; Lee et al., 2018; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to interpret the findings. The captured data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpretations were confirmed by a trained and independent statistician. SPSS is commonly used in quantitative studies to analyse numerical data collected through polls, surveys and questionnaires to ensure the findings can be generalised between different groups (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021).

Regression analysis was employed to determine whether and how students' self-efficacy beliefs influence their communicative practices. The precise statistical approaches and procedures that were utilised are explained in the empirical research results below. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, so all students enrolled in the Bachelor

of Education degree with a language specialisation in English III who were present during the lesson were equally eligible for selection. A total of 116 third-year education students majoring in English, comprising 23 males and 93 females, from a University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa, participated in this study in semester two of this specific academic year.

5.2 Measuring self-efficacy

The efficacy degrees were calculated by the level of students' confidence with regards to their communicate competence. These attributes of self-efficacy findings were measured through task-specific questionnaire components that differ according to difficulty and represent levels of confidence as recommended by Zimmerman (2000). Self-efficacy measures concentrate on performance competences instead of personal qualities. Furthermore, interpretations of efficacy are subjected to a proficiency criterion of performance rather than prescriptive or other criteria.

5.3 Questionnaire design and validity

Bandura (2006) suggests that the activities of the self-efficacy questionnaire should be formulated starting with statements such as "I can ..." instead of "I will ...". "I can ..." is seen as a judgement of capability, while "I will ..." is a statement of purpose. Consequently, the activities of this questionnaire were framed using statements such as: "I feel confident when...", and "I would like to..." and were calculated to the extent to which students agree or disagree with these statements. This study was piloted with a small group of students during the first semester of the English III course to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire before the formal questionnaire was distributed during the second semester. The questionnaire comprised three sections. Section A gathered demographic details of the participants, such as gender and language background. Section B encompassed eight items targeting students' confidence levels in their English communication abilities. These items assessed attributes such as participating in English-only class discussions and presentations, communicating with professors and classmates, and engaging in English dialogue during class interactions. Section C measured the aspirations of English competence skills. These comprised of five items which included questions pertaining to students' future aspirations regarding their English language proficiency, as well as their beliefs that English will facilitate meaningful life experiences, such as creating opportunities for them to live and work in foreign countries. Section D comprised of two items that measured students' self-efficacy in relation to the extent to which they feel confident to ask for assistance or guidance from teachers (or in this case the lecturer) when they experience challenges. The survey provided a clear explanation of the research purpose and its significance in assisting language educators to better guide students in improving their English oral proficiency skills, aiming to encourage honest responses from respondents.

6. Ethical considerations

Before the data were collected, the researchers obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty of Humanities' Ethics Committee to conduct the research. To mitigate participant bias, completing the survey was entirely voluntary. Respondents' answers were kept confidential, and all data were presented in aggregate form ensuring overall anonymity. To maintain anonymity, participants were not required to disclose any personal details such as their names or student numbers. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason.

7. Findings

Table 1 provides a summary of the respondents' demographic profiles. The gender of the participants shows an obvious uneven spread of 80% females and 20% males who participated in the study. It is also evident from Table 1 that most of the students who participated were Black students from African language backgrounds, which reflects the common student profile of the chosen university.

Table 1: Participants' profile

Variable	Education students N = 116
Male	23
Female	93
Race/Ethnic group	
African/Black	103
Coloured	8
Indian/Asian	0
White	1
Other	
Home language	
African/Black	95
Afrikaans	11
English	6

The findings by some researchers (Ali & Narayan, 2019) highlight the significance of ethnic differences in the examination of students' self-efficacy beliefs. This is relevant to the present study because it evaluates education students' self-efficacy beliefs in a South African context where students come from diverse ethnic groups and language backgrounds. It is important to consider the context provided in Table 1 when presenting the findings. Discussions concerning

mother tongue education, inequality, and race in South Africa are closely linked to this study because the students are at the centre of these issues. Students are navigating the tension between mother tongue education and English supremacy which influences their role as future teachers, positioning them to determine how such inequalities are reproduced in the classroom.

Table 2: Participants' self-efficacy scores for confidence

<i>I feel confident</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
2.1 every every time I speak English with everyone	83,2	16,8
2.2 speaking in English during group discussions in class.	86,9	13,1
2.3 each time I communicate with others in English	90,5	9,5
2.4 speaking English with my peers and lecturers.	88,1	11,9
2.5 doing oral presentations in English.	77,4	22,6
2.6 expressing my opinions in English.	8,6	91,4
2.7 engaging in academic discussions with my peers.	94,1	5,9
2.8 when presenting in class.	27,2	72,2

Table 2 captures participants' responses to each of the questions which were summarised into categories of 'Agree' and 'Disagree'. When comparing the 'Confident Category', most students responded that they feel proud every time they speak English, with 83,2% agreeing, and 16,8% disagreeing with the statement. The questions that assess their 'confidence' regarding whether they enjoy speaking English in group discussions and whether they feel good every time they communicate with others in English, scored high averages. Most students (86,9%) responded that they strongly agreed, whilst a small percentage (13,1%) did not agree. Similarly, 90,5% agreed and 9,5% disagreed that they enjoy communicating in English. On the contrary, most students (91,4%) disagreed that they confidently express their opinions in English, whilst only 8,6% agreed that they are confident to do so. A total of 88,1% agreed that they enjoy speaking English to their peers and lecturers. Furthermore, 77,4% of the respondents agreed that they enjoy doing oral presentations in English, and only 7,3% disagreed with the statement.

When assessing their confidence when engaging in academic discussions with their peers, 94,1% of respondents agreed with the statement, and 5,9% disagreed. The question addressing students' nervousness when presenting in class yielded a high average agreement, with 72.8% of respondents indicating that they experience nervousness during presentations. In contrast, only 27.2% of respondents reported feeling confident when presenting in class.

Table 3: Participants' self-efficacy scores for aspirations

<i>I would like to</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
3.1 be eloquent/fluent in English	94	6
3.2 improve my English comprehension.	97,7	2,3
3.3 speak good English to enable life-enriching experiences.	94	6
3.4 speak good English as it will help me in foreign countries.	96,6	2,4
3.5 speak good English as it will assist me to do well academically	92,9	7,1

When comparing the questions under the 'aspiration category' in Table 3, respondents scored high average percentages. The question about their aspiration to become eloquent and fluent in English yielded a high agreement of 94%, indicating that most respondents agreed that they wanted to become fluent in English. The total percentage score for respondents' level of aspiration to improve their English comprehension was 97,7%, with only a small percentage (2,3%) indicating they do not aspire to improve their English comprehension. Most respondents (94%) indicated that they aspire to speak good English because it will enable life-enriching experiences, whilst 6% disagreed with the statement. Respondents' agreement with the statement that their aspiration to speak proficient English is driven by the belief that it will support them in foreign countries reached an average of 96,6%. Similarly, respondents' aspiration to speak proficient English, based on the belief that it would support their academic success, received an average agreement of 92,2%, with only 7,1% of respondents expressing disagreement.

Table 4: Participants' self-efficacy scores for teacher assistance

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
4.1 I feel comfortable to ask help from lectures when I don't understand.	68,3	31,7
4.2 I use the feedback and assistance from lecturers to improve my communication.	78,6	21,4

Table 4 highlights respondents' level of confidence to ask for assistance from teachers when they do not understand. In this regard, 68,3% responded positively, while only 12,2% of respondents did not feel comfortable asking for help from teachers. The question addressing whether feedback from teachers helped respondents improve their communication skills received an average agreement of 78,6%, while 21,4% of respondents indicated that such feedback did not contribute to improvements in their communication.

8. Discussion

An evaluation of students' self-efficacy of confidence levels proved that most students are highly confident when they engage in academic discussions and oral presentations. This is a positive response because it demonstrates their high efficacy beliefs, which supports the findings by Woottipong (2022) that students with high self-efficacy beliefs concerning their English proficiency tend to be more motivated and involved in partaking in English discourse. This supports Kim and Lorshbach's (2005) view that students who have higher confidence in their spoken language proficiency tend to achieve better results compared to those with lower confidence levels. Specifically, their confidence in enjoying speaking English to both peers and teachers was reflected in consistently high average scores. This is in line with the findings by Reilly et al. (2022) who suggest that the frequent use of English enhances students' fluency in the language. This also supports the finding by Li et al. (2024) that students with high self-efficacy beliefs in English proficiency are likely to be more confident and positive in social encounters concerning the use of English.

The question on the confidence of students when presenting in class scored a high average, indicating that most agreed to being nervous when presenting in class, with only 27,2% of students showing confidence when presenting. It is no surprise that some students are nervous and do not enjoy oral presentations because such students lack confidence and fear making mistakes (Li et al., 2024) as they may not be provided with sufficient opportunities to practice their English oral proficiency skills (Joe et al., 2017). This can limit their exposure to the English language and culture, and their opportunities for personal and professional growth. The large classes in the Teacher Education programme might contribute to the low confidence levels, because students may be shy and embarrassed to speak in front of peers in class.

When assessing the self-efficacy of their aspirations most students are highly aspired to become more articulate in English, with only a few respondents who indicated that they do not want to become more fluent in English. Most students agreed that good English proficiency will assist them academically, enable life-enriching experiences and will avoid miscommunication when travelling to foreign countries. This is in line with the findings by Kangira (2016) who noted that parents and students still believe that English proficiency is the only key to unlocking employment opportunities. This is also consistent with the findings by Mthombeni and Ogunnubi (2021) who argued that although students recognise the importance of mother tongue education, they raised concerns that speaking their mother tongue might impact their academic performance. This proves that students with high efficacy levels are motivated to learn new English discourses (Li et al., 2024), while students with lower self-efficacy levels believe that being a poor English speaker is a fixed condition and do not believe that development is the result of effort (Dweck & Master, 2009).

When assessing the students' self-efficacy of confidence to ask teachers for help, most students regarded the role of teachers as significant and believed their feedback can assist in improving communication. This confirms the findings of many researchers that the teacher plays an important role in developing self-efficacy in learning a L2 (Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). Particularly students with low self-efficacy levels are likely to ask for help from teachers to support their learning. Meluso et al. (2012) suggest that teachers can provide opportunities for students to observe their peers who accomplished similar tasks and allow collaborative groupwork to enhance students' self-efficacy beliefs. Teachers can also use positive reinforcement, which includes praise and recognition, to strengthen students' development, shape their confidence in English (Bangui & Adder, 2020), promote their preparedness to communicate and lessen students' anxiety (Woodrow, 2011).

9. Conclusion

The study provided an overview of students' responses to questions which demonstrated their perceptions of their self-efficacy in relation to confidence, aspirations, and lecturers' assistance. Most students proved to be highly confident when communicating with peers and lecturers and during group discussions. However, when it comes to presenting in front of the class and sharing their opinion with the class, most students agreed that they are not confident to speak in front of a class. It is important to note that part of a teachers core responsibility is to create a supportive learning setting that promotes learner participation and confidence, particularly in areas of public speaking and opinion sharing. Students' lack of confidence when presenting in class is common amongst second language students who fear making mistakes and being embarrassed in front of their peers. In addition, opportunities for presentations as assessments are limited in the English class, and therefore the lack of confidence could be ascribed to students not being frequently exposed to making presentations in front of a class. The results revealed that most students aspired to become more fluent in English as they believed it would enable life-enriching experiences. This will result in them utilising both personal and professional development opportunities, such as teaching English as a foreign language overseas and overcoming language barriers while traveling to foreign countries. This suggests that English fluency in academic settings is often associated with perceptions of intelligence and social status, leading some students who speak African languages to abandon their mother tongue.

The study offered insights into how teachers could enhance students' confidence in their English communication skills by using positive reinforcement techniques such as praise and recognition to acknowledge their progress. The high confidence levels of students seeking assistance from lecturers demonstrate the significant role of teachers in developing self-

efficacy, because students believe that teachers' feedback can enhance their communication skills.

One main finding of this study is that education students experience low self-efficacy especially as far as presenting in English in front of others is concerned, as well as expressing their ideas clearly and actively engaging in classroom discussions. These low levels of confidence can be linked to linguistic limitations, fear of being judged, and lack of prior exposure to oral tasks. Consequently, students may become passive in the classroom and reluctant to interact critically with course content. This study recommends that lecturers should incorporate more presentation type of assessments for teacher education students, which will create opportunities for them to share their opinions with the class with confidence. Such oral and interactive learning opportunities are critical for enhancing both communication competencies and self-efficacy in academic contexts. Furthermore, the institution should provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic communication and interaction with English speakers, such as through language exchange programmes and cultural immersion experiences.

10. Limitation

This study was limited to views of education students majoring in English, which limits the generalisation of the findings to other education specialisations and the perspectives of lecturers. To achieve greater comparative results, a bigger sample including students and lecturers from other courses or universities could be used. This study was limited to a quantitative approach, but future studies can adopt a mixed or qualitative method by including interviews and observations, thereby increasing opportunities for triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of research findings. As indicated earlier, this study comprised of one case study at a university of technology (UoT), limiting the results to be applicable to other universities. Other researchers could focus on conducting comparison studies with other universities.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Atrimecia Hass

Central University of Technology, South Africa

Email: ahass@cut.ac.za **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2623-8503>

Atrimecia Hass is the former writing centre coordinator at CUT. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Languages and Social Science Education at CUT where she teaches English in the B.Ed. Language specialisation programme. Her research covers both linguistic and literary issues, and she is interested in multilingualism, second language acquisition and academic writing.

Emmanuel Vogt

Central University of Technology, South Africa

Email: evogt@cut.ac.za **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8489-7702>

Emmanuel Vogt is a distinguished lecturer in English and Linguistics in the B.Ed programme in the Department of Languages and Social Science Education. He earned his Master's in Language Practice from the Central University of Technology, Free State. He is known for his engaging teaching style; Mr Vogt inspires students to explore literary analysis and critical thinking.
