



The Relationship between Intermediate EFL Students' Oral Production and their Lexical Knowledge and Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Oral performance in general plays a significant part in any academic field and it is a flexible tool that can be used to meet a variety of goals (Diamond, 1999; Graham, 2006). This study aimed to illuminate and investigate one psychological and crucial factor influencing the oral performance: Self-efficacy (SE). Lexical knowledge (LK) also plays a significant role in oral performances. An attempt was made to assess the relationship among self-efficacy, lexical knowledge, and oral performance. In so doing, after homogenizing the students as Intermediate ones via a placement test, a standard questionnaire of SE (Owen&Froman, 1988) was administered to intermediate students. In addition a lexical knowledge test was taken. Afterwards, the researcher asked the subjects to deliver a speech on a general topic. Based on the results, the subjects were divided into four groups: 1) High SE, High LK, 2) High SE, Low LK, 3) Low SE, High LK, and 4) Low SE, Low LK. The data collected as well as the scores given to their oral performances were analyzed through SPSS (21.00). Results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups of High self-efficacy, high lexical knowledge and Low self efficacy, low lexical knowledge. The former group outperformed the latter one. The outcomes of this study can have benefits for both foreign language teachers and learners. They both can attain better results by focusing more on the psychological factor of self-efficacy and linguistic factor of lexical knowledge in their roles. The findings of the present study demonstrated that more concentration ought to be placed on this psychological factor as well as lexical knowledge of the learners in order to enhance their oral performances.

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Introduction

The self-efficacy of the students appears to be a critical factor in determining academic success and performance (Gerardi, 1990). An extensive body of research indicates that academic self-efficacy is positively associated with grades in college (Bong, 2001; Brown, Lent, & Larkin, 1989; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991) as well as with persistence (Zhang & RiCharde, 1998). Bandura (1993) postulates that self-efficacy beliefs affect college outcomes by increasing students' motivation and persistence to master challenging academic tasks and by fostering the efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills.

Lexical knowledge is a term used for knowledge in form of vocabulary which covers information that generally has been confirmed and published by scientific and academic sources. The main and central point of second language acquisition (SLA) is lexical knowledge, the vocabulary of which is its fundamental structure. It is often regarded as the major need and source of defects by language learners (Segler et al, 2002). Gass (1988) emphasizes and confirms the significance of lexical knowledge in such a way that grammatical errors lead to understandable meaning, but the errors in vocabulary and lexical knowledge disrupt the meaning of context and stop communication. Lack of vocabulary or phrase knowledge practically causes the speaker to face a sort of delay and then he or she attempts to find out a

substitution for some words instead of suitable and accurate vocabularies in oral performance and; as a result, he or she will blunder due to losing confidence or self-esteem. It was proven that there was a relation between a range of students' lexical knowledge and increasing their performance during their academic oral presentation. There had been limited investigation into the relationship among learner's lexical knowledge and self-efficacy and their oral production before.

This study had three main purposes. The first purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Iranian English language learners' level of self-efficacy (SE) and their oral production in their lectures in the classes. The second purpose of this study was to explore the level of lexical knowledge (LK) among these English language learners to see if there was any significant relation with their oral production skills and LK in their class lectures. The third purpose was to probe into the interactional effect of both LK and SE on oral production to investigate if these two variables combined, would they improve the lecturing?

In order to achieve this purpose, a group of English language learners' oral production were video-recorded and rated based on validate and reliable criteria introduced by Farhady, Jafarpour, & Birjandi (1999) that two Ph.D. holders in TEFL checked it as well and its relationship with the participants' level of SE and LK was measured.

In order to do so, the validated questionnaire of self-efficacy CASES (Owen and Froman, 1988) and Cambridge lexical knowledge standard test (Vocabulary Extra) were used.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. Is there any significant relationship between self-efficacy and intermediate EFL students' oral production?
2. Is there any significant relationship between lexical knowledge and intermediate EFL students' oral production?
3. Is there any significant relationship between the interactional effect of both self-efficacy and lexical knowledge on oral production?

H01. There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and intermediate EFL students' oral production.

H02. There is no significant relationship between lexical knowledge and intermediate EFL students' oral production.

H03. There is no significant relationship between the interactional effect of both self-efficacy and lexical knowledge on oral production.

Participants

The participants were 60 MA EFL students (male and female) at Islamic Azad University of Damavand and were selected on the basis of convenience sampling. Having been homogenized via a proficiency test (Cambridge Placement Test, 2010), 36 students were selected as Intermediate ones. Their age ranged between 20 and 45.

Design, Procedure, and Instruments

The design of this study was ex-post facto design since there were two independent variables (SE & LK) and one dependent one (oral performance). In the first two questions, the main effects of SE and LK on oral performance were accounted for respectively. In the third question, the interactional effect of both independent variables on oral production was taken into considerations.

In order to guarantee the homogeneity of the subjects of this study and to fulfill the objectives of the study; first, a standard Cambridge placement test was distributed among the all 60 students to determine their level of proficiency. Thirty six students who were ranked as intermediate were selected to participate in this research. Then a standard questionnaire of CASES (Owen and Froman, 1988) was distributed among all students to achieve their self-efficacy. This was followed by the administration of a lexical knowledge test. Students were asked to sit for a Cambridge lexical knowledge standard test (Vocabulary Extra). Afterwards, two general and controversial topics were introduced to the students and they were asked to give a short lecture on them. Two raters were later asked to score their speaking performances on the basis of the rubric introduced by Farhady et.al. (1998). By turn, students presented a lecture on two different general topics while they were allowed to choose either one according to their interest and favor. All performances were video-recorded and then two university professors as raters were asked to evaluate and score them. Rating scales were based on Farhady et.al. (1999) classifications which covered pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension with the rank scale from 1 to 6 for each.

Based on the collected data, four groups were formed:

1. High LK – high SE group
2. High LK- low SE group
3. Low LK – low SE group
4. Low LK – high SE group

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

Is there any significant relationship between Intermediate EFL student's lexical knowledge and their oral presentation?

The results of Pearson correlation ($r(34) = .907$, $P < .005$) indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between Intermediate EFL student's lexical knowledge and their oral presentation. Thus the first null-hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation: Lexical Knowledge with Oral presentation.

		oral presentation
Lexical Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.907**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	36

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2

Is there any significant relationship between Intermediate EFL student's self-efficacy and their oral presentation?

The results of Pearson correlation ($r(34) = .67$, $P < .05$) indicate that there is a significant relationship between TEFL student's self-efficacy and their oral presentation. Thus the second null-hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation: Oral presentation with Self-Efficacy.

		Self-Efficacy
Oral presentation	Pearson Correlation	.677*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024
	N	36

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3

Is there any significant relationship with interaction of self-efficacy and lexical knowledge (both) with oral presentation?

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Oral presentation by groups.

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Oral presentation	High Self-Efficacy High Lexical Knowledge	8	4.88	.641	.227
	Low Self-Efficacy Low Lexical Knowledge	12	2.75	.622	.179
	Low Self-Efficacy High Lexical Knowledge	9	4.67	.500	.167
	High Self-Efficacy Low Lexical Knowledge	7	2.57	.535	.202
	Total	36	3.67	1.195	.199

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the four groups' means on the lecturing test. As displayed in Table 3, the high Self-Efficacy high Lexical Knowledge (Mean = 4.88) showed the highest mean on oral presentation. This was followed by Low Self-efficacy High Lexical Knowledge (Mean = 4.67), Low Self-Efficacy Low Lexical Knowledge (Mean = 2.75) and High Self-efficacy Low Lexical Knowledge (Mean = 2.57). It seems that the students' mean scores on oral presentation were more dependent on the lexical knowledge than self-efficacy. So it can be claimed that the group with high lexical knowledge had a significant and best performance than those groups with low lexical knowledge or even with high self-efficacy in last group.

The results of one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 32) = 38.53$, $P < .05$, $\omega^2 = .75$) it represented a large effect size) indicated

significant differences between the means of the four groups on the lecturing test. Thus the null-hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA: Oral presentation by Groups.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Oral presentation	Between Groups	39.161	3	13.054	38.537	.000
	Within Groups	10.839	32	.339		
	Total	50.000	35			

The results of the post-hoc Scheffe's test indicated that there were significant differences between:

1: High self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.88) and low self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.75) (Mean Difference = 2.12, $P < .05$),

2: High self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.88) and high self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.57) (Mean Difference = 2.30, $P < .05$),

3: Low self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.67) and low self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.75) (Mean Difference = 1.91, $P < .05$),

4: Low self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.67) and high self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.57) (Mean Difference = 2.09, $P < .05$),

Major Findings

Table 5. Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test: Oral presentation by Groups.

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HSE-HLK	LSE-LLK	2.125*	.266	.000	1.34	2.91
	LSE-HLK	.208	.283	.909	-.63	1.04
	HSE-LLK	2.304*	.301	.000	1.41	3.19
LSE-LLK	HSE-LLK	.179	.277	.936	-.64	1.00
LSE-HLK	LSE-LLK	1.917*	.257	.000	1.16	2.67
	HSE-LLK	2.095*	.293	.000	1.23	2.96

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.



Graph 1. Oral performance by Groups.

1: High self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.88) and low self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.75) (Mean Difference = 2.12, $P < .05$),

As can be seen, the mean difference is quite significant ($P = 0.000$), that is, there is a significant difference between the two mentioned groups.

2: High self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.88) and high self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.57) (Mean Difference = 2.30, $P < .05$),

As it is crystal clear, the mean difference is quite significant ($P = 0.000$), that is, there is a significant difference between the two mentioned groups.

3: Low self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.67) and low self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.75) (Mean Difference = 1.91, $P < .05$),

It is obvious that the mean difference is quite significant ($P = 0.000$), that is, there is a significant difference between the two mentioned groups.

4: Low self-efficacy high lexical knowledge (Mean = 4.67) and high self-efficacy low lexical knowledge (Mean = 2.57) (Mean Difference = 2.09, $P < .05$),

As can be seen, the mean difference is quite significant ($P = 0.000$), that is, there is a significant difference between the two mentioned groups.

However, the mean difference between HSE-HLK and LSE-HLK is not significant ($p = 0.909$) which is much larger than (0.05).

Moreover, the mean difference between L SE-L LK and H SE-L LK is not significant ($p = 0.936$) which is much larger than (0.05).

Base on the above descriptions, obviously it can be realized that the factor 'lexical knowledge' is more effective than the other factor 'Self-efficacy' in students' oral presentations. Those students with high lexical knowledge have outperformed the ones with high self-efficacy. Meanwhile, it must be emphasized that the interaction of these two variables has also been effective in the way students make their presentations. As can be seen, the best group from the raters points of view is group one (High Self-efficacy- High lexical knowledge) with the mean score of 4.88.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was in line with the findings of Coxhead (2006), Horst, Cobb, & Nicolae (2005) and Lee and Munice (2006) that in learning English language, vocabulary and lexical knowledge is acknowledged as a significant contributor to ESL or EFL improvement. In addition, according to Mokhtar (2010), L2 learners' lexical knowledge may determine the quality of their listening, speaking, reading, and writing performances.

This study was also consistent with Pajares and Schunk's (2001) findings that individuals tend to engage in tasks about which they feel competent and confident, and avoid those in which they feel incompetent. In accordance with Multon, Brown and Lent (1991), self-efficacy beliefs are positively related to and influence academic performance.

The findings of this research were also in line with Heidari et al. (2012), Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), and Delcourt and Kinzie (1993) that perceived self-efficacy reflects an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform the behavior required to produce specific outcomes and individual beliefs in their abilities are central to their actions and attainments. Learners with higher faith in their abilities show more motivation and engagement in the classroom and better academic performance.

The current study was in agreement with Multon Brown and Lent (1991) that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the academic achievements. Also, the results were quite in line with Staikovc and Luthans (1988) that there is a strong and positive relationship between the self-efficacy and the performance.

The study came up with the conclusion that both self-efficacy and lexical knowledge were able to make considerable improvements in participants' language learning. The study concluded that there was a significant relationship between intermediate EFL students' self-efficacy and their oral production in the first null hypothesis. This is in accordance with Bandura (1977) who put forth an increase in self-efficacy could encourage a growth in performance. Regarding the conclusions of the study, the higher the level of LK is, the more ambitious the students are to settle language learning. The third null hypothesis was also rejected as there was a significant relationship between oral production of intermediate EFL students and the interaction of self-efficacy and lexical knowledge. This study shows that self-efficacy, alone, cannot guarantee a satisfactory lecture.

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