EDeR

Educational Design Research

Volume 2 | Issue 1 | 2018 | Article 11

Contribution Type: Academic Article

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Abstract: The foreign language (FL) classroom can be an anxious environment where students feel uncomfortable having to communicate in a language in which they feel inadequate and have little practice. Low self-efficacy in skill-specific tasks is oftentimes the culprit. While there are a number of factors involved in successful language learning, this study examines how practice affects students' sense of self-efficacy in the foreign language classroom. Using self-efficacy theory and design-based research, this qualitative study 'flipped' the classroom to focus on student input and output practice in class with grammar instruction video-recorded for homework. Data were recursively collected and analyzed from ten courses over three semesters. Classroom observations and reflection were triangulated with interviews and focus groups. Findings suggest that practice and self-efficacy in the FL classroom are indeed linked and that other factors such as peer familiarity and grading also play a role. The paper concludes with implications for language learning and teaching.

Keywords:
design-based research
foreign language classroom
language learning
practice
self-efficacy

DOI: dx.doi.org/10.15460/eder.2.1.1214

Citation Moreno, R. & Kilpatrick, J. (2018). Student perceptions of self-efficacy in the foreign language classroom: A design-based research study. *EDeR - Educational Design Research, 2* (1), 1-26. http://dx.doi.org/10.15460/eder.2.1.1214

Student perceptions of self-efficacy in the foreign language classroom: A design-based research study

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1.0 Introduction

"I haven't spoken Italian in three weeks." Unfortunately, this student's comment is not an isolated occurrence in collegiate foreign language (FL) courses. Due to time and curricular constraints, extensive language practice often resides in the periphery of learning (Ortega, 2013). Face-to-face instruction is typically limited to three to four hours a week, making it difficult for teachers to communicate the required content by the scheduled exam. Therefore, it is not uncommon for teachers to utilize grammar drills, lecture, and worksheets (Nation & Macalister, 2010). As a result, students may perform well on tests and 'know' the grammar, and yet struggle to produce it. As educators, we continue to see students limiting their language production and relying solely on words or phrasing with which they feel more confident or have simply memorized.

While there is much research connecting self-efficacy to increased language proficiency, scholars have noted that little research focuses on *how* to develop efficacy (Edwards and Roger, 2015; Raoofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Drawing on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), we asked if through increased practice students would feel more self-efficacious with language use. The purpose of this qualitative study was to address how to build task-specific self-efficacy through curricular interventions. We relied on design-based research (DBR), an approach that has greatly increased in use in recent years as more scholars seek to bring educational theory and praxis together (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012), to iteratively conceptualize, apply, and analyze the incorporation of increased practice into the collegiate FL classroom. The intention was not to analyze student ability, but rather students' perceived efficacy in correlation with practice and how that affected their comfort with language production. According to Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2006), "Beliefs of personal efficacy, therefore, are not dependent on one's abilities but instead on what one believes may be accomplished with one's personal skill set" (p. 277). Building on this underlying concept, we asked the following research questions:

1. How does increased exposure and productivity affect students' perceived self-efficacy?
2. What areas of FL learning classroom environment impact students' sense of self-efficacy?

The preliminary findings result from the first three iterations of the design implemented across successive semesters of el-

ementary and intermediate Italian at a large southeastern U.S. university.

2.0 Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy refers to how individuals perceive their ability to do a specific task (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Maddux, 2016). Self-efficacy and self-confidence are often used interchangeably, with some often choosing to use the latter as a more common frame of reference rather than the less well known or understood term of 'self-efficacy'. However, there is an important distinction between the two. As noted above, self-efficacy is task specific whereas confidence is a more general perception of self. Dörnyei (1994) clarified the difference by explaining:

> "Self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgement of his or her ability to perform a specific action... Self-confidence--the belief that one has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals or perform tasks competently--is an important dimension of self-concept. It appears to be akin to self-efficacy, but used in a more general sense" (p. 277).

Nevertheless, the two are closely related and studies that focus on self-confidence rather than self-efficacy and vice versa still often produce findings that may be relevant to each other.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) is at the core of Social Cognitive Theory, which affects the motivation and behavior of individuals. Bandura (1977) proposed that a higher level of self-efficacy influences future behaviors and coping mechanisms for participating within a given task. Self-efficacy determines the extent to which individuals choose to participate since learners are apt to avoid situations where their corresponding self-efficacy is low (Dörnyei, 1994; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Bandura (1977) explained, "Persistence in activities that are subjectively threatening but in fact relatively safe, produces through experiences of mastery, further enhancement of self-efficacy and corresponding reductions in defensive behavior" (p. 191). In other words, the more a person works at a task that they perceive to be challenging, the more efficacious they will feel with regard to that specific task as they build increased proficiency or "mastery".

Bandura (1977) presented four primary sources that build self-efficacy: *Performance accomplishments; Vicarious experiences; Social persuasion; Emotional arousal*. Each of these principal sources have "various modes of induction" (p. 195), which are presented in Table 1. Bandura considered mastery experiences, i.e., *performance accomplishments*, to be the most influential contributor to self-efficacy, which he described as "Successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them," (p. 195). Not to be discounted, the other three sources are also important contributors to self-efficacy: *Vicarious experiences*, where one's self-efficacy is impacted by how others are succeeding in the task; *Social persuasion*, where others encourage or critique one's ability to participate in the task; and *Emotional arousal*, which relates to how a person reacts physiologically and emotionally to the task.

Sources of Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1977)			
Performance Accomplishments	**Vicarious Experiences**	**Verbal Persuasion**	**Emotional Arousal**
•Participant Modeling •Performance Desensitization •Performance Exposure •Self-Instructed Performance	•Live Modeling •Symbolic Modeling	•Suggestion •Exhortation •Self-Instruction •Interpretive Treatments	•Attribution •Relaxation, Biofeedback •Symbolic Desensitization •Symbolic Exposure

Table 1. Sources of Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1977, p. 195)

2.1 Self-Efficacy in the Foreign Language Context

Due to the strong influence that self-efficacy has on individual behavior and participation, it is especially relevant in language learning contexts (Mills, 2014; Raoofi et al., 2012; Shi, 2016). Several scholars have applied self-efficacy theory to second language acquisition and have found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and language learning across different domains and tasks (e.g., Csizér & Magid, 2014; Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Mills, 2014; Shi, 2016). Ooyoung Pyun (2013) examined Korean language learners' response to task-based language learning and found that students' positive attitudes were significantly increased by self-efficacy. Busse and Walter (2013) found that German language learners in the United Kingdom had increased engagement in the classroom in direct correlation with high self-efficacy. Sardegna, Lee, and Kusey (2018) followed Korean students of English as foreign language (EFL) learners and reported that students who had higher self-efficacy in pronunciation sought more practice as a way to gain improved proficiency. Zahibi (2018) also reported that Iranian EFL learners' low levels of self-efficacy negatively affected L2 writing.

Other FL researchers have examined self-efficacy in relation to proficiency and achievement while also commenting on comfortability as a source of self-efficacy. Mills et al. (2006) reported that intermediate collegiate French students who perceived themselves to be efficacious in reading ability, produced higher levels of proficiency in reading. Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007) found that higher levels of self-efficacy correlated with better course grades in intermediate college level French. Zabihi (2018) found language learners with high levels of self-efficacy in writing, were "more prone to write more complex, accurate and fluent narratives" (p. 48). Woodrow (2011) reported increased writing performance as a result of high self-efficacy in FL writing and additionally found that self-efficacy lowered L2 writing anxiety in Chinese EFL college students. Similarly, Hsieh and Kang (2010) and Hsieh and Schallert (2008) found that self-efficacy was closely correlated with achievement—and that students with lower self-efficacy attributed their lower test grades to lack of ability rather than lack of effort. Some

scholars, however, have reported contrasting results and cautioned against the perception that high levels of self-efficacy automatically equate with increased quality of ability (Jones, 2008; Ong, 2015). Jones (2008) found that self-efficacy in writing did not result in higher course grades or test scores and Ong (2015) reported that self-efficacy in various writing genres played an insignificant role in EFL's writing ability within those genres.

Interestingly, Mills et al.'s (2006) results for increased listening self-efficacy were significant for only their female participants. Mills et al. surmised, "men might perceive FL study as a feminine domain and thus feel less comfortable in the language learning context" (p. 420). Their response suggests that students who feel more comfortable in a setting are more likely to present higher levels of self-efficacy. Hsieh and Schallert (2008) also noted a discrepancy in self-efficacy across participants, but with respect to the specific language. Spanish learners reported the highest levels of self-efficacy in comparison with German and French. The scholars proposed that these findings were a result of greater contact and familiarity with Spanish in that region of the United States where Spanish is more prevalent. As with Mills et al. (2006), these conclusions suggest a distinct connection between self-efficacy and comfortability: The more comfortable a student feels with the language, the more efficacious they will feel.

Scholarship also supports the notion that the more a language learner participates or interacts with the target language, as per Bandura's (1977) consideration of mastery experiences, the greater their self-efficacy (or self-confidence as some researchers have used) will be. Although the following studies also discuss the broader term of 'confidence' instead of self-efficacy, we suggest that these findings are indeed relevant to this study and that increased practice and exposure strengthen self-efficacy in the practiced tasks. Edwards and Roger (2015) correlated frequency of interaction as the impetus for greater perceived listening comprehension. They connected overall 'self-confidence' to language proficiency, but then reported a major theme of improved perceived listening comprehension in conjunction with their focal participant's level of "confidence". Despite the use of the word confidence in this context, we argue that since it is a task-specific domain, it was actually the participant's self-efficacy that increased with greater perceived listening comprehension. Similarly, Cao and Philp (2006) also used "self-confidence" to describe students' perceived ability in a specific domain, i.e., speaking in class, which we connect to self-efficacy. The authors described how two of their seven EFL participants had high levels of perceived self-confidence in speaking whereas the other five reported low self-confidence as the reason for their unwillingness to speak in class. These two students both attributed their greater self-confidence to the fact that they participated in a course where more than 50% of the class time was dedicated to interaction and participation. In Clément's (1980) seminal research on the social context model he also found that frequency of contact with native speakers promoted self-confidence. Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) reported

consistent findings in their large-scale study of 8,593 Hungarian teenagers noting that "the amount of contact" with the language and culture had positive results on their attitudes and confidence towards language learning (p. 351).

Despite the positive correlation of self-efficacy with language learning, there is little research that focuses on the practical application of instructional strategies to increase self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Alishah and Dolmaci (2013) contributed a study on FL learners' use of repeated self-assessment, which they found increased ESL student self-efficacy. Zheng, Young, Brewer, and Wagner (2009) used virtual gaming strategies as a mode to increase self-efficacy in the EFL context and yielded positive results in both self-efficacy and improved proficiency. Mills (2014) also gave some explanation on activities used in the classroom, but in general, research to date has focused primarily on establishing a connection between self-efficacy and FL education rather than praxis. Schunk and Pajares (2009) asserted, "we need experimental research that sheds further light on the interplay between determinants and educational interventions that put into practice the policies and strategies that emanate from insights already obtained from prior research" (p. 51). This current study does just that. Employing educational design research, we bridged the connection between theory and praxis by incorporating instructional interventions into the FL curriculum.

3.0 Designed-Based Research

The objective of this study was to apply theory to pedagogical application with the goal of improving the language learning experience for current and future students. Following the lead of recent scholars who have applied DBR to language learning contexts (i.e., Egbert, Herman, and Lee, 2015; Hung, 2017; Schleppegrell, 2013), we therefore chose design-based research as our methodology. Collins (1992) and Brown (1992) conceptualized DBR as a means of addressing the lack of interaction between theory and practice by having researchers and practitioners collaborate in a learning environment. Bardone and Bauters (2017) referred to Aristotle's term *phronesis* to best describe this intersection of theory and praxis. Bardone and Bauters argued that while Aristotle's *episteme* best refers to theory and his *techne* best refers to output, *phronesis* meets the two in the middle and is representative of the theoretical and praxis-based principles of DBR.

The Design-Based Research Collective (2003) outlined the five tenets of DBR as: 1) Reconceptualizing learning environments through the combination of both practice and theory; 2) The research design has multiple phases of action, analysis, and redesign; 3) The implications are disseminated to practitioners and theorists alike; 4) Findings report *how* the design worked in the naturalistic context; 5) The methods of the design are communicated so that others can understand and use the process. DBR is both exploratory and grounded in theory (either existing or emergent) and seeks to research innovative interventions in the learning environments on a recursive basis (Wang & Hannafin,

2005). It is not enough to simply establish a new pedagogical approach and report the results; instead the research is iterative with researchers and practitioners continually reevaluating and analyzing the effects of the intervention to make new adjustments as needed (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Barab and Squire (2004) added "Our goal, as applied researchers engaged in doing design work, is to directly impact practice while advancing theory that will be of use to others" (p. 8). The cyclical design process allows for continual 'fine-tuning' and analysis, with the goal of establishing a vetted activity or intervention that will be disseminated to researchers and educators in FL teaching. The methods and findings must then be clearly communicated so that others may understand and learn from the process.

3.1 Context and Positionality

This study took place at a large southeastern university in the United States. It covered 10 semester-long courses of lower level Italian over a year and a half period of study, i.e. two courses in the first semester (Phase I), four in the second semester (Phase II), and four in the third semester (Phase III). Each course covered a 15-week span and consisted of three face-to-face 50-minute lessons per week plus a fourth 'day' of online work as part of an existing *hybrid* structure where one fourth of the class utilized the textbook's online platform for grammar drills and language structure practice at home.

The lower level Italian courses at the target university are spread across four semesters: Elementary Italian 1, Elementary Italian 2, Intermediate Italian 1, Intermediate Italian 2. For the purposes of this study, only the first three levels were included as part of [author2's] scheduled teaching load (i.e., Elementary 1 and 2, Intermediate 1). In Phase I there were two Elementary 2 courses. In Phase II there were three Elementary 2 courses and one Intermediate 1. In Phase III there were four Elementary 1 courses. All the target courses included in this study followed the same curriculum as the equivalent non-target courses offered at the same university, with scheduled chapter tests requiring all teachers to cover the same material within the same time frame.

Both authors have multiple years' experience teaching Italian at the college level. Our emic (insider) perspectives made it easy to conceptualize the design in conjunction with FL curriculum design research (Nation and Macalister, 2010; Nation & Yamamoto, 2012) and to consider what may or may not work within our context. Schleppegrell (2013) noted the importance of context when using DBR in language learning research, stating that knowledge of the established class structures, student participation, and materials, among others, will influence how one approaches the design: "Context is crucial to design-based research, which does not focus on the development of a product, but instead on generating models of successful innovation that help us understand the nature of learning in a complex system" (p. 157). This research design has been shaped by our own understandings and observations of student participation within

the classroom in conjunction with the study of educational theory and curriculum design.

Despite both authors' experience as practitioners, during the time of this study [Author1] worked solely in the capacity of 'researcher'. As the collaborating language teacher, [Author2] implemented each phase of pedagogical interventions while [Author1] conducted the theoretical and methodological components. Our positionality as instructors and researchers was also an important consideration since one's positionality in a study can affect analysis and interpretation, as well the relationship between researcher and participants (Patton, 2015). Thus, the division of tasks was also reinforced by the consideration of power within the classroom environment; [Author2's] teaching relationship with his students and subsequent power dynamic could impact the data collection process and therefore it was important to have an outside researcher collecting the interview data (Watt, 2007).

3.2 Design Intervention

Following the tenets of DBR, [Author1], in the role of researcher, and [Author2], in the role of practitioner, teamed up to re-conceptualize the existing course format to create more time for increased practice. The initial intervention was to 'flip' the already hybrid course by moving the grammar instruction online and to dedicate the extra time afforded by the displaced lessons to in-class practice and language production. [Author2] recorded short lessons in the target language (see Hung, 2017 for another example of a DBR flipped classroom study) and posted them to the university's online learning platform.

Each in-class lesson plan related to the content from the videos and text units and included activities that focused on frequency and practice across the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking as per language learning curriculum design pedagogy (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Nation & Yamamoto, 2012). Among a wide variety of activities, students wrote in journals, listened to various audio pieces from authentic sources, read numerous written texts, participated in frequent speaking activities and discussions, and had more interaction time with the instructor in the FL. During conversation practice, students primarily worked in groups of two and conversed on a given topic. After an initial round of conversation, students switched partners and conversed on the same topic, but with a different person. During the reading component, students often read in pairs and then wrote out responses to comprehension questions or discussed the reading in the FL. While activities such as these were not novel and had been utilized previously, the time allotted to them had been considerably less.

[Author2] also incorporated a new activity format that sought to incorporate a combination of reading, listening, writing, and speaking. As a general example, students would read a projected passage written with attention to the content they were learning, [Author2] would read the passage aloud and ask com-

prehension questions, then students would work with a partner to expand the scene or story in various genres such as a script or narrative or visualization. Then the students would act out the dialogue or read the expansion or describe the visual representation to another pair of partners who would then take notes on the general idea of the expansion.

3.3 Iterative (Re)Design Process

As dictated by DBR, this study involved multiple iterations, or phases, for continual review, reflexivity, and reevaluation. Reflexivity helps to ensure trustworthiness in a research design (Watt, 2007). In this case, the authors consistently reflected upon their methods throughout each phase, discussing how students responded to activities and increased practice, and noting what to reconsider and adjust in the next cycle (see Table 2 below for a visual representation). Following the third phase, the preliminary findings were then disseminated across multiple contexts, i.e., national conferences, the home language department, a group of pre-service language instructors.

DBR Phases		
	Phase I (semester 1): Initial Intervention to create more in-class practice time	Flipped the classroom
		Instructor-recorded video lessons for out-of-class review
		Dedicated in-class time to practice and usage-based activities
	Phase II (semester 2): First iteration of redesign in response to initial intervention	Added more scaffolding in speaking tasks, i.e. better prompts, conversation skills
		Moved writing journal to an online out-of-class platform
		Introduced 'Free to Err' (FTE) for conversation tasks
	Phase III (semester 3): Second interation of redesign in respons to phase II	Added FTE to online writing journal and reincorporated in-class quick-writes relating to text and class topics
		Mini-reviews of the video lessons in each class with Q&A period
		Creation of 'pods', i.e. 4-person table groupings

Table 2. DBR Intervention Phases

3.3.1 Phase I.

The first phase involved the initial design intervention of replacing class lectures with online videos of the instructor teaching the same material. The video lectures were successful in freeing up time in the class to do more practice-based activities and had an added benefit of providing additional study materials for the students. However, students struggled with the conversation and practice activities due to lack of skills and time. As [Author2] noted repeatedly in his observation notes, much of the time during conversation activities was spent "trying to formulate questions, not on actual conversation." Similarly, we also found that while the intention of the design was to have all four threads equally utilized in class, we quickly realized that writing was more difficult to fit into the time constraints. Students were slow to develop ideas for writing, and as such spent too much time contemplating *what* to write rather than actually writing.

3.3.2 Phase II.

In Phase II, we reviewed the initial design and implemented design changes - an essential step in the DBR process (Design Based Research Collective, 2003). Preliminary findings from Phase I suggested that it was not enough to simply flip the classroom and add in practice-based activities. Students needed more guidance and time to process. We therefore introduced better scaffolding and conversational language tools after seeing that students did not naturally transfer their L1 conversation skills to FL learning. [Author2] also empowered the students to freely branch out from the given topic, thereby emphasizing communication, not grammar practice.

Although we had originally included daily journal quick-writes in each lesson plan, [Author2] found the journal entries more difficult to incorporate consistently with an adequate amount of classroom time. Students not only struggled with process time, they voiced a preference to have more time to produce their thoughts and be creative. This was in contrast to our original idea that short bursts of written production would help the students become more habituated to writing. To address these issues, we moved the in-class journal writing to an out-of-class online journaling format.

Perhaps the most influential amendment to the course structure came towards the end of Phase II with the implementation of "Free to Err" (FTE), which [Author1] created in response to preliminary findings on student grade anxiety. Anytime the term FTE was attached to a speaking activity, the students were free to converse without concern for mistakes and with freedom to rely on their L1 as needed for continued communication. Language production was not "graded" during FTE periods and instead counted as participation. Students were not corrected except upon request so that they could focus on production. However, the instructor was an active participant in the classroom and always noted common errors from the FTE sessions to go over with them later in the larger group. Error correction was a part of all other non-FTE course components.

3.3.3 Phase III.

In the third phase, FTE was extended to the online writing journal activities not only due to the overwhelming positive response to its use in the conversation activities, but also since students had been treating their journals as graded assignments rather than a free-write exercise. Short writing tasks were reintroduced into the classroom, but also under the FTE label. The in-class writings were timed quick-writes in which the students expanded on a topic covered in that lesson, and in conjunction with listening activities. Although these had initially been unsuccessful in Phase I, the FTE label eased the writing experience making it a successful (re)addition to Phase III.

We also added mini-reviews of the video lessons to the beginning of each class after students requested follow-ups to the videos to create, as one student mentioned, a „platform to ask questions and discuss." Finally, a review of student feedback on partner and group work encouraged a greater focus on building cohorts within the classroom. Subsequently, we introduced the idea of "pods," which comprised of four students grouped together around one table to encourage a stronger sense of camaraderie and student comfort.

4.0 Methods

We relied on a qualitative approach to our design research with the intent of capturing students' reactions to the curricular interventions while also complementing existing quantitative studies on self-efficacy and language learning (e.g., Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Mills et al., 2006, 2007). This study began in 2016 and included the Spring 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017 semesters.

4.1 Data Collection

Data collection included observations, student evaluations, interviews, and focus groups. We relied on multiple methods for triangulation and validity (Maxwell, 2013). [Author2] kept observation notes each semester detailing student reactions and responses to language learning activities in the classroom. We reviewed the anonymous open-ended student course evaluations--generated and conducted through the university's system--and coded for themes pertaining to self-efficacy theory. We flagged any mention of topics related to the research questions and included in data analysis. In addition to four individual interviews of 40-60 minutes, [Author1] conducted nine focus groups to provide a perspective stimulated by the whole group dynamic and social interaction. The focus groups were 25 minutes in length. Both were semi-structured in nature with open-ended questions such as "How would you describe yourself as a language learner?" and "What helps you feel more confident in the language classroom?"

4.2 Participants

Participants in the overall research observations included 254 undergraduate students across 10 courses. The focus groups comprised 108 participants from across the 10 courses. These students self-selected to participate in the focus groups. Students ranged in age from 18 to 24, with the majority in their first or second year at the university. As is representational of the general trends in the field of foreign language (Mills et al., 2006, 2007), each classroom had a higher ratio of female students. Although we did not examine the role of gender in this study, the higher ratio of females across all the courses partially explains the homogenous gender of our four interview participants. The four interview participants were sophomores who had completed their first semester of beginning Italian with the traditional format and then the second semester with the DBR curriculum. These students were among a small group that responded to an initial email invitation and follow-up email, sent out to [author2's] enrolled students, to participate in a research study approved by the university's institutional review board. From those who responded, the four participants were those who agreed to do a 40-60-minute interview. Two students, Delilah and Sandy (pseudonyms), interviewed at the end of their Level 2 course in the spring of 2016. Margaret (pseudonym) interviewed after completing her Level 2 course while already in the Level 3 course with a new professor in the fall of 2016. Casey (pseudonym), interviewed at the end of her Level 2 course in the fall of 2016. No students interviewed in the spring of 2017 due to lack of response at the close of the semester.

4.2.1 Interview participants

Delilah took both first and second semesters of beginning Italian with [Author2]. She chose Italian to fulfill the foreign language requirement and because she felt it might be helpful to her future career. Sandy only had [Author2] for the second semester. Sandy was inspired to take Italian from a love of Italian art and a trip to Italy. She classified herself as highly motivated and stated that she wanted to learn Italian to go back to Italy and interact with Italians. Margaret took both semesters with [Author2], and some Italian in high school. After her first semester, she added Italian as a minor and was considering it as a double major. Margaret said she was extremely motivated to learn Italian and watched movies in Italian to improve her skills. Casey also took both semesters with [Author2] and decided to take Italian because it was "the alternative to Spanish" and because she likes Italian food. She had no other motivating factors and explained that it was simply the best option to fulfill the requirement.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was a continual process from the initial stages of data collection as necessitated by DBR and qualitative research (Patton, 2015). Watt (2007) explained, "Since analysis takes place throughout the entire research process, a study is shaped

and reshaped as a study proceeds, and data is gradually transformed into findings" (p. 95). Throughout the analysis, we were also conscious of our subjectivity and biases. Subjectivity affects how the research is designed, implemented, and interpreted, but this is not necessarily a negative. Indeed, incorporating one's experiences into the research study not only validates and supports the research, but also opens it up for more authentic insights and interpretation (Patton, 2015). Drawing on our experiential knowledge has been a key component of the analysis and continued research development.

To interpret the data, we recursively employed inductive and thematic analysis to uncover the dominant themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Watt, 2007). Following transcription, both researchers independently coded the various datasets for emergent themes. We discussed [Author2's] classroom observation notes in connection with our research purpose and questions. Upon cross-examination of the notes, students' final course evaluations, and interview data, we tagged repeated themes across the data and discussed their relevance to self-efficacy. We pulled out relevant text and created our overall themes and subthemes of interest based on our research questions and theoretical framework. This analytic process produced the following themes and subthemes: 1) *Anxiety* - Habituation, Grades, Peer cohort and 2) *Perceived Ability* - Peer Comparison, Autonomy.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Anxiety

Anxiety emerged as an overall theme across the data. Students used terms such as "fear," "inadequate," and "feeling stupid" to explain their initial approach to the language. Students felt nervous using Italian outside of their comfort zone of traditional lecture with limited student output. One student stated how concerned she was by the increased exposure to Italian because in her previous class she had just memorized what was necessary to get a good grade on the test rather than actually understand it: "When [Author2] first started speaking in Italian the whole time, I was like, „Oh boy" because I just had it memorized to get the grade on the test." Others echoed this fear, agreeing that they were accustomed to PowerPoint slides, lectures, and memorization, and therefore felt more anxious about applying the language outside of strict grammar drills. Casey voiced this anxiety, but explained how it lessened with practice during the DBR intervention course, "I think [practice] made all the difference. For the first semester [non-DBR course], I was able to get through it, but…I wasn't relaxed while doing it, I was a little tense. I was a little worried."

It is important to note that not all students felt anxious, which can be attributed to a multitude of factors (e.g., internal and/or external motivation, personality). Margaret told us, "I knew that I probably wasn't pronouncing things right, but I was just so in love with the material that I didn't care. It was just so much fun." However, Margaret also later professed that she had felt embarrassed to speak at times during class, but was more at ease after

so much practice. These sentiments show how self-efficacy is a dynamic process and that students may feel comfortable in one moment, but not in the next, regardless of their motivation.

5.1.1 Habituation

Students noted that consistent exposure helped alleviate some of the anxiety in using the language and allowed them to interact with other students in ways that were not previously possible. One student explained, "we have time to actually speak and listen in Italian every day in class. So, I feel like that's definitely helped me personally get used to the language." Others relayed that they felt their anxiety decreased the more they interacted in the language: "I believe us talking -- just getting over that intimidation, that fear of approaching something that is completely new…kind of helps; especially just being comfortable and gaining that confidence." Students grew more comfortable with the language the more they were exposed to it. While the initial stages were "uncomfortable," persistent employment of these tactics resulted in increased self-efficacy to use the language.

In a course evaluation, a student wrote, "Being challenged to speak daily and to work your way through a sentence even if you weren't confident in your answer was very helpful." Another student indicated how the increased input from videos and the instructor "helped us acclimate to just hearing it." [Author2] observed that after an initial 'feeling out' period in which students adjusted to the new format, the students seemed to be less apprehensive to engage in using the language than in previous non-intervention classes. He wrote, "In the flipped courses, I have seen little to no hesitation on speaking assignments. They go right into conversing." Margaret also expressed, "People will be uncomfortable with [using Italian], it's just natural, but then you have to do it, you're more exposed to it and you'll feel better." After noting how anxious she had been, Casey added, "But after practicing it so much it wasn't even a big deal. It's like taking a million practice tests and you're like, okay, just get through it and you're fine."

In concordance with [Author2's] observation about the 'feeling out' period, the students did not automatically acclimate to the increased language use; many students resisted at first and felt that they had to be "forced" into it. [Author2] also observed that some students reacted to new problems with defeatist responses such as "I can't do it" and "I don't know how to say that." However, after that initial reluctance, they became accustomed to using the language and noticed how helpful it was to their learning process. In a focus group, two students explained:

> [Student1] "I think I was more engaged just because I was kinda forced to do more. I couldn't just sit there and listen to the lecture and write down some vocab and just be done with it."
>
> [Student2] "Yeah, I agree. Forcing conversations was useful. It's awkward, but I mean it's kind of necessary and it works out really well."

Additionally, [Author2] observed that while initial responses to extended readings were met with 'expressions of shock and dismay', as the semester went on and longer readings were used, students simply treated the readings as regular assignments. We attributed this shift in student reaction to increased self-efficacy through habituation as the readings became commonplace.

Habituation also emerged in writing. Moving the writing component online and making it an ongoing journal assignment increased student habituation to the process of writing and creating more complex thoughts. Sandy commented,

> "I feel [journaling] was a crucial part in my ... language learning. It allowed me to start thinking in Italian (to an extent) by allowing me to bring in my own experiences and personal voice/style into recounting them in another language, which is really neat! … The casual aspect of the journaling has led me to feel much more comfortable in my weekly conversations, and the composition we did was much easier."

Casey also remarked, "I think [journaling] really helped because I was able to expand on my ideas and expand on my writing so then I would write longer things which of course is more challenging." Another student explicated that the journaling helped her "feel more confident in [her] writing ability." The increased writing resulted in positive responses both regarding overall confidence and improved self-efficacy on exams or formal writing assignments.

5.1.2 Grades

Student concern over "grades" emerged as a contributor to anxiety in using the language. Students take the class to learn the language, but overwhelmingly admitted that the inevitable grade they receive takes precedence. Casey aptly summed up this sentiment,

> "The absence of saying that this is for a grade, or I'm going to be grading this, really helps because then you're willing to take risks, then you're willing to do more as opposed to do less and make it pristine. Because then I'd use 'essere' [verb 'to be'] for every single sentence and it'd be the worst."

Fear of being incorrect, and thereby losing points, inhibited many students from taking risks and participating in class. Delilah explained that she doesn't mind making errors if it is "low stakes" and she won't be penalized for it because she is more concerned about becoming fluent in the long term, indicating that perhaps even the most motivated students allowed the grading system to take precedence.

Students reported feeling less anxious during designated *Free-to-Err* (FTE) practice times, e.g., "It took a lot of the pressure off trying to say everything correctly and using correct grammar when speaking." One student stated, "[FTE] definitely increased confidence in conversation--knowing that I could make a mistake,

I started making less and less mistakes because I was kind of less anxious." This student felt she was able to perform better at the task because she was less concerned about making errors; in other words, her self-efficacy in speaking went up as her anxiety went down. Other students made similar comments connecting FTE to self-efficacy: "Up until FTE - I was really struggling still with having confidence with speaking, but that's helped" and "The FTE environment was very helpful for our conversational skills. I feel more confident than ever in speaking a different language." Another student explained how FTE improved her self-efficacy by lowering her anxiety:

> "I think [FTE] builds more confidence for me--that I can think through what I do know. I'm not as scared to just say what I want to say, rather than just make up something that I don't want to say just because I know how to say it."

Finally, [Author2] noted that the amount of language use (both spoken and written) increased exponentially across all 10 classes. For example, on only the third day of an FTE conversation activity, [Author2] logged that one class spoke for 20 minutes with minimal incorporation of English to keep the conversations going. Students also noticed their own increased production of the language as a result of FTE. One student remarked, "After a while I just kinda relaxed a little bit because I realized [the instructor] wouldn't be meticulously grading each one and so I'd be able to write more and not really worry about everything being perfect." Not only does this comment show a connection to decreased anxiety, this student, like many others, stated that she actually produced more than she would when anxious about grading.

5.1.3 Cohort

The concept of a cohort within the class emerged as students remarked on how peer familiarity helped ease anxiety. One student stated, "I'm not the best at Italian, but I'm not scared to talk to them in Italian because I know them now. So, if I mess up, it's not [a big deal]". The data show that students tended to feel more at ease, and therefore more likely to participate in the language, when working with people they felt they knew. This focus group excerpt described as much:

> [Student1]: "I think it's important to have people that you're comfortable with, that you're comfortable messing up in front of, you know what I mean? Because if I have to talk to a stranger for an entire semester and just butcher this language it would be extremely embarrassing."
>
> [Student2]: "Yeah, it's difficult talking to strangers in English sometimes. [laughter] When you throw in a language that you don't know, it gets a lot more difficult. So, getting to know some people in the class has definitely helped exponentially."

[Author2's] observations mirrored these comments: "On the whole, students seem more willing and able to interact when

they know the person, even if their relationship exists just within the walls of the classroom."

Numerous students also expressed a sense of camaraderie as a result of the cohort. "It helps that we work together because then you have someone else to help figure it out, but also sometimes people can explain things in a different way that makes you get it." The cohort also extended to helping each other become better students: "I've been with them an entire semester and they know my strengths and my weaknesses, and I know theirs. So, it could kind of help improve on that." Another student added, "It definitely helps because you become comfortable with your partners throughout the year. You help each other grow as a student." In general, familiarity and feeling "comfortable" with one's peers was a strong factor in lowering anxiety and helping students become more efficacious across various language activities.

Some students, however, had mixed reactions to partner and group work. During Margaret's first semester she became friends with her partner and felt that having a familiar partner significantly aided her learning process, comfortability, and motivation to learn. However, in her second semester, partner work had the opposite effect and marred her entire experience. Margaret felt "stuck" with her partner who was not only disinterested, but was always correcting her when she made mistakes. Margaret went from being "extremely motivated" to learn Italian, to not wanting to continue. While partner-work functions on a whole for many students, a negative pairing will likely decrease student interest and willingness to participate. Learning of Margaret's experience was also part of the catalyst to move towards building cohorts of four to give students more options for building positive relationships.

5.2 Perceived Ability

This larger theme describes students' beliefs that with increased practice comes improved ability. Students did not measure their perceived ability by higher grades or test results, instead, it appeared to be a generally understood fact: the more you practice, the better you become. One student attested, "You get better at Italian. I mean, because you're practicing so much." Another added, "I feel like if I went [to Italy] again this summer, I would be significantly better just because of the way we practice in class." One student connected frequency to ease and therefore "enhanced" ability and self-efficacy in writing. "Doing the weekly journals definitely enhanced my writing skills because writing the essay portion on the test became a lot easier." Students felt more self-efficacious simply through practice, i.e., "Seeing that I had to write something on an exam felt very daunting, but having to approach it constantly throughout the whole entire semester made me feel more confident about it." Delilah remarked that the increased practice in reading and writing "made her a better student," which "led to more confidence."

5.2.1 Peer Comparison

This subtheme arose out of students noticing a perceived difference between themselves and their peers in other classes. All students attributed their abilities to practice and habituation. In one focus group, [Author1] and a student had the following interaction:

> [Student]: "My other friends in Italian seem more terrified to speak and listen, so I feel like I'm more confident compared to others."
>
> [Author1]: "Okay, and why do you feel that way?"
>
> [Student]: "Because we have time to actually speak and listen in Italian. Every day in class. So, I feel like that's definitely helped me personally get used to the language."

A similar conversation occurred with Casey:

> [Casey]: "I actually had a friend in another class and he was like, 'Yeah, I have to do this writing and I'm really nervous about it.' And I was sitting there and I was perfectly fine. I was like, 'yeah, it'll be fine. I'll just write down some vocab words that I know and I'll be able to write it.' And it was oddly easy."
>
> [Author1]: "So why do you think it was so much easier for you than for him?"
>
> [Casey]: "Definitely because we had to practice every single day. And it was painful getting there because it can be really hard to write in another language ...and that's where a lot of people get stuck. But I feel like if you set that foundation early on then you are kinda ahead of the game completely."

Margaret explained how she had noticed that the other students in her 3rd semester (non-DBR) course were all silent with the exception of four students and herself. She realized that those four students had all participated previously in the DBR format. To be clear, she wasn't sure if the "silent" students had taken a DBR course or not, but she could guarantee that the four students who regularly contributed in class had and used that as her reasoning for them feeling more comfortable in speaking. The data regarding peer comparison suggest an overall sense of confidence as students realized and felt that they have greater degrees of language competency over their peers as a direct result of increased practice.

5.2.2 Autonomy

Data also showed that students' sense of self-efficacy influenced their ability to work through the language on their own. They felt the type of practice they received in the DBR course helped train them to autonomously unpack the language, which in turn strengthened their confidence. One student remarked:

> "When you have to speak, or have to write on your own, and you have to develop your own subjects ... then you

> have to depend on yourself, on your own ability and that helps you gain confidence, versus when you're in a test, you studied that rigid amount of material and so you feel like you're more dependent on your memory of the course material."

In reference to reading, Margaret relayed these same sentiments:

> "I don't know the words, but because [of practice], I know how to go about … putting it together … instead of plugging it into Google Translate ... It really helped [us] just get confident with knowing that you can do it, you can piece it together."

Margaret's comment clearly shows a large degree of self-efficacy. She feels that she knows "how to go about" completing the task on her own and with confidence. A student evaluation further connected autonomy and perceived ability:

> "I have made an astounding amount of progress this semester, and I find myself able to, at my own idea and will, chat with people from Italy on social networking sites, which is awesome because [the practice] has really helped with my confidence and ability to have a skill that I can actually use--not just mention on a resume."

This particular student had gained such a level of self-efficacy she felt confident to independently interact with unknown native speakers.

6.0 Discussion

In response to our research questions, the findings showed that practice via increased exposure and productivity in the classroom improved student self-efficacy by lowering anxiety and increasing perceived ability. Bandura (1977) explained the connection of self-efficacy with anxiety and perceived ability as, "People fear and then to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating" (p. 194). Our findings showed that through practice and repeated exposure, students became more habituated to and accepting of previously "intimidating" activities. In doing so, their self-efficacy grew as their "coping skills" and perceived abilities increased. As supported by research (e.g., Busse & Walter, 2013; Sardegna et al., 2018; Zabihi, 2018) our findings also showed that the more students became habituated to language practice, the lower their anxiety became. The discussion of language learning and anxiety in the foreign language classroom is not new (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Mills, 2014), however, this study moves beyond this connection to illuminate ways in which students became more efficacious in their language learning, i.e., through habituation, a decreased focus on grades, a stronger cohort, peer comparison, and autonomy.

One of the most significant themes to arise from the data was the role of grades on student anxiety, which is supported by scholarship in the field (see Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012). Furthermore, while some research (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Spielberger, 2013) explains the negative effect of language anxiety on grades, our findings instead highlighted the negative effect grades had on anxiety. As Casey explicated, "once we hear it's for a grade, it just puts so much anxiety on us." In low-stakes situations, students felt inclined to challenge themselves and participate more. This sentiment contrasts what some have voiced about grades as being a motivating factor (Shi, 2016). Indeed, [Author2] initially hesitated at the idea of implementing non-graded components out of concern that students might not apply themselves. Our data suggest otherwise and support Zahibi's (2018) findings: Students will not only produce greater quantities of the language, they will feel more comfortable in doing so. This theme is supported by Bandura's (1977) source of *emotional arousal* where students become more self-efficacious to positive emotional responses.

Student behavior was also affected by explicit use of the phrase FTE, which we attribute to Bandura's (1977) source of *verbal persuasion* as explained by the impact of suggestion and interpretive treatment on self-efficacy development. Despite previously imploring students to disregard errors during conversation practice activities, it was not until the practice was given a specified title, i.e., FTE, that students responded accordingly. This finding supports research regarding the effects of how activities are framed and understood (Moore, 2013; Spence-Brown, 2001). The implications of this suggest the need for further research on the impact of specific phrasing to help us better understand how our students are affected and how we can apply that knowledge to improving the language learning environment.

The emergence of the cohort theme also has important implications for the FL classroom: Students feel more comfortable interacting with people they know. This theme connects with all four of Bandura's (1977) sources of self-efficacy. Consistent with previous research on the positive relationship between peer familiarity and lowered language anxiety (Cao & Philp, 2006; Çubukçu, 2008), the data from the cohort theme suggest that greater attention is needed in curriculum design to create a cohort dynamic early on as an effective mode to building self-efficacy. Many instructors incorporate "ice-breakers" into initial classes, but we recommend more long-term relationship-building tactics, as doing so will help lower anxiety, increase production, and ultimately develop greater self-efficacy throughout the semester. However, we must be also mindful of over-reliance on partner-pairing activities. Grouping students into small teams or 'pods,' not only alleviates the issue of getting "stuck" with one partner, but also builds mini cohorts within the larger class. These pods can rely on each other for help, practice, and support.

In alignment with self-efficacy theory, the participants' conviction of their perceived ability - which they measured by way of peer comparison, their own enhanced autonomy, and exposure to more practice - increased their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Students connected practice to their belief of improved abilities, which caused them to favorably compare themselves to their peers in other classes who did not have as much practice. In doing so they felt more efficacious and capable of success. This type of social comparison is explained via the main source of vicarious experiences, which builds self-efficacy (Bandura, 198). Additionally, the increased practice created a sense of autonomy for students where they felt empowered to tackle new problems on their own and expand their creative expression, which was important to them in their language learning process. Benson (2013) affirmed the importance of fostering autonomy in language learning through learning strategies and activities. In this case, autonomy as an outcome of self-efficacy stems from self-instructed performance as a mode of induction towards the source of performance accomplishments. What is interesting to consider here is the emphasis on *perceived* ability. Unlike the numerous studies that correlate self-efficacy with measured ability (e.g., Mills et al., 2006, 2007; Hsieh and Kang, 2010; Hsieh and Schallert, 2008; Jones, 2008), these findings highlight personal beliefs of capability, which Bandura argued are essential for persistence and continued effort.

7.0 Limitations and Implications

Several limitations exist for this study (e.g., one instructor, one language, one institution). Additionally, the study relied more heavily on focus group interviews than individual interviews due to a limited response from students to participate in full interviews. In future studies, it would be important to navigate this constraint to include a greater diversity of participants. Given the small sample size, we chose not to analyze the typology of the four students, but it would be interesting to look into differences in personality, language background, and gender, among others and if those factors impact motivation and self-efficacy.

Despite the limitations to this study, the implications are noteworthy: With increased exposure and habituation, students became more comfortable with using the language beyond grammar drills. Their perceived self-efficacy in FL tasks was greater, in their opinion, than their peers, and their confidence in all aspects of the language was stronger. As per DBR structure, we have disseminated these findings in multiple contexts that include both researchers and practitioners. These settings have included two large national conferences for applied linguists and language instructors, the home university language department, and a curriculum design course for pre-service FL instructors in the home university's college of education. Further opportunities are currently being pursued for presentations in other FL departments across various institutions on both on the national and international levels.

Future studies may also want to consider other factors that may impact self-efficacy growth in the FL classroom such as personality or gender differences (as noted by Mills et al., 2006) as well as differences across language type (as discussed by Hsieh and Schallert, 2008). The findings surrounding autonomy and creativity also suggest the need to consider intrinsic motivation, which was outside the scope of this study. Deci and Ryan (1985) highlighted autonomy and competence as foundational supports for building intrinsic motivation as part of their self-determination theory. Although a discussion on intrinsic motivation is not within the scope of this study, our findings certainly suggest that as students became more self-efficacious in language learning tasks, their autonomy increased and with that their intrinsic motivation to produce more. Future research may benefit from a more specific focus on the connection between self-efficacy and autonomy as a mode for building intrinsic motivation.

Finally, the success of FTE as a mode for increased production, creativity, and self-efficacy, presents new considerations for future research across FL courses. We recommend continued study on the insertion of FTE into varied L2 contexts such as advanced language courses and study abroad. It would also be relevant in relation to the current multilingual turn in language learning (e.g., Collins & Muñoz, 2016; García & Kano, 2014; Turnbull, 2018) to further examine the incorporation of multilingual practice within FTE.

8.0 Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of increased practice on student self-efficacy and *how* to best achieve this goal using an educational design approach. Not surprisingly, the findings suggest that increased practice does lead to a higher degree of self-efficacy. However, practice alone was not as effective as when combined with stronger peer familiarity and a decreased emphasis on grades. We designed this study with the intention of improving language learning in not only the beginning Italian level, but across all levels and languages. Some scholars have criticized DBR for its inability to generalize the context so that others may benefit (see Barab & Squire, 2004), however, the changes made in this study are widely applicable in any foreign language classroom. In addition, 'flipped' and hybrid classes are readily available in many departments and as such it would be reasonable for them to adopt these changes.

The process of enacting a practice-based approach was not as simple as initially conceptualized. Students struggled for numerous reasons including ineffective prompts, lack of language skills, peer discomfort, and error anxiety. Until we conducted focus groups and interviews, we were unaware of how students would react. Based on their responses, we addressed the issues with small adjustments such as more directed prompts, conversation skill building, the creation of 'pods' to promote a stronger peer cohort, and the FTE environment. Through the added practice, decreased emphasis on grades, and enhanced

cohort, students felt more efficacious and were more willing to participate.

Our account of the reflective process in this study, while limited to the parameters of one paper, can help practitioners better understand how to approach curricular changes in the FL classroom. Researchers also benefit from the scope of this study. With a paucity of qualitative studies that examine the relationship between student perceptions of self-efficacy and language learning, this study presents narrative evidence that students *believe* they learn better as they practice more and increase their self-efficacy. The implications from these student perceptions inform both future research directions and praxis in foreign language instruction.

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Journal Details

EDeR – Educational Design Research
An International Journal for Design-Based Research in Education
ISSN: 2511-0667
uhh.de/EDeR
#EDeRJournal (our hashtag on social media services)

Published by

Hamburg Center for University Teaching and Learning (HUL)
University of Hamburg
Schlüterstraße 51
20146 Hamburg
Germany
+49 40 42838-9640
+49 40 42838-9650 (fax)
EDeR.HUL@uni-hamburg.de
hul.uni-hamburg.de

In collaboration with

Hamburg University Press
Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg – Landesbetrieb
Von-Melle-Park 3
20146 Hamburg
Germany
+49 40 42838 7146
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