An Exploration of Thai ESP Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Sources Concerning Course Development and Instruction

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Abstract

Challenges of English for specific purposes (ESP) course development and instruction have still been reported in a number of studies. They could affect ESP teachers' belief and confidence in their ability to do such tasks. This qualitative case study explores the development of self-efficacy, along with source information concerning challenges in course development and instruction. The study case took place in a Thai university's institution where eight ESP teachers participated in this exploration. Through multiple interview sessions, they revealed source information and different ways to develop self-efficacy. Findings included that cognitive and enactive mastery experience were the most influential sources derived from their educational background and success in implementing pedagogical elements in their actual practices. Vicarious experience and verbal persuasion appeared to be scant due to the underlying contextual factors related to the institutional policies explored in the case. Physiological and emotional states proved to be less influential and acted as supplementary sources of influence. The current study also highlights the influence of contextual factors' shaping sources of self-efficacy and the development. Indeed, the lack of collaborative practices diminished vicarious experience and verbal persuasion so that individual teachers relied on their knowledge and experience as mastery experience to be efficacious. Research implications focus on policies where collaborative culture development is included. A suggested plan is to employ professional learning communities (PLC) to develop internal collaboration (e.g., sharing knowledge and practices to improve self-efficacy sources and development).

Keywords: challenge, English for specific purposes, self-efficacy belief, self-efficacy source

1. Introduction

1.1 Existing ESP Challenges

Many studies have demonstrated challenges for pedagogical tasks concerning English for specific purposes (ESP) (e.g., course development, instruction; e.g., Poedjiastutie, 2017; Luo & Garner, 2017). Challenges revolve around a mismatch of theory and practice, learners' different language proficiency, and heavy workload (Marwan, 2017). Another is lack of course material (Medrea & Rus, 2012). Iswati and Triastuti (2021) explored ESP challenges relevant to course development and instruction, such as a lack of disciplinary knowledge, the absence of needs analysis, and large class sizes. Because most ESP teachers held a degree related to English language teaching or applied linguistics, ESP instruction seemed to be challenging, especially for those who generally taught general English (GE) courses (Pei & Milner, 2016).

These challenges variously affect new ESP practitioners, especially in the context of higher education where ESP teachers usually develop courses to serve the students' needs from a wide variety of disciplines. They may face a number of challenges related to ESP course development and instruction. It is of particular interest to examine their ways to deal with such challenges. To overcome any challenges, a teacher must believe they can surmount obstacles to achieve pedagogical goals (Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018). This is part of teacher self-efficacy, which directly concerns belief in one's own ability to do a particular action. Bandura (1997), the originator of social learning theory and self-efficacy, defined self-efficacy as "Beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainment" (p. 3). This type of belief is the predicator of instructional quality (Holzberger et al., 2013) and teacher perseverance (Bandura, 1997).

1.2 The Focus on Self-Efficacy to Deal with ESP Challenges

Examining ESP teachers' self-efficacy helps to explore how they cope with challenges in their practices and develop confidence in doing so. This case study attempted to unpack the development of self-efficacy, accompanied by relevant source information in the context of higher education in Thailand, where challenges concerning course development and instruction have been prevalent. The glaring challenges have included disciplinary content, needs analysis, and in-class instruction (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021). To gain underlying data needed for analysis, this intrinsic case study was employed for detailed elaboration (Stake, 1994). As this case was intrinsic, the research into ESP teachers' self-efficacy has been understudied.

The aim is that this study will bring in-depth information for how ESP teachers' self-efficacy is developed through a qualitative method to provide researchers and educators in the field with deep aspects of self-efficacy development and indications of directions for future research. The particularly interesting aim is to investigate the ways they overcome such challenges and develop their sense of self-efficacy. Apart from such attainment in ESP pedagogical challenges, associated source information is worth exploring to account for self-efficacy development. Furthermore, tentative plans for improving self-efficacy among the ESP teachers in this case were also presented and discussed for those taking an interest to transfer it for the real application. Regarding the current study the objectives were as follows:

(1) To explore ESP teachers' self-efficacy and source information in the aspect of pedagogical tasks.

(2) To explore contextual factors having an influence on self-efficacy development and source information.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Self-Efficacy

As Bandura (1997) proposed, self-efficacy is associated with an individual's belief in their ability to drive their behavior to reach an expected outcome and be successful in the target situation. It is regarded as a fundamental concept of cognitive learning theory. In the context of education, teacher self-efficacy is a predicator of teacher's perseverance when they deal with challenges in actual practices, along with their tentative plans for pedagogical tasks (Schunk & Meece, 2006). The literature showed that a high level of self-efficacy maintained a positive relationship with self-motivation and use of a variety of teaching techniques and strategies (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006). As regards its concept, self-efficacy could provide the present study with the connection between ESP teachers' positive belief and their confidence in doing their pedagogical tasks.

2.2 Self-Efficacy Sources

Through the cognitive learning theory, self-efficacy was developed by processing source information. According to Bandura's theory (1997), there are four classical sources of information to develop self-efficacy. First, mastery experience is derived from past experiences concerning the success and failure in instruction (i.e., enactive mastery experience; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001) as well as relevant pedagogical skills the teachers possess in cognitive mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). The second source is vicarious experiences. Observing other teachers' teaching in their classroom as a model enhances this source information (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Teachers can compare observed practices with their own. However, this source is two-edged. If they think the model outperforms themselves, self-efficacy can decrease.

Regarding the third source, verbal persuasion is feedback, a comment, or a viewpoint from others that influences one's belief (Bandura, 1997). It can be negative or positive, because the influence of verbal persuasion depends largely on the characteristics of those giving comments, such as background knowledge and social status. In the context of instruction, verbal persuasion is generally in the form of pedagogical suggestions or comments related to a teaching performance received from colleagues. The last source concerns physiological and emotional states. Self-efficacy development may be relative to different physical and emotional conditions an individual has. In other words, it may improve or impair a sense of self-efficacy regarding pedagogical elements.

2.3 Previous Studies into Self-Efficacy Sources and Contextual Factors

A plethora of studies has unpacked different source information accompanied by fluidity of self-efficacy development. The influence of contextual factors has also been burgeoning and is still in the trend. Bandura (1997) postulated that self-efficacy depends on contextual factors. Such factors may contribute to new sources of efficacy information as proposed in a renowned self-efficacy development framework established by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). The following are examples of recent studies where diverse source information, and influential contextual factors have been thoroughly discussed.

Hoang and Wyatt (2021) showcased the prevalence of enactive mastery experience, a potential source of confidence in pedagogy developed among Vietnamese preservice teachers. The secondary source is vicarious experiences along with verbal persuasion constituted during mentoring activities. Interestingly, the teachers' perceptions of language proficiency were found to correspond to contextual factors.

Yada et al. (2019) made a comparison of self-efficacy shared by in-service primary and lower secondary teachers. Findings revealed mastery experience as the most prominent source in both contexts (Japan and Finland). The less influential sources appeared to be physiological and emotional states. However, they seemed to have a mediating source. Regarding the contextual factors, feedback as verbal persuasion received from students, parents, and colleagues was more vital to self-efficacy development compared to that from the principals. Teaching models as vicarious experiences were scant because the teachers found it difficult to observe such models. With this, the collectivist aspect of culture, as well as power distance, was able to account for such phenomena.

Hoi et al. (2017) constructed and validated the scale assessing the four classical sources of self-efficacy. A total of 250 primary Chinese teachers completed the scale. Verbal persuasion was found to be the most influential source. Some Chinese contextual factors can account for this. Collectivism as the main cultural concept can be a prime example. Chinese people tend to comply with social norms and we-consciousness (Hoi et al., 2017). Self-perpetuating belief could be less noticeable because most beliefs appear to maintain harmony in social groups. With this in-group, comments were deemed beneficial and able to increase a sense of self-efficacy.

Using the phenomenological lens, Marschall and Watson (2020) placed emphasis on the function of self-schemata in relation to the development of self-efficacy. The male participant was a preservice teacher accumulating his first in-class experience. Findings unveiled past experience, mastery experience as an affective agent to contribute to self-efficacy, together with the consideration of the relevant tasks and goals in the classroom. Another source, enactive mastery experience, was proved to be of particular importance to the mechanism of self-schemata processing and self-efficacy development. It was suggested by the authors that vicarious experience and verbal persuasion be improved by means of variant workshops and formal classroom observations.

Holzberger and Prestele (2021) invested contextual factors mediating self-efficacy development. Results showed the relationship between classroom management and self-efficacy and self-reported activation. The contextual factors found were a culture of collaboration, instructional leadership, and participation. Results forwarded the potential of highly supportive environment in accordance with reducing gaps in instructional quality. As in a high level of teacher collaboration found here, positive correlation between self-reported classroom management and self-efficacy in such an aspect also came into existence.

An array of studies of Iranian language teachers' self-efficacy confirmed the existence of contextual factors influencing self-efficacy development. Moradkhani and Haghi (2017) put forward self-efficacy and its source of 106 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers from both private and public schools. Private teachers posited that prior pedagogical success as a mastery experience promoted their self-efficacy development, whereas those from public schools viewed it as a secondary source. Public school teachers said verbal persuasion was the predominant source. Student's positive comments were viewed as the primary source, and that from the supervisor a secondary one. Here, the glaring challenge was limited collegiality in public schools, which subsequently decreased the two sources (i.e., vicarious experience and verbal persuasion). Large class size, dynamic language proficiency, course books unmatched with subjects, paucity of teachers' professional development, and teacher fatigue made negative contributions to self-efficacy development.

Moradkhani et al. (2017) presented the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' reflections and self-efficacy development. Obtained from a mixed-method design, the quantitative data corroborated the impact of teachers' reflection on self-efficacy development. In regard to qualitative data, source information was limited owing to a dearth of teacher collegiality. In actual practice, the teachers found it difficult to seek a model of in-class instruction to follow because awkwardness might impede source information, especially in less familiar teacher groups.

Using a qualitative case study, Phan and Locke (2015) conducted a qualitative case study concentrating on a source of self-efficacy and development of Vietnamese EFL teachers. Major findings uncovered verbal persuasion as the primary source of information. Positive verbal persuasion was found among feedback from students, and the secondhand information related to other teachers' instructional performance, whereas the negative source was administrative leaders. Apart from this, vicarious experience and physiological and affective states were found to be secondary sources. Surprisingly, mastery experience was the least influential source. To

be more specific, cognitive mastery experience was more prevalent than the enactive one. The two researchers placed emphasis on contextual factors' impinging on source information.

Employing a sociocultural perspective in her research, Takahashi (2011) explored self-efficacy development of four English language arts and math teachers' evidence-based practices concerning pedagogical decisions in relation to self-efficacy through the lens of communities of practice (CoP). The interview information described practices where the teachers co-constructed in their shared practices (e.g., instructional improvement). The author manifested the role of sociocultural theories to extend the underlying investigation into self-efficacy development despite the limit of cognitive theories.

2.4 Lack of Qualitative Studies

As can be seen, the majority of the studies fell into the quantitative design where correlation and relationship were established to account for the specificity of self-efficacy development. However, quantitative research seems to focus on the whole picture of self-efficacy, or collective efficacy, along with the use of a holistic scale. Here, the researchers argued in favor of providing more underlying qualitative studies to shed light upon the complexity of self-efficacy development as it can be changeable because of the contextual factors (Bandura, 1997).

Contextual factors could be more elaborated upon through qualitative methods. There has been a dearth of qualitative design in the literature (e.g., Labone, 2004; Wyatt, 2014). As regards the current study, the focus was primarily on the investigation into ESP teachers' self-efficacy development related to pedagogical tasks. The researchers attempted to highlight existing contextual factors where self-efficacy and elaborated on its sources in more detail. Hopefully, the authors' detailed information could be translated to tentative plans for forthcoming self-efficacy development frameworks and transferred to any similar context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigm

With respect to the research paradigm, the researchers employed the view of interpretivism to establish the key findings. The concepts of interpretivism have many things to do with the interpretation of social action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The concept adheres to individuals' different worldviews used to interpret target social actions. Similar to constructivism, it seeks for shades of meanings to account for the social actions (Williams & May, 1996). These concepts remain subjective in nature (Al-Saadi, 2014). Nevertheless, researchers should remain objective in terms of interpretation (e.g. Attia & Edge, 2017). Due to the fluidity of self-efficacy as the target social action, there seems to be multiple truths to be explored along with the interplay of contextual factors (Hughes, 1980). Here an interpretivist aspect can be warranted to capture a plurality of truths dependent on individuals (Gray, 2014).

3.2 The Current Case

The case for the current study took place at the language institution of an autonomous university where ESP courses have been tailored to accommodate studies of the students in a variety of disciplines. The institution comprised Thai and native-English lecturers with dynamic experiences in ESP instruction. Additional public training course were also customized. With the academic rigor, along with the qualified staff, this case is directly relevant to the current study, contributing to the underlying information beneficial to the case itself and similar ones.

3.3 Participants and Ethical Consideration

The research participants were eight Thai ESP teachers with the pseudonyms Bella, Ethan, Tony, Jennifer, Lisa, JJ, Athena, and Stella. These names cover the participants' identities. For ethical considerations, consent forms were sent to them to seek for their approval along with information on how the study would collect and analyze the data.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data. Interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis and thick description (Creswell, 2016). The focus of the data was on individual self-efficacy development and relevant source information concerning ESP challenges, course development, and instruction.

3.5 Trustworthiness

To increase trustworthiness, member checking was used to confirm the interpretation of information with the participants. If there is any part with a different worldview, the process of member checking for re-negotiating a

sense of information must be done to maintain validity of the information (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Relevant themes and categories are presented in the next section.

4. Findings

In this section, the researchers present themes and categories obtained from thematic analysis. The themes mostly revolve around sources of self-efficacy, pedagogical tasks, and challenges, and most described the influence of contextual factors on self-efficacy development. Attached are types of source information in the description to make a connection of source and self-efficacy development. There are five central themes: (a) existing challenges affecting self-efficacy, (b) the power of mastery experience, (c) the dearth of model and feedback, (d) the emotions and class interaction, and (e) the influence of contextual factors.

4.1 Existing Challenges Affecting Self-Efficacy

There were four existing challenges reported by the eight participants. The first challenge was conducting a needs analysis. Most of them described the difficulty in collecting the information concerning needs from both targeted students and stakeholders. Tony said that he had received only shallow information needed about generic language skills since his students were not mature enough since they lacked work experience.

> *Mostly, for undergraduate students, I have done a few needs analysis. I found that they just took an interest in a target profession. But I don't know if they really want to go for it. It depends on their future. Anyway, I used to conduct some of the analysis. But I didn't get deep information from them because they're undergraduate students. (Tony)*

Bella and Athena tried to contact content lecturers from the target faculties to do a needs analysis. However, they also received superficial information. Bella reported that the content teachers thought that it was a language teacher's duty to design the ESP course, not them. They tended to mention the skills they lacked when they were undergraduate students.

> *Most of them let me go ahead to design the course as I wanted. They told me something like what they lacked when they were undergraduate students in terms of language skills. They thought that language teaching was not their business. (Bella)*

Athena also received generic information from the nursing lecturer with whom she tried to do needs analysis.

> *Sometimes when asked, they don't know the language topics that we should teach. They just talked about broad topics. For skills, vocabulary, and other content we have to create materials on our own. (Athena)*

She also felt less confident when she had to go on designing pedagogical elements without needs analysis as a milestone.

> *In a way, I felt less confident to my lesson. It's like … am I going to the right way? If only I had detail about content to follow, I think I would be more confident. Anyway, there's no time for us to discuss this since we were in different faculties. (Athena)*

The second challenge was material development. Stella described uncontrollable difficulty coming from the use of authentic materials. It made her nervous when using them in her class.

> *Whenever I used something authentic, I felt like, oh dear, I have to explain more things and they're out of the scope. Then I will be always afraid if the students understand or get lost during the lesson. Yeah, it quite makes me nervous. (Stella)*

Jennifer found difficulty in using materials with the classroom where students' language proficiency was a lot different.

> *If I use the material that is easy for the students with high language proficiency, especially those coming from the leading international high schools, they are bored with it. Another is that some materials focus intensely on the language patterns like grammar. Sometimes, it's too academic for some low-proficient students. (Jennifer)*

Disciplinary content was the third challenge the participants mentioned. First of all, Athena was worried about if she understood terminologies, especially those in the field of health science since she had taught more general English courses than ESP courses.

> *In ESP courses, there are terms to handle. I have taught many general English courses. The aim is communication. It's different. Sometimes I cannot reach it. I don't have deep insight comparing to the content teacher. (Athena)*

Also, Stella faced the same challenge when it came to technical terms in a more specific context. She said that she had no experience related to the field before. She superficially taught the terms without confidence.

> *But there were some technical terms in business like investment. For writing an email, this was not problematic. The most challenging one is English for Mass Media or that in the field of science and technology. I have never taught it before. (Stella)*

Athena also added that when teaching an ESP course for the first time, she had had less confidence and no ideas about specific language tasks to include in the lessons.

> *As I said, I have little experience in specific content that may drain away my confidence. It's kind of problematic sometimes. It's like from the starting point, I don't know what to teach, what content to be included. This makes me quite worried. (Athena)*

The last challenge captured during the interview was learner assessment. Jennifer said that there were very few authentic assessments. Most of them rather focused on four main language skills.

> *There's a few assessments about communication, listening, and speaking in the real situations. They are usually in the form of assignments with no scores. To stimulate them, I must give them some scores. If I let them do such activities without scores, they won't do it. (Jennifer)*

JJ also mentioned the same issue in assessment that the assessment emphasized grammar and vocabulary, not the real communication.

> *But, from time to time, the items fail to assess what is described in the learning objectives. They're often in the form of grammar-based test. If we want our students to communicate well in English, the test then should focus on the communication, not grammar. There's no need to be 100% grammar and vocabulary. With this, I think we can focus more on the way they communicate and the degree of comprehension. (JJ)*

Tony and Ethan reported that the institution lacked simulation rooms for the students to feel the sense of authenticity. Instead, they used imagination to substitute for authentic atmosphere.

> *It cannot be a 100% authenticity because I didn't have a mock-up room to teach English for business airlines like a private university having a simulation airplane and a round serving plate. Here all we need is imagination. Right? We'd rather focus on building up the language skills. It's kind of a challenge to make the assessment the most authentic. (Ethan)*

> *The limitation of the assessment is that there's no simulation rooms and stuff for the students. They have to use a great deal of their imagination. So, it's hard to design the assessment under this circumstance. (Tony)*

Another is subjectivity when they gave scores to the students. Jennifer seemed to have such a problem in her class.

> *There's a conflict with some students talking about giving a score. They asked me why I gave them the score; they thought it's low. Here, subjectivity is another problem. Sometimes, the three groups did equally well in the project presentation. But, they always asked why this group got more score than that one. That make me feel uncomfortable. But assessment is not black and white you know. (Jennifer)*

For the most part, the challenges found here were negatively influential to the two sources of self-efficacy information, enactive mastery experience, and cognitive mastery experience. However, as the next section shows, the participants also reported their ways to improve the two sources of self-efficacy.

4.2 The Power of Mastery Experience

In this theme, all participants mentioned their individual approaches to overcome the challenges relevant to ESP pedagogical tasks. Most of them were in association with the source information: cognitive mastery experience and enactive mastery experience. They were also found it to be the most influential source in this case. The extracts below were the prime examples of mastery experience as source information.

Bella felt that the disciplinary content in ESP courses she taught was not too difficult to handle. That is to say, her disciplinary contents and pedagogical skills as cognitive mastery experience improve her self-efficacy.

> *I don't have a feeling like, "Oh dear! I don't understand it at all." It's not like that. The undergraduates don't take such advanced courses. With this, there's no problem and challenge from the content. It's not difficult. (Bella)*

Ethan was another teacher who seemed self-efficacious when it came to in-house material development. He talked at length about his techniques to develop an in-house course book. Most of it referred to his past experience as cognitive mastery experience.

> *As I said, experiences can tell and so does attention. I don't have kind of magical models to follow. I rather use myself as the model. I quite travel a lot, and I had direct work experience. To prepare materials, it must be systematic. You know, I collected documents, the authentic ones from hotels in England, USA, Canada, and Australia. Especially, I collected brochures and whatever from the airports. I used to take notes of the dialogue of in-flight safety demonstration and notices written on the seats. (Ethan)*

Despite the difficulty in using authentic materials, Tony still felt confident in applying them to his class. Perhaps it is enactive mastery experience from success in using the materials from the previous classes that improve his self-efficacy.

> *I'm quite confident in the material because when designing it, I take the background of the students' language proficiency and knowledge into consideration. For example, I find out whether the students know the content before. If not, I have to adjust it not to be difficult, but understandable. So, in a way, I'm confident in the material I design. (Tony)*

Another evidence of enactive mastery experience was from Athena's practice. She was able to differentiate tasks for the students with different language proficiency and improvise additional activities to accommodate the mixed-ability students.

> *If they lack teaching experience, there will be dead air, and they don't know what to do next. Teaching experience is important. For me, I like improvising activities a lot because sometimes your lesson plan may not match with all of the classes you teach. (Athena)*

Bella added up contemporary content related to target disciplines to make the lessons more up-to-date. Pedagogical skills as a cognitive mastery experience were the source information.

> *I try to add up-to-date language skills and language use like patterns and functions. Then I choose up-to-date content related to daily-life and contemporary information. The content must be relevant to the target discipline. For example, to teach engineering students, I selected the material directly related to them, such as renewable energy. It's a contemporary topic. I try to familiarize them with such a topic in their context, along with the use of language. This is my role. (Bella)*

To deal with disciplinary content, Ethan and Stella had their individual techniques to teach specific contents and learn them simultaneously. Ethan used some presentation activities with his students to extend the discussion of specific contents. During the discussion, he had a chance to learn specific contents the students shared. Stella crosschecked technical terms with websites and language corpora to make her feel more confident.

> *They've already known these terminologies in their discipline. So, the way to deal with the ESP course that we may not have expertise is to do something more than giving a lecture. Let them give a presentation like case study. Integrate into group-based activities. That's a chance we can teach and learn with them. (Ethan)*

> *I can check it in some corpus websites to see the actual use of the terms. You see, I check the terms in many websites. After I get the fixed collocation of the terms, I type them all and hit the search again to see the websites or the articles where they're used. It takes a lot of time, but it makes me feel confident that I get quite accurate information to teach my students. (Stella)*

Finally, most of the participants addressed the use of formative assessment where specific tasks in the target field were included to maintain a sense of authenticity. Bella felt content with her practices since the tasks she assigned in the assessment potentially reflects authenticity related to the target field.

> *For example, for academic English for basic sciences, all of the tests are relevant to what the target language use that we taught in the class, such as making definitions and writing a description of graphic information. They have to write about it for real. Like using words for making a comparison or writing about causes and effects, they are related to what they will use in the future. (Bella)*

4.3 The Dearth of Model and Feedback

In this case, formal classroom observations as a source of self-efficacy information (i.e., vicarious experience could not be the case because there were some contextual factors impeding such observation, such as workload).

> *It's really hard to observe other classes. Every semester we had many sections to take care of. And we even have no time to think about it. It is like after we finish teaching and then we drive back home. (Jennifer)*

Another factor is related to viewpoints on classroom observation. Two participants felt that observing others may be unnecessary since teachers might have different teaching styles which cannot be one-size-fits-all.

> *We have a lot different style to teach. I think observing might not help. Maybe I cannot use the style I observe as I have no idea about it or I'm not quite good at it. For me, I might not need to observe any classes. (JJ)*

> *We have quite different characteristics. Sometimes, it's not one-size-fit-all. I could observe a class, in a way, but I cannot follow all of the step the teacher does. It works in that class, but it might not work out in mine. (Lisa)*

Stella felt that observing others could be their burden, and it could cause some awkward situations.

> *Honestly, I felt quite kreng-jai [laugh] what is the word in English? Yeah, I think it is kind of awkward when we were sitting there and if the teacher were yelling at the students. (Stella)*

Kreng-jai is a cultural Thai concept where people try not to be a burden for others. In this way, Stella tried to avoid observing other teachers' classes because she did not want to make the observed teachers feel she was a stranger observing in their class. She also added that she might not gain any new techniques because the observed teacher and she were language teachers. The techniques used in the class could be quite similar.

> *I think I will not get anything new from observing a language teacher since we are in the same position. I would say, we do the same job. I think observing expert teaching specific task will be more exciting or running a workshop on specific disciplinary content would be more interesting for me. (Stella)*

For feedback on teaching, the teachers in the case tended to work individually, and collaboration was limited in some group teachers where they had created intimacy for a long time. Some participants addressed constructive feedback from their students, most of which were related to specific contents applicable in the real situations (e.g., job applications).

> *When she called me that she got a job, I really appreciated her effort and I felt like it was worth spending time on suggestions. And I felt like what I am teaching in my airline business course is the real stuff people can use. (Jennifer)*

> *My student got a job in the position of cabin crew. I felt really happy with her success. Before she got the job, she came to consult me for quite some time. Mostly, she asked me about how to answer interview questions. (Ethan)*

Such feedback could be another source of self-efficacy information (i.e., verbal persuasion received from the students rather than the colleagues due to the limited teacher collaboration in the case).

4.4 The Emotions and Class Interaction

It was found that in-class emotions were in association with the student interaction. Tony reported that he tried not to leave any generation gaps. He told me that he was open-minded and discuss some topics with his students to understand them. He said this way could help him maintain positive emotions in the class as well as increase interactions with the students.

> *But I try not to leave a gap between us. I discussed the topics I don't know with them so that we can understand one another. Well … I always view myself as one curious about anything around. So, we exchange some knowledge. (Tony)*

JJ reported that sometimes passive students and uninterested students could be challenging. They had to adjust emotions to deal with such students, especially those who pay less attention to the class.

> *For the uninterested, as far as I'm concerned, when I walk to them, they tend to be active in the lesson, but when I walk to the other way, they suddenly stop and use mobiles despite the rules in not using a mobile phone in the class. For the very first time for teaching, this clearly affected my confidence. Now I have to admit that they have different interest. I mean, they should have pushed themselves to learn. If not, I feel that I have to ignore them. (JJ)*

Here, they tried to avoid being emotionally aroused by the uninterested students by ignoring them. However, physiological-emotional states were found to be less influential to the participants' sense of self-efficacy because a few of them mentioned this source. They instead served as a source mediating between the two elements (i.e., the positive emotion and the class interaction).

4.5 The Influence of Contextual Factors

In this theme, there were contextual factors in the case influencing source information and self-efficacy development. One of them were about the policy of an ESP course where there was at least one course coordinator designing ESP materials for the teachers in the team. Despite the slim chances for each teacher to design their own materials, Bella and Stella expressed trust in this in-house material.

> *The curriculum designers have understanding in ESP course construction. I think I'm lucky because the materials in ESP courses that I teach have no problems. (Bella)*

> *They have various tasks for the students. Some of them may be challenging for the students, but I can adjust the tasks when using them in the class. No problems are found. I like it because it helps save my time. (Stella)*

The participants used the in-house material in their courses. They appeared to trust in the materials as expressed in the extracts above. For our interpretation, such materials could give them some secondhand experience and be a source information (i.e., vicarious experience since the material was used as the main one in the class, and they did not mention any problems).

During the first phase of COVID-19, the institution in this case also provided a series of workshop for its instructors to survive in the rapid change of education platform. Ethan felt that he was much more confident after partaking in the workshop. This could be cognitive mastery experience that increased when he took part in the workshop.

> *Luckily, my workplace provides us with lots of workshops for online instruction. And the workshops are organized timely during the first phase of the outbreak. So, it helps me a lot to tackle the unexpected situations. (Ethan)*

However, Stella, Tony, Jennifer, and Athena addressed difficulties related to pedagogical practices, such as implementing listening activities, group role plays, technological tools, and communicative assessment. Most of the difficulties were related to the inconvenience in applying such elements in the online platforms and also reduced their confidence and source information (i.e., enactive mastery experience).

Regarding teacher culture, the participants rarely addressed how they worked with their colleagues. As abovementioned, there was limited collaboration merely in the group of teachers who had worked together and already developed trust for a long time. Class observation was not the case because the participants believed that it was trivial (see Section 4.3). In this case, the participants reported that such collaboration was rare because works in tertiary education was individual in nature. In other words, the teachers had high academic freedom and could freely choose partners to work with.

> *However, this institution is rather in the form of individual working. It's hard to say, you know. It's also about familiarity with each of the colleagues in the workplace. To be honest, we have different characters and we're not forced to work in active, clear collaboration with one another as always. If we become very intimate with any colleagues, we tend to collaborate on the work. But if we don't teach in the same course, maybe we rather have a slim chance to work together. (Lisa)*

Types of culture (i.e., individualism and collectivism) that were influential in each teacher's group were found in this case. Bella reported that groups with individualist aspect, especially those with native English instructors, tended to express their opinion more openly when they had to improve some pedagogical elements comparing to a collectivist group where expressing different ideas seemed to be limited to avoid group disharmony or conflict.

> *I feel quite comfortable because we can discuss about what we like and what we don't. For Thai lecturers, some of them may not like something, but they don't tell me directly. When I know what they don't like later, it's not kind of upsetting. But I think I lost opportunities to better what they don't like from their comment. (Bella)*

From the researchers' viewpoints, relationships among members in the group played pivotal roles in developing culture of collaboration potentially improving source of self-efficacy (i.e., vicarious experience and verbal persuasion because they may have more chances to work together). However, full collaboration was less frequently mentioned in this case. Going forward, to increase teacher collaboration, there must be some plans or policies to enhance in such collaboration to maintain positive self-efficacy and source information.

5. Discussion

In regard to the source information, both cognitive and enactive mastery experiences were prevalent in this case. As can be seen, all of the participants addressed their individual ways to overcome challenges concerning ESP

pedagogical tasks. They experimented in their own ways through trial-and-error to deal with such challenges. Source information (i.e., enactive mastery experience) could enhance in self-efficacy development. Additionally, their educational background could be another source of self-efficacy (i.e., cognitive mastery experience). From the extracts above, they seemed to have various pedagogical skills to handle such challenges. Many studies (e.g., Hoang & Wyatt, 2018; Marschall & Watson, 2022; Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017; O'Neill & Stephen, 2012; von Suchodoletz et al., 2018;) could lend support to the current study. That is to say, successful past experiences could be a primary source of information (i.e., enactive mastery experience for them to be more efficacious when dealing with pedagogical challenges). In relation to cognitive mastery experience, the current study witnessed the influence of educational background as well as the past work experiences (e.g., flight attendant). The literature (e.g., Chácon, 2005; Morris & Usher, 2011) also confirmed the influence of this source information.

However, the current case study was in contrast with some previous studies (e.g., Hoi et al., 2017; Milner, 2002; Phan & Locke 2015). These studies did not witness mastery experience as the primary source information. Instead, verbal persuasion was proved to be more predominant in their contexts. For example, Phan and Locke found negative verbal persuasion in the administrative leaders when they came to observe classrooms and had regular meetings with the teachers. Moreover, positive verbal persuasion was predominant in the students' feedback, and their description of other teachers' teaching performances. Another example is Hoi et al. (2017), who found verbal persuasion the strongest source in the context. Types of national culture (i.e., collectivism; Hofstede, 1991) could account for this phenomenon. By and large, primary Chinese teachers seemed to comply with the social norms rather than themselves (Hoi et al., 2017). With this, verbal persuasion was proven to be of importance because the teachers had to listen to other comments to adjust themselves to suit the social norms.

Unlike previous studies, this study found that verbal persuasion was one of the rare sources of information. This was in association with the limited collaboration among the colleagues in this case. The characteristics of work in the higher education context were likely to be more independent. That is to say, each lecturer has more academic freedom and rights to choose their own work partners (Russell, 1993; Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011). In this case, there was no clear policies from the administration to force the teachers to work together. So, collaboration was found to be loosely based on some groups of teachers who had already developed trust or taught in the same course for a long time. There was no ideal collegiality frequently mentioned in this case. Because of this, chances for the teachers in the case to exchange comments during any collaborative practices as verbal persuasion were not common. Regarding vicarious experience obtained from formal observation, it could not be the case because some of the participants considered it unnecessary (see Section 4.3). Stella reported that she would not gain anything new in terms of teaching techniques because she believed that the observed teachers would do the same thing she did in her classes as a language teacher. As Chen and Usher (2013) proposed, vicarious experience was much more influential when the observed tasks were new to the observers.

A contextual factor related to the Thai cultural concept of kreng-jai was also found in the current case (Holmes & Tongtongtavy, 1995). Stella felt that observing others could be a burden due to such cultural concept. In a way, this could be in accordance with what Moradkhani et al. (2017) found. They reported that being observed by unknown teachers could be intimidating and cause some negative emotional states to discourage a sense of self-efficacy. Also, this case may be similar to Morris et al. (2017), who found pre-service teachers had already developed their own teaching identities, making observational practices less useful for them. In the current case, the ESP teachers relied heavily on their own successful past experiences and pedagogical skills derived from their own classroom practices (i.e., trials-and-error and their educational background directly relevant to the context of ESP course development and instruction). They tended to be self-efficacious through the two enactive and cognitive mastery experience as opposed to vicarious experience partially due to a rare chance to conduct a classroom observation (Morris & Usher, 2011) and their views on such practices.

With respect to the last source, physiological and emotional states, they were not prominent compared to the other sources. Instead, there seemed to be a tenuous connection between emotional states and in-class interaction. As Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2004) explored, it was highly likely that spending more time on disciplining students could lower a sense of self-efficacy because of exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). However, this case witnessed how to avoid receiving negative emotional states from the uninterested students (i.e., JJ in Section 4.4). Also, Tony's tried having more conversations with his students to understand them and develop a good relationship in the classroom.

Now that vicarious experience and verbal persuasion seemed to be the two sources that the current case lacked, there should be policies or plans for the institution to implement to improve these two self-efficacy sources. From the researchers' viewpoint, the use of internal professional learning communities (Van Lare & Brazer, 2013) could be applicable to exchange pedagogical techniques among the ESP teachers in the case because they

held direct educational background and classroom experiences (Buysse et al., 2003). Professional learning communities generally enhance collaborative practices important to colleagues to develop trust within groups for self-efficacy improvement (Moradkhani et al., 2017). Recent studies, such as Zounobi et al. (2017), evidenced the improvement of self-efficacy among the teachers by means of professional learning communities.
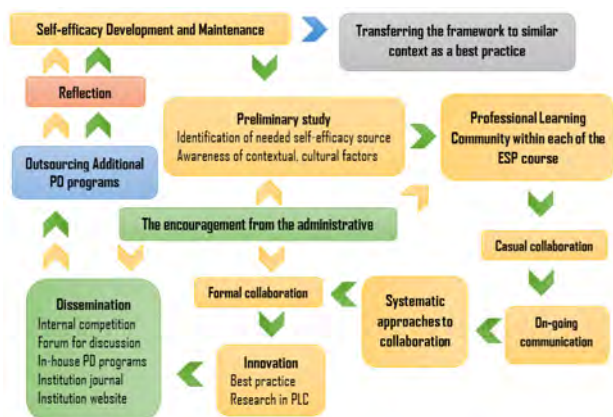

Figure 1. Tentative Plans for Self-Efficacy Improvement and Maintenance

Here, the researchers proposed the tentative plan for self-efficacy improvement, maintenance for the current case, and any other cases having similar conditions. In this way, PLC should be conducted in each of the ESP courses for each of the teaching teams to share pedagogical practices to provide more chances for teachers to exchange comments as sources of verbal persuasion. Possibly, materials exchanges and casual classroom observations could be the case when the teachers in the same group start to develop trust, which could be the source for vicarious experience. With this, the administration should support them by providing the teachers with more venues for exchanging practices (i.e., in-house PD programs and institutional websites). Such venues could help disseminating (best) practices for the ESP teachers in the case to learn about and apply them in their individual practices.

6. Conclusion and Research Implication

In the current case, contextual factors were directly influential to self-efficacy development and its source information as witnessed in a number of recent studies (e.g. Calik et al., 2012; Durksen et al., 2017; Guo et al. 2010; Hoang & Wyatt 2021; Holzberger & Prestele, 2021; Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). To recap, the main contextual factors in this case were individualism in the workplace where the ESP teachers count on their own pedagogical skills and experiences as cognitive and enactive mastery experiences, and a cultural concept where classroom observation and giving direct comments were considered as burdens and disharmony for others. Such factors could limit chances to develop teacher collegiality enhancing in vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion. From the researchers' viewpoints, the current case could make useful contributions to ESP teachers, policy makers, and the administration because it provides evidence of the influence of contextual factors. For ESP teachers, challenges and techniques were reported as the examples for them to contextualize. The case also implied that teaching collaboratively to increase vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, such as PLC (Zounobi et al., 2017) and content-language teacher collaboration (Chaovanapricha & Chaturongakul, 2020) should be considered.

For policy makers and administrators, this research study provided them with a tentative plan for self-efficacy improvement and maintenance, especially for the context where individualism was quite noticeable. The findings related to the influence of contextual factors could make them aware of sensitivity of self-efficacy development and source information more or less. For forthcoming policies or teacher professional development programs, ways to improve ESP teachers' self-efficacy should be taken into consideration as it potentially supports teachers to cope with pedagogical challenges and improve teaching performances. To conclude, self-efficacy was sensitive to diversity of one particular context. Thus, an investigation into self-efficacy, sources, and contextual factors is needed. It can account for how teachers develop themselves to be more or less efficacious in terms of their pedagogical performances when dealing with challenges. Furthermore, this study provided the field with information transferable as a milestone for upcoming, alternative ways to improve self-efficacy and source information.

7. Directions for Future Research

The directions for future research could still be the focus on the influence of contextual factors. The qualitative design has still been needed due to the few works (Labone, 2004; Wyatt, 2014). A quantitative design can be another interesting design to investigate more relationships between key contextual factors and demographic variables (e.g., age, educational background). Last, a mixed-method design could assist in providing the field with solid evidence concerning the relationship between self-efficacy development and contextual factors, along with the respective explanation specific to the research context. Apart from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), forthcoming studies could tap into sociocultural aspects (i.e., situated learning theory) to account for the complexity of contextual factors and self-efficacy development (Korthagen, 2010). Hopefully, the current case study could provide evidence of contextual factors influencing self-efficacy, source information, and tentative plans to improve and maintain ESP teachers' self-efficacy development in the context of Thai higher education.

Acknowledgments

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