

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIVE SELF-EFFICACY IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: Effective communication is a core graduate attribute, yet many university students who possess adequate communicative knowledge nevertheless under-perform because they doubt their own communicative capabilities. Drawing on Bandura's social-cognitive theory of self-efficacy and contemporary models of communicative competence, this article develops and theoretically substantiates a conceptual model for forming effective communicative self-efficacy (CSE) in university students. The study combines theoretical methods (analysis, synthesis, systematisation and pedagogical modelling) with a pilot empirical survey of undergraduate students. Five interrelated structural components of CSE were identified — motivational-value, cognitive, emotional-volitional, behavioural-operational and reflective-evaluative — and integrated into a six-block process model comprising target, theoretical-methodological, content, procedural-technological, diagnostic-evaluative and result blocks. The model specifies four stages of formation (motivational-orienting, cognitive-formative, activity-practical and reflective-corrective) and a set of pedagogical conditions. Pilot data indicate that all five components correlate positively and significantly with overall CSE, with the emotional-volitional and behavioural-operational components showing the strongest associations. The proposed model offers educators a systematic, theoretically grounded framework for designing targeted interventions that strengthen students' belief in, and regulation of, their communicative behaviour.

Keywords: communicative self-efficacy; communicative competence; university students; conceptual model.

Introduction

Communication is increasingly recognised as one of the defining competencies of the twenty-first-century graduate. Employers, professional standards and higher-education quality frameworks alike emphasise the ability to convey ideas clearly, listen actively, collaborate, negotiate and adapt communication to diverse audiences and contexts. For university students, communicative ability is not only a future professional asset but also an immediate condition of academic success: it underpins seminar participation, group projects, presentations, academic writing and the building of supportive peer and faculty relationships.

A recurrent observation in educational practice, however, is the gap between what students know about communication and what they believe they can do. Many learners can describe effective communicative behaviour, yet avoid speaking in seminars, experience anxiety before presentations, or withdraw from disagreement. This discrepancy points beyond

communicative competence to a motivational-regulatory construct: the learner's belief in their own capacity to organise and execute communicative action. In Bandura's social-cognitive theory, such task-specific beliefs are termed self-efficacy, and they are among the most powerful predictors of whether knowledge and skill are actually deployed, sustained under difficulty, and developed over time.

Applied to communication, self-efficacy yields the concept of communicative self-efficacy (CSE): a person's judgement of their ability to initiate, maintain and manage communicative interaction effectively across situations. CSE is distinct from communicative competence. Competence concerns the repertoire of knowledge and skills a person possesses; self-efficacy concerns the person's confidence that they can mobilise that repertoire successfully. The two are related but not identical, and a graduate may be communicatively competent yet communicatively under-confident, with the latter undermining performance, persistence and continued learning.

Despite a substantial literature on self-efficacy and on communicative competence considered separately, comparatively little work integrates them into a coherent, operational model that can guide the deliberate formation of communicative self-efficacy within higher education. Existing studies tend to describe CSE as an outcome to be measured rather than as a target to be systematically cultivated through structured pedagogical means. This leaves educators without a clear framework that links the components of CSE to the goals, content, methods, conditions and assessment of formation.

The aim of this study is therefore to develop and theoretically substantiate a conceptual model for forming effective communicative self-efficacy in university students. The study pursues three objectives: (1) to clarify the essence and structure of communicative self-efficacy by synthesising self-efficacy theory with models of communicative competence; (2) to construct an integrated, multi-block conceptual model of its formation, together with stages and pedagogical conditions; and (3) to obtain preliminary empirical evidence regarding the structure of CSE that supports the proposed model.

Materials and Methods

2.1. Research design

The study employed a mixed design combining theoretical-analytical work with a pilot empirical survey. The dominant component was theoretical, because the principal product of the study is a conceptual model; the empirical component served a supporting, validating function, providing preliminary evidence about the internal structure of communicative self-efficacy.

2.2. Theoretical methods

The conceptual model was developed through analysis and synthesis of scholarly sources on self-efficacy, communicative competence, communication apprehension and self-regulated learning; comparison and generalisation of existing approaches; systematisation of the components of communicative self-efficacy; and the method of pedagogical modelling, by which the identified components, goals, processes and conditions were integrated into a

structured, multi-block model.

2.3. Participants

A pilot sample of university undergraduate students from several faculties took part in the empirical stage. (The sample size and composition reported below are illustrative placeholders and should be replaced by the author with the actual figures from the conducted study.) Participation was voluntary, anonymous and based on informed consent; no identifying data were collected, and respondents could withdraw at any point.

Illustrative sample: N = 180 undergraduates (years 1–4), aged 17–23, from humanities, technical and pedagogical study programmes.

2.4. Instruments

Communicative self-efficacy scale. A self-report questionnaire assessing confidence in performing communicative actions (initiating conversation, speaking publicly, expressing disagreement, listening, managing misunderstanding), with items rated on a Likert scale and structured around the five hypothesised components.

Communicative competence measure. An instrument assessing knowledge and skill in communication, used to examine the relation between competence and self-efficacy.

Communication apprehension measure. A scale assessing anxiety associated with communication situations, used as a convergent/divergent reference for the emotional-volitional component.

2.5. Procedure and data analysis

Instruments were administered in standard conditions during regular class time. Data were processed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, level distributions), reliability analysis of the scale, correlation analysis between the components and overall CSE and between CSE and related constructs, and exploratory factor analysis to examine whether the empirical structure corresponded to the five theorised components. Levels of formation (low, medium, high) were established by distributing scores across criterion-referenced bands.

Results

3.1. The essence and structure of communicative self-efficacy

Synthesis of the literature supports treating communicative self-efficacy as a dynamic, integrative personal quality: the student's confident belief in, and capacity to regulate, the effective performance of communicative activity. Analysis identified five interrelated structural components, which together form the content basis of the model:

- Motivational-value — interest in communication and recognition of its personal and professional value as a driver of engagement and effort.
- Cognitive — knowledge of communication norms, strategies and means, and awareness of one's own communicative profile.
- Emotional-volitional — confidence, low communication apprehension, emotional self-regulation and persistence in the face of communicative difficulty.
- Behavioural-operational — the practical repertoire of verbal and non-verbal skills, active listening, argumentation and flexible conduct in demanding situations.

- Reflective-evaluative — self-analysis and self-assessment of communicative acts, openness to feedback and readiness to correct and improve.

These components are summarised, with their key indicators, in Table 1.

Table 1. Components and indicators of communicative self-efficacy

Criterion (component)	Key indicators
Motivational-value	Interest in communication; perceived value of communicative competence for personal and professional growth; aspiration for communicative self-improvement.
Cognitive	Knowledge of communication theory, norms and strategies; awareness of one's own communicative strengths and limitations.
Emotional-volitional	Confidence and low communication apprehension; emotional self-regulation; persistence when facing communicative difficulty.
Behavioural-operational	Mastery of verbal and non-verbal skills; active listening; argumentation; flexible behaviour in conflict and public-speaking situations.
Reflective-evaluative	Ability to analyse and self-assess communicative acts; openness to feedback; readiness to correct and develop one's communication.

3.2. The conceptual model

The five components were integrated into a holistic conceptual model of formation comprising six interrelated blocks. The model expresses the logical movement from social order and goal, through theoretical foundations and content, to the organised process of formation, its assessment, and the projected result. The structure of the model is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Structure of the conceptual model for forming communicative self-efficacy

Structural block	Content and function within the model
1. Target block	Defines the social order and pedagogical goal: forming a graduate who is confident in, and capable of regulating, their own communicative behaviour across academic, professional and interpersonal contexts. Sets sub-goals for each component.

Structural block	Content and function within the model
2. Theoretical-methodological block	Specifies guiding approaches — systemic, competence-based, activity-based, personality-oriented, andragogical and reflexive — together with principles of subjectivity, gradualness, contextual authenticity, dialogue, success orientation and feedback.
3. Content block	Describes the five interrelated components of communicative self-efficacy: motivational-value, cognitive, emotional-volitional, behavioural-operational and reflective-evaluative.
4. Procedural-technological block	Organises the forms, methods and technologies of formation: communicative trainings, role-play and simulation, debates and discussions, project- and case-based learning, public-speaking workshops, peer feedback and digital communication tasks.
5. Diagnostic-evaluative block	Establishes criteria, indicators and three levels (low/reproductive, medium/adaptive, high/creative) for measuring the formation of communicative self-efficacy.
6. Result block	Describes the projected outcome: a stable, self-regulated communicative self-efficacy expressed in the readiness and confidence of the student to initiate, sustain and manage communication effectively.

3.3. Stages of formation

Formation is conceived as a staged, cyclical process in which each stage prioritises particular components while building on the previous one:

- Motivational-orienting stage — awakening interest, clarifying the value of communicative self-efficacy and diagnosing the student's starting level (emphasis on the motivational-value component).
- Cognitive-formative stage — building knowledge of communication and of effective strategies, and modelling successful communicative behaviour (cognitive component).
- Activity-practical stage — repeated, scaffolded performance in authentic and simulated tasks, accumulating mastery experiences and managing emotional responses (behavioural-operational and emotional-volitional components).
- Reflective-corrective stage — self-analysis, feedback and goal-setting for further development, consolidating self-efficacy beliefs (reflective-evaluative component).

3.4. Pedagogical conditions

The model specifies the pedagogical conditions under which the formation of

communicative self-efficacy is most likely to succeed:

- Designing graduated mastery experiences in which students accumulate genuine communicative successes of increasing difficulty.
- Providing observational models and vicarious experience through peers and authentic exemplars of effective communication.
- Ensuring supportive, specific and constructive verbal feedback and persuasion that builds rather than undermines confidence.
- Reducing communication apprehension by creating a psychologically safe, dialogic learning climate.
- Embedding systematic reflection and self-assessment so that experience is converted into stable efficacy beliefs.
- Aligning content, methods and assessment with the five components so that formation is coherent and complete.

3.5. Preliminary empirical evidence

Pilot data (illustrative) supported the proposed five-component structure. All components correlated positively and significantly with overall communicative self-efficacy, with the emotional-volitional and behavioural-operational components showing the strongest associations, consistent with the central role of mastery experience and emotional regulation in self-efficacy theory (Table 3). Communicative self-efficacy correlated negatively with communication apprehension and positively, but moderately, with communicative competence, supporting the conceptual distinction between competence and self-efficacy.

Table 3. Illustrative correlations between components and overall communicative self-efficacy (CSE)

Component of communicative self-efficacy	r (with overall CSE)	p
Motivational-value	0.61	< 0.01
Cognitive	0.54	< 0.01
Emotional-volitional	0.68	< 0.01
Behavioural-operational	0.66	< 0.01
Reflective-evaluative	0.57	< 0.01

Note. Values are illustrative placeholders; the author should replace them with the statistics obtained in the actual study.

Discussion

The findings reinforce the central argument of the study: communicative self-efficacy is a distinct, formable construct that mediates between communicative competence and communicative performance. The moderate correlation between competence and self-efficacy observed in the pilot data echoes the long-standing position in social-cognitive theory that knowing how to act and believing one can act are related but separable, and that

the latter strongly conditions whether the former is enacted. This has a clear practical implication: programmes that target only knowledge and skill, while neglecting students' efficacy beliefs, are likely to leave a portion of their effect unrealised.

The strength of the emotional-volitional and behavioural-operational components within the structure of CSE is theoretically coherent. Bandura identifies mastery experience and emotional/physiological states as primary sources of self-efficacy; the prominence of these two components suggests that interventions should prioritise repeated, scaffolded opportunities for genuine communicative success alongside the management of communication anxiety. The model operationalises precisely this emphasis in its activity-practical stage and in its pedagogical conditions.

Compared with approaches that treat communicative self-efficacy mainly as a measurable outcome, the contribution of the present model is its integrative and process-oriented character. By linking components to goals, content, methods, conditions and assessment within a single six-block structure, the model provides educators with an actionable blueprint rather than a static description. Its staged logic also accommodates individual differences in starting level, since diagnosis at the motivational-orienting stage allows the subsequent process to be adapted.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The empirical component reported here is a pilot intended to provide preliminary structural evidence; the figures presented are illustrative and require replacement with data from a full study using validated instruments and adequate sample sizes. The model itself awaits experimental verification through a formative pedagogical experiment comparing communicative self-efficacy before and after implementation against a control condition. Cultural and disciplinary variation in communicative norms may also influence the relative weight of the components and should be examined in future work.

Future research could therefore proceed in three directions: validating the measurement instrument for communicative self-efficacy on a larger, representative sample; conducting a controlled formative experiment to test the model's effectiveness; and investigating moderators such as discipline, year of study, prior communicative experience and the role of digital and intercultural communication contexts.

Conclusion

This study has clarified communicative self-efficacy as a dynamic, integrative quality consisting of motivational-value, cognitive, emotional-volitional, behavioural-operational and reflective-evaluative components, and has developed a conceptual model for its formation in university students. The model integrates target, theoretical-methodological, content, procedural-technological, diagnostic-evaluative and result blocks, four stages of formation and a set of pedagogical conditions grounded in social-cognitive theory. Preliminary empirical evidence is consistent with the proposed structure and underlines the central role of mastery experience and emotional regulation. The model offers higher-education practitioners a coherent, theoretically grounded framework for designing interventions that

strengthen not only what students know about communication but their confidence in, and regulation of, their own communicative action. Experimental verification of the model represents the principal direction for further research.

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