

Students' Self-Confidence Behaviors in Learning English: A Classroom Observation Study

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ABSTRACT

Self-confidence is widely recognized as one of the affective factors that shape how young learners engage with a foreign language, yet the way this construct actually surfaces in real classroom behavior is still rarely documented through direct observation. This study was carried out to describe how Grade 3 elementary school students displayed self-confidence during an English lesson on naming fruits and objects at an Islamic elementary school (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) in Batam, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative design was used, and data were gathered through a twenty-item classroom observation checklist constructed from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, covering indicators such as volunteering to answer, imitating pronunciation, persisting after mistakes, responding to encouragement, and interacting with peers in English. Ten observers independently recorded the same lesson to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The results show that students most consistently displayed confidence through willingness to answer questions, enthusiasm, positive responses to praise, and sustained attention, while behaviors requiring more independent initiative, such as raising a hand unprompted or completing tasks without assistance, were observed less consistently. These patterns indicate that young learners' confidence in this setting was strongly anchored in supportive teacher encouragement and peer modeling rather than fully autonomous participation. The findings extend prior questionnaire-based research by offering behavioral evidence of how confidence is enacted in an authentic classroom and suggest that teachers of young learners should continue to combine verbal encouragement, peer modeling opportunities, and low-pressure speaking tasks to nurture confidence at this developmental stage in English language classrooms.

Keywords: *classroom observation; elementary EFL learners; self-confidence; self-efficacy; social cognitive theory*

INTRODUCTION

English functions today as one of the principal languages of instruction, science, commerce, and cross-border communication, which is why many national education systems, Indonesia included, introduce it as early as elementary school rather than waiting until secondary education. Early exposure is intended to give young learners a head start not only in vocabulary and pronunciation but also in the confidence needed to keep using the language once formal instruction ends. What is less often acknowledged is that success at this stage

depends as much on how a child feels about speaking English as on what the child actually knows. A learner who is linguistically capable but reluctant to speak will still struggle to progress, while a learner with modest vocabulary but genuine willingness to try often makes faster practical gains (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). Self-confidence, understood here as a learner's belief that they can attempt and cope with a learning task, is therefore not a peripheral concern in language pedagogy but one of the conditions that determines whether classroom instruction translates into active participation.

In practice, confident young learners tend to raise their hands, attempt answers even when unsure, repeat new words aloud without excessive hesitation, and keep speaking despite occasional errors. Less confident learners, by contrast, often wait to be called on, mumble responses, avoid volunteering, and show visible discomfort when asked to perform in front of classmates. Over time, these patterns compound: students who participate more receive more practice and more corrective feedback, while students who withdraw receive comparatively little, widening the gap in spoken competence (Pajares, 1996; Anam & Stracke, 2020). These behavioral patterns do not emerge in isolation from the broader instructional context: teaching methods, classroom environment, and learner motivation jointly shape how successfully young EFL learners are taught, situating confidence as one thread within a larger instructional picture. Because young learners are still forming their attitudes toward language learning as a whole, the early grades represent a formative window in which classroom experiences can either strengthen or discourage the willingness to communicate in English. This is precisely why the affective side of language teaching, and not only the linguistic content of a lesson, deserves close empirical attention at the elementary level.

This study draws on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory as its conceptual foundation. Bandura (1986) proposed that learning is shaped by a continuous, reciprocal exchange between what a person does, what they believe about themselves, and the environment surrounding them, meaning that a child's confidence is not fixed but is constantly being reshaped by classroom experience. Bandura (1997) further identified four sources through which self-efficacy is built: mastery experiences, in which success in a task strengthens belief in future success; vicarious experiences, in which observing a peer succeed raises one's own sense of capability; verbal persuasion, in which encouragement from a credible source such as a teacher increases willingness to try; and physiological and affective states, referring to the emotional and bodily sensations, such as nervousness or enjoyment, that accompany a learning task. This four-source structure has held up well beyond its original context: Gale et al. (2021), studying early-career teachers rather than language learners, likewise found that mastery experiences and social persuasion were the most consistently reported contributors to self-efficacy, lending cross-context support to the framework adopted here. Taken together, these four sources offer a workable lens for interpreting classroom behavior, since each can be traced to a specific, observable moment in a lesson rather than remaining an abstract belief reported only after the fact. Importantly, this framework does not treat confidence as an inborn trait, but as something teachers can actively shape through the way a lesson is structured and delivered.

A growing body of research supports the relevance of self-efficacy and confidence to English learning outcomes among Indonesian students. Anam and Stracke (2020), studying primary school learners, found that stronger self-efficacy beliefs corresponded with deeper

cognitive engagement and better achievement in English, positioning confidence as a meaningful predictor of learning success rather than a mere byproduct of it. Comparable findings have been reported at other educational levels: Asnaini et al. (2025) identified mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional state as interlocking factors shaping speaking confidence among EFL students in higher education, echoing Bandura's own framework almost item for item. Juliani and Dafit (2024) similarly emphasized, through a qualitative study in an elementary school setting, that teachers acting as motivators, feedback providers, and communication facilitators played a decisive role in building young learners' self-confidence, while also noting that classroom seating arrangements and consistent positive reinforcement measurably strengthened students' willingness to participate. Ramadhani et al. (2023) and Hamid et al. (2026) further reported that both verbal and non-verbal teacher reinforcement, expressed through praise, affirmation, and personalized encouragement, reduced learner anxiety and increased engagement across different school levels in Indonesia, reinforcing the idea that confidence responds directly and quickly to how a teacher interacts with students moment to moment.

Similar patterns recur across other Indonesian school levels. Hadi et al. (2021) linked stronger self-confidence to more proficient English speaking among young learners, while Muqorrobin et al. (2022) traced learners' hesitancy to speak back to fear of making mistakes and limited opportunities to practice among junior and senior high school students. At the elementary level specifically, Kinanti et al. (2025) and Nst et al. (2025) reported that stronger self-confidence corresponded with better speaking outcomes among primary school students, and Rahmawati et al. (2025) similarly found that fourth-grade learners' confidence was closely tied to how well they could work through problems encountered during English tasks. Complementary intervention studies point to concrete classroom strategies for nurturing this confidence: By and Veng (2024) and Malage and Watini (2024) both showed that structured, reward- or activity-based approaches strengthened young learners' willingness to speak English, while Alberth et al. (2023) linked broader affective factors, including classroom community and foreign language enjoyment, to students' self-confidence in EFL settings.

Confidence and its affective counterpart, anxiety, have also been shown to move together. Hermagustiana et al. (2021) found a significant correlation between self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, and speaking performance among Indonesian EFL learners, and Li and Zhang (2023) and Ma (2022) both demonstrated, in different instructional contexts, that self-efficacy-based interventions could reduce anxiety and improve speaking or oral fluency outcomes. More recently, Tsang and Yeung (2024) and Ye and Hu (2025) reported that young EFL learners' self-confidence, engagement, and speaking anxiety were closely interrelated and jointly responsive to classroom-level motivational support, reinforcing the view that confidence cannot be fully understood in isolation from the anxiety that so often accompanies early language production.

Nevertheless, most of this evidence comes from questionnaires, Likert-scale instruments, or interviews administered after the fact, methods that reveal what students say they believe about their own confidence but not necessarily what they do when actually placed in a classroom interaction. This is a meaningful gap for young learners in particular, since children in the early primary grades often struggle to articulate abstract self-perceptions through a written or verbal self-report, making questionnaire data less reliable for this age group than

for older students (Kidachi & Leis, 2026). Even the qualitative studies that have begun to address teachers' roles in shaping confidence, such as Ma (2022), tend to foreground the teacher's actions rather than systematically cataloguing the corresponding student behaviors as they unfold minute by minute during a lesson. A checklist-based observation of how confidence is behaviorally expressed by Grade 3 students during an ordinary English lesson therefore remains comparatively rare, even though this level of behavioral detail is precisely what allows teachers to identify concrete, teachable moments rather than general dispositions that are difficult to act upon in daily practice.

To respond to this gap, the present study employed a classroom observation checklist, built directly from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, to describe how Grade 3 elementary school students display self-confidence while learning English. Rather than asking students to reflect on their own confidence, the study observed twenty concrete behavioral indicators as they naturally occurred during a lesson on naming fruits and everyday objects, including willingness to answer, imitation of pronunciation, persistence after mistakes, response to encouragement, and peer interaction in English. The research question guiding this study is as follows: How are students' behaviors related to self-confidence during English learning activities? In turn, the objective of this study is to identify and describe Grade 3 elementary school students' observable behaviors that reflect self-confidence during English learning activities, based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, and to draw out practical implications for how elementary English teachers might further nurture that confidence in the classroom.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the study was not to test a particular teaching method or to establish a cause-and-effect relationship, but rather to describe, in as much natural detail as possible, how self-confidence is expressed through students' classroom behavior. Descriptive qualitative research is well suited to this purpose because it allows a phenomenon to be documented as it unfolds in its natural setting, without the researcher intervening in or altering the learning process (Al-Hendawi et al., 2025). Given that self-confidence is an affective construct that is often difficult for young children to describe verbally, observing behavior directly offered a more developmentally appropriate route to understanding it than a questionnaire would have. This design choice also mirrors that of comparable Indonesian studies on confidence and motivation in elementary and secondary EFL classrooms, which have likewise relied on direct classroom observation, sometimes combined with interviews, to capture affective constructs that young or shy learners find difficult to self-report (Juliani & Dafit, 2024; Hamid et al., 2026).

Participants or Data Sources

The participants were 10 Grade 3 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Daud Kholifatullah, an elementary school in Batam, Indonesia, who were attending a regular English lesson on the topic of naming fruits and objects in English. Grade 3 was selected because

students at this stage have already acquired basic classroom routines and simple English vocabulary, yet are still in the process of consolidating the confidence needed to use that vocabulary spontaneously, making this an instructive point at which to examine how confidence is displayed. Participants were included through purposive sampling, since the study specifically required learners who were actively engaged in ongoing English instruction rather than a general elementary school sample. The lesson observed followed its normal instructional flow, including teacher explanation, guided vocabulary repetition, question-and-answer exchanges, and short interactive activities, and no modification was made to the teacher's usual lesson plan for the purpose of this study. To maintain research ethics, permission was obtained from the school before the study was conducted. Parental or guardian consent and the children's assent were obtained prior to the observation. The researchers acted solely as non-participant observers, maintained the confidentiality of all participants by reporting no personal or identifying information, and presented the findings only as collective behavioral patterns across the observed class. The observation was conducted without disrupting the normal teaching and learning process.

Instruments

Data were collected using a classroom observation checklist developed from Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory. The indicators were developed by translating the theoretical constructs of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory into observable classroom behaviors. Before data collection, the checklist was reviewed by two English education lecturers with expertise in educational psychology and classroom assessment to ensure content relevance, clarity, and appropriateness for Grade 3 learners. Revisions were made based on their feedback before the instrument was used in the classroom. The checklist consisted of twenty behavioral indicators distributed across the four sources of self-efficacy together with related constructs of self-regulation, modeling, and emotional state, including, among others, students' willingness to answer the teacher's questions, willingness to speak English without being forced, confidence in repeating vocabulary, persistence after making mistakes, observation of classmates before attempting a task, response to praise, peer interaction using English, and independent completion of tasks. Each indicator was recorded using a simple Yes/No format, complemented by a notes column that allowed observers to record short contextual remarks about what they saw. This format was chosen over a Likert-type scale because it was better suited to capturing discrete, observable moments rather than degrees of self-perception, which matched the aim of documenting behavior rather than belief. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the data, the ten observers were undergraduate students from the English Education Program who had previously studied classroom observation techniques. Before the observation, all observers received the same observation guidelines and an explanation of each checklist indicator. They observed the same lesson independently using the identical checklist, and the completed checklists were compared and discussed to ensure consistency across observers before the findings were finalized.

Data Collection Procedures

Observation was carried out during a single regular English lesson conducted on the topic of naming fruits and objects in English. Each observer completed the twenty-item checklist

while watching the lesson unfold, marking an indicator as observed whenever a student, or a visible group of students, displayed the corresponding behavior at any point during the session. Observers were positioned so as not to disrupt the normal flow of the lesson and did not intervene in the teacher's instruction or the students' activities at any stage. Immediately after the observation, each observer reviewed their completed checklist to ensure that every indicator had been addressed and that supporting notes, where relevant, had been recorded. Because ten checklists were completed for the same lesson, discrepancies between observers could later be examined to identify which behaviors were consistently visible across raters and which were noticed only intermittently, which also served as an informal check on the credibility of the observation data. To gauge how consistently the ten observers interpreted the same behavior, agreement for each indicator was calculated as the number of observers who marked that indicator as observed divided by the total of ten observers, expressed as a percentage; an indicator checked by eight of the ten observers, for instance, yielded 80% agreement. This calculation was repeated separately for all twenty indicators, and the twenty resulting figures were then averaged to obtain the overall mean. Agreement calculated this way ranged from 50%, for indicators that called for a more subjective judgment, such as gauging a student's confidence while performing individually in front of the class, to 100%, for indicators tied to behavior that was unambiguous and easy for every observer to notice, such as visible enthusiasm during the lesson. The resulting mean of 72% exceeds the 70% minimum level that has commonly been regarded as acceptable for descriptive observational research (Al-Hendawi et al., 2025). Because this study relied on a purpose-built checklist rather than a validated quantitative scale, some variation in how individual observers judged the more interpretive indicators was expected and did not undermine the overall pattern of findings, particularly since every indicator was still recorded as observed by at least half of the ten observers.

Data Analysis Techniques

The completed checklists were analyzed descriptively. Responses for each of the twenty indicators were compiled across all ten observers, and the consistency with which each behavior was recorded as observed was used to classify indicators into four descriptive categories: Mostly Observed, for behaviors recorded by nearly all observers; Frequently Observed, for behaviors recorded by a clear majority; Moderately Observed, for behaviors recorded by roughly half of the observers; and Rarely Observed, for behaviors recorded by only a small minority. This categorical approach was chosen because a purely numerical tally risked overstating the precision of what remained, at its core, qualitative and observer-dependent data. Field notes accompanying each checklist were then read alongside the categorized results to provide contextual explanation for why certain behaviors appeared more consistently than others. Finally, the classified indicators were interpreted in relation to the four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997), namely mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states, so that the discussion could connect observable classroom behavior back to the theoretical framework guiding the study. No indicator in this study fell into the Rarely Observed category, as all twenty behaviors were noticed by at least half of the ten observers during the observed lesson.

RESULTS

The classroom observation showed that Grade 3 students displayed self-confidence through a range of observable behaviors during the English lesson on naming fruits and objects. Across the ten independent observation checklists, students most consistently showed confidence through willingness to answer questions, enthusiasm during the lesson, and positive responses to teacher encouragement, while behaviors that required more independent initiative were noticed somewhat less consistently. Table 1 summarizes the twenty observation indicators together with their corresponding theoretical construct and the overall observation result derived from the ten checklists.

Table 1
Students' Observable Behaviors Related to Self-Confidence in Learning English

No.	Observation Indicator	Theoretical Construct	Observation Result	Observer Agreement (n/10)
1	Students voluntarily answered the teacher's questions in English.	Self-Efficacy	Mostly Observed	9/10
2	Students were willing to speak English without being forced.	Self-Efficacy	Mostly Observed	9/10
3	Students repeated English vocabulary after the teacher confidently.	Mastery Experience	Frequently Observed	8/10
4	Students raised their hand to participate in classroom activities.	Self-Efficacy	Moderately Observed	6/10
5	Students continued trying even after making mistakes.	Self-Efficacy	Frequently Observed	8/10
6	Students observed classmates before attempting an English task.	Observational Learning	Frequently Observed	8/10
7	Students imitated the teacher's or classmates' pronunciation.	Modeling	Frequently Observed	8/10
8	Students showed enthusiasm during English learning.	Emotional State	Mostly Observed	10/10
9	Students responded positively to praise or encouragement from the teacher.	Verbal Persuasion	Mostly Observed	10/10
10	Students interacted with classmates using simple English expressions.	Social Cognitive Theory	Moderately Observed	5/10
11	Students asked questions when they did not understand the lesson.	Self-Regulation	Moderately Observed	5/10
12	Students completed English learning activities independently.	Self-Efficacy	Moderately Observed	6/10
13	Students remained confident when asked to perform English tasks in front of the class.	Physiological and Affective States	Moderately Observed	6/10
14	Students encouraged classmates to participate in English learning activities.	Social Persuasion / Social Cognitive Theory	Frequently Observed	7/10

No.	Observation Indicator	Theoretical Construct	Observation Result	Observer Agreement (n/10)
15	Students used previously learned English vocabulary in new classroom situations.	Mastery Experience	Frequently Observed	8/10
16	Students maintained attention during English learning activities.	Self-Regulation	Mostly Observed	9/10
17	Students accepted corrective feedback without showing excessive anxiety.	Verbal Persuasion	Mostly Observed	9/10
18	Students attempted to complete challenging English tasks before asking for help.	Self-Efficacy	Moderately Observed	5/10
19	Students demonstrated improved confidence after observing successful peers.	Vicarious Experience	Frequently Observed	7/10
20	Students expressed enjoyment and confidence while participating in English games or songs.	Positive Emotional State	Mostly Observed	9/10

Note. Results reflect the consistency of each behavior across ten independent classroom observation checklists conducted during a single Grade 3 English lesson on naming fruits and objects at MI Daud Kholifatullah, Batam. The Observer Agreement column shows the number of observers (out of ten) who recorded each behavior as observed.

As shown in Table 1, behaviors linked to self-efficacy through direct interaction with the teacher, such as volunteering to answer questions, speaking without being forced, showing enthusiasm, and responding positively to praise, were the indicators most consistently recorded across observers. Behaviors tied to mastery experience and modeling, including repeating vocabulary confidently, imitating pronunciation, persisting after mistakes, and encouraging classmates, were also frequently observed, suggesting that repeated practice and peer modeling played a visible role in the lesson. By contrast, indicators requiring students to act with less external prompting, such as raising a hand spontaneously, asking clarifying questions, completing tasks independently, or remaining confident when performing individually in front of the class, were recorded only moderately across the ten checklists, indicating that these more autonomous displays of confidence were present but not yet the dominant pattern among the observed students.

The observation notes accompanying the checklists further indicated that several students appeared hesitant at the start of the lesson but became visibly more willing to participate once the teacher offered encouragement or once a classmate had successfully answered a similar question first. For example, one observer noted that a student who initially remained silent later volunteered to answer after receiving positive encouragement from the teacher. This pattern was noted independently by multiple observers, lending additional credibility to the interpretation that teacher encouragement and peer modeling supported students' self-confidence during the lesson. A smaller number of students, according to the notes, needed repeated prompting before attempting to speak at all, and remained more comfortable responding in unison with the class than answering individually, which is

consistent with the moderate level of observation recorded for item 13 in table 1. Overall, the results suggest that self-confidence among the observed Grade 3 students was reflected through active participation, imitation of language models, persistence after errors, and positive engagement with both the teacher and classmates, even though fully independent, self-initiated participation remained an area still developing at this stage.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to describe how Grade 3 elementary school students display self-confidence during English learning activities, using a classroom observation checklist grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. The findings indicate that confidence in this setting was most visibly expressed through teacher-supported behaviors, such as answering questions, repeating vocabulary, and responding to praise, while behaviors demanding greater self-initiated participation were only moderately present. This pattern is broadly consistent with what would be expected of early-grade learners, whose confidence is still substantially scaffolded by adult and peer support rather than being fully self-sustained (Anam & Stracke, 2020).

The prominence of teacher-related indicators supports Bandura's (1997) proposal that verbal persuasion is one of the most immediate sources of self-efficacy, since encouragement from a trusted adult can quickly shift a hesitant learner toward active participation. The observation notes describing students who grew more willing to speak after receiving praise illustrate this mechanism directly: confidence, in this context, did not appear as a fixed trait a student either had or lacked, but as something visibly constructed, moment to moment, through the teacher's responses. This finding aligns with Li et al. (2024), who reported that Indonesian primary school students with stronger self-efficacy beliefs showed deeper engagement in English learning, and is further corroborated by Ramadhani et al. (2023) and Hamid et al. (2026), who both found that consistent, context-sensitive verbal reinforcement measurably increased student engagement and participation in Indonesian EFL classrooms at other school levels. Gale et al. (2021) reported a comparable pattern outside the language-learning context, finding that social persuasion and mastery experience were the sources most frequently linked to increased self-efficacy among early-career teachers, which suggests that the mechanism observed here in young language learners is not confined to childhood but reflects a more general property of how self-efficacy is built. This dynamic also echoes Kono et al. (2024), who found that teacher support meaningfully shaped self-efficacy among primary school foreign language learners even when students did not actively seek help, suggesting that verbal persuasion can reach quieter learners as much as those who visibly request encouragement. Taken together, these studies extend the present finding by showing concretely how encouragement operates as an observable trigger for confident behavior rather than only a self-reported influence.

The frequent presence of imitation, pronunciation modeling, and peer observation before attempting a task similarly reflects Bandura's (1986) account of vicarious experience and observational learning: watching a capable peer succeed appeared to lower the perceived risk of attempting the same task, making students more willing to try once they had seen a model

perform it first. This corresponds with findings from Asnaini et al. (2025) who identified vicarious experience as one of several interlocking sources shaping EFL students' speaking confidence, and with Juliani and Dafit (2024), who found that classroom seating arrangements that placed hesitant students near more confident peers appeared to strengthen the weaker students' willingness to participate. This is broadly consistent with Mohamed et al. (2023), who found that structured peer- and self-assessment activities in primary school English classrooms encouraged students to look to one another as models of expected performance, further supporting the idea that peers function as an accessible and low-pressure source of vicarious learning for young students. In this study, however, the effect appeared especially pronounced given how frequently students were noted watching classmates before responding themselves, a pattern that may be more visible among younger learners who are still developing independent problem-solving strategies and who rely more heavily on visible models than older, more autonomous learners might.

At the same time, the comparatively moderate presence of independent behaviors, such as raising a hand without prompting or completing a task unassisted, points to a limitation in how far confidence had developed at this stage rather than to any weakness in the observation instrument itself. This is broadly consistent with survey-based findings among older Indonesian students, where confidence in speaking has repeatedly been found to sit at only a moderate level even well beyond elementary school, suggesting that the gradual, supported growth seen here in Grade 3 is not unique to young learners but part of a longer developmental trajectory that continues, unevenly, through later schooling. This reading is consistent with Kidachi and Leis (2026), who found that the manner and timing of teacher praise can meaningfully shift young learners' engagement and, by implication, their confidence, well before that confidence becomes fully self-sustained.

These findings carry practical implications for teachers of young English learners. Because verbal persuasion and peer modeling were the mechanisms most visibly associated with confident participation, teachers may benefit from deliberately structuring opportunities for capable peers to model a response before quieter students are invited to try, alongside consistent, specific praise rather than generic encouragement, echoing the recommendations made by Ramadhani et al. (2023) and Hamid et al. (2026) for Indonesian EFL classrooms more generally. At the same time, given that independent initiative remained only moderately present, activities that gradually reduce scaffolding, such as short paired tasks that shift from teacher-led repetition toward student-led exchanges, may help extend confidence from a supported behavior into a more self-sustained one over time. Techniques such as drama-based activities, shown by Kumar et al. (2022) to improve both speaking proficiency and self-confidence, or structured neuro-linguistic programming exercises, as explored by Gashi (2024), may offer additional concrete tools for translating these mechanisms into classroom practice, particularly for teachers seeking to draw out more independent, self-initiated participation from their students. Teachers should also be mindful, following Nst et al. (2025) that poorly timed or overly general feedback risks limiting rather than extending the gains observed here, and that praise tied specifically to effort and improvement tends to be more effective than praise tied only to correctness.

A further contribution of this study lies in its method rather than only its findings. Where most prior research on self-confidence in English learning has relied on questionnaires or

interviews (Anam & Stracke, 2020; Asnaini et al., 2025), the present study observed behavior directly as it occurred, offering evidence of what confidence looks like in practice rather than only what students report believing about themselves. This is particularly relevant for Grade 3 learners, who may not yet be able to accurately articulate their own confidence through a written or interview-based instrument, making direct classroom observation a more developmentally appropriate complement to, rather than a replacement for, existing self-report approaches. Combining the present observational evidence with the interview-based findings of (Malage & Watini, 2024) and the reinforcement-focused studies of Ramadhani et al. (2023) and Hamid et al. (2026) suggests a coherent picture across methods: young Indonesian EFL learners' confidence is highly responsive to how supportively a teacher structures moment-to-moment classroom interaction, regardless of whether that responsiveness is captured through observation, interview, or self-report.

CONCLUSION

This study described how Grade 3 elementary school students at MI Daud Kholifatullah, Batam, displayed self-confidence during an English lesson on naming fruits and objects, using a classroom observation checklist built on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. Across ten independent observation checklists, students most consistently showed confidence through willingness to answer questions, enthusiasm, positive responses to encouragement, and sustained attention, while behaviors requiring greater independent initiative, such as unprompted participation and unassisted task completion, appeared less consistently. These patterns suggest that, at this stage, students' confidence was still substantially anchored in teacher encouragement and peer modeling rather than being fully self-directed.

The findings contribute to the literature on affective factors in English language learning by offering direct behavioral evidence of how self-confidence is enacted in an authentic classroom, complementing prior questionnaire- and interview-based studies that have documented learners' self-perceptions of confidence or teachers' roles in shaping it without observing student behavior itself in this level of detail. Practically, the results suggest that elementary English teachers can strengthen young learners' confidence by combining consistent verbal encouragement, structured opportunities for peer modeling, and low-pressure speaking tasks that gradually shift responsibility from the teacher toward the students.

This study is limited by its focus on a single class, a single lesson, and a single school, which restricts how far the findings can be generalized to other grades, schools, or lesson topics. In addition, because the study relied solely on observation, it cannot fully explain why individual students behaved as they did without complementary interviews or reflective accounts from the students or their teacher. Future research is therefore encouraged to combine classroom observation with interviews or teacher reflections, extend data collection across multiple lessons and school contexts, and consider longitudinal designs that track how individual students' confidence changes across a semester, in order to build a fuller picture of how young learners' confidence in English develops over time.

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