

Teaching for Empowerment: An Autobiographical Reflection on Fostering Students’ Self-Efficacy in English for Journalism

¹Afifah Linda Sari, ²Syafi’ul Anam, ³Ahmad Munir

¹²³Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

125020956022@mhs.unesa.ac.id, ²syafiul.anam@unesa.ac.id, ³ahmadmunir@unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This autobiographical reflection explores my lived experience as an English Lecturer in integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into an English for Journalism course to foster students’ self-efficacy and empowerment. It tells the story of how I tried to help my students believe in their own ability to use English meaningfully while also finding purpose in global issues. Drawing from my teaching journals and classroom memories, I revisit moments when I designed SDG-based activities such as mind-mapping, writing news scripts, and recording digital broadcasts. These tasks encouraged students to express their ideas confidently, connect classroom learning with real-world challenges, and see themselves as part of a global community. Through authentic journalistic tasks grounded in local realities, students developed activity, critical thinking, and a stronger sense of global responsibility. Furthermore, Throughout the process, I recognized that promoting self-efficacy entails more than skill development; it requires the trust, empathy, and reflective practice. This autobiographical journey reveals how teaching for sustainability reshaped my understanding of empowerment: it is not something we give to students, but something we grow together through meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: *Autobiographical Reflection; Empowerment; English for-Journalism; SDGs; Self-Efficacy.*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in today’s world is no longer about preparing students for their future careers, it is also about shaping them into responsible global citizens. This shift necessitates for designing a curriculum which connects learning with real-world challenges, particularly those outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These seventeen goals serve as a roadmap for creating a better future, offering educators a meaningful framework to inspire students to think critically and act responsibly for the well-being of people and the planet (Mambrasar, 2024).

In this changing educational context, English Language Teaching (ELT), especially within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), provides a powerful space to bring global issues into classroom learning (Kwee, 2021; Yu et al., 2024). English for Journalism (EFJ) is particularly relevant, as it naturally connects to real-world communication and public dialogue, offering an ideal platform to combine language development with meaningful social action (Sari & Nugroho, 2025; Bai et al., 2020). When teachers go beyond grammar drills and theory, and instead use authentic communicative activities, they enable students to explore and respond to current local and global stories in meaningful ways (Cheng et al., 2019).

Helping students believe in their own ability to use a new language remains one of the biggest challenges in second language education (Gan et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2024). When English Language Learners (ELLs) doubt their skills, they tend to participate less and achieve lower outcomes, making self-efficacy an important focus for teachers (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). As stated by (Bandura, 1997), Self-efficacy refers to students' belief in their abilities to deal with specific tasks and accomplish desired learning outcomes. In the fast-moving world of journalism, where learners must report, analyze, and communicate with confidence, building this belief in themselves is essential to their progress and success (Salniwati et al., 202; M.S, 2023).

This article suggests that integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the English for Journalism course can serve as a powerful means of enhancing both students' linguistic confidence and their sense of personal activity, eventually fostering the empowerment. When English learning is connected to meaningful social issues, students begin to view the language not merely as an academic requirement but as a valuable tool for contributing to social change (Sari & Nugroho, 2025). This authentic and purposeful approach encourages stronger motivation and commitment, thereby fostering greater self-efficacy.

To explore the connection of pedagogy and social purpose, this paper offers an autobiographical reflection on my experience as an English lecturer who designed and implemented SDGs in English for Journalism course (Abdujabarova, 2025; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020). The reflection draws on my teaching journals and classroom memories, revisiting how various activities were created and implemented immediately. These activities included mind-mapping sessions, writing broadcast news scripts on local issues, and producing digital news recordings (Sari & Nugroho, 2025) designed to bridge the gap between classroom theory and global concerns.

These reflections lead to a realization about what empowerment truly means in which it is not something teachers can simply give to students, but evolving process that raises through meaningful learning experiences. The next sections of this article first outline the theoretical foundations of self-efficacy and empowerment in language learning, then describe the course setting and the SDG-based teaching approach used. The following parts present my autobiographical reflections on significant classroom moments and student projects, leading to a final discussion that brings together the key insights and proposes a practical framework for teaching empowerment in ESP contexts.

METHODS

Subjects of Research

This study grew out of my own teaching journey, so an *autobiographical approach* used to look closely at my lived experiences as an English lecturer (Dittus, 2023). This approach allowed me to reflect deeply on how my teaching beliefs, emotions, and classroom practices evolved while integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into an English for Journalism (Efj) course. Rather than viewing myself as a distant observer, I became both the teacher and the storyteller, using reflection as a way to make sense of what happened, what changed, and what it meant for me and my students.

Participants

The reflection took place in an *English for Journalism* course I taught at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin. The course was designed for undergraduate students in English Language Education who were learning how to apply their language skills to real-world communication through journalism. Although students' names are not mentioned, their ideas, reactions, and projects became fundamental to this reflection. As their lecturer, I guided them through SDG-based tasks which invited them to connect English learning with meaningful social issues. In many ways, their energy and creativity shaped my own progress as an educator.

Data Analysis

The data in this autobiographical inquiry were derived from two primary sources: classroom memories, and student projects. I revisited my classroom memories, reconstructing them through narrative writing to capture the emotions and insights embedded in key teaching events. Then, students' creative projects such as mind maps, news scripts, and digital broadcasts, offered an authentic window into their engagement with English learning, particularly how they expressed ideas, built confidence, and connected with global and local themes. Collectively, these data sources offered comprehensive both the researcher's professional development and the learners' evolving sense of empowerment.

The process of analyzing these reflections was repetitive and very personal. I began by focusing on how these experiences influenced my ideas and feelings, charting the changes in my teaching beliefs and self-perception. Then, I integrated these personal insights to theoretical perspectives on empowerment and self-efficacy, allowing my lived experiences to interact with larger educational discourses. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, reflexivity and transparency were maintained throughout the research process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This autobiographical inquiry focuses into my reflective process of incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into an English for Journalism course. Rather than perceiving the classroom as a place of observation, I saw it as a space for lived

experience, a place where I could teach, learn, and reflect on how SDG-based activities could empower both my students and me. The findings are presented as a series of connected reflections collected from my teaching notebooks, classroom memories and student work, which together demonstrated improvements in my pedagogical ideas and professional identity.

Reframing Learning through SDG Mind-Mapping

Introducing SDG topics into the English for Journalism lesson originally tested my views about language instruction. My goal in designing the mind-mapping practice based on actual news items about sustainability challenges was to help students visually arrange information and think critically. However, what came from this process was a better understanding of how such assignments positioned me not only as a language teacher, but also as a facilitator of social awareness.

As students read headlines like *Jakarta Offers Women Free Public Transit on Kartini Day* or *Microplastics Are Choking Our Waters*, I found myself thinking about how local and global issues may intersect effectively in language classes. Their passion for connecting SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) to Indonesian circumstances helped me understand that language learning became more relevant when linked to their actual experiences. From a teaching perspective, the activity reinforced the importance of linking linguistic aims to social awareness. Personally, it strengthened my belief that English education might develop both communicative competence and social responsibility.

Building confidence through writing tasks

The news script writing stage encouraged me to think about how students use English to show advocacy and agency. As I assisted them through the process of writing local SDG-themed journalism, I saw their confidence build in transforming community challenges into organized journalistic storylines. However, beyond student achievement, this phase served as a mirror for my changing ideals about teaching for empowerment.

Previously, I saw writing projects as exercises in accuracy and coherence. Through this project, I began to see them as acts of expression, where students could express their opinions on subjects such as *trash management, gender equality, and child protection*. Reading their scripts, I was impressed by how their language conveyed both empathy and critical insight. I learned that when students write with purpose, language becomes a tool for transformation rather than just performance.

Students were tasked with writing short news scripts based on local issues and later recording them as digital broadcasts. Initially, many hesitated to perform; some worried about pronunciation, while others feared their ideas were “not good enough.” Moments like this highlighted how authentic communicative tasks could nurture students’ confidence. As Gan et al. (2021) and Hu et al. (2024) suggest, self-

efficacy grows when learners experience small, successful moments of performance in realistic settings.

Empowering students’ performance and expression with recording

When the students began recording their scripts in video or audio format, I expected a concentration on technical performance: pronunciation, intonation, and pacing. However, witnessing their various reactions and hesitations helped me gain more introspective knowledge of confidence in language learning. Some students spoke confidently in front of the camera, while others preferred audio recordings to minimize visibility. These situations reminded me of my own early experiences with linguistic insecurity and the courage it takes to speak a foreign language publicly.

This practice taught me that empowerment in the classroom goes beyond academic abilities and involves the emotional space that allows students to have a sense of belonging. This finding encouraged me to approach comments with greater consideration and to prioritize students' personal autonomy over their linguistic accuracy. Teaching through the lens of the SDGs turned into teaching with a humanistic perspective, realizing that personal growth often occurs with communicative development.

This experience reshaped my understanding of empowerment. I noticed that empowerment did not flow in one direction from teacher to student, but grew through shared effort and trust. It was not about granting students power or confidence, but about creating the condition in which they could find it for themselves. As Soland & Sandilos, (2021) argue, empowerment and self-efficacy flourish when learners feel possession of their learning process.

Teaching as Self-Transformation

Perhaps the most important insight to emerge from this experience was that empowerment in education is essentially proportional. Teaching the English for Journalism course was both a professional experiment and a personal awakening (Dewi et al., 2024). A process that allowed me to explore how teaching and learning shape one another. What began as an attempt to empower students through SDG-based activities evolved into an experience of self-transformation. I discovered that encouraging empowerment took more than just creative lesson ideas; it required patience, empathy, and the willingness to let go of complete control. In moments of uncertainty, when lessons turned out differently than expected or students struggled to express complex ideas, I learned to trust the process as a necessary part of true teaching.

Throughout this journey, my understanding of empowerment has evolved. It was no longer enough to produce competent English speakers, it was also important to develop people who believe they are capable of making a difference. This shift reflects the notion that empowerment is a personal and collective experience that

becomes deeper when teaching and learning are based on empathy, reflection, and purpose (Sari & Nugroho, 2025). Moreover, these reflections show that incorporating the SDGs into the English for Journalism course not only improved students' language skills, but also fostered a sense of self-efficacy and social consciousness.

Dual Empowerment: SDG Integration as a Transformative Process for Both Students and Instructor

Reflecting on my teaching journey, I came to realize that integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the English for Journalism course changed not only how my students learned, but also how I understood the act of teaching itself. What began as an effort to make language learning more relevant and meaningful became a process of mutual empowerment in which one that reshaped both my students' confidence and my own professional identity.

Throughout the semester, I saw how authentic, socially based activities could encourage a sense of belonging and confidence in students' capabilities. This event supported Bandura, (1997) theory that self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, when learners successfully complete activities that are meaningful to them. Activities like making mind maps from real news items, composing broadcast scripts on local concerns, and recording digital news reports became meaningful participation opportunities. Students were not merely doing projects; they were expressing themselves, interpreting real-world issues, and discovering their English voices. As they overcome their fears and presented their work publicly, I watched how small, authentic accomplishments built their confidence over time. In this situation, the classroom felt less like a space of instruction and more like a community of practice where learning and meaning existed.

Integrating the SDGs also revealed how language education can serve a broader social purpose. As Yu et al., (2024) note, sustainability in English teaching invites learners to see themselves as global citizens who use language to understand and respond to real-world challenges. My students' journalistic projects became more than exercises in vocabulary and grammar, they were opportunities to connect personal expression with social awareness. When students wrote about pollution in the Martapura River or gender equality in public spaces, they were not only demonstrating linguistic competence but also, they were practicing the values of empathy, justice, and civic responsibility. In turn, I learned that teaching for sustainability meant teaching with humanity, seeing language as a bridge between communication and integrity.

This autobiographical reflection confirms that empowerment in language teaching is a collaborative method of transformation. It develops in the intersection of meaningful content, authentic communication, and reflective practice

(Jayaannapurna, 2017). For me, empowerment took shape not in moments of control, but in moments of connection, when I trusted my students’ potential and when they trusted their own voices. The event reminded me that sustainable education begins with the educator's desire to reflect and change. My own feeling of purpose increased as I helped my students gain confidence in their use of English.

At last, teaching English through the perspective of the SDGs became an experience towards individual discovery and collective development. It emphasized that education, at its best, is about developing the ability to care, question, and contribute meaningfully to the world, rather than just language proficiency or academic accomplishment. Empowerment is not a destination, but rather a manner of teaching, learning, and being that grows with each meaningful contact in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

This journey has taught me that teaching for empowerment is not only about helping students grow, it is also how to grow together with them. Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into my English for Journalism class changed my perspective on teaching and learning. I discovered that true empowerment occurs when students utilize language to convey meaningful ideas, connect with the world around them, and begin to trust in their own capabilities. Through activities like mind-mapping, writing scripts, and recording broadcasts, students discovered that their voices mattered. When students saw themselves communicate effectively in English, their confidence increased. These experiences helped them believe that they were capable communicators, and in turn, they strengthened my belief in the transformative power of learning that connects language with life. At the same time, I discovered that empowerment is not something a teacher provides, but rather something that arises from connections. It takes patience, empathy, and a willingness to listen deeply. Lessons did not always go as planned, but those imperfect moments frequently resulted in the most important learning for both my students and me. Accepting this allowed me to understand vulnerability as a necessary component of authentic teaching and a source of my own self-efficacy. This reflection suggests that both teachers and students build self-efficacy through meaningful learning experiences. When lessons connect with real-life issues and allow students to use English to express their ideas, confidence naturally follows. At the same time, teachers strengthen their own sense of efficacy when they see learning become purposeful and alive. For teacher education, this means creating spaces where reflection, empathy, and connection are valued as much as method and content. Empowerment grows where teachers and learners learn to believe themselves, in each other, and in the power of education to create change.

Empowerment rises where teachers and students learn to believe in themselves, one another, and the ability of education to effect change.

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