Investigating the relationship between self-efficacy and reading comprehension skill of Iraqi EFL preparatory school students from students' perspectives

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Abstract

The phrase "self-efficacy" refers to one's belief in one's capacity to execute a task. Students can assess their self-efficacy based on actual performances, vicarious (observational) experiences, persuasive strategies, and physiological reactions. The student's own successes are the most reliable indications of self-efficacy . Self-efficacy has an impact on how pupils feel, think, and act. A low degree of self-efficacy is associated with low self-esteem. The aim of this study is to investigate if there is a correlational relationship   between the self-efficacy of Iraqi EFL 5th preparatory school students and their reading comprehension skill performance . The sample of the study is 310 preparatory school students (188 male and 122 female). The data of the research is gathered and analyzed by using   a reading comprehension self-efficacy scale with some modifications to measure the self-efficacy of the students and a reading. A comprehension test which is adopted from (liveworksheets.com)   to test the level of reading comprehension performance of the students after using statistical formulas it is found that there is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy of Iraqi EFL 5thpreparatory school students and their reading comprehension skill performance in Hillah city as well as the level of the male students of self-efficacy and their performance of the reading comprehension are higher than female students.

Keywords: self-efficacy , reading comprehension , Iraqi EFL, preparatory school , perspectives.

Introduction

Reading is so crucial in the topic of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) that every student, especially at the preparatory level, must grasp it in order to succeed academically. Understanding written materials is, in fact, the initial step in learning a language. Comprehension refers to the ability to absorb major concepts in a text as well as the relationships that connect them. It is vital for pupils to use reading comprehension approaches in order to obtain a high degree of knowledge. As a consequence, students must read a book, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate the material. To put it another way, pupils should improve their own talents while reading, according to Macceca (2014:65).

Despite this, many students struggle to grasp the material. They have difficulty with reading comprehension for a number of reasons, and they don't appear to be capable of developing reading comprehension skills that are essential to all reading tasks and assignments. As a result, they will have poor academic achievement. According to research by Bandura (1977), Schunk (1995), and Pajares (1996), most students' learning difficulties are due to their self-beliefs; there is a strong link between language acquisition and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs are personal views about one's capacity to manage new or hard activities.

Many students struggle with reading comprehension not because they are unable of doing so, but because they are hesitant to believe that they are capable of doing so flawlessly. (Bandura, 1977, pp. 87-88.)

Because self-efficacy is linked to language learning and reading comprehension strategies are an important part of the reading process, researchers have investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and the use of reading comprehension strategies in order to improve the situation of learning/teaching English. Students in our preparatory schools have a lot of trouble with reading comprehension, especially when they try to answer the first question (unseen text) in the monthly, mid, and final English subject tests.(Hussein,2019)

Aims of the study

This study aims to figure out :

1. Iraqi EFL 5th preparatory students' self-efficacy in terms of their reading comprehension skill.
2. The level of 5th preparatory students' performance of reading comprehension skill .
3. The difference between reading comprehension performance level and efficacy level between the two genders within 5th preparatory school students.
4. The relationship between students' self-efficacy and their reading comprehension performance level.

Research questions

The focus of this study is to compare the self-efficacy of preparatory school students to their reading comprehension scores.

1. What is the level of Iraqi EFL 5th preparatory school students' self-efficacy in terms of their reading comprehension skill.
2. What is the level of 5th preparatory school students' performance of reading comprehension skill.
3. Is there difference between the self-efficacy of 5th preparatory school students with their reading comprehension performance between the two genders ?
4. Is There a relationship between students' self-efficacy and their reading comprehension performance level ?

Theoretical background

Self-efficacy
Self-efficacy has been described in a variety of ways, including the belief that one is

capable of doing a certain activity in order to achieve specific goals in a specific style or scenario In other words, self-efficacy may be described as a personal conviction in one's skills, which is necessary for producing, a specific degree of performance that has an impact on events that affect one's entire life   (Smart, 2013: 68).

Albert Bandura established the belief of self-efficacy, which is one of   his social cognitive theory components. Self-efficacy is a term that describes one's belief in one's ability to complete a task. Actual performances, vicarious (observational) experiences, persuasive techniques, and physiological reactions provide information for students to evaluate their own self-efficacy. The most important   indicator of self-efficacy is the student's own accomplishments. Other sources have a wider range of effects. Failures diminish self-efficacy,whereas a single failure may unlikely have a significant influence on a strong feeling of self-efficacy (Pajares and Urdan, 2002: 32; and Wentzel and Wigfield, 2009: 38).

The concept self-efficacy is situationally particular, according to Woodruff and Cashman (1993:424), and is not generalize to other domains. Because certain situations have a greater generality than others, the sensation ,of capacity gained from, one experience may or may not be transferable to other situations. The 'Bandurian, perspective' proposes that the general self-efficacy construct varies in strength depending on the dimension of, life being, studied and the amount to which it overlaps with other dimensions. (Hammad,2018 ; Rahoomi,2019)

Similarly, Self-efficacy according to McKenzie (1999: 11) influences how students feel, think, and behave. A low level of self-efficacy is linked to a poor level of self-esteem. Students that have poor self-esteem have gloomy views on their achievements and personal growth. A high sense of competence aids cognitive processes and performance in areas such as academic success.

It is assumed that students who   possess the skills   are necessary to deal with anticipated scenarios by taking a variety of activities, such as the notion that one's actions have a significant impact on his or her surroundings.

)Andrade and Cizek, 2010: 225(

The ability of a person's judgment or appraisal to do a certain activity is known as self-efficacy. It is a student's belief that "I can" or "I cannot." Unlike self-esteem, which indicates students' feelings about their own work or value, self-efficacy reflects students' confidence in doing a certain activity. (Kareem,2019)

Reading Comprehension
According to Blachowicz and Donna (2008:27-8), is an individual's capacity to understand and digest information using his intellect. It is a gradual process in which competent readers actively participate in, the construction of meaning by engaging with what they are reading and integrating past knowledge and experiences with what they already know. The ,readers' prior experiences and, knowledge have an impact on how they comprehend.(Dehham,2020; Bairmani,2021)

The meaning of a book might be conveyed in three different ways as a consequence of the comprehension processes. The first level is sentence level representation, in which words are

interpreted as the text is read. The second level is presenting the proposal in this manner, the reader extracts the key concepts from the main text because the meanings ofthe terms are readily available, The syntax is used to examine and establish the link between words   allowing the propositional meaning to be constructed. The scenario model which depicts the coherent circumstances offered in the primary text   is the greatest and final level of displaying a text's meaning (Griffiths, Sohlberg, & Biancarosa, 2011:7). Readers update and combine what they know about a subject into elaborate and complete renderings of it , which are referred to as situation models. Reading comprehension, in particular, is reliant on a number of cognitive processes.

Reading comprehension refers to the process of making sense of literature and obtaining information from it. Snow et al., (2002:13-15)   go on to state that understanding is made up of three parts: the reader, the text, and the action. Classroom teaching, classroom learning environment, school culture, peer-to-peer social contact, student self-concepts, and educational history, all take place within a larger socio-cultural framework. Reading comprehension, according to Klingner et al (2007:8), is the act of deriving meaning from a text via communication between readers and the information they bring to the manuscript, such as prior knowledge or scientific background, or by using specialized methods. Reading comprehension, according to Badr El-Deen (2011:11), is the ability to transmit a manuscript that includes interpreting and decoding sentences and vocabulary using cognitive strategies, metacognition, and prior experiences related to the text to obtain the meaning or aimed message that the writer wants to present through the words. Reading ability, according to Elradii (2014:14)   is an individual's capacity to communicate in a manuscript in order to construct alternative interpretations or express the writer's thoughts using a coherent technique that involves cognitive and metacognitive methods. On the other hand, knowledge of, reading connects with the text and the authors' ideology through using various reading abilities. (Abbas,2018 &   Ali,2019)

Self-Efficacy and Reading Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as a type of expectation concerned with a person's belief in his or her ability to do a given action or collection of behaviours required to achieve a specific result. Self-efficacy is defined as "people's assessments of their abilities to plan and carry out the courses of action required to attain particular types of performances" (Bandura, 1986 : 391). "Self-efficacy is concerned not with one's talents but with appraisals of what one can achieve with whatever skills one possesses," according to Bandura. This concept supports Bandura's claim that self-efficacy and other self-constructs are distinct. Self-efficacy differs from other self-constructs in that it is based on judgments of one's capacity to do a certain task, according to Bandura (ibid).

According to Zimmerman & et al. (1992:201), self-efficacy has five distinct characteristics: To begin, self-efficacy is a competence evaluation that measures people's confidence in their abilities. Second, the subjects in the study are represented in many dimensions. Third, capability evaluations are investigated in a variety of situations. Fourth, self-efficacy is based on mastery standards, which means researchers determine how well students believe they can do tasks. Finally, before they begin their tasks, learners' self-efficacy is measured. In addition, self-efficacy beliefs change throughout time. Circumstances may have an impact on one's beliefs. When driving on country roads, for example, a person's self-efficacy belief may be high, but when driving in the city, it may be low (Bandura, 1982; Pajares, 1992).

After then, others sought to articulate self-efficacy, although they all paraphrased and

mentioned Bandura's notion. Huang and Shanmao (Gahungu, 2007: 69) describe self-efficacy expectations as "beliefs about one's potential to effectively complete a given activity or action." According to Pajares (1996), self efficacy is a person's belief in their capacity to perform a certain job well, and it is linked to early task engagement, perseverance, and achievement. This term is also described as "beliefs about one's capacity to learn or accomplish, behaviours at fixed levels" by Schunk (as mentioned in Gahungu, 2007: 68-69). Individuals who are confident in their skills to finish a task are more likely to take part in it and work hard to meet the objective.

Reading self-efficacy is a subset of general learning self-efficacy. Readers' conceptions of themselves as readers, according to Freed (1995:93), have a substantial impact on their literacy development. Reading self-efficacy, in other words, represents how students feel about their capacity to grasp a book, their approach options, their interest in and attitude toward a text, and the purpose of their reading. Reading self-efficacy refers to a student's judgments of their ability to execute different reading tasks, such as comprehending the main concept, guessing the meaning of an unknown word, inferring the authors' attitudes regarding their own written material, and employing reading comprehension methods.

Methodology

Instruments of the study
In order to achieve the aims of this study   two   instruments have been used   namely : a reading comprehension self-efficacy scale is adopted with some modifications from" The impact of self-efficacy perception on reading comprehension on academic achievement"   on the other hand   a   reading comprehension test which contains a reading passage   is adopted from liveworksheets.com , the reading   passage   is suitable for the ages (14-18).

Reading comprehension self-efficacy scale
In order to identify EFL students' reading comprehension skill self-efficacy, a scale is adopted   from " The impact of self-efficacy perception on reading comprehension on academic achievement" (kadirYogort, 2012) with some modifications according to the recommendations of the jury members.

The scale comprises 27 items (SeeTabelA). Each item   has five responses measured on a five points' Likert scale. The scores that are given to each response are as follows:

strongly agree   5 scores
agree   4 scores
neutral   3 scores
disagree   2 scores
strongly disagree   1 score

Reading Comprehension Test
A test may be described as a technique meant to elicit certain behavior   from which conclusions about an individual's qualities can be drawn (Bachman, 1990:20). A reading passage (see table B)   is adopted from (liveworksheets.com) a website of   tests to measure the reading comprehension skill of the students , the passage is suitable for the ages (14-18) .

Three questions   measure the reading comprehension skill of the students the first one

includes five Wh-questions , the questions require no more than   three words to be answered .The second question includes five items which are(True   /False) to test the comprehension of   the students , while the last question is a multiple choice question , it includes five items.

Results of the Study

Results of the First Aim

The first aim of the current study is to figure out the students level of their self-efficacy in term of their reading comprehension.

To achieve this aim, reading comprehension self-efficacy scale has been utilized   to the sample. The results indicate that the   mean   score of the sample is 90.65 with a standard deviation of   16.359 . To find out   the significance of the difference, one sample t-test has been utilized. The computed t-value which is 10.381   is found to be higher than the critical t-value which   is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant and 309 degree of freedom. Thus, it has been found that there is a significant level of self-efficacy of the students (see Table   1)

(**Table 1** the level of students' levelof their self-efficacy level)

No. of Sample	Mean	SD	T- Test		Df	Sig. Level
			computed	critical		
310	90.65	16.359	10.381	1.96	309	0.05

Results of the second aim

The second aim is to find out the level of students' performance in reading comprehension skill ,   to perform   this aim, a   reading comprehension   test has been utilized   to the   sample. The results indicate that the   mean   score of   the sample is 18.39 with a standard deviation of   3.265   To find out   the significance of the difference, one sample t-test has been utilized. The computed t-value which is 18.276   is found to be higher than the critical t-value which   is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant and 309 degree of freedom. Thus, it has been found that there is a significant level of performance of students' reading comprehension skill (see Table 2)

(**Table 2** the level of students' performance in reading comprehension skill**)**

No. of Sample	Mean	Std. Deviation	T- Test		Df	Sig. Level
			computed	critical		
310	18.39	3.265	18. 276	1.96	308	0.05

Results of the third aim

In order to" figure out The difference between reading comprehension performance level and   efficacy level between the two genders within 5th preparatory school students". (table 3) shows the differences between the male and female students in term of their self-efficacy. It is shown that the mean score of male students is 97.51 with standard deviation of 15.612 ,   the computed T value is 10.735 with critical T value 1.96 at 0.05   level of significance and 308 degree of freedom , on the other hand It is shown that the mean score of the female students is 80.07 with standard deviation of 10.986 with computed T value 10.735

and   critical T value 1.96 at 0.05   level of significance and 308 degree of freedom . so, that indicates that male students have a higher level of self-efficacy than the female students .

In order to figure out is there a difference in reading comprehension performance of the students between the two genders   as shown in   (Table 4) .It is shown that the mean score of male students is 19.16 with standard deviation of   3.074 ,   the computed T value is 10.735 with critical T value 1.96 at 0.05   level of significance and 308 degree of freedom , on the other hand   It is shown that   the mean score of the female students is 17.12 with   standard   deviation of   3.209 with computed T value 10.735 and   critical T value 1.96 at 0.05   level of significance and 308 degree of freedom . so, that indicates that male students have a higher level of self-efficacy than the female students.

(Table 3 Differences between genders concerning the students' self-efficacy**)**

Gender	N mean	Std. Deviation	T- Test Computed	Critical	Df	Sig. Level
male	188	97.51	15.612	10.735	1.96	308	0.05
female	122	80.07	10.986			308	0.05

(Table 4 Differences between genders concerning   the students'   reading comprehension skill performance**)**

Gender	N mean	Std. Deviation	T- Test computed	critical	Df	Sig. Level
male	188	19.16	3.074	10.735	1.96	308	0.05
female	122	17.12	3.209	10.735	1.96	308	0.05

Result Related to the fourth Aim

The fourth aim is concerning   finding out the relationship between students' reading comprehension self-efficacy and their reading comprehension   performance . To achieve this aim, Pearson correlation coefficient formula has been utilized   to determine the relationship between the two variables. Pearson correlation coefficient is found to be   0.543 in the students' level of self-efficacy and   0.543 in the students' level of reading comprehension skill performance . This indicates that there is a   positive correlational relationship between the students' reading comprehension self-efficacy and their level of reading comprehension performance, and that whenever their self-efficacy is high, their reading comprehension performance is also high and vise versa (see Table 5).

(Table 5 the relationship between students' reading comprehension self-efficacy and their reading comprehension performance**)**

		Scale	Test
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.543
Reading comprehension	Pearson Correlation	0.543	1

Conclusion

1   General Self efficacy is considered to be an important concept in the field of second language learning according to the previous study and to this study itself.
2   Reading comprehension self-efficacy level of the Iraqi EFL preparatory school students has a significant relationship with their reading comprehension skill performance .
3   Male preparatory school students have higher level than female preparatory students in term of their self-efficacy level and their reading comprehension skill performance.
4   There is a positive co relational relationship between reading comprehension self-efficacy and reading comprehension skill among 5th preparatory school students , so when the self-efficacy is high the reading comprehension skill performance is also high and vice versa .
5   Female preparatory school students face many difficulties concerning answering the questions that are related to reading comprehension test because of their self-efficacy is not very high.

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