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THE IMPACT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNER'S READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY AT PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the impact of self-efficacy on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level. For this purpose, 150 male and female learners learning English language were chosen. Having being homogenized by an OPT test, 120 learners were selected and they were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental and control groups (60 participants in each group, 30 males and 30 females). Then two groups sat for a pre-test, which was a reading comprehension test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learner's initial knowledge of reading comprehension ability. The experimental group received self-efficacy treatment; however, the control group did not receive any treatment. The results indicated that self-efficacy had an effect on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level. It was also demonstrated that self-efficacy influenced on both genders equally.

Key Words: *Self-Efficacy- Reading Comprehension Ability*

INTRODUCTION

The present study is conducted to observe the pedagogical and practical effect of self-efficacy on reading comprehension ability.

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a perceived ability, refers to the confidence people have in their abilities that they can successfully perform a particular task so self-efficacy can influence in all tasks.

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) believe Self-efficacious students are characterized as being hard working; they are willing to ask for help when needed and engage in the task and using both cognitive strategies which help in greater comprehension. The concept of self-efficacy is the belief that one can do something, according to Wigfield and Guthrie (1977), studies on reading motivation shows those children who feel efficacious about reading are more likely to engage in reading and also their motivation is associated with reading comprehension.

Self-efficacy could not have been found in old methods, but it is an important element for student's learning in new methods such as CLT that is considered by teachers in the classrooms. Creating self-efficacy by teachers among students should be considered at pre-intermediate levels in order to improve reading comprehension ability among learners in different genders.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is a complex cognitive activity essential for sufficient functioning and for obtaining information in modern society (Alfassi, 2004). "Many factors can cause students to be labeled as poor or struggling readers by teacher" (Shelberg, 2009).

Noukbehrousta and Saeed (2012) believe low self-beliefs rather than their lack of ability in many situations are reason of their low motivation, participation, performance, and achievement. It is should be considered that teachers and parents pay attention to student's confidence, and don't misunderstand their failure to their weak knowledge base or inadequate skills. As students believe in themselves and in their abilities to perform tasks, they create greater interest in learning and developing their confidence to keep focus when encounter difficulties during learning. Highly self-efficacious learners show more motivation and engagement in the classroom and better academic performance.

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According to Bandura (1986), it is common for some students to believe that they do not have enough ability in reading a task so they choose less reading comprehension tasks to make few errors and they do not try to focus on them because they think that their efforts are aimless so it reveals their lack of ability to do a reading comprehension skill tasks. He mentions that if a teacher develops his/her student's belief about reading a task, in fact he/she will increase the student's self-efficacy in learners so students with high self-efficacy can solve their problems because they have developed to solve the problems and they know that if their ability improve, they will learn more. As a result crating self-efficacy by teacher among the students can solve the problem.

Research Questions

In order to tackle the problem of the research in a much consolidated way, the following research questions have been formulated as follows:

- Does Self-efficacy have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension ability at pre- intermediate level?
- Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners regarding the effect of self-efficacy on the reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level?

Research Hypotheses

To answer the research questions of the study, the following research hypotheses have been formulated:

- Self-efficacy does not have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level.
- There is not any significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners regarding the effect of self-efficacy on the reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level

Review of the Literature

According to Pajares (1996) self-efficacy is person's beliefs to run a specific task successfully and is communicated closely to beginning task engagement, persistence, and achievement.

Bandura (1997) believes the students who have higher efficacy are more likely to select challenging tasks, increase more effort, and persist when encountering difficulties. This presupposes that high efficacy is a vital factor in helping students to focus on and persist at difficulty tasks, such as reading for understanding.

Schunk and Pajares (2002) believe initial sources of self-efficacy are reciprocal and family based. An improved family environment with many embedded mastery experiences fosters self-efficacy beliefs. Parent interest is communicated by their children's excitement and curiosity in exploring their environment.

According to Rose (1998), teacher's self-efficacy can also dedicate to increase student's sense of efficacy, encouraging their involvement in class activities and their efforts in facing problems. Other findings suggest a reciprocal effect between a teacher's perceived self-efficacy and a student's achievement, showing that teacher's perceived self-efficacy is particularly high in schools with high-achieving and well-behaved students (Ross, 1998).

"Reading is a thinking process, is part of everything that happens to you as a person and comprehending a text is intimately related to your life" (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006).

According to Gagen (2007), comprehension is defined as acquiring meaning from the text. Comprehension is a complex higher level skill. Obviously, comprehension is critically important to the raising of a student's reading. Comprehension is an active process that requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text. Vocabulary development is critical to comprehension.

According to Lenz (no date), Reading comprehension is the process of establishing meaning from text. The aim of all reading instruction is ultimately targeted at helping a reader comprehend text. Reading comprehension involves at least two people: the reader and the writer. The process of comprehending involves decoding the writer's words and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer's message.

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Motivation and engagement may affect the development of reading comprehension because motivated students usually want to understand text content fully and process information deeply. When they read frequently with these cognitive purposes, motivated students achieve in reading comprehension proficiency (Guthrie *et al.*, 1999).

Noukbehrousta and Ghazi Mir Saeed (2012) mention reading is regarded as a complex process and the main goal of reading is comprehension. One of the many problems students face nowadays is their lack of interest. Studies based on reading habits have particularly focused on the importance of the promotion of specific strategies to promote their interests, make reading materials available, build an appropriate environment, allow time to read in school, provide significant adult models, and use motivational techniques (Clary, 1991).

Walker (2003) characterizes self-efficacy as the belief that a learner can perform a specific task. It is the basic idea if someone thinks they can. Walker (2003) added the specificity of self-efficacy can be based on the goals of the learner, trust about specific tasks and involves in the information and task and therefore leads to success in completing a task.

Another source of evidence on the important role played by self-efficacy in reading achievement comes from studies investigating strategy instruction and strategy value feedback. Much research shows that teaching students to use learning strategies develops achievement outcomes, motivation, and self-evaluations of capabilities (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1998).

Studies on reading motivation shows those children who feel efficacious about reading are more eager to engage in reading and also their motivation is associated with reading comprehension (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Design of the Study

The design of the study is quasi-experimental design, which has three pre-test and one post-test.

2. Participants

The populations of the study were 150 pre-intermediate students both males and females in Meead institute, Islamshahr, Tehran, Iran. After administration of OPT test, 120 pre-intermediate students were selected. They were randomly divided into two groups (60 participants in each group, 30 males and 30 females). Both groups sat for the pre-test of reading comprehension ability to measure their initial knowledge of reading comprehension ability. They had a self-efficacy test for recognizing their efficacious level too.

Then the control group received no treatment. However, the experimental group received treatment based on teaching self-efficacy by the researcher and finally both groups sat for the post-test, which was a different reading comprehension ability test from reading comprehension ability pre-test.

3. Materials

The following materials were employed throughout the course of this study. An OPT test was used for the purpose of homogenizing the level of the learners. Another type of the test which was used for the purpose of the study was reading comprehension ability test. This type of test was utilized as pre-test to measure the learner's initial knowledge of two groups. Then a self-efficacy test was administered to the participants to determine their efficacious level. Another reading comprehension test was used as a post-test.

4. Procedure

The following steps were taken in the course of the present investigation:

1. As it was already noted, the participants were homogenized by an OPT test (all of them were at pre-intermediate level) and randomly assigned into two groups. Each group embraced 30 students.
2. The same reading comprehension ability pre-test test was administered to all participants.
3. A same self-efficacy test was given among all participants as pre-test to assign all students are in same rate in self-efficacy.

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4. In Experimental groups, treatment was run by researcher, so he started to teach self-efficacy to the students.

5. In control groups, none of the above-mentioned techniques were used by researcher. Instead, traditional reading comprehension texts were translated only.

6. After 10 sessions, both experimental groups and control groups took the same reading comprehension ability test as a post-test. This test was not as same as the reading comprehension test which was given in pre-test.

5. Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed through SPSS; an ANCOVA was run to analyze the data of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis and Result

1. Introduction

As it is noted, the present research aimed at observation the statues effects of self-efficacy on reading comprehension ability.

The major aim of present study is to evaluate whether students participating in EFL classes could improve their reading comprehension based on the self-efficacy that the researcher transmitted to the students or not and which gender can acquire self-efficacy more. This chapter focuses on the findings of the study and provides answers to the questions that lie at the heart of the investigation.

2. Descriptive Statistic

120 students were divided into the two groups-one experimental group and one control group. In each group, there were 60 students (30 males and 30 females). Table (1) describes the descriptive analysis of experimental group in pre-test.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Pre-Test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group

	N	Maximum	Minimum	Variance	Std.Deviation	Mode	Median	Mean
Statistic test	60	20.00	80.00	86.453	9.29802	20.00 ^a	34.50000	34.7667

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table (1) described analysis of reading comprehension ability pre-test in experimental group. It demonstrated that the number was 60, variance was 86.453, standard deviation was 9.29802, mode was 20.00^a, median was 34.50000, maximum was 80.00, minimum is 20.00, and mean was 34.7667.

Table (2) demonstrated the descriptive analysis of post-test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Post-Test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group

	N	Maximum	Minimum	Variance	Std.Deviation	Mode	Median	Mean
Statistic test	60	96.00	37.00	33.406	17.703270	37.00	66.00000	65.4667

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

It showed that the number was 60, variance was 33.406, standard deviation was 17.703270, mode was 37.00, median was 66.00000, maximum was 96.00, minimum was 37.00, and mean was 65.4667.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Pre-Test of reading comprehension ability in control group

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	N	Maximum	Minimum	Variance	Std.Deviation	Mode	Median	Mean
Valid& missing	60	80.00	20.00	227.732	15.09079	80.00	37.5000	39.6167
Statistic test	60	80.00	20.00	227.732	15.09079	80.00	37.5000	39.6167

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table (3) described analysis of pre-test of reading comprehension ability test in control group. It pointed out that the number was 60, variance was 227.732, standard deviation was 15.09079, mode was 80.00, median was 37.5000, maximum was 80.00, minimum was 20.00, and mean was 39.6167.

Table (4) demonstrated the descriptive analysis of post-test of reading comprehension ability in control group

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Post-Test of reading comprehension ability in control group

	N	Maximum	Minimum	Variance	Std.Deviation	Mode	Median	Mean
Statistic test	60	83.00	19.00	232.185	15.23763	36.00a	37.0000	39.4667

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

It demonstrated that the number was 60, variance was 232.185, standard deviation was 15.23763, mode was 36.00a, median was 37.0000, maximum was 83.00, minimum was 19.00, and mean was 39.4667.

In order to answer to this question, in which gender self-efficacy had more effects on the learner’s reading comprehension ability, the scores of genders were analyzed separately.

The scores of pre-test in experimental group were analyzed separately (30males and 30 females). The researcher described in table (5) about the descriptive analysis of pre-test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on the genders (30 males and 30 female).

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis of Pre-Test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on genders (males and females)

genders	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
males	30	33.5667	8.69674	1.58780
females	30	35.9667	9.86279	1.80069

The scores of males and females were analyzed separately in this table. The standard deviation was 8.69674 for males and 35.9667 for females, standard error mean was 1.58780 for males and 1.80069 for females, and mean was 33.5667 for males and 35.9667 for females.

The scores of post-test in experimental group were analyzed separately (30males and 30 females). Now the researcher described in table (6) about the descriptive analysis of pre-test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on the genders (30 males and 30 female).

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis of Post-Test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on genders (males and females)

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Genders	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Males	30	63.70000	17.63451	3.21961
Females	30	67.2333	17.89372	3.26693

The scores of males and females were analyzed separately in this table. The standard deviation was 17.63451 for males and 17.89372 for females, standard error mean was 3.21961 for males and 3.26693 for females, and mean was 63.70000 for males and 67.2333 for females.

3. Inferential Analysis

Interpretations of facts were analyzed in inferential section. The researcher analyzed both experimental group and control group in pre-test and post test according to this analysis.

Interpretations of facts were analyzed in inferential section. The researcher analyzed pre-test and post test of experimental group and control group:

Table 7: Analysis of both pre-test and post-test of reading comprehension ability in control group and experimental group

Group	Post-test		Pre-test		N
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Experimental	65.4667	17.70327	34.7667	9.29802	60
Control	39.4667	15.23763	39.6167	15.09079	60
Total	52.4667	20.99817	37.1917	12.71623	120

Table (7) demonstrated that the mean in experimental group in pre-test was 34.7667(standard deviation 9.29802), but after treatment by the researcher in experimental group, the mean became 65.4667 (standard deviation 17.70327). The Mean in control group of pre-test was 39.6167 (the standard deviation 15.09079), after no treatment by the researcher in control group, the mean was 39.4667 (the standard deviation 15.23763).

Table 8: Dependent Variable: post-test. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (covariance)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power ^b
Corrected Model	48843.131 ^a	2	24421.565	787.850	.000	.931	1.000
Intercept	478.443	1	478.443	15.435	.000	.117	.974
Pre	28563.131	1	28563.131	921.458	.000	.887	1.000
Group	29631.177	1	29631.177	955.914	.000	.891	1.000
Error	3626.736	117	30.998				
Total	382800.000	120					
Corrected Total	52469.867	119					

a. R Squared = .931 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.930); b. Computed using alpha =0.05

Table (12) demonstrated that based on pre-test scores, the researcher's treatment caused the meaningful differences in experimental group ($f < 0/001$).

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It demonstrated that 0.89% of variance is for researcher's treatment (the statistic is based on 100%), so in conclusion, based on table (8) the researcher's treatment in creating self-efficacy is effective among learners in experimental group.

In order to answer this question, in which gender self-efficacy had more effects on the learner's reading comprehension ability, the scores of males and females in experimental group were analyzed separately. The scores of pre-test in experimental group were analyzed separately (30 males and 30 females). Now the researcher described in table (9) about the inferential analysis of pre-test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on the genders (30 males and 30 female).

Table 9: Inferential table of Experimental Group (pre-test) based on the genders

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pre	Equal variances assumed	0.220	0.640	-1.000	58	0.322	-2.40000	2.40075	-7.20562	2.40562
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.000	57.105	0.322	-2.40000	2.40075	-7.20723	2.40723

Because meaningful level of Levene test was more than 0.05 percent, the researcher could use of the first row because it demonstrated the variance assumption of two groups. T outcome (sig=0.322 and t=-1.000) demonstrated that the mean of females (35.9667) and males (33.5667) were not so different from each other in the pre-test scores in experimental group.

Table (10) demonstrated the inferential analysis of post-test of reading comprehension ability in experimental group based on the genders (30 males and 30 female).

Table 10: Inferential table of experimental group (post-test) based on the genders

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pos	Equal variances assumed	0.001	0.976	-0.770	58	0.444	-3.53333	4.58680	-12.71480	5.64814
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.770	57.988	0.444	-3.53333	4.58680	-12.71484	5.64818

Because meaningful level of Levene test was more than 0.05 percent, the researcher could use of the first row because it demonstrated the variance assumption of two groups. T outcome (sig=0.444 and t=-0.770)

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demonstrated that the mean of females (67.2333) and males (63.7000) were not so different from each other in the post-test scores in experimental group.

Based on what the researcher found in descriptive and inferential analysis the first hypothesis that is self-efficacy does not have any effects on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension ability at pre intermediate level is rejected, but the second hypothesis that is there is not any significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners regarding the effect of self-efficacy on the reading comprehension ability at pre-intermediate level is accepted.

4. Implication

Self-efficacy has some implications for teachers and students:

4.1. Implications of the Study for Student

Self-efficacy can help the students to do tasks well in the classrooms. By developing their self-efficacy, they can raise their ability to perform the tasks well; they can increase self-confidence, autonomy, and self-esteem. The observation demonstrates that the students those who are efficacious, can do the task better than who are not. They are eager to answer the questions more and they can focus more on the activities and questions.

4.2. Implications of the Study for Teacher

Self efficacy gives teachers the responsibility for leading in particular areas of pedagogy, development of the curriculum, and in responding to the social, emotional, and wellbeing needs of learners, unlocks innovative and untapped potential in teachers. In doing so it increases the capacity of schools to meet the needs of pupils and to enhance educational achievement, so by enhancing the self-efficacy among the teachers, it can be transmitted to students and develop their sense of efficacy too.

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