

SELF-EFFICACY AND INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING ABILITY IN ONLINE CLASSES

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33508/mgs.v50i1.3347>

ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy in reading is considered to be the cause and result of academic achievement, especially in online learning where students need to learn independently. In this study, the researchers attempted to find out the impacts of self-efficacy on the reading ability of 9th-grade students at SMP 5 Purwokerto during online learning. There were 32 students from class 9A who participated in this study. The research question was: What is the perceived effect of self-efficacy on the reading ability of 9th-grade students at SMP 5 Purwokerto? The researchers used the qualitative method with two research instruments. The results reveal that 9th-grade students have a high level of self-efficacy, can find solutions to every problem, and read a lot of new things from the internet, newspapers, novels, or magazines. Online classes, therefore, bring students' independence to find solutions from the problems. This study contributes to learning English on reading skills during online school.

Keywords: *self-efficacy, reading ability, junior high school, online learning*

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in the academic scope in Indonesia because students from elementary up to university levels should learn English (Suhono & Sari, 2017; Suhono, 2016; Haikal, 2018). This means that the Minister of Education in Indonesia hopes that young generations will be smart and ready to face the globalization era (Anwar, 2020). But in fact, English is not yet fully understood by students. This needs to be considered because the competitiveness of the nation also depends on English language mastery. Therefore, teachers in schools are expected to assist students in learning English, one of which is by teaching reading properly and correctly.

However, nowadays, students cannot come to the class to follow the learning processes. Based on Steele et al. (2018), participating in a learning experience requires not only the acquisition of new knowledge but also more knowledge. To fully participate in the learning process, students must also connect with peers and mentors in a meaningful way. In line with this opinion, participation in the learning process is important to build online collaboration with classmates and teachers. Distance learning, during this COVID-19 pandemic, must be developed. In the educational sector, especially in the junior high school stage, reading is one of the important skills that students should acquire (Parahita, 2017). First of all, reading impacts the success of students' learning and helps with communication, listening, and vocabulary. Second, as stated by Gibb (2015) students who can read are more likely to succeed in school, obtain good qualifications, and subsequently have substantial and meaningful careers. This means that reading also impacts high professional achievement.

At the same time, active mastery of experience is considered to be the most effective source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) which brings impacts on high academic performance that enhances students' judgment on their ability to cope with future performance requirements (Schöber et al., 2018). Therefore, academic self-

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efficacy is considered to be the cause and result of academic achievement. Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1986, p. 391) as “people’s judgment of their ability to organize and execute the course of action to obtain a specified type of performance”. In other words, self-efficacy can be thought of as a personal belief about what an individual can learn or do by organizing and executing actions that lead to successful results (Unrau et al., 2018). Because in this study reading self-efficacy is the form of self-efficacy, the researchers define it as the readers’ perception of the ability to complete reading tasks (cf. Chapman & Turner, 1995; Guthrie & Coddington, 2009). Someone who applies self-efficacy in reading can help him understand the contents of the reading more confidently by organizing and implementing things that can make him successful.

There is some research related to this topic. Liao and Wang (2018) state that learning reading comprehension strategies can help students cope with reading anxiety, enhance self-efficacy, and further improve reading abilities. Therefore, teachers need to be more patient when helping students master strategies for resolving anxiety when learning English as a foreign language. They should give students sufficient time and guided exercises so that they can gain an appropriate understanding of the strategies to build self-confidence, reduce anxiety and achieve the desired level of self-efficacy and proficiency. Then, research from Kitikan and Sasimonton (2017) shows that there is a strong positive correlation between self-efficacy in various languages and overall English learning performance. The research result is consistent with the findings of Ahmadian and Pasand’s (2017) Friedman test. The results show that online metacognitive reading strategies for problem-solving are most commonly used by learners, while supporting strategies are the least commonly used. The findings of multiple analysis of variance in this study (MANOVA) reveal that there is a significant positive correlation between learners’ perceptions of metacognitive online reading strategies and their self-efficacy in reading comprehension. This research shows that women use more global online reading strategies, while men believe that it is more effective to read online texts. Finally, the analysis of the thinking way protocol shows that learners also use some other metacognitive online reading strategies.

So far, there has been very little research investigating students’ self-efficacy in online reading classes nor how online learning impacts on students’ reading ability. Currently, the students’ ability to read English is very important, especially when undergoing an online school. Since teachers may not be able to fully assist students in learning how to speak or write, they may choose to give students reading passages and then give them assignments based on reading. The availability of data on the impact of students’ self-efficacy and the impact of online learning on reading as perceived by students will contribute positively to the online learning of reading both teachers and students.

This study examined the perceived impacts of self-efficacy on the reading ability of 9th-grade at SMP 5 Purwokerto during distance learning. The data on the reading ability of junior high school students was collected while they were learning in online classes. This study focused on answering a research question: What is the perceived impact of self-efficacy on the reading ability of 9th-grade students at SMP 5 Purwokerto? The researchers used the qualitative method with two research instruments. First, the researchers collected data through Google Forms as digital questionnaires. Furthermore, the researchers randomly selected students to be interviewed. The data was processed using descriptive techniques and presented in tables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-efficacy

The basis of self-efficacy is “people believe in their ability to produce the desired effect through their actions” (Bandura, 1997). That is the most important determinant of people’s behavioral choices and persistence in facing obstacles and challenges. Based on Maddux (2002), self-efficacy beliefs are more than just predictions about behavior. Self-efficacy is not the intention to manifest or to achieve a specific goal. Research has shown that intention is affected by many factors, including but not limited to efficacy beliefs (Maddux, 1999). Self-efficacy beliefs have no behavioral expectations (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1999). The expected value of the behavior is a belief that a specific behavior may lead to a specific result in a specific situation. In short, self-efficacy is the belief that one can perform actions that produce results (Maddux, 2002).

Self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in many common psychological problems and successful interventions on those problems (Maddux, 2002). Low levels of self-efficacy expectations are an important feature of depression (Bandura, 1997; Maddux and Meier, 1995). Depressed people often think that they are less effective than others in many important areas of life. Dysfunctional anxiety and avoidance behaviors are usually the direct results of low self-efficacy in coping with threatening situations (Bandura, 1997; Williams, 1995). On the other hand, according to Maddux (2002), people who have strong confidence in their abilities will deal with potentially difficult situations more calmly and will not experience undue interference due to difficulties. Finally, self-efficacy has played an important role to overcome drug abuse and eating disorders (Bandura, 1997; DiClemente, Fairhurst, and Piotrowski, 1995).

Students’ Reading Ability

Grabe (1991) explains that research on reading in a foreign language to improve target language mastery has expanded in the main quarter of the most recent century. Viable reading needs precise understanding and abilities to read consequently (Raymond, 2006). Reading is an unpredictable interaction that includes various purposes and fluctuating cycles in various capacities (Grabe, 1991). Anderson (2006) suggested that reading has changed from what has been known as a responsive cycle to what in particular is currently known as an intelligent interaction. Reading perception expertise isolates “uninvolved or untalented” readers from the “dynamic” readers. It appears that dynamic readers can acquire data from the content and deduce the more profound layers of the proposed message (Nourdad et al., 2018). Sanders (2001) uncovered that in reading appreciation abilities the aloof untalented reader is isolated from the dynamic reader. Ultimately, not only do talented readers read, but they also collaborate with the content.

During the reading time in class, students intermittently have trouble reading narratives. Students once in a while give important data according to the teacher’s reading material (Permana et al., 2019). Such circumstances lower most students’ willingness and capacity to dive into any data within the reading content. Permana et al. (2019) explain that the basic issues which impact such circumstances are the students’ lack of information on reading and the recurrence of understanding action. Lacking information is reflected in the students’ helpless jargon and low perceptual capacity towards detailed data they can find in the reading content. As per Catherine (2002: 11), reading appreciation is the cycle of extricating and building significance through communication and inclusion with composed language. The presence of numerous markers or viewpoints while dissecting the reading text makes it hard for students to pick up the reading material.

A person reads successfully if he can go through several stages. The stages are adjusted to the person's age accordingly. Based on Chall (1989), there are six stages in reading development. Stage zero is a pre-reading or pseudo reading (6 months – 6 years old). In this stage, a child can understand thousands of words but can only read a few. The way to do this is to provide books and read dialogically. The first stage is initial reading and decoding (6-7 years). In this stage, a child can learn the relationship between letters and sounds, written and spoken words, read simple texts, sound out syllables of words, understand 4000 words, and read about 6000 words. The more effective way to get it is through direct instruction and practice than giving them storybooks with high-frequency words (most used words). Then, the second stage is confirmation and fluency (7-8 years). At this stage, children can read easily and select readings that increase fluency. What is more effective for children of this age is listening than reading. To obtain this, teachers can provide direct instruction on decoding skills through vocabulary activities. The next stage is reading for ages 9-13. Children learn new ideas, knowledge, experience, feelings and at the beginning of this stage. Teachers can provide more complex reading materials to get to this stage. The fourth stage is reading at multiple viewpoints (15-17 years). At this stage, readers read a broad range of complex reading material and comprehension. It is better than listening comprehension. The way to get this is through reading magazines and biological references and through studying words and word parts. The last stage is construction-reconstruction (18 years and above). In this stage, readers read argumentative texts, and reading at this stage is more efficient than listening. The way to get this is through reading the more difficult texts. Graphic organizers and context clues in reading are helpful for college students. Reading habits can be developed since childhood, starting from the pre-reading to the higher reading stages.

Online Reading

Nowadays schools in Indonesia are starting to implement digital reading. This is necessary to cultivate the habit of digital reading. This is in line with the opinion of the International Reading Association (2009) that today's literacy skills require not only the understanding of traditional printed texts but also the skills of twenty-first-century technology. While online reading has been an ordinary and accessible thing, readers are not captivated with digital messages adequately and effectively. Teachers can assist their students in improving their interest in online reading and perception by understanding the unmistakable difficulties of online-based reading and giving adequate preparation for advanced practice (Burn-Mercer, 2019). Both printed and digital reading require various complex abilities. Reading is characterized as "the capacity to draw importance from the printed page and decipher data fittingly" (Grabe and Stoller, 2011). It is affected by three factors: the content, the reader, and the reading circumstance. While reading, there are three possible learning approaches. First, they start reading by recognizing the smallest units of language, i.e., letters, which are trailed by the next words that consolidate to make sentences and sections (Konza, 2006). This methodology is known as bottom-up reading. Second, in a top-down way, singular word decoding is viewed as less critical, and learners predict and expect the importance of it through reading unknown dialects using their prior knowledge and making guesses. Eventually, the utilization of those methodologies is known as the intuitive way to deal with reading (Konza, 2006).

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative method to collect and analyse the data. The qualitative method aims to describe and clarify human experiences (Englander, 2019). To collect the qualitative data, the researchers used interviews and questionnaires. To generate extensive and in-depth interviews, the researchers processed useful

data obtained from the 9th-grade students of SMP 5 Purwokerto. The researchers took one of the classes, namely class 9A, which amounted to 32 students. All students followed the research well and cooperatively. The researchers used close-ended questionnaire using Google Form and interviews using telephone via WhatsApp application. The questions used are adapted to the conditions of students during online learning. The researchers wanted to see the impact of self-efficacy on students' reading ability during online classes.

The researchers distributed a questionnaire consisting of 10 close-ended questions that all the students could fill out and interviewed 5 students from class 9A which could be used as a data collection technique. In closed-ended questions, the researchers arranged questions based on the main research topic and problems that students often face in reading. To clarify the results of the study, the researchers used interviews that could help students explain the problems they were experiencing with the help of students' self-efficacy. Students could also share experiences and opinions in reading. Then, the researchers made data reduction for summarizing the data and selecting the main points. Afterwards, they rechecked and made a summary of each point. Furthermore, the researchers drew conclusions based on the data obtained. These are new findings that have never existed before. At the end of data processing, a complete research report was prepared by the researchers. This data processing also used descriptive statistical analysis taken from the results of the questionnaire, besides qualitative method. Qualitative is an investigation that does not apply statistical procedures nor tools (Ali and Yusof, 2011). In this respect, qualitative tools differ from quantitative tools because the main point of the quantitative method is the use of calculation and statistical analysis. The calculation equation used is as follows.

$$\Sigma x / \Sigma n. 100\%$$

where

Σx : Number of the voters

Σn : Number of all participants

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section sums up the research findings from a Likert scale survey and interviews to find out the perceived impacts of self-efficacy on the reading capacity of 9th-grade students while they were attending online classes. The finding expounds on the perceived effect of self-efficacy on the reading capacity of 32 students of 9A at SMPN 5 Purwokerto during the online class. Then, they emphasize the perceived reading ability of junior high school students when having online learning. Each finding is presented in tables with statements from the meeting results, related findings from past research, and interview.

Table 1. The Questionnaire Results of Self-efficacy on the Reading Ability

No	Statements	I cannot do it at all	I cannot do it	Maybe I cannot do it	Maybe I can do it	I can do it	I can do it well
1.	I can complete English reading assignments on my own and without the help of others.	-	-	1 (31.2%)	9 (28.1%)	8 (25%)	15 (45.5%)
2.	I can understand English news.	-	-	1 (0.3%)	11 (34.4%)	16 (48.5%)	5 (15.2%)
3.	I can understand English information on the Internet.	-	-	2 (6.1%)	6 (18.2%)	18 (54.5%)	7 (21.2%)

4.	I can understand the English reading text given by the teacher.	-	-	3 (0.9%)	5 (15.2%)	17 (51.5%)	8 (24.2%)
5.	I can understand English newspapers.	2 (6.1%)	2 (12.1%)	4 (12.1%)	12 (36.4%)	11 (33.3%)	2 (6.1%)
6.	I can understand new lessons in English school books.	-	2 (6.1%)	3 (9.1%)	6 (18.2%)	13 (39.4%)	9 (27.3%)
7.	I can understand English magazines.	1 (3%)	2 (6.1%)	4 (12.1%)	9 (27.3%)	13 (39.4%)	4 (12.1%)
8.	I can understand ads in English.	-		3 (9.1%)	5 (15.2%)	15 (45.5%)	10 (30.3%)
9.	I can understand English poetry.	-	1 (3%)	3 (9.1%)	11 (33.3%)	12 (36.4%)	6 (18.2%)
10.	I can understand English short novels.	-	2 (6.1%)	2 (6.1%)	13 (39.4%)	9 (27.3%)	7 (21.2%)

The research results in Table 1 show students' self-efficacy in reading in online classes. There were twelve statements that the respondents should answer. Statement one represents the students' perception about their ability to complete English reading assignments without the help of others. Fifteen students (45.5%) admitted that they could do well in English assignments without the help of others. Furthermore, 8 (25%) students acknowledged that they could do English assignments without the help of others. Then, 9 (28.1%) students believed that they could do the English assignment without the help of others and 1 (31.2%) student stated that he or she was unsure whether or not they could complete the project without assistance. This first statement corresponds to the fourth stage of reading from various points of view (15-17 years old) because students in grade 9 are generally 15 years old (see, Chall, 1989). At this stage, a reader reads various complex reading materials and has a better perception of reading than listening comprehension. Some ways to improve reading skills are through reading magazines and other reading materials and through the study of words and word parts. There were various reasons why 12 students reported being not sure about their English skills, such as they did not read enough English books from a young age and they were not used to reading English texts based on questionnaire and interview.

Next, statement two is about the students' perceived ability to students can understand English news. There were 5 (15.2%) students who agreed that they understood English news. Then, as many as 16 (48.5%) students admitting understanding English news. The remaining 11 (34.4%) reported being not sure about their ability to read English news and 1 (0.3%) student said that he was not sure that he could read English news. Based on the interview, they read a lot of online news but rarely read a print newspaper. This is in line with the notion of the International Reading Association (2009) that today's literacy skills require not only understanding of traditional printed texts but also twenty-first-century technological skills. While online reading is commonplace and necessary in many instances, readers are not captivated by digital messages adequately or effectively.

Then, statement three is about the students' perception about their ability to understand English information on the internet. There were 7 (21.2%) students who acknowledged that they could do it well, 18 (54.5%) students admitting being able to do it, the rest 6 (18.2%) students reported having the ability to do it, and 2 (6.1%) students stated that they probably could not do it. Almost all the 9th-grade students confessed that they could understand English information that they read through the internet. It shows that almost all of them understood the importance of learning English even with an online mode. These data were supported by the data from the interview. One of the respondents declared:

“I’ve read English novels or stories on the internet (e-books).”

It can be seen that today’s child development, especially in relation to technology, is very rapid. Children sometimes choose to read through mobile devices. This is supported by a statement of the International Reading Association (2009) that today’s literacy skills require not only the understanding of traditional printed texts but also the skills of twenty-first-century technology. It can be used by today’s teachers to make teaching easier and effective.

The fourth statement shows that eight students (24.2%) chose “I can do it well” and three students (37.5%) chose “agree”. These findings indicate that they can understand the English reading text given by the teacher. If students can understand the material given during online school, it means the teacher successfully provides instructions and understanding of the material that help students succeed in following the lesson. Through the English text, students can find out a lot of new things in which the teacher can add daily assignments and tests, as one student explained in the interview as follows:

“I like English as my parents have taught me English since I was a little, so I can easily understand and apprehend English texts without thinking about vocabulary too much.”

During the reading time in class, students occasionally face writing difficulties in the reading report. Indeed, students occasionally provide important data because of questions from the teacher in the teaching reading interaction (Permana et al., 2019). It can be seen that many parents accompany them while studying. If students did not understand the English reading assignment, they could also ask their parents, consulted the dictionary, or got help on Google.

The fifth questionnaire item is about the students’ ability to understand English news. Two students (6.1%) strongly believed they could read well, eleven students (33.3%) stated they could read English newspapers, twelve students (36.4%) had confusion in their ability to read English newspapers, four students (12.1%) doubted that they cannot do it and the other four students (12.1%) stated that they could not read English newspapers at all. This, however, could be overcome by doing a repeated reading or consulting the dictionary. A respondent explained that in the interview:

“I understand the contents of the reading by reading it repeatedly then translate the unknown vocabulary.”

It can be seen that junior high school students need to improve the culture of literacy, especially in English reading. Indeed, English printed newspapers in Purwokerto are rare or even almost impossible to find. However, people can still read English newspapers on the internet. Teachers can assist their students by improving their online reading interest and perception, understanding the obvious difficulties of online-based reading, and providing adequate preparation systems and advanced reading practices (Burn-Mercer, 2019).

Then, the sixth questionnaire item is about the students’ ability to learn new things through English school books. Almost all students could earnestly learn something new despite online schooling. Nine students (27.3%) reported being very confident that they could learn new material from an English book. Thirteen students (39.4%) said that they were sure they could do it; six students (18.2%) stated that they were doubtful about it, and the rest (15.1%) were not sure that they could do it. Students had some doubts due to the lack of assistance from teachers and parents at home. During the pandemic, schools did not carry out face-to-face meetings, so students could study alone at home with parental assistance. One of the students put out:

“I can immediately learn and read on my own. If I read and study before being instructed by the teacher, I can answer any questions from her.”

On the other hand, another student said:

“I wait for the teacher’s orders because sometimes I don’t understand the instructions in the book.”

From these two opinions, it was clear that junior high school students still needed assistance from their parents or teachers although some of them could learn English on their own. Restricted mobility and limited time during the pandemic could be obstacles to English learning. Even so, students should have self-confidence because the basis of self-efficacy theory is that people’s belief in their ability to produce the desired effect through their actions (Bandura, 1997). It is one of the most important determinant of people’s desired behavior and survival from obstacles and challenges.

The seventh questionnaire item is about the students’ ability to understand English magazines. The results show that four students (12.1%) could confidently read an English magazine, thirteen students (39.4%) believed they could read it, nine students (27.3%) were doubtful that they could not read it, four students (12.1%) were unsure if they can read it, and the rest (9.1%) could not that they read English magazines. It could be seen that reading English magazines was not popular among junior high school students, as explained by the following student:

“When I read English magazines, I usually don’t understand them. But I’m still learning to get used to it.”

As stated above that English language magazines were rare in their area. It comes as no surprise that the students lacked an interest in reading English magazines. Teachers however could introduce English magazines through the teaching and learning process. In addition, students could also search for it by themselves on the internet. This is in line with Grabe and Stoller’s notion (2011) that reading is characterized by the ability to draw interest from the printed page and decipher data appropriately. It is influenced by three factors: content, readership, and reading state.

The eighth questionnaire item is about the students’ ability to understand English advertisements. Ten students (30.3%) strongly believed that they understood an English ad, fifteen students (45.5%) believed they could understand it, five students (15.2%) were doubtful about their ability to understand it and the rest (9.1%) were doubtful that they cannot understand an ad well. From these data, almost all students could understand English ads. This is reinforced by a student who stated:

“Advertisements have simple sentences. If I find one that is difficult to understand, I look for the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary in the dictionary.”

Advertisements use common vocabulary that is easily understood by the audience. Therefore, students can easily grasp the intent, purpose, and characteristics of advertisements. The teacher also will find it easy to acquire teaching materials regarding advertisements.

Next is about students’ ability to understand English poetry. The results of the questionnaire show that six students (18.2%) were very sure they can understand it well, twelve students (36.4%) could understand it, eleven students (33.3%) were doubtful about it, and the other students (12.1%) could not understand English poetry well. Poetry does use figurative language that junior high school students rarely know. However, the students were also trying to find the meaning of new and unfamiliar vocabulary they find. It proves that the students had a high level of self-efficacy. This is in line with the opinion of Maddux (2002) that self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in many common psychological problems and successful interventions.

Last but not least is the students’ ability to understand English short novels. From the results of the questionnaire, seven students (21.2%) mentioned that they were very sure that they could read an English novel; nine students (27.3%) stated that were sure about it; thirteen students (39.4%) stated that they were hesitant about

it, and the rest (12.1%) acknowledged that they could not read an English novel. For most junior high school students, reading English novels was challenging. However, a number of them enjoy it, as explained by a student:

“I do not know the meaning of every word in the novel but I understand the gist of the story.”

It demonstrates that not all students did not like novels due to the bountiful novel genres that they could choose. This is in line with Chall's theory (1989) that the fourth stage is reading with various perspectives for 15 to 17 years old. At this stage, readers could read from various complex materials and they regarded it better than listening comprehension. The way they undertook to master reading comprehension was through reading magazines and biological references and through learning words and word parts.

The results of this study indicate that self-efficacy in reading influences students' interest in online English classes. Students' willingness to read English literature is influenced by the inner drive to take action. A high level of self-efficacy that students have in online classes, especially in reading activities, is driven by motivation within themselves, as well as external factors that work well together, such as parents who provide learning facilities, teachers who provide materials and assignments to help students study well, and classmates to support one another. Only students with great self-efficacy will unlock academic achievements. Thus, every student needs to have great self-efficacy to meet the learning objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings and discussions above denote that most students had a high level of self-efficacy in reading during online classes. They were responsible for the tasks given and do them with the help of parents, Google, and the internet whenever they encounter difficulties. Furthermore, the research shows students' good perceptions of their reading ability. In general, 15-year-old student reads from a broad range of complex reading materials. This can be developed through wider reading activities such as reading English newspapers and magazines. Based on the data analysis, the researchers concluded that the 9th-grade students of SMPN 5 Purwokerto had good reading ability and self-efficacy because they could find solutions to every problem and read a lot of new things from the internet, newspapers, novels, or magazines. Online classes seemed to bring independence to students to find solutions to problems that arise. The drawback of this study was the lack of interview respondents due to time constraints. Further researchers are suggested to use quantitative methods.

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