# Reading Self-Efficacy of EFL Students on Pre-Service Teaching Program and Practice in the EFL Classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

Students' self-efficacy regarding their ability to learn is critical for their motivation to learn and achieve the intended goals. What they believe, they are capable of will influence how they learn. This study examines students' self-efficacy in reading academic materials and their preferred academic materials based on two distinct sources, printed and digital. Descriptive qualitative is used to conduct this study. In collecting the data, the researchers utilized an online questionnaire and interview. The study interviewed and distributed questionnaires to 30 university students about their experiences reading academic materials. The study found that students exhibit favorable attitudes toward the three components of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and physiological states. Additionally, the majority of students have a high level of self-efficacy when it comes to reading academic materials from both printed and digital sources. From the two sources, students prefer to read digital academic materials than printed ones. Therefore, lecturers are expected to let students choose the most appropriate sources of materials for academic reading. They should also instill a reading habit in their students, which can begin with reading materials that interest them.

**Keywords:** *academic materials; EFL classrooms; reading academic materials; self-efficacy; students' self-efficacy*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is the basic activity for obtaining information and nurturing the human brain. The process requires understanding the meaning of written words through interaction and association of the words (Yogurtcu, 2013). This enables them to acquire knowledge and expand their horizons. In this case, reading requires individuals to exert conscious and cognitive effort in order to achieve their reading goals. Readers should be cautious about what they read and the information they seek. Reading comprehension involves different processes: imagining what the words describe, understanding the context of the book and being able to answer the questions relating to the texts (Kent, 2002, cited in Yogurtcu, 2013). In this case, the students are displaying their comprehension skills when they can answer the questions about the book, explain important events described in the book and have an opinion of why the events may occur. Comprehending the text is not an easy process: the readers need to recall the information obtained from the reading, rework the information and link to new data when it is necessary (Yogurtcu, 2013). Without having the skills, students will struggle to grow academically, as reading is the foundation of all academic subjects. This may affect their ability to write, as reading involves two things: comprehension of the subject matter and the memory to retain the materials read. Both components are part of the learning process for the readers. Logically, students are able to write more or express their ideas in written form when they have the materials to write. When they read a variety of topics, they can recall the information obtained from previous reading in their writing.

Given the complexity of the process of comprehending reading texts, teachers should instill the ability at an early age. Children may struggle to engage with the storyline of the book they are reading while they are learning to read. However, by encouraging students to read in every lesson, teachers can stimulate their imagination and help them develop a love of books (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016). Mclean and Poulshock (2018) argue that reading skills will enable learners to discover new things and educate themselves in any area of life in which they are interested. In other words, acquiring the skill will benefit students academically and help them develop into lifelong readers. The following question is how to maintain students' interest in reading. It makes sense for teachers to encourage students to read in every lesson (Lee and Jonson-Reid, 2016). By frequently promoting reading habits in the classroom environment, students may develop an appreciation for reading because it fosters a supportive environment. They will develop a reading habit and a passion for reading. They are not compelled to read, but reading is an integral part of their education.

Numerous studies on reading in the EFL context have been conducted, focusing on a variety of topics, including reading strategies, the use of technology in reading, and self-efficacy in reading. In terms of the role of self-efficacy in sustaining students' motivation, research has shown that it contributes to students' reading comprehension (Solheim, 2011) and is a significant factor in academic achievement in both Second Language Education (SLE) and Foreign Language Education (FLE) (Yogurtcu, 2013). Solheim (2011) makes a point of emphasizing the importance of motivation in students' reading development. This may occur because students who comprehend and interpret texts unconsciously develop their reading comprehension and self-confidence in the books they are reading, and by being motivated to read, students may develop an awareness of their ability to read effectively. Motivation in this context is self-efficacy; it refers to an individual's personal capacity for completing a particular task (Walker, 2003; Yang et al., 2018). Teachers can engage students in literacy activities by understanding motivation and self-efficacy. Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) argue that the development of students' reading skills is contingent on not only their verbal abilities, but also on motivational variables, which plays a significant role in the development of their literacy skills (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, students who have a high level of self-efficacy are more likely to make personal progress on reading tasks and achieve higher levels of literacy achievement.

Bandura (1997) views self-efficacy as individuals' capacity to carry out actions required to achieve a confindent level of achievement. When people have self-efficacy, they will be able to demonstrate a particular performance and achieve it successfully (Bandura, 1997; Guthrie et al., 2007; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007; Solheim, 2011). Some scholars argue that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices they make, the goals they set for learning (Schnell et al., 2015), the effort they make (Galla et al., 2014), and their persistence in tasks (Schnell et al., 2015). Research has revealed that students with low self-efficacy seem to avoid challenging reading tasks while self-efficacious students challenge themselves to read demanding reading materials and tasks (Solheim, 2011). This hightlights that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs influence their development in a positive way. Accordingly, self-efficious students will participate more readily, work harder, persist longer and have fewer adverse emotional reactions than students who doubt their abilities (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Students may have varying beliefs about their capabilities for learning in general, for reading competencies or completing reading tasks (Peura et al., 2019), and the level of their self-efficacy will influence the performance they make (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997)

further explains that individuals with self-efficacy see problems as challenges they should cope with: not as threats that will hinder them. Thus, if they fail, it is not due to a lack of skills but to their insufficient efforts in achieving the targets. Individuals can still set goals by experiencing and learning the process of coping with problems and achieving their goals. If the individuals do not reach the goal set, they may need to increase their efforts (Safali & Akpunar, 2020). Considering the critical role of self-efficacy in sustaining individual reading motivation. It will be interesting to investigate college students' self-efficacy with regards to reading comprehension. The purpose of this study is to ascertain students' self-efficacy in reading academic materials by examining the types of materials they read (e.g. print and digital). Additionally, the study identifies the type of reading materials they prefer and the reasons for their preference.

**METHOD**

To ascertain students' self-efficacy in reading academic materials, this study employed a qualitative approach, distributing questionnaires to 30 EFL students and conducting in-depth interviews with three of them. Each student is completing a research proposal in order to gain experience reading academic materials in both digital and print formats. This study began with the distribution of a questionnaire to ascertain the general trend in students' self-efficacy levels. Then, it continued to gather additional data, focusing on the types of academic materials they prefer to read and the rationale behind their choices. (Safali & Akpunar, 2020)

This study enrolled 30 EFL students who are currently working on their thesis proposals for the questionnaires. We chose only these students because they were required to read a substantial amount of academic material, both digital and printed, in order to write their proposal. This criterion is advantageous for determining their self-efficacy when it comes to reading academic materials. If they have no prior experience of reading academic papers, they may be unable to distinguish between academic and non-academic books. Students majoring in English teaching from a public university in Surabaya took part in this study. We conducted a case study of these students due to their ease of access to data and their prior experience reading academic papers in both digital and print formats. We recognize that throughout the pandemic, all lecturers share reading materials online, which means that students will need to read the papers digitally, even if some will print them. Additionally, students have the ability to borrow books from the library, allowing them to read academic materials in print. The study interviewed three students based on their lecturers' recommendations to learn about the types of academic material they prefer to read and the reasons for their preferences.

As mentioned previously, this study examined two research questions: students' self-efficacy in reading academic materials and the types of academic materials they prefer to read (e.g. digital or print). We distributed questionnaires and conducted interviews to ascertain the answers to the two research questions. The questionnaire is used to assess students' self-efficacy in reading academic papers and is based on Henk and Melnick's Reader Self Perception Scale (RSPS) (1995). The questionnaire contains closed-ended items in the form of a Likert Scale, with participants asked to select one of five possible responses, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions cover general information (e.g., participant demographics), mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and psychological states. This study interviewed students to learn about the types of academic papers they prefer to read. The interview was conducted online via WhatsApp or Zoom, as agreed upon by the participants. The interviewees were questioned not only about their preferences for academic materials, but also about their rationale for choosing the described option. Due to the fact that we used a semi-structured interview, we had the freedom to develop questions based on the participants' responses in order to elicit detailed information (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The questionnaire data were coded according to the responses of the participants (e.g. strongly agree was coded by 5 and strongly disagree was 1). All data was exported to Excel for analysis. This study used SPSS to analyze questionnaire data in order to determine the students' level of self-efficacy (Pallant, 2016). The analysis's findings were classified into three categories: low, moderate, and high. The self-efficacy level of students is calculated in Table 1.

**Table 1 Students' self-efficacy level**

| Formula | Interval | Score | Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| $X < (\mu - \sigma)$ | $X < 35$ | 15 - 34 | Low |
| $(\mu - \sigma) \leq X \leq (\mu + \sigma)$ | $35 \leq X \leq 55$ | 35 - 55 | Moderate |
| $X > (\mu + \sigma)$ | $X > 55$ | 56 – 90 | High |

We began our analysis of the interview data by transcribing all of the recorded interviews. Then, we read through all transcripts to familiarize ourselves with the interview's content and highlighted some key points. It was a recursive process in which we read the data several times in order to comprehend it. We coded key points and grouped similar responses into one category as we read the transcripts. If there were additional responses, we categorized them accordingly. The coding system was developed from the data and was modified a few times to align with the categories established by other participants' responses.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In terms of students' self-efficacy for reading academic materials, questionnaire analysis revealed that students have varying levels of self-efficacy for reading both printed and digital academic materials: low, moderate, and high. We categorize self-efficacy into three distinct levels to enable scoring (see Table 1. for the range score of each level). Figure 1 and Figure 2 depict the percentage of students' self-efficacy in reading printed and digital academic materials.
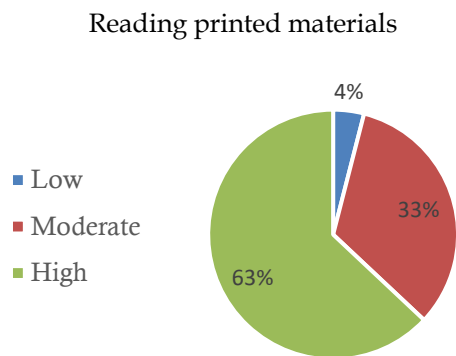
Reading printed materials



**Figure 1 Self-efficacy in Reading Printed Materials**
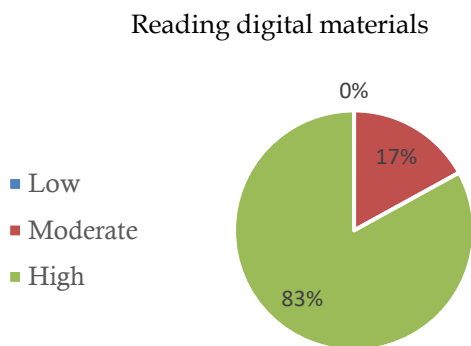
Reading digital materials



**Figure 2 Self-efficacy in Reading Digital Materials**

According to Figure 1 and Figure 2, the majority of students have a high level of self-efficacy when it comes to reading printed and digital academic materials, with 63% and 83% of responses, respectively. This indicates that the majority of students enjoy reading academic materials and comprehend the content of texts in both print and digital formats (as described in the questionnaire). In detail, Figure 1 demonstrates that a sizable proportion of students (63 percent responses) agreed with statements indicating a high level of self-efficacy in reading printed academic materials. 33% of students have a moderate level of self-efficacy, while 4% have a low level of self-efficacy. In terms of self-efficacy for reading digital materials, the majority of students (83%) have a high level of self-efficacy, while 17% have a medium level of self-efficacy. Interestingly, the findings indicate that no student has a low self-efficacy level.

This indicates that students have a high level of self-efficacy when it comes to reading digital academic materials.

However, Figure 2 indicates that reading digital materials received more responses (83%) than reading printed materials. This indicates that students have a higher level of self-efficacy when it comes to reading digital materials than when it comes to reading printed materials. The result makes sense, as students may have grown accustomed to reading materials digitally, particularly since the outbreak of Covid-19. We believe that the majority of

students are enrolled in online courses during the pandemic and are required to read and search for materials online. When they are looking for information, they may find it more convenient to read digitally or online, as this eliminates the need to borrow books from the library or from their colleagues. This is supported by the self-efficacy results for reading digital materials, which indicate that no student has low self-efficacy in this format. This means that the condition may encourage students to read more digital materials, thereby increasing their self-efficacy in digital reading over printed reading. We hypothesize that accessibility to materials may contribute to students' self-efficacy when it comes to reading digital materials.

Concerning the type of reading materials that students prefer, this study interviewed three students to ascertain their preferences and justifications for reading print or digital materials. According to the interview analysis, three students preferred to read digitally rather than in print. For instance, Student A stated that she became bored reading printed texts and thus preferred to read digitally. We assume that reading digital materials enables students to zoom in and out on the content of the texts they wish to highlight, which adds interest to the reading. Another student pointed out that he could easily and quickly save the file or reading material, as well as access it from any location. This convenience led him to prefer reading digital materials over printed ones. This

finding is consistent with the findings regarding self-efficacy in reading both print and digital materials, which indicate that students have a higher level of self-efficacy when reading digital materials.

*'According to me, reading printed materials is boring, especially when I have to read a lot of print texts. I feel bored after reading some pages and I get sleepy'* (Student A).

*'Digital cannot be disappear. We can bring it everywhere in our cell phone, and it simpler'* (Student B).

*'It is practical, convenient, and simple to obtain information and knowledge from a digital material'* (Student C).

Even though the three students said that they preferred to read digitally, they still read academic materials in print. They pointed out several reasons for reading the two formats, as described in Table 2.

**Table 2 Reasons for Reading Printed and Digital Materials**

| Printed | Digital |
|---|---|
| ▪ Able to highlight difficult words | ▪ Easy to access & search information |
| ▪ Easy to memorise information | ▪ Portability |
| | ▪ Practical & convenient |

Table 2 shows that participating students argued that they were able to highlight key

points or difficult words when using printed materials. It aided them in easily memorizing the information. The finding indicates that some students have a variety of strategies for comprehending the texts, and they have the freedom to choose the one that works best for them. For instance, some individuals may find that reading printed materials helps them recall information more easily because they can highlight key points. The primary objective of any approach they take should be to benefit their development. This implies that certain strategies may be effective for some students but ineffective for others. The study discovered that students read digital materials because they make it easier to access and search for information. Furthermore, they were swayed by the portability of digital academic resources. They could easily transport and save reading materials on their smartphone.

Self-efficacy is formed by four sources of information; mastery experience (progress) how one's perception of current reading performance compares to his/her previous experience, vicarious experience (observational comparison), social persuasion, and physiological states related to one's internal feeling towards his/her experience during reading (Bandura, 1997). According to the study, students responded positively to the three sources of self-efficacy, which are mastery experience, vicarious experiences, and physiological states.

## CONCLUSION

This study discovered that students have a high level of self-efficacy when it comes to reading academic materials in both print and digital formats. They appear to understand the value of academic reading as a component of their education. That is why their self-efficacy is unaffected by the format in which they read, whether print or digital. They have confidence in their ability to complete the reading tasks and are likely to find solutions to the difficulties they encounter. Lecturers should reflect on this and recognize that when students choose topics that interest them, they will persevere longer and exert more efforts. As a result, teachers' preferred method of motivating students is to plan interesting topics and clever activities. When students develop confidence in their ability to read, they become active participants in their education. By providing students with options, literacy strategies, and opportunities for self-evaluation, teachers can help students to develop and reflect on what they did. Understanding the situational nature of self-efficacy can assist teachers in developing classroom procedures that incorporate choice, allowing students to concentrate on learning and reflection. Additionally, lecturers can reinforce self-motivating statements about students' strategy use by focusing on effort and strategy use rather than failure. Along with reinforcing positive self-evaluations about specific tasks, these changes can help

students increase their self-efficacy. These experiences can help students become more engaged in the task and motivated to continue reading.

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