

Exploring the Link Between Reading Self-Efficacy and Comprehension: A Study on Chemical Engineering Students

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency is vital for chemical engineering students to access scientific literature and technical documentation. Among the critical skills, reading comprehension plays a central role. This study investigates the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension in first-year chemical engineering students at Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. A quantitative approach was employed, involving 66 participants. Data were gathered using a reading self-efficacy questionnaire and a standardized reading comprehension test. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to determine the relationship between the two variables. The analysis indicated a moderate positive correlation between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension ($r = 0.469$). The p-value (7.04×10^{-5}) was below the 0.05 threshold, confirming statistical significance. These findings suggest that students with higher confidence in their reading abilities tend to perform better in reading comprehension tasks. The results support the initial hypothesis that self-efficacy significantly influences reading comprehension. This underscores the need for instructional strategies that build students' confidence in reading. To enhance reading comprehension among chemical engineering students, educators should prioritize methods that foster reading self-efficacy. One effective approach is the use of top-down reading strategies, which encourage active engagement with texts and can improve both confidence and comprehension outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In education, self-efficacy (SE) plays a significant role in academic achievement and learning. Self-efficacy (SE) is the conviction in one's ability to execute successfully a certain assignment or accomplish a target (Walidaini, 2020). Students with high SE tend to be more active in learning, use effective ways to solve problems, and continue trying over a long period. In essence, students who have high SE have the potential to be more persistent when facing challenges and more successful in academic and career achievement (Y. Li & Wang, 2010). Self-efficacy helps a person become resilient, adaptable, and successful in a changing world. Self-efficacy is influenced by four key factors: mastery experiences, indirect

experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological states (Wijaya, 2021). Direct experience is the most important because it involves someone successfully overcoming challenges, thus strengthening their self-confidence. Meanwhile, indirect experience occurs when someone sees the success of others, especially if the person is similar to themselves. Verbal persuasion, such as motivational reinforcement or positive feedback, can also increase self-efficacy. Finally, an individual's emotional and physiological states, such as anxiety or excitement, can influence their beliefs in their abilities, either positively or negatively.

In educational settings, developing reading comprehension (RC) is critical to academic success and lifelong learning (Duc & Lan, 2023). Strategies such as guided reading, interactive questioning, and explicit instruction in comprehension skills can help students become more effective readers. For instance, explicit instruction in critical thinking skills has been shown to significantly enhance RC among learners, as critical thinking is integral to the reading process, involving skills such as inference, analysis, and evaluation (Taghi Hassani, Rahmany, & Babaei, 2013). Educators play a critical role in modeling comprehension strategies, encouraging critical thinking, and giving pupils the chance to interact with a range of texts. By understanding the complexity of RC, educators can implement approaches that meet individual needs and build students' confidence in understanding increasingly complex material. Nevertheless, the capability to comprehend and analyze texts isn't always dependent on cognitive skills such as vocabulary and decoding abilities.

One of the language abilities that pupils should have is reading (Maharani, Juniardi, & Nurlely, 2022). In the context of reading, SE influences how students deal with challenging texts, persist through difficulties, and use strategies to enhance their understanding (Witri, 2021). Self-efficacy is one of the factors that play a significant role in a reader's ability to comprehend and interpret text. Readers with high SE are more likely to use effective strategies, such as inferring and summarizing, that enhance comprehension (Unrau et al., 2017). Conversely, low SE can lead to a lack of effort, which negatively impacts reading performance.

Reading comprehension is one of the skills tested in TOEFL. Reading comprehension (RC) is an essential skill that plays a critical role in academic achievement and continuous education (Prawiyata & Barus, 2022). The process of creating meaning from written text by combining linguistic and cognitive skills is known as RC (Nation, 2019). Then, Devi et al (Devi, Juniardi, & Syafrizal, 2020) stated that the process of RC is dynamic, requiring the reader to decode the text precisely and swiftly in order to comprehend it. It involves decoding words, understanding sentences, and integrating information into a broader context. Key cognitive components such as vocabulary knowledge, working memory, and inference-making are important for RC as well (Smith, Snow, Serry, & Hammond, 2021). Readers must not only recognize words but also understand their meaning in context to obtain an accurate interpretation.

English language proficiency for Chemical Engineering students can be measured through TOEFL scores, which is a standardized test to assess English language skills, especially in academic contexts (Bania, 2024). Mastering English language skills is very necessary in the academic and professional world. Chemical Engineering students need to have good English language skills because most scientific literature, textbooks, and research in the field of chemical engineering are written in English (Ji, 2022). In addition, English is used in many international conferences, scientific journals, and professional communications. Good English language skills are also important for understanding technical instructions, working together on global projects, and interacting with colleagues or experts from various countries (Layagan, 2024). At Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Untirta), chemical engineering students are required to achieve a TOEFL score of at least 400, which is one of the graduation requirements. This requirement aims to ensure that graduates have adequate English language skills. To successfully complete the chemical engineering study program, students need to improve their English skills from the beginning of their academic journey as new students. Therefore, English language ability measurement needs to be done in semester 1.

Some researchers have studied the relationship between self-efficacy (SE) and reading comprehension (RC). Fitri et al. (Fitri E., Sofyan, & Jayanti, 2019) examined if there was any significant correlation between SE and RC at SMAN 5 Bengkulu. The subjects of this research were 273 students in the 12th grade in a science class at Senior High School 5 Bengkulu. The findings revealed a strong relationship between SE and RC. Then, another study (Apriliyani & Usuludin, 2023) revealed that there was a significant correlation between SE and RC in senior high school students (eleventh grade) with a coefficient correlation of 0.174. Furthermore, Rama (Rama, 2022) investigated that there was a significant positive correlation between SE and students' RC at SMA N 2 Wawatobi. In this research, the participants were 32 science students. In addition, Oranpattanachai (Oranpattanahai, 2023) in the research, showed that there was a significant correlation between reading strategy, SE, and RC. The research sample consisted of 31 Thai engineering students at a public university in Thailand. Then, Ghabdian and Ghafournia (Ghabdian & Ghafournia, 2016) showed that there was a significant positive correlation between SE and RC. The participants were 120 students from various language schools.

Based on the information above, other authors have not conducted an investigation of the correlation between self-efficacy and reading comprehension among chemical engineering department students. Hence, the purpose of this study was to examine that correlation using respondents from the Chemical Engineering Department, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. In this case, the TOEFL score is used to measure students' understanding of reading comprehension.

The research question in this study is whether there is a significant correlation between self-efficacy and reading comprehension among Chemical Engineering students at Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. This study hypothesizes that higher reading self-efficacy is positively correlated with better reading comprehension in the TOEFL test.

2. METHODS

2.1. Respondents

The respondents of this investigation were 66 first-semester students in Chemical Engineering at the Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Untirta). Students registered in the academic year 2024/2025. These first-semester students were selected because the researchers hope that the results of this study can be used to design earlier interventions to help improve their reading skills and self-confidence from the start of college.

The respondents were taking a course of "*Pengolahan dan Analisis Data*" in Chemical Engineering at the Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Untirta). They were asked to participate in filling out the SE questionnaire and answer RC questions in the TOEFL test voluntarily after the lecture was completed. Respondents were informed that their personal data would be kept confidential.

2.2. Collecting data

This study used a quantitative research design. The study instruments were English reading SE and RC tests. The questions in the survey were modified from Li and Wang (Y. Li & Wang, 2010). Li and Wang's questionnaire was used in this research because in line with Li and Wang's research which focused on self-efficacy. Additionally, this questionnaire is designed for EFL learners, so it is relevant for UNTIRTA Chemical Engineering students who use English as a second language. The format of self-efficacy questionnaires was statements. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items. The questionnaire utilized a seven-point rating scale of self-efficacy, where participants were asked to select their responses by ticking based on their opinions about reading self-efficacy English of each item. The self-efficacy questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 1.

Meanwhile, the material of the RC test was 25 of 50 reading equations from a Longman TOEFL test used by (Sintya, 2022). The TOEFL test was used as a tool to measure RC because TOEFL is a standardized test that is widely accepted to measure English language proficiency. In addition, the

TOEFL test score is used as a graduation requirement in the UNTIRTA chemical engineering department, so this can be used as a basic reference for developing English language proficiency. The 25-item test's correct response was utilized to determine the student's level of reading comprehension (RC). The survey of SE questionnaire and RC test was distributed through Google Forms, allowing participants to easily provide their responses online. The item tests can be seen in Appendix 2.

2.3. Analyzing data

2.3.1. Self-efficacy value

Each student filled in the self-efficacy questionnaire having 14 statements. Each statement has a seven-point rating scale. Thus, each statement has a point with a range of 1-7. A total of points from 14 statements was then calculated. Furthermore, the self-efficacy value of each student was determined using Equation 1.

$$\text{self efficacy value} = \frac{\text{Total of point}}{(7 \times 14)} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

2.3.2. Reading comprehension value

Each student did an RC test with 25 questions. Then, the reading comprehension value of each student was determined using Equation 2.

$$\text{Reading Comprehension value} = \frac{\text{Total of correct answer}}{25} \times 100\% \quad (2)$$

2.3.3. Normality test

The researcher utilized the Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis to assess the data's normality with the help of Microsoft Excel.

2.3.4. Homogeneity test

The homogeneity analysis was carried out through the F-Test Two-Sample for Variances method with the help of Microsoft Excel.

2.3.5. Correlation (Pearson's coefficient)

The correlation between self-efficacy (SE) value and reading comprehension (RC) value was determined using Pearson's coefficient (Equation 3).

$$R = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})^2 \times \sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}} \quad (3)$$

Where:

R = Pearson's coefficient

X = Self-efficacy value

Y = Reading comprehension value

\bar{X} = Mean of self-efficacy (SE)

\bar{Y} = Mean of reading comprehension (RC)

The subscript i = i-th data

n = Number of data

After we got the correlation, the researcher analyzed the correlation using the interpretation guidelines for Pearson's coefficient. The interpretation table is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The interpretation of Pearson's coefficient (Fitri E. et al., 2019)

Coefficient Interval	Degree of Interpretation
0.00 – 0.199	Very low
0.20 – 0.399	Low
0.40 – 0.599	Medium
0.60 – 0.799	Strong
0.80 – 1.000	Very strong

2.3.6. Significance test

The significance of the correlation between SE and RE was analyzed through a t-test. The t_{table} was determined with a confidence level of 95% and the two-tailed test. The $t_{calculated}$ was determined using Equation 4.

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \quad (4)$$

Where:

$t = t_{calculated}$

r = correlation coefficient value

n = number of samples

With hypotheses:

H_0 = there is no significant correlation.

H_1 = there is a significant correlation.

If the $t_{calculated}$ is higher than t_{table} , H_1 is accepted, meaning that the correlation is significant. On the opposite, if the $t_{calculated}$ is lower than t_{table} , H_0 is accepted, meaning that the correlation is not significant.

In addition to using the T-test, the significance of the relationship between SE and RC can be seen from the P-value. In this study, researchers calculated the P-value using the ANOVA table with a confidence level of 95% with the help of Microsoft Excel. If the P-value is lower than 0.05, the correlation is significant. On the opposite, if the P-value is higher than 0.05, the correlation is not significant.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Descriptive data on the self-efficacy in the reading of first-semester Chemical Engineering students

The mean score for the descriptive data on the English reading self-efficacy of first-semester Chemical Engineering students was 70.5, with a 10.84 standard deviation. The range of scores is 36.7 at the lowest and 100 at the highest, with a total range of 63.3. which shows a wide diversity in self-efficacy levels. The median score is 70.9, which is very consistent with the mean. Whereas, the mode is 62.24, reflecting the most frequent score among the 66 students assessed. These results highlight varying degrees of self-assurance in reading proficiency across the students. The descriptive data on SE in the reading are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Descriptive Data on Self-Efficacy in Reading

Mean	70.5
Standard Deviation	10.84
Max	100
Min	36.7
Range	63.3
Median	70.9
Mode	62.24
N	66

3.2. Descriptive data on the reading comprehension of first-semester Chemical Engineering students

The descriptive data for RC among the students shows a mean score of 56.73, with a standard deviation of 16.79. The range of scores is 12 at the lowest and 80 at the highest, resulting in a range of 68, which shows considerable diversity in RC levels, slightly higher than the mean, while the mode is 52. These findings suggest that while some students have good RC, others still face significant difficulties in this case. The descriptive data of RC are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The descriptive data of reading comprehension

Mean	56.73
Standard Deviation	16.79
Max	80
Min	12
Range	68
Median	60
Mode	52
N	66

3.3. Normality test

Data was normally distributed if the D value < Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) table whereas if the D value > KS table, the data was not normally distributed. The self-efficacy questionnaire in this study had a D value of 0.096 and the KS table was 0.166. We can conclude that D value < KS table. Therefore, the reading self-efficacy data was normally distributed. Furthermore, the D value of the RC test was 0.083, and the KS table was 0.166. It can infer that the D value < KS table. Hence, the data from the RC test was normally distributed. The results of the normality analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the normality test

Statistic	Self-Efficacy	Reading Comprehension
n	66	66
Mean	70.5	56.7
s	10.83	16.79
D	0.096	0.083
KS Table	0.166	0.166
Conclusion	D value < KS table	D value < KS table
Normality	Yes	Yes

3.4. Homogeneity test

Data called homogeneity when F statistic < F Critical One-Tail. In this study, the F statistic was 0.417, and the F critical one-tail was 0.663. Hence, the data was homogenous because of the F statistic < F critical one-tail. The findings of the homogeneity analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings of the homogeneity test

	Self-Efficacy	Reading Comprehension
Mean	70.5318	56.7272
Variance	117.4996	282.0476
Observations	66	66
df	65	65
F	0.417	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.0003	
F Critical one-tail	0.663	
Conclusion	F statistic < F critical one-tail	

3.5. Correlation (Pearson's coefficient)

Once it was determined that the two variables had homogenous variances and were normally distributed, the correlation between them was computed. The correlation value between SE and RC is calculated using Equation 3. Furthermore, the R-value is interpreted using Table 1. Detailed determination of correlation is presented in Table 6. The significant test was calculated using Equation 4. Additionally, the significant test results can be seen in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 6. Determination of correlation

$\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})^2$	=	7637.47
$\sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2$	=	18333.09
$\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})$	=	5553.25
R	=	0.469 (Medium)

Table 7. T-test result

$t_{\text{calculated}}$	=	4.25
t_{table}	=	2.00
$t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$	=	Significant

Table 8. ANOVA result

	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Regression	1	4037.79	4037.79	18.08	7.04×10^{-5}
Residual	64	14295.30	223.36		
Total	65	18333.09			
p-value < 0.05 (Significant)					

Based on the calculation above, we can conclude that R was 0.469, indicating that SE and RC are positively correlated. The strength of the correlation was medium, with the R (0.469) in the interval (0.400 – 0.599). The relationship between SE and RC was significant due to $t_{\text{calculated}}$ (4.25) > t_{table} (2.00) and p-value (7.04×10^{-5}) < 0.05.

Discussion

This study explores the correlation between reading self-efficacy (SE) and reading comprehension (RC) among first-semester chemical engineering students at Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. The findings reveal a moderate positive correlation between reading SE and RC, with a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.469$. The strength of this relationship is statistically significant, as indicated by $t_{\text{calculated}} (4.25) > t_{\text{table}} (2.00)$ and a p-value $(7.04 \times 10^{-5}) < 0.05$.

This significant relationship may be attributed to the fact that students with high self-efficacy possess the motivation and confidence necessary to tackle academic challenges. Regardless of task difficulty, such students are more likely to believe in their capabilities, which enhances their persistence and engagement. As noted by Pajares (2002), learners with strong self-efficacy are more inclined to commit to academic tasks, set challenging goals, and strive to accomplish them.

Several previous studies have reported similar findings. For instance, Witri (2021) identified a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.532$) between reading SE and RC at State Islamic Senior High School 3 Pekanbaru. Similarly, Rama (2022) observed a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.537$) among second-grade students at SMAN 2 Wawatobi. In addition, Oranpattanahai (2023) found that Thai EFL students in their second semester demonstrated a significant moderate correlation between reading SE and RC.

Conversely, other studies reported lower levels of correlation. Fitri et al. (2019) found a low positive correlation ($R = 0.324$) among twelfth-grade science students at SMAN 5 Bengkulu. Similarly, Apriliyani and Usuludin (2023) reported a very low positive correlation ($R = 0.175$) among eleventh-grade SMA students. Boakye (2015) also found a low correlation between reading proficiency and self-efficacy.

These differences could stem from various contributing factors. As Schunk (2003) asserts, while self-efficacy significantly influences academic performance, it is not the sole determinant. Other variables such as prior knowledge, skill level, expected outcomes, and perceived task value also play crucial roles. The disparity in results may thus be attributed to differences in the characteristics and learning environments of the participants.

These findings offer practical implications for educators seeking to enhance students' reading comprehension by boosting their self-efficacy. Teachers can foster self-efficacy by using affirmations such as "You can do it easily," praising progress, and selecting texts that are appropriately challenging. Studies by Li et al. (2022), Mohammed and Mohammed (2022), and Okyar (2021) emphasize the effectiveness of such strategies in promoting reading self-efficacy.

Additionally, educators are encouraged to implement effective reading strategies, particularly top-down approaches. These include predicting content based on titles, skimming, and scanning before reading in depth. Such strategies help students grasp meaning without needing to understand every word, thereby enhancing both their confidence and comprehension skills (Oranpattanahai, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between reading self-efficacy (SE) and reading comprehension (RC) among first-year chemical engineering students at Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.469$), suggesting that students who are more confident in their reading abilities tend to perform better in comprehension tasks. This result aligns with previous studies and underscores the significance of self-efficacy as a contributing factor to reading success. Notably, the research offers fresh insights by focusing on a technical, non-language-oriented discipline, demonstrating that SE plays an essential role in academic success even in STEM fields. Chemical engineering students reported that strong SE helped them engage more effectively with complex technical texts, highlighting the need for strategies to foster SE in such contexts. However, a key limitation of this study is its focus on a single academic program within one

institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider a broader sample across various STEM disciplines and examine additional factors that may influence RC, such as vocabulary breadth, reading strategies, and intrinsic motivation. Investigating these elements will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of reading comprehension among non-native English speakers in specialized academic fields.

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