The Relationship between Students' Reading Performance and their Self-Efficacy Belief: the Case of Hawassa Polytechnic College Students, Hawassa, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to study the relationship between self-efficacy belief and reading performance of Hawassa Polytechnic College students. Samples of 250 students were selected from the college employing availability sampling technique. To measure their reading performance, reading performance assessment test was administered. A self-efficacy belief assessment questionnaire was developed to measure students' self-efficacy belief. And interview was conducted with selected teachers and students. The result revealed that there is a significantly strong positive correlation between the students' self-efficacy belief and their reading performance. The correlation analysis indicated that self-efficacy sources predicted the self-efficacy beliefs of students in reading performance. The finding of this study, with the tenets of social cognitive theory, revealed students' beliefs are positively correlated with their reading performance. Based on the findings, it is recommended that students' self-efficacy belief to trust in themselves should be developed so that they could be capable of doing better in reading and develop their reading performance.

Key terms: Self-efficacy belief, reading performance, correlation analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

        English has been offered as one of the subjects in polytechnic colleges to enhance different skills of the English language. The exclusion of English from the institution seems to have affected the whole purpose that the language is used to serve as a medium of instruction. Activities or tasks that require the reading skills are affected by the exclusion of the subject, for students of polytechnic college are expected to read different manuals related to their career (Alderson, 2000; Alderson, 2003; Barnet, 1989; Coiro, 2003)

        Many people think reading as a skill that is taught once and for all in few years of schooling as a result of which, it is left to be taught only in lower grades of schooling. And some others consider reading as a simple activity and process; however, this could not be the right understanding of reading as to (Ruddell, 1994; Alderson, 2000: Samuel, 1988). Students in technical and vocational schools usually encounter challenges to confidently read, understand and complete their duty, and solve problems of their career, especially in their work place; thus, their lack of reading self-efficacy belief is one of the factors that affect their goals adversely.

        Self-efficacy belief as to Bandura (1986) is a self-evaluation of one's competence to successfully execute a course of action necessary to reach desired outcomes. When we see our students' reading success in real life, most of them are poor in their reading performance probably because of their lack of appropriate reading self-efficacy belief. Students' failure is clearly seen when they are engaged to a particular job to get involved in the field of their specialization. Students with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to evaluate the demands as a challenge, even in reading (Chemers, 2001; Dadzie, 2008; Carrell, 1988).

        Self-efficacy is about students' beliefs about their capabilities to produce certain levels of performance, especially on reading performance. In this respect, most graduate students lack reading ability and understanding of the written materials and documents in the area of what they are expected read and do something. From this, we can decide that self-efficacy is one of the variables that might affect their reading performance. It is suggested that self-efficacy belief affects academic outcomes, like reading performance (Carney, 1981). When we see students in work places, they appear to face and encounter to manage and settle what they are ordered to do. In other words, most students doubt their capabilities to the extent that they stay away from difficult tasks they view as personal threats. Most of the graduates usually lack confidence probably because of the problem of their self-efficacy beliefs that make them not to be effective and successful in their

careers (Pajarees, 1996). As to Pajarees, self-efficacy belief is vital in life for doing such activities as reading confidently. So, having clear thinking about self-efficacy belief, as to the present study is important in terms of enhancing students' reading performance, for reading requires emotional and cognitive activities that strongly influence all phases of the skill (Dornyei, 2001; Eskey, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

The role of self-efficacy belief in EFL/ESL classes has not been widely studied. Teachers spend much of their time on working to improve students' reading skills. However, many students still seem to be lagging behind in the area of reading skills even to understand written materials or documents. To that effect, self-efficacy belief has been studied in different fields and is regarded as influential variable in performance. In the academic field, self-efficacy belief has been studied and is regarded as a strong predicator of academic performance (Pajares, 1995). In previous years, English was excluded from Polytechnic Colleges in Ethiopia. Having knowledge about a reading skill does not ensure that students will get fully engaged in reading. A student may understand the reading skills and be a good reader, but without possessing appropriate self-efficacy belief, the skill may never be put to effective performance (Bandura, 1997).

When graduating students are given any particular activities or tasks of reading skills that enable them to operate on any machine or electronics, they seem to face problems of reading and understanding. That is what initiated the present researcher to assess the potential problem of the students, and where the problem comes from in reading to understand the written materials. It is obvious that self-efficacy belief affects every aspect of human endeavor including reading skills. So, determining the beliefs the students under this study hold regarding their reading self-efficacy belief might strongly influence their reading performance and the choices they make to overcome reading challenges (Bandura, 1994; Ormond, 2006). Thus, this research is intended to find out the correlation between self-efficacy belief and the reading performance of Hawassa Polytechnic College students.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between reading performance and self-efficacy belief of polytechnic college students. Specifically, the study was intended to:
❖ Find out reading self-efficacy belief level of the subjects under the study;
❖ Identify the reading performance level of the students under the study;
❖ Find out the relationship between reading performance and self-efficacy belief of the subjects under the study;
❖ Determine factors affecting their reading self-efficacy belief and performance;

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area and Subjects

This study was conducted on graduating class students of Hawassa Polytechnic College at Hawassa City, Ethiopia. There were a total of 250 (146, 58.4 % females and 104, 41.6% males) students in five departments; the number of teachers in the college was ten. All the students and teachers were included in the study since their number is manageable. Thus, this study employed availability sampling technique.

Study Design

The design of this research is correlational descriptive, employing mixed-methods approach to gather the relevant quantitative and qualitative data to study the relationship between students' reading performance and their self-efficacy beliefs; the data gathering tools like questionnaire, reading test and interview were employed.

Research Tools and Procedures of Data Collection

This study employed questionnaire, reading performance test and interview to come up with relevant data for the research objectives. Self-efficacy belief questionnaire adapted from Bandura (2006) was employed. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on suggestions given by Bandura (2006). The questionnaire items were made to relate with the tasks that measure their reading performance. The questionnaire consisted of statements which reflected the reading performance of the students. There were fifteen items that measure students' confidence to work on reading tasks, with a scale ranging from 0 (cannot do) to 50 (can do moderately) to 100 (can do certainly). The subjects were instructed to use any scale from 0-100 to indicate their level of reading self-efficacy belief towards each reading performance. The items were written in a way that each efficacy item corresponds to the expected reading skills. The researchers decided to use 0-100 scale on the self-efficacy questionnaire in this research because of its sensitivity and appropriateness to predict the context of the research.

Another tool used in the study was interview. The interview was designed for teachers to obtain specific data about the reading performance and reading self-efficacy belief of the subjects. Genuine personal contact was made to obtain pertinent data in relation to the factors affecting their reading performance and reading self-efficacy belief. To achieve its validity, the researchers' most senior colleagues were requested to give comments on the interview items.

The third tool employed in this research was a reading test. A reading performance test adapted from an authentic text was administered. The test was carefully designed to serve the purpose of the study by integrating the objectives of the study with the present situation of the students. The text focused on finding out pertinent data regarding the students' understanding level of reading skills through fifteen multiple-choice comprehension questions. The test items were sequenced from simple to complex to let students go smoothly from what they could easily do to the challenging ones.

Data Analysis Methods

The quantitative data were coded and organized for analysis. Then, SPSS version 20 was employed. The values of all variables were entered into the SPSS and correlation was made to assess the relationship between the students' reading self-efficacy belief and reading performance. To that end, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was computed. One Way ANOVA was also computed. The qualitative data was thematically organized and presented in relation to the quantitative data of the questionnaire to be discussed in a triangulated way.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results and Discussion of Students' Questionnaire
The Correlation between Self-Efficacy Belief and Reading Performance
The following table shows the direction and strength of the relationship between the reading performance and self-efficacy belief. There exists a positive relationship between self-efficacy belief and the reading performance. The Pearson's correlation between the two variables ($p = 0.020$) obtained is significant at $p < 0.001$, which indicates the result is acceptable.

Table 1: Correlation between Self-Efficacy Belief and Reading Performance (N = 250)

Variables		Reading Self-Efficacy Belief	Reading Performance
Reading self-efficacy belief	Pearson Correlation	1	.753*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020**
	N	250	250
Reading Performance	Pearson Correlation	.753*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020**	
	N	250	250

**Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

The Table above shows the results of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients. The correlation coefficient, .753* has a positive sign that indicates the magnitude of the relationship between the two variables is positive. The result of the coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship between students' self-efficacy belief and their reading performance at *p<0.01,* given the different factors that may influence students' reading performance.

Regression Analysis of Self-Efficacy Belief on Reading Performance

As can be seen from the overall model summary, the correlation between the model (predicator) the self-efficacy belief on reading performance was found to be 0.020 whose adjusted R Square shows us that the model accounts for 4% of variance in students' reading performance. It does show us a little about the overall effect of students' self-efficacy belief in general. The correlation of the predictor (Self-efficacy-belief) as could be seen from the overall Model Summary is 0.020. R-Square shows the proportion of Reading Performance.

Table 2: The ANOVA Table of Reading Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26.473	1	26.473	.100	.753[b]
lResidual	65909.627	248	265.765		
Total	65936.100	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Reading performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reading self efficacy belief

The P-value (sig.) related with the F-value (0.100) in the ANOVA figure/table is high (P < *0.753).* It gives information to reliably predict about the reading performance (F = 0.100, df = 249 and p < *0.753).* It could be possible to say that self-efficacy belief variable predicted reading performance. We can claim that self-efficacy belief predicts reading performance, for the ability of self-efficacy belief to predict the reading performance is addressed.

The above ANOVA table shows that self-efficacy belief predicts students reading performance with 249 degree of freedom, and 0.100 F-value at significance level of 0.753b. Thus, it is possible to generalize that self-efficacy belief reliably predicted reading performance.

Table 3: Parametric Estimates of Reading Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	78.787	7.902		9.971	.000	63.224	94.351
Reading self efficacy belief	.036	.116	.020	.316	.753	-.191	.264

a. Dependent Variable: Reading performance

From the regression coefficient table above, we can see correlation of self-efficacy belief. From the above data, we can decide that self-efficacy belief had a significant role (β=0.020, P<0.753). This entails that self-efficacy belief was important for reading performance based on the information given and analyzed.

Discussion of Results for each Research Objective
Objective 1: The result showed that self-efficacy belief was significant for reading performance. The mean figures and standard deviations for self-efficacy belief and reading performance indicated a positive relationship between the two variables. Students in the 'lower result' group showed lower self-efficacy belief (M 7.20 and Std. D 1.712). On the other hand, students in 'higher result' group, showed relatively better self-efficacy (M 6.33 and Std. D 1.913). The students with lower result reported the lowest levels of self-efficacy belief, were followed by those who were considered to be at high risk; On the other hand, students in 'low risk' group who were perceived to have relatively better reading performance, showed relatively higher self-efficacy (M 7.68 and Std. D 0.995). The students with lower result showed the lowest levels of self-efficacy belief and were followed by those who were considered to be at high risk.

As could be inferred from the findings for the first objective, self-efficacy had a positive relationship with reading performance and was a predicator for reading performance. These findings suggested that increment of self-efficacy belief would increase students' reading performance and having higher reading ability would increase students' self-efficacy. These results are consistent with Bandura's (1997) view that states self-efficacy belief was an influential predicator to performance. The positive correlation suggests that students with high self-efficacy beliefs would be better in their reading performance. Self-efficacy was the variable that correlates to reading performance. Low achievement in reading comprehension assessment might indicate that the students had low self-efficacy and/or low English language proficiency.

Objective 2: The statistics in the tables above showed   lower result (M 7.68 and Std. D 0.995) whereas higher result (M 7.41 and Std. D 1.069). So, we can infer that self-efficacy belief predicts reading performance. The difference between the lowest (M 7.41 and Std. D 1.069) and the highest (M 7.91) are (M 0.233). The medium

is (M 7.62 and Std. D 1.055). When the medium result is compared to the lower result, it has (Std. D difference of 0.014). When it is compared to higher result (M 7.91 Std. D 1.302) it has the Std. D difference of 0.247). From the obtained data, it could be deduced that students' reading performance is moderate.

The low results of the reading performance also suggested that few students found the reading texts have high passage difficulty. Students' self-efficacy beliefs are powerful determinants of the behaviors they choose and how they deal with and interact with their setting or context. On the way, students develop self-efficacy beliefs about their reading performance that likely guide what they choose, how they read, and whether they succeed or fail. As mentioned earlier in the review literature the four sources of self-efficacy beliefs should be considered in the area of reading performance. Since the four terms are the sources of self-efficacy belief, we should require them as input for reading performance. They are also correlated to each other (Usher & Pajares, 2009). Reading self-efficacy belief is correlated in expected directions with the four sources of self-efficacy hypothesized by Bandura (1997).

Objective 3: The study showed that self-efficacy belief was consistent with reading performance. Self-efficacy belief predicted reading achievement. The strongest predicators are measures that correspond closest to their reading achievement outcome. When we deduce from the tables above, by comparing the lowest result (M5.17 Std. D 1.504) and the highest result (M 7.20 Std. D 1.712), the difference is 0.208. The medium result is (M 7.01 Std. D 1.660). When it is compared with the highest result (M 7.20 Std. D 1.712), the difference is 0.052. When it is compared with the lowest result, the difference is 0.156. Students with high level of self-efficacy belief have relatively better reading performance. Thus, from the above data, we can infer that the students' reading self-efficacy belief level as moderate.

Thus, it could be deduced from the findings for research objective three that reading self-efficacy belief significantly correlated with reading performance in the directions that the research predicted. This may indicate that students who believe in themselves in dealing with reading performance are more likely to pursue reading for the sake of learning. Students who are confident in reading have performance–approach to learning approach as to (Midgley et al., 2001; Pajarees et al., 2000). Most of the correlations between self-efficacy belief and reading achievement outcomes were significant and positive. Overall, students with higher reading self-efficacy beliefs were more likely to do well on reading assessment as their result indicated.

The Overall correlation analysis for the objectives stated above showed the existence of significant correlation between self-efficacy belief and reading performance (p = 0.020). This finding is supported by Bandura (1982) that there is a direct relationship between self-efficacy belief and reading performance. The findings of the present research also indicate that students' beliefs about their own reading performance are key factors to their ultimate success or failure. The regression analysis of students' self-efficacy beliefs also predicts their reading performance. Correlations between self-efficacy belief and reading performance outcomes are significant and positive. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to do well on reading performance test. Bandura (1997) asserted that self-efficacy is a task-specific assessment. Students with higher self-efficacy belief reported more mastery experience, social persuasion and vicarious experiences in reading. So, from this perspective we can see that self-efficacy belief has a power to develop reading performance and confidence to do such reading tasks. The findings of this study provided how self-efficacy belief is related to reading performance.

Objective 4: Students' questionnaire and interview data indicated that factors like, students hatred to reading considering it as a difficult skill affects their performance negatively. So, students do not trust in themselves that they can do it by themselves. They do not have reading classes that enhance their reading performance. They do not know how to deal with reading exercises. The other factor that affects their reading performance and self-efficacy is uncertainty they hold about reading. In lower grades, students were not informed adequately to deal with reading, since they were from various backgrounds. One factor that affects both variables is losing confidence although many factors were mentioned under the students' interview sections.

Results and Discussion of Students' Interview
As students responded, they were not given adequate information about the importance of reading. The students reported that during the class session, they did not deal with reading lessons, that is why their reading performance is poor and that is why they have low perception and low confidence in their capability of reading and understanding even manuals and instructions. They added, "In class, we all are passive and we are not engaged in reading like comprehension. We face comprehension questions like reading activity in exams, before we sit for reading; we are not given any practice and exercise." From the above responses, one can deduce that their low perceptions and self-efficacy belief have led them to poor reading performance.

The students said, "When we see any text materials, we encounter challenges of comprehending. The way we came through made us not to activate any written documents in our fields of specialization. That is why we did not succeed in national examination which was prepared by the government. We are facing the same challenges these days in this institution, for nobody was willing to make connect us with written materials. The students expressed teachers' reluctance to deal with reading texts that enhance understanding word, details of passages, and understanding complex sentences."

The students reported that almost all of them luck confidence. They are not confident enough in connecting reading and reading activities with confidence and better performance. They complained lack of confidence make their reading skill in effective.

Respondent 5: *"Before I joined the institution, I was not encouraged to develop reading confidence and performance with effective practices. Even the teachers were not eager to deal with it. That is why our confidence is adversely affected."*

Respondent 8: *"Teachers' approach to reading and the style they conduct reading is not attractive; they are not confident enough; that is why we were not developing our confidence. It caused and affected our reading performance that we too are not able to trust in our reading capability."*

They do not have clear idea about their reading perception, confidence and performance. They think that reading is the most difficult task in teaching and learning. Most students associate this problem with their reading background.

Respondent 4: *"We face challenges to read and understand any reading text we read. Our teachers did not encourage us to independently deal with reading texts. So, this made us not to enhance our reading confidence and performance."*

Respondent 7: *"We were not learning how to deal with reading. Teachers jumped over the reading sections. We are not eager to read in our institution even when we were given reading assignment".*

As they responded, Students were not exercising this reading skill properly. They were not given any chance of doing it. That is why they do not know how to infer reading documents.

Respondent 4: *"We do not know how to infer. Had we been given a chance to deal with reading, at least we would have inferred any reading text by ourselves".*

Respondent 3: *"We do not have any clue about how to infer reading texts because in early classes we had no reading classes. It was a neglected class. In any reading task or activities, we are facing problems about how to deduce something from the reading activities".*

Students responded that they can read any reading materials and can summarize the reading texts, but they are not sure about their summarizing ability. Students face problem on how to summarize using their own words.

Respondent 9: *"We usually face challenges about how to summarize. Recently, we are facing this as a problem because we had no chance in previous class and our background was not good enough. Even teachers by themselves were not aware of how to summarize. Even when we summarize reading texts, our teachers do not tell us whether it was right or wrong. Sometimes, we copy the written text as it is by reducing such ideas as if it were summary."*

Results and Discussion of Teachers' Interview

The central idea of the questions prepared for interview was about reading performance and self-efficacy belief. Here, the teachers were considered as they saw the problems through their career.

During their explanations, especially with the concern to the challenges that students face, teachers responded that there are many challenges that students encounter:

As to interviewees 3 & 4, the current teaching of English is inconvenient for teaching English skills. In polytechnic colleges, the medium of instruction is English; so the reading skill should not have been excluded from the curriculum, for it could inform us how to deal with reading to improve their reading self-efficacy belief and reading performance as to respondents 4 & 6.

In the institution, there should have been some persons that could tell and show how to deal with reading and enhance their confidence and performance. Probably it is because of this that students do not have any ground to be competent in reading activities. So, this can easily make them unable to increase their reading performance. Students consider themselves that they are incapable of reading and understanding the themes of the reading materials. They believe they can read, but they do not understand what the idea of the reading document is.

As to respondents 1 & 2, students are not confident enough to connect the reading activities with extra and supplementary work they have to perform by reading manuals and instructions.

The other respondents also shared the same view that was given to the question. And they mentioned that it affects their reading tasks: *"Because of this, they always copy assignments from their friends. They are*

not confident enough in what they do. They need assistance for every reading activity." Hence, in the institution there should be someone that deals with psychological therapy of the students' self efficacy belief problem. They should be treated psychologically to develop and enhance self-confidence; all the respondents had the common view that students do not trust in their reading ability.

Students are of different social and cultural background, and also they are from different learning system. From this perspective, the respondents forwarded different views. As to Respondent 4, *"During the class session observed, students tell there is uncertainty in the perspective they hold about reading. They (students) also tell us (teachers) students were not informed adequately about how to deal with reading activities."*

All the respondents shared similar view in that the background of the students affects their reading performance.

Concerning the interest of students' reading, respondents 6 & 7, expressed their views as follows:

Respondent 6 - *Most students are not interested and willing in sitting and doing reading tasks or assignments. Most of them are not interested and have negative attitude for it.*

Respondent 7 - *They are not eager to do any reading, though the current system needs them to read a lot and to extract new information from different sources.*

Therefore, teachers' responses above show that students need psychological training to step up their confidence, performance and interest of reading.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions are drawn based on the major findings of this study:

♣ It was found out that the students' self-efficacy belief is moderate; they are not confident enough in their performance that they are capable of reading.

♣ It was generally seen that students are poor in their reading capability.

♣ Students' background affected their reading performance. Moreover, they were not treated properly in reading; they were not given any inputs that develop their reading performance. In their interview data also, the same thing was seen.

Based on the findings obtained and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

❖ Students should be aware of how to deal with different kinds of reading materials confidently since their confidence influences their performance;

❖ Students' self-efficacy beliefs should be cultivated and treated so that the confidences students' build up influences their actions and choices;

❖ Teachers have to encourage students to build their reading self-efficacy belief in dealing with whatever reading activities they are given to read and understand;

❖ Teachers should consider the reading inputs that boost up the reading self-efficacy belief of students in dealing with any reading lessons;

❖ Concerned bodies of reading materials developers should find ways to foster and strengthen students' reading self-efficacy beliefs and reading achievement, for these two variables are interdependent.

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