ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Reading Self-Efficacy and Reading Strategies Use in L1 Context

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Abstract

The general objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading strategies use in Amharic L1 context. To achieve this objective, seventy-five Amharic major students participated in this study. The participants were selected using a convenient sampling technique. Data were collected using reading self-efficacy and reading strategies questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient. The results of the reading self-efficacy questionnaire showed that students' reading self-efficacy level was average (3.39). Similarly, the data from the reading strategies questionnaires revealed that most students have appropriate levels of reading strategy use. Finally, there was a statistically significant relationship (P = 0.000) between students' reading self-efficacy and use of reading strategies. This finding implies that self-efficacious students used significantly more reading strategies than their low self-efficacy counterparts. Hence, the study recommended that instructors take these factors into account while teaching reading skills in the classroom since they have a better knowledge of the connection between students' reading techniques and their reading self-efficacy.

Keywords: L1, reading self-efficacy, reading strategy use

Introduction

Reading is an essential skill and probably the most important skill for both first and second/ foreign language learning (Grabe, 1991). As one of the language skills, comprehension of written texts, or reading skill, creates the foundation for a student's education. The main concept in reading skill is 'comprehension'. It enhances the purpose of language acquisition and helps students to read for different purposes. In spite of the fact that reading comprehension in Amharic L1 context has received a great deal of priority recently (the major focus of all level of school Amharic syllabus, (MoE, 2006).

In spite of this crucial role of reading, many students still have problems with their reading comprehensions. This seems true even if the learners have a considerable amount of

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linguistic knowledge. Since reading comprehension has been distinctively important for language learning, the ways to enhance reading comprehension, most notably reading strategies, are of great interest in the fields of reading research (Zare & Davoudi, 2011). Strengthening reading skills enable both first- and second/foreign language learners to make more progress and obtain greater development in all academic domains (Anderson, 2000). Reading teachers and researchers have paid considerable attention to linguistic and cognitive factors. Lu (1989) and Xu (1997) note that reading comprehension is an interactive and complex process influenced by linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural, and affective and motivational factors. However, research concerning the influences of affective and motivational factors on the development of reading processes and learners' reading abilities is limited (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Zou, 2002). Therefore, it can be suggested that there are some non-linguistic factors in the process of reading comprehension (Bagheri & Faghih, 2012). Anderson (2002) claims that language learning is affected by both domains, which are the mental and emotional sides of human behavior. Findings in L1 reading research indicate that motivational processes lay solid foundations for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading (Guthrie & Wegfield, 2000).

Self-efficacy, as one of the most important affective factors influences the emotional sides of learners. It also, plays a key role in language learning and motivates students effectively. (Kargar & Zamanian, 2014; Zare & Davoudi, 2011; Li, & Wang, 2010) have asserted a significant relationship between language learning and self-efficacy. In the language learning process, learners with high self-efficacy participate in tasks faster, work harder, and persist longer when encountering failures than those who doubt their own capabilities (Wang, 2011). So, learners should believe in their abilities and make greater efforts when encountering failures rather than to attribute all their failures to their lack of abilities.

Although so many studies have been conducted on learning and reading strategies and self-efficacy beliefs, only few explored the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. In Amharic L1 context, especially, the issue has not been adequately addressed. The novelty and importance of the topic were the main impetus for the researcher to delve into this arena to see if there is any relationship between Amharic Language major students' reading self-efficacy and their use of reading strategies in the University of Gondar, Ethiopia.

The objective of this study was to explore the relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and their use of reading strategies in University of Gondar. The following research questions were pursued:

1. What is the current level of students reading self-efficacy?
2. What is the current level of students' reading strategies use?
3. Is there a significant relationship between students reading self-efficacy and their use of reading strategies?

Literature Review

One of the three dimensions of L1 reading motivation is self-efficacy (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Bandura (1996) introduced self-efficacy as one of the components of social cognitive theory. He defines it as "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 392). If people do not believe in their own capabilities and power to create and produce things, situations, or behaviors they are experts at, they will have no effect on achieving what they want. On the other hand, people's belief in their competence to produce the results they wish will make them enthusiastically endeavor to attain their purposes.

Reading self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to run a specific task successfully and is closely tied to task engagement, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1997). Learner's beliefs in their capabilities affect performance better than their real ability (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1997). This does not mean that people can accomplish tasks beyond their abilities because they believe they can. People for competent functioning require harmony between self-beliefs on the one hand and possessed skills and knowledge on the other. Rather, it means that self-perceptions of capability help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have (Pajares, 1997).

Self-efficacy is one aspect of social cognitive theory, imposing that there is an interaction among the environment, human behavior, and personal aspects such as cognitive, physiological, and affective factors (Bandura, 1986). In social cognitive theory, it is suggested that people can reflect upon their own behaviors or actions, a metacognitive activity, and thus shape their environment rather than passively reacting to it. Considering the reciprocal interaction among environmental, behavioral, and personal forces, the efforts individuals exert in performing a task are determined by their beliefs in their own capabilities (Bandura, 1999). Moreover, self-efficacy is a context-bound and domain-specific construct (Bong, 2006), which should not be equated with self-confidence and anxiety, which are rather stable traits. There are plenty of studies on L2 learners' self-efficacy and its effect on various aspects of L2 learning (see, for example, Ahmadian, Amerian, & Lavasanti, 2015; Anaydubalu, 2010; Hsieh & Schaller, 2008). Rahemi (2007) explored the humanities students' English self-efficacy beliefs and examined the contributions they make to their EFL achievements. The results revealed that Iranian senior high school students majoring in humanities lack an appropriate level of self-efficacy to cope with their daily tasks and exercises in the Iranian EFL context.

Reading strategies use

Reading is an interactive process combining top-down and bottom-up processing (Barnett, 1989); thus, it is very important for students to use appropriate reading strategies to increase their comprehension. According to Barnett (1989), the term "strategy means the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read". In other words, reading comprehension requires the integration and application of multiple strategies or skills. Among various classifications of language learning strategies, including memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies has been realized as one of the most comprehensible (Oxford, 1990).

Unlike self-efficacy and learning strategies, reading strategies particularly, have defined as "deliberate, conscious procedures used by readers to enhance text comprehension" (Sheory & Mokhtari, 2002: 433). The purpose of reading strategies is to have general knowledge, to get a specific detail, to find the main idea or theme, to learn, to remember, to delight, to summarize, and to do research (Hylland, 1990). In addition, reading strategies are used as basic mechanisms intended to aid reading comprehension, for example, through note-taking, underlining, and highlighting textual information (Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012).

Richards & Renandya (2002) argues that the use of well-chosen strategies distinguishes experts from novices in many learning areas. Pressly (2000) and Wade (1990) also believe that good readers apply a variety of appropriate strategies to the text they are reading. Anderson (2002) further hypothesized that, compared to other reading strategies, metacognitive strategies play a more vital role. He reasoned that when a learner comes to understand how to regulate his or her learning by using strategies, the rate of language acquisition will become faster. Metacognitive reading strategies are depicted as thinking processes applied to self-monitoring and self-regulating that the reader uses to choose among different reading strategies in various contexts and for various reading purposes (Anderson, 2002).

Three main metacognitive reading strategies, as distinguished by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2001), include global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies. Global reading strategies set the stage for the reading act and include readers' plans for reading, previews of text content, etc. Problem-solving strategies are used when there are problems in comprehending a text, in which the reader reads the text or tries to guess the meaning of unknown words. Support strategies, such as note-taking, highlighting a text, or the use of reference materials, act as tools and mechanisms aimed at helping the readers in the process of reading. Implying the crucial importance of reading strategies, there are a number of studies on reading strategy use that reveal the significance of

metacognitive strategies in assessing L1 and L2/foreign language learners for checking and evaluating their comprehension while reading (such as Li & Wang, 2010; Shang, 2010). For instance, Shang (2010) examined the uses of reading strategies by a group of Taiwanese EFL learners, and the study revealed that participants have an average level of reading strategy use. For these reasons, the present study examines on L1 learners' use of reading strategies while reading self-efficacy.

The relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading strategies use

A reader's sense of self and his or her reading ability contribute to motivation to read. In this regard, Moskal & Blachowicz (2006) states, "A motivated reader will develop a sense of self-efficacy and high expectations for success" (p.3). Self-efficacy is strongly related to reading comprehension. Pajares (1997) noted that self-efficacy could influence choices made, efforts expended, and perseverance executed when confronted with obstacles, stress, and anxiety. Especially, students who had high self-efficacy beliefs were persistent when faced with challenges and were more successful in academic achievement (Schunk, 1990; Wag & Pape, 2007). Multon, Brown, and Lent's (1991) meta-analysis of decades of research studies showed a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievements.

Reading self-efficacy was defined in this study as learners' perceptions of their reading abilities to perform various reading tasks, such as grasping the main idea, guessing the meaning of an unknown word, and inferring the authors' attitudes from the article. Reading self-efficacy may have a significant impact on readers' overall orientation toward the reading comprehension process and their achievements (Henk & Melnick, 1995). Many L1 reading studies showed that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with reading achievements (Barkley, 2006; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989; Song & Song, 2000). In contrast to the amount of research on self-efficacy in L1 reading, there has been little research on reading self-efficacy in the Amharic L1 context. But a little research takes place in the L1 context. For example, when Li & Wang (2010) studied the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading strategies in a Chinese EFL context, the result revealed that reading self-efficacy was significantly related to the use of reading strategies in general. Readers with high self-efficacy reported significantly more use of reading strategies than those with low self-efficacy. In addition, a study by Zare and Davouldi (2011) investigated the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. Participants were 45 students from an Iranian senior high school at an Iranian high school. The results showed that participants have a medium level of reading self-efficacy and reading strategies, and that reading self-efficacy is positively correlated with reading strategies.

Kargar & Zamanian (2014) explore the relationship between self-efficacy and reading comprehension strategies among Iranian male and female EFL learners. In this study, 50 students participated. The study showed that there was a positive relationship between these variables. In another study by Naseri & Zafernieh (2012), students had an average level of reading self-efficacy and reading strategy use, and finally, a positive relationship was found between Iranian junior high and senior high school students' reading self-efficacy and reading strategy use.

Methods and Techniques

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and reading strategies use in L1 context. To achieve the objective, the study employed a quantitative research method and a correlation design.

Participants

The participants for the study were 2023 4th year summer program students at the University of Gondar. All participants were Amharic as L1 speakers, majoring in Amharic language and literature in the Department of Ethiopian language(s) and literature. Fourth-year students have been taking the course Critical Reading Skills. The course Critical Reading Skills is suitable for the study on students' awareness of reading strategies use and reading self-efficacy. Since the course Critical Reading Skills (Elam 203) has adequate reading lessons to investigate the variables properly. Therefore, the course was purposefully considered for the study. A total of 75 students participated in this study. They were selected based on purposive sampling. The participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency was checked through the administration of a standard proficiency test, and they were found to be at the intermediate level.

Data collection instruments

To achieve the purpose of the study, two sets of questionnaire were used in this study as instruments. Reading self-efficacy questionnaire and reading strategies use questionnaire, both of which are explained in detail below.

Reading self-efficacy questionnaire

The reading self-efficacy questionnaire was adapted from the English self-efficacy questionnaire designed by Zare & Davoudi (2011). The reading self-efficacy questionnaire used in their study included 10 items. This research also implemented all these items because they are specially designed to reflect the current major Amharic L1 context. Then participants were asked to complete the questionnaire items on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (I can't do it at all) to 7 (I can do it well).

The questionnaire was written and administered in Amharic to assure the students' understanding of the content. To check the validity of the questionnaire, the instrument was given to two assistant professors who had more than ten years of experience teaching Amharic reading skills to obtain necessary feedback in terms of language appropriateness, the sequence of questions, and relevance to purpose. To protect the privacy of the participants, a pseudonym was given to each participant. With regard to the reliability of the questionnaire was piloted with a class of 35 students who were similar to those in the study. After piloting, the reliability scale was found to have high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha =.82). In line with this, Pallant (2007) suggested that coefficients of Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70 are considered to be reliable indicators of the constructs under study.

Reading strategy use questionnaire

The reading strategy questionnaire was adapted from Li & Wang's (2010) study, which contained 48 items. The instrument was used to measure adult Amharic BA students' awareness of reading strategy use while reading for academic purposes in their L1. After piloting the questionnaire on the same 35 students with whom the self-efficacy questionnaire was piloted, the researcher selected 34 items that are optimally feasible for University of Gondar majoring Amharic BA students in the reading context. The reason 14 questions were excluded is that they were not applicable to the current educational context of our country.

To assess the validity of the questionnaire, it was evaluated by two experienced professors at the University of Gondar before the study was conducted. Based on the feedback provided by these instructors, necessary additions were made, unnecessary elements were removed, and unclear concepts were clarified and revised. Efforts were also made to ensure the validity of the questionnaire by incorporating the evaluation and feedback of experts in the field. The questionnaire was written and administered in Amharic, participants' first language, to avoid misunderstandings. Participants were required to complete the questionnaire items on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 (this statement is never or almost never true of me) to 5 (this statement is always or almost always true of me). Oxford's (1990) criterion about strategy frequency was also adopted to report the frequency of the use of reading strategies. During the pilot study, the reliability of the reading strategy use questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to determine the level of consistency. Based on this, the reliability of the reading strategy use questionnaire was found to be $\alpha = 0.79$. Since this value is above 0.7, it confirms that the questionnaire is reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The two sets of questionnaires were administered to 78 students majoring in Amharic language during their critical reading skills course in the summer program. After the

removal of incomplete questionnaires, 75 questionnaires were coded for statistical analysis with SPSS 16. First, descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the students' responses to the reading self-efficacy and use of reading strategies questionnaire. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to explore the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies.

Ethical Considerations

To adhere to ethical protocols, all participants were informed of the study's objectives, their role in the research, and the measures taken to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. Subsequently, arrangements were made to ensure that the data collection days were convenient. During each appointment, additional detailed explanations regarding the purpose of the study were provided to the participants. This helped build trust. Students were given explanations about the purpose of filling out the questionnaire and the process of completing it. They were repeatedly reminded to ask questions if any concepts were unclear. Care was also taken to ensure that students filled out the forms with their genuine feelings and perspectives, and efforts were made to prevent them from altering their responses during the completion process.

Results and Discussions

This section presents discussions, analysis, and findings of the study based on the research questions. As discussed earlier, the reading self-efficacy and reading strategies use questionnaires were administered to measure the level of students' reading self-efficacy and reading strategies use and their relationship between them.

Reading self-efficacy level of Amharic major students

To study the level of students' reading self-efficacy and their reading strategies use, descriptive statistics was run. After computations, on average, the participants felt rather confident in their abilities to perform Amharic language tasks, as measured by the Amharic reading self-efficacy questionnaire. This is because the average level of participants' reading self-efficacy was 4.10 (see Table 1 below). The table shows an acceptable level of self-efficacy among students. On the scale, the highest possible score on the self-efficacy questionnaire was 7, and if we round up the average score (4.0), we will achieve scale 5, which stands for "I basically can do it." Therefore, students believed that they could basically complete the reading tasks. Therefore, students' judgments of their abilities to do reading tasks were at an appropriate level.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Reading Self-efficacy and Reading Strategy Use (n=75)

	Reading Self-efficacy	Reading strategy use
M	4.10	3.39
SD	0.76	0.52

The results of the reading self-efficacy questionnaire reject previous study findings by Rahemi (2007) and support the findings of Zare & Davouldi (2011) and Kargar & Zamanian (2014). So, the current research illustrates that the participants believe in their own abilities to successfully conduct their reading activities in the classroom. Furthermore, the finding of this study is in agreement with the literature, which view self-efficacy influence students' in their capabilities to performing a specific task, engagement and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1997).

The current level of use of reading strategies

Table 1 also showed that participant students used a total mean value of students reading strategy use (3.39). This means that most students have an appropriate level of reading strategy use because, based on a scale of 1–5, students will achieve scale 4, which stands for "this statement is usually true of me" in the questionnaire. This finding indicates that the frequency of reading strategy use is almost "usually"; that is, students generally have a clear awareness to use the combination of strategies in order to comprehend the reading tasks. So, the results of reading strategies in the present research support findings in the literature (Shang, 2014; Zare & Davouldi, 2011; Kargar & Zamanian, 2014). Moreover, the result of this study supports the conclusions made by Naseri & Zaferanieh (2012) in that interpreting students' used reading strategies as basic mechanisms intended to aid reading comprehension, for example, through note-taking, underlining, and highlighting textual information.

The relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies

To examine the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies, a Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted in the study. Results in Table 2 show that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with reading strategy use (r =.252, $P< 0.01$). The results of the correlation strongly show that reading self-efficacy directly affects the students' performance on the use of reading strategies. In other words, the more confident and competent students feel about overcoming reading tasks, the

more they employ reading strategies.

Table 2: Correlation between reading self-efficacy and reading strategy use (n=75)

Variables		1	2
Reading Self-efficacy (1)	Pearson correlation (r)	1	.252*
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		.000
	N	75	75
Reading strategy use (2}	Pearson correlation (r)	.252*	.1
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		.000
	N	75	75

**$P < 0.01$(2 -tailed)

This finding does support the previous studies. Li & Wang (2010), Zare & Davouldi (2011), Kargar & Zamanian (2014), and Kargar & Zamanian (2014) posit that there is a correlation between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. Findings of the present study and similar research exploring the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading strategies used among major Amharic L1 students lead us to the conclusion that it seems quite beneficial to allocate special sections of reading classes to explicitly teaching reading strategies to improve students' beliefs about their capabilities and consequently enhance their conscious, purposeful, and permanent use of reading strategies. On the other hand, the present finding implies that reading self-efficacy and effective use of reading strategies enable language learners to develop their reading comprehension effectively.

Conclusion

The average level of the participants' reading self-efficacy was close to "I basically can do it," suggesting that the participants felt confident in their abilities to complete the reading tasks in the questionnaire. With regard to the use of reading strategy questionnaire, students have a medium level of reading strategy use to handle reading tasks and exercises. This result indicates that teachers should help students develop their own reading strategies while cultivating reader autonomy. Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was found between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. This is the point that implies self-efficacious students used significantly more reading strategies than their low self-efficacy counterparts. In addition, the results indicate that reading self-efficacy exerts some influence on the use of reading strategies.

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