

# Reading Self-Efficacy: Is There a Relationship between Progress and Psychological States

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## Abstract

Reading involves a complex process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through the reader's interaction and involvement with written language. Reading is often a self-guided behavior, readers need self-efficacy as a key motivator for reading (McLean and Poulshock 2018). Self-efficacy in reading is conceived as readers' belief in their abilities to accomplish desired outcomes (Ortlied & Schatz, 2020). Studies have shown that self-efficacy is significantly positively related to reading comprehension performance (Li and Wang 2010, Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. 2019). While correlational research on self-efficacy and reading comprehension has been plentiful, less abundant are studies exploring factors influencing readers' self-efficacy. This study is done to explore factors that influence EFL reader self-efficacy. A total of 660 non-English major undergraduate students at a Chinese university participated the study. A 5 Likert scales questionnaire on reading self-efficacy was used as an instrument to collect data. The scale used are: 1- strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-undecided; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree. The questionnaire was adapted from the Reading Self-Efficacy Scale (RSES) by Kassem (2013). Two factors – progress (14 items) and psychological states (12 items) were the same as RSES. Findings revealed that there are correlations for progress and positive psychological states. Findings also showed that there are correlations for progress and negative psychological states. These findings bear implications in the teaching of reading among undergraduates so that readers' self-efficacy can be improved to gain progress in their reading experience in universities.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, interaction, self-efficacy, psychological states, progress

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Background of Study*

Reading is one of the most important language skills. We read to know, understand, and act according to what we read. Considering the importance of reading, it's crucial to be a successful reader in the target language. However, reading is not easy. It involves a complex process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through the reader's interaction and involvement with written language (Snow 2002). Previous studies indicated that EFL learners faced challenges in reading comprehension (Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. 2019). Reading is often a self-guided behavior, readers need self-efficacy as a key motivator for reading (McLean and Poulshock 2018). Self-efficacy in reading is conceived as readers' belief in their abilities to accomplish desired outcomes (Ortlid & Schatz, 2020). Studies have shown that self-efficacy is significantly positively related to reading comprehension performance (Li and Wang 2010, Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. 2019). While correlational research on self-efficacy and reading comprehension has been plentiful, less abundant are studies exploring factors influencing readers' self-efficacy.

### *1.2 Statement of Problem*

The purpose of reading is to connect ideas on the page to the reader's background schemata. Sometimes reading becomes difficult because the subject in the text is unknown to the reader. Other times, the content may be familiar; however, the vocabulary and language used may pose problems to the reader. That is why readers of EFL may be consumed with fear when they read due to many reasons. According to Rahmat (2019), reading anxiety fear are caused by top-down anxiety (TRA), bottom-up anxiety (BRA) and also classroom reading anxiety (CRA). TRA is reader-specific and relevant to the reader. TRA result from lack of background and cultural background of the text. TRA can also be caused by general reading ability. BRA is text-specific and it refers to the reader's problems in vocabulary and grammar. CRA is associated with the variables that has nothing to do with the text and the reader. CRA factors are context-relevant and arise from the classroom settings where the teacher, reader, and text interact. Being fearful of reading can influence the readers' self-efficacy during reading tasks. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's abilities to accomplish desired outcomes (Ortlid & Schatz, 2020). Readers' self-efficacy can influence the way they attend to reading tasks. What type of influence do reading self-efficacy has on EFL readers? This study is done to explore factors that influence EFL reader self-efficacy. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions:

How do EFL learners perceive their progress in reading?

How do the EFL learners' psychological state influence their perception of reading?

Is there a relationship between progress and psychological state in reading?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Reading in EFL

Reading is an essential input source for English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. It has a great impact on linguistic form of acquisition. It provides support for greater progress and development in all academic areas (Alderson and Alderson 2000). It's not an easy task for EFL learners to read in English (Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. 2019). Limited vocabulary, inefficiency in parsing text for structural information, and lack of background knowledge hindered many EFL learners from a fluent reader. The growing importance of EFL reading, coped with the difficulty in it, poses a tremendous pressure on EFL learners, makes EFL learners fear of English reading.

### 2.2 Reading Self-Efficacy

Reading self-efficacy plays a vital role in EFL learner's reading process because efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (Bandura 1995, Okyar 2021). It is conceived as learners' perceptions of their reading abilities to perform various reading tasks (Li and Wang 2010). Highly self-efficacious readers tend to be willing to read, despite the challenges in reading. They believe that they can cope with difficult tasks. They are aware that the strategies they use, the time and energy they put into the comprehension process will finally bring them success in reading. On the contrary, readers with low self-efficacy are not confident and are fearful of difficulties in reading. They think that it is not worth the effort because they believe that they are not capable enough to handle difficult texts (Okyar 2021). Empirical study also shows that high self-efficacious readers reported significantly more use of reading strategies than those with low self-efficacy (Li and Wang 2010).

### 2.3 Past Studies

#### 2.3.1 Past Studies in Reading in EFL

The study by Rahmat, Arepin & Sulaiman (2020) investigated students' fear in academic reading. It is also aimed at investigating the influence of perceived difficulties in their reading comprehension. Data from 25 respondents were analyzed quantitatively using Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) developed by Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999). The objectives of the study are to examine the influence of students' fear and perceived difficulties in academic reading. The findings of this study reveal that factors such as background and culture, general reading ability, vocabulary, grammar as well as teaching method can make readers fear reading. The results of this study bear interesting implications towards the teaching and learning of academic reading in English as a Second Language.

#### 2.3.2 Past Studies in Reading Self-Efficacy

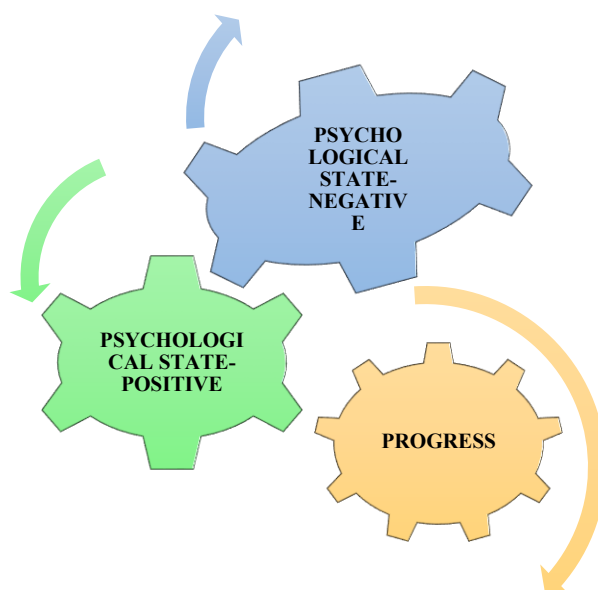
Students' reading self-efficacy beliefs were assessed by Reading Self-Efficacy scales. Henk and Melnick (1995) developed a Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) to measure readers' self-efficacy. Four scales were identified as contributors of self-efficacy. There are progress, observation comparison, social feedback, and social psychological states. Kassem (2013)

adapted RSPS and developed a 38 items scale to assess reader's self-efficacy in Egyptian context. Four factors were investigated: progress, observation comparison, social psychological states, which are the same as RSPS, and strategic awareness.

Studies have shown the significance of reading self-efficacy. For example, Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. (2019) explored the mediating role of reading self-efficacy beliefs. A total of 351 Saudi EFL learners were selected from eight public universities of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by employing proportionate stratified random sampling. The data was collected by two questionnaires including 'questionnaire for sources of reading self-efficacy', and 'reading self-efficacy beliefs questionnaire', and an IELTS reading comprehension test. The finding shows that four self-efficacy sources proposed by Bandura, Freeman et al. (1999), namely, mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persecution, and physiological state were significantly associated with reading self-efficacy beliefs. Besides, reading self-efficacy beliefs were significantly associated with reading comprehension. Similarly, Okyar (2021) carried out a study with 211 university-level English preparatory class students by questionnaires on RS use and reading self-efficacy, and reported a positive relationship between students' reading strategy use and reading self-efficacy.

#### *2.4 Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework is rooted from the two main factors for reading self- efficacy and they are (a) progress and (b) psychological state. With reference to Figure 1, the perception of (a) progress is positively influenced by the perception of the reader's (b) psychological -positive state. On the other hand, when the reader has a negative psychological state, their perception of their progress will also be influenced. Readers' perception of progress includes how they perceive the reading task. It also involves how readers perceive themselves making efforts to understand the reading text. Next, readers' psychological state can either be (i) positive or (ii) negative. When readers are in positive psychological state, they feel good about the text and is able to communicate well with the writer in the text. When readers are in negative psychological state, they can be nervous, they find reading stressful, or confusing and this can be due to their inability to understand the text. Difficult text can also give readers a negative psychological state.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of the Study-Relationship between Progress and Psychological State in Reading

### 3. Method

This quantitative study is done to investigate factors that influence EFL reader self-efficacy. A total of 660 non-English major undergraduate students at a Chinese university participated the study. A 5 Likert scales questionnaire on reading self-efficacy was used as an instrument to collect data. The scale used are: 1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- undecided; 4- agree; 5-strongly agree. The questionnaire was adapted from the Reading Self-Efficacy Scale (RSES) by Kassem (2013). Two factors – progress (14 items) and psychological states (12 items) were the same as RSES. Factors on observational comparison and strategic awareness were ruled out due to the research objectives of the present study. The distribution of items in the survey was shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Items in the Survey

Section	Construct 题项	No of Items
A	Progress 进步	14
B	Psychological States-Positive 心理状态-正面	6
C	Psychological States-Negative 心理状态-负面	6
	Total number of Items 题项总数	26

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics for the survey. SPSS analysis showed a Cronbach alpha of .935 which indicated a high external reliability for the instrument used. Further SPSS analysis was done to report the mean scores of each item to answer the research questions for this study.

**Table 2.** Reliability for the Survey

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.935	26

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Findings for Demographic Profile

#### Q1 Gender

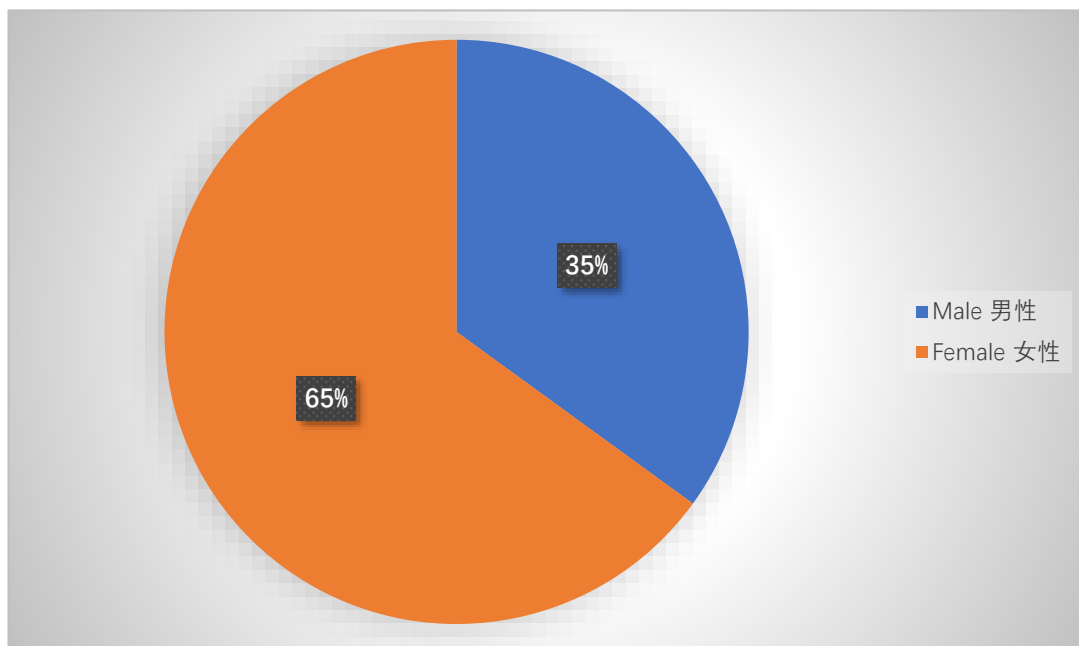
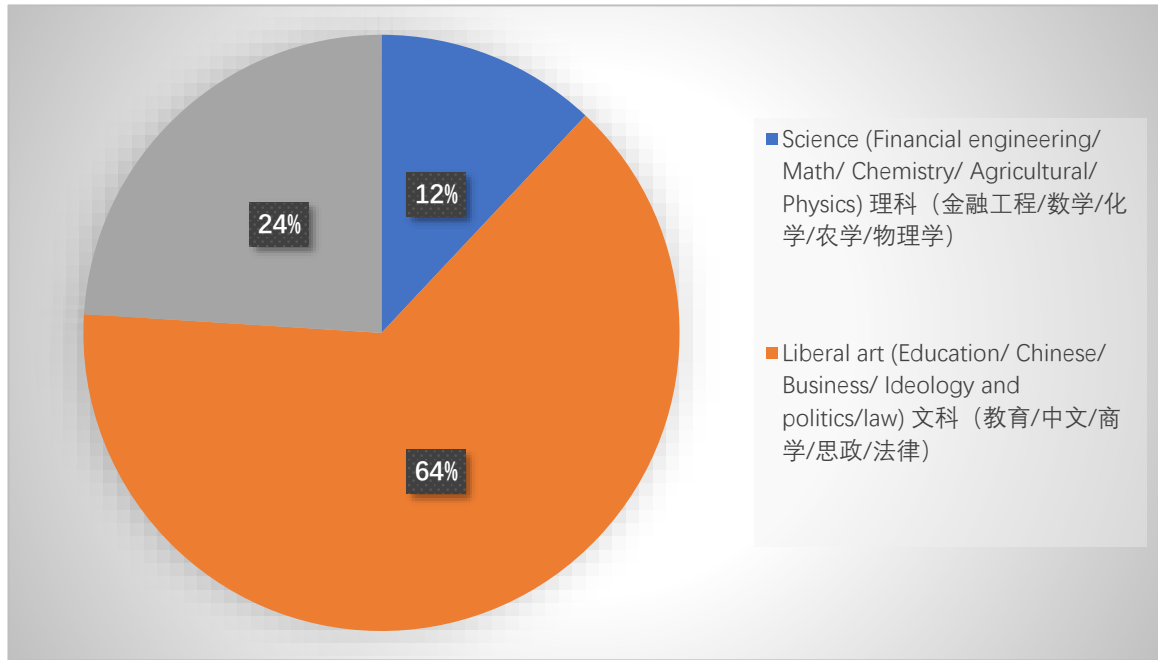


Figure 2. Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 presents the percentage for gender. Out of the 660 respondents, 228 or 32% are male and 432 or 65% are female.

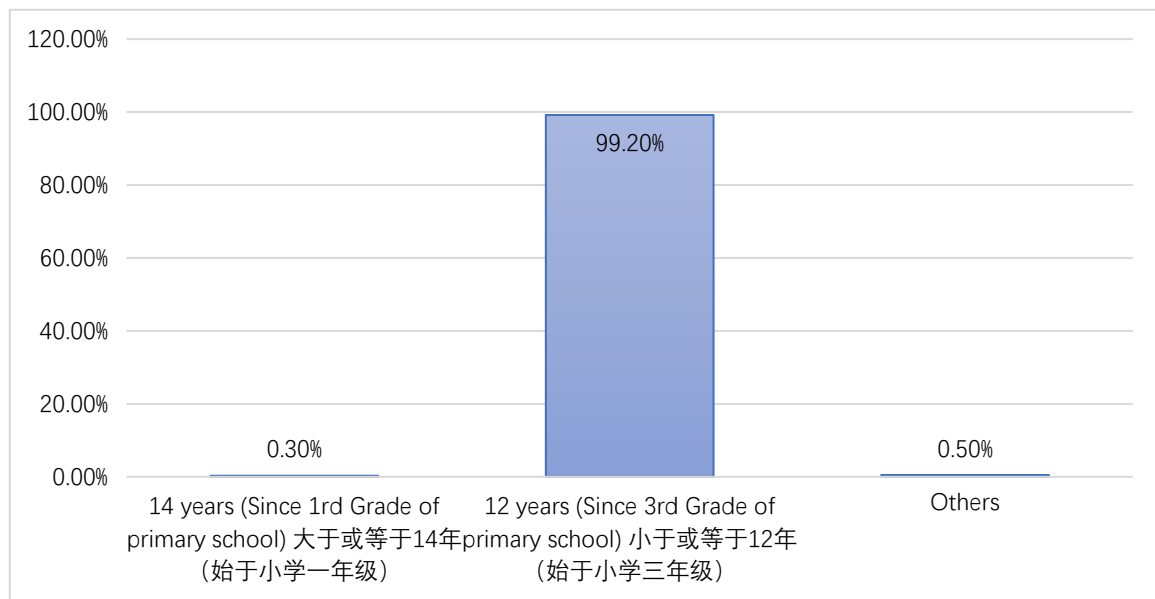
#### Q2 Cluster 学科

Figure 3 shows the percentage for cluster. 81 or 12% of the participants are from the science cluster. 423 or 64% of the participants are from the liberal art. 156 or 24% of the participants are from Engineering.



**Figure 3. Percentage for Cluster**

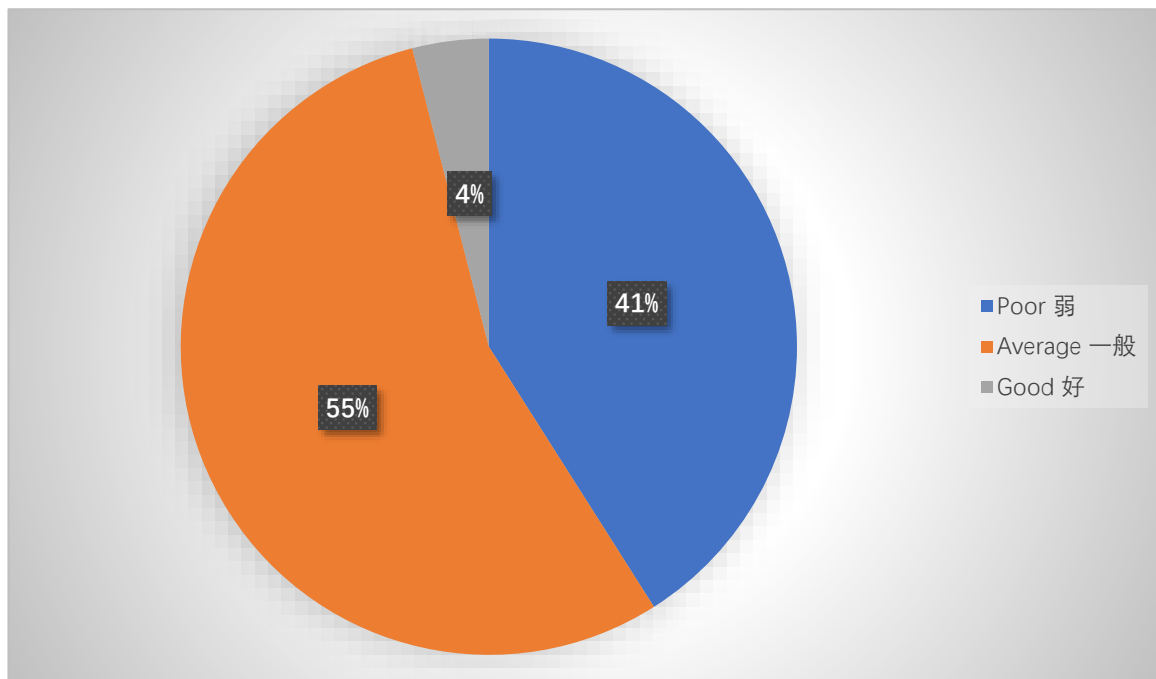
**Q3 How Many Years Have You studied English**



**Figure 4. Percentage for Number of Years they Studied English**

Figure 4 presents the percentage for the number of years the participants studied English. 2 or 0.3% of the participants studied for 14 years, while 655 or 99.2% studied for 12 years. 3 or 0.5% responded to “others” category.

**Q4 Self- Rating of Reading in English Proficiency**



**Figure 5.** Percentage for Self-rating of Reading

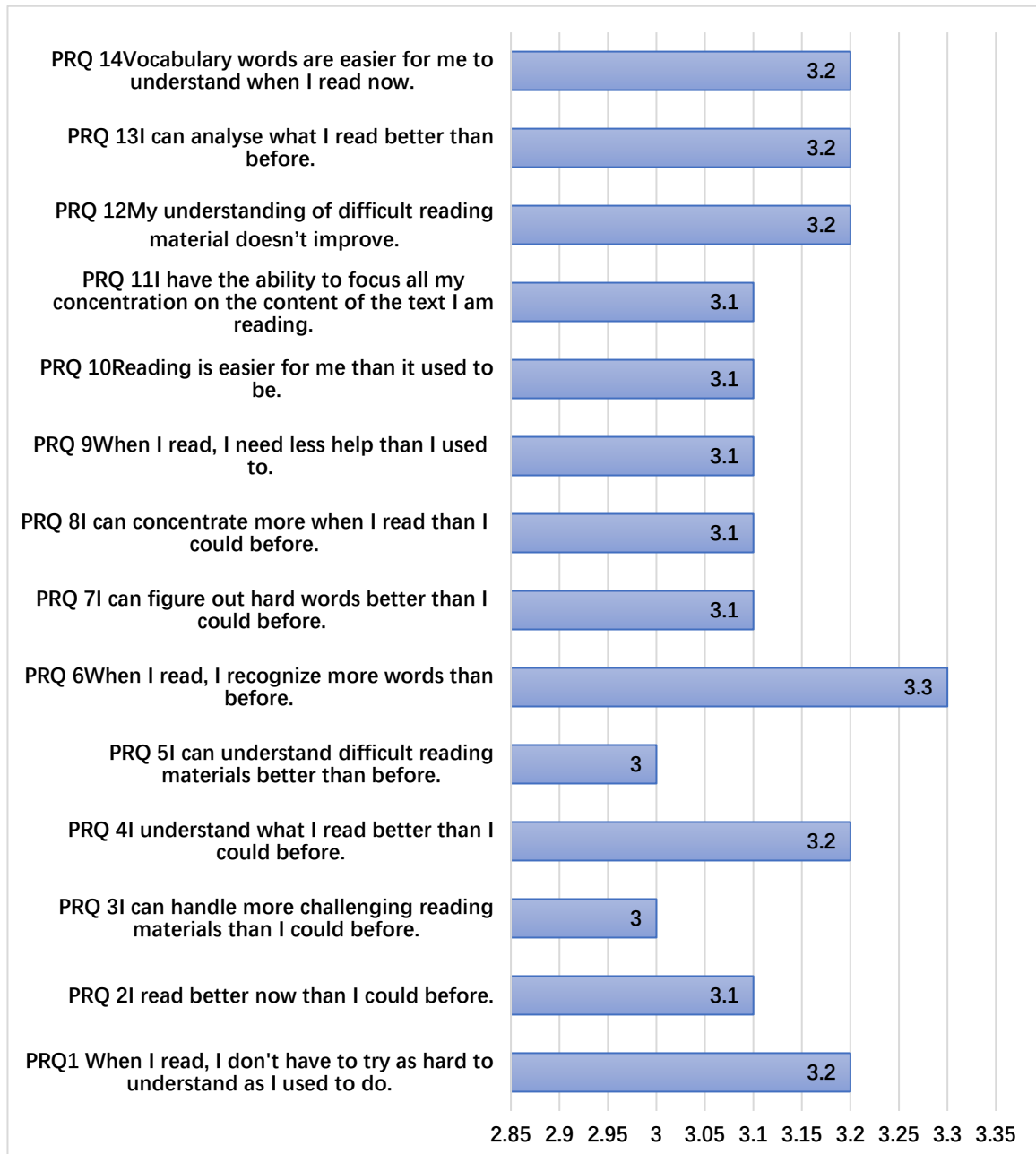
Figure 5 shows the percentage for self-rating of reading. 279 or 41% rate themselves as “poor”. 365 or 55% rated themselves as “average” while 16 or 4% of them rated themselves as “good”.

#### *4.2 Findings for Progress*

This section presents data to answer research question1: How do EFL learners perceive their progress in reading? The mean scores for 14 items are presented to show the results for “progress”.

Figure 6 presents the mean for progress. The highest mean is 3.3 for the item “When I read, I recognize more words than before”. Five items share the same mean of 3.2 and they are “When I read, I don't have to try as hard to understand as I used to do.”, “understand what I read better than I could before”, “My understanding of difficult reading material doesn't improve”, “I can analyse what I read better than before” and “Vocabulary words are easier for me to understand when I read now.”.



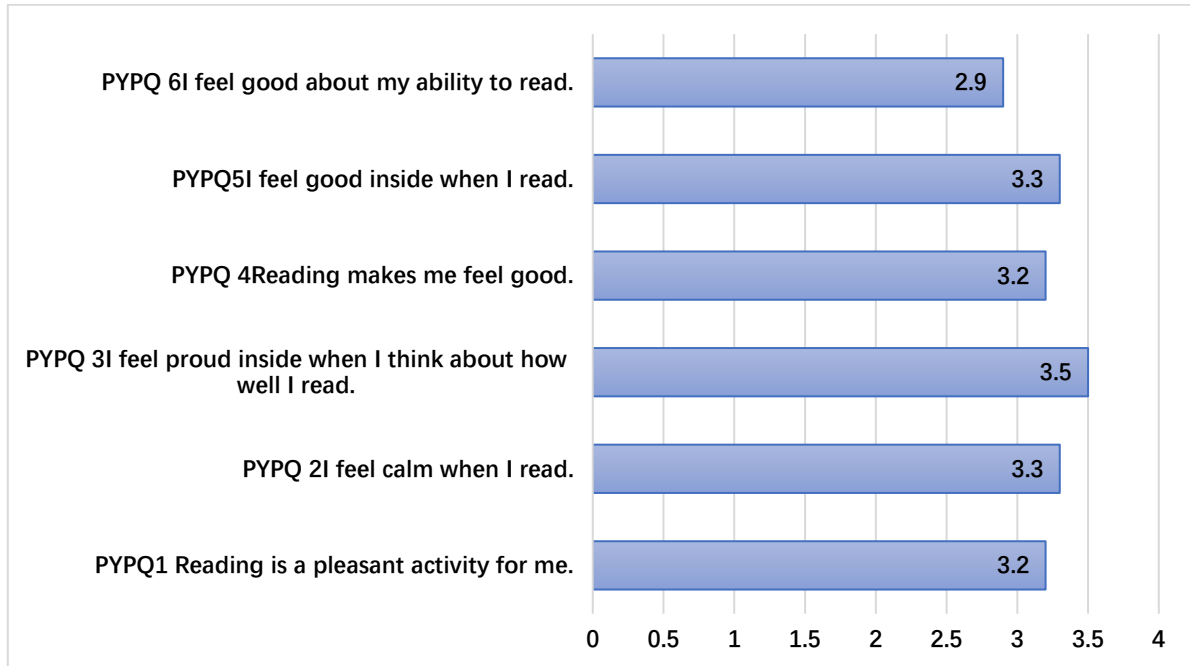


**Figure 6.** Mean for Progress

#### 4.3 Findings for Psychological States

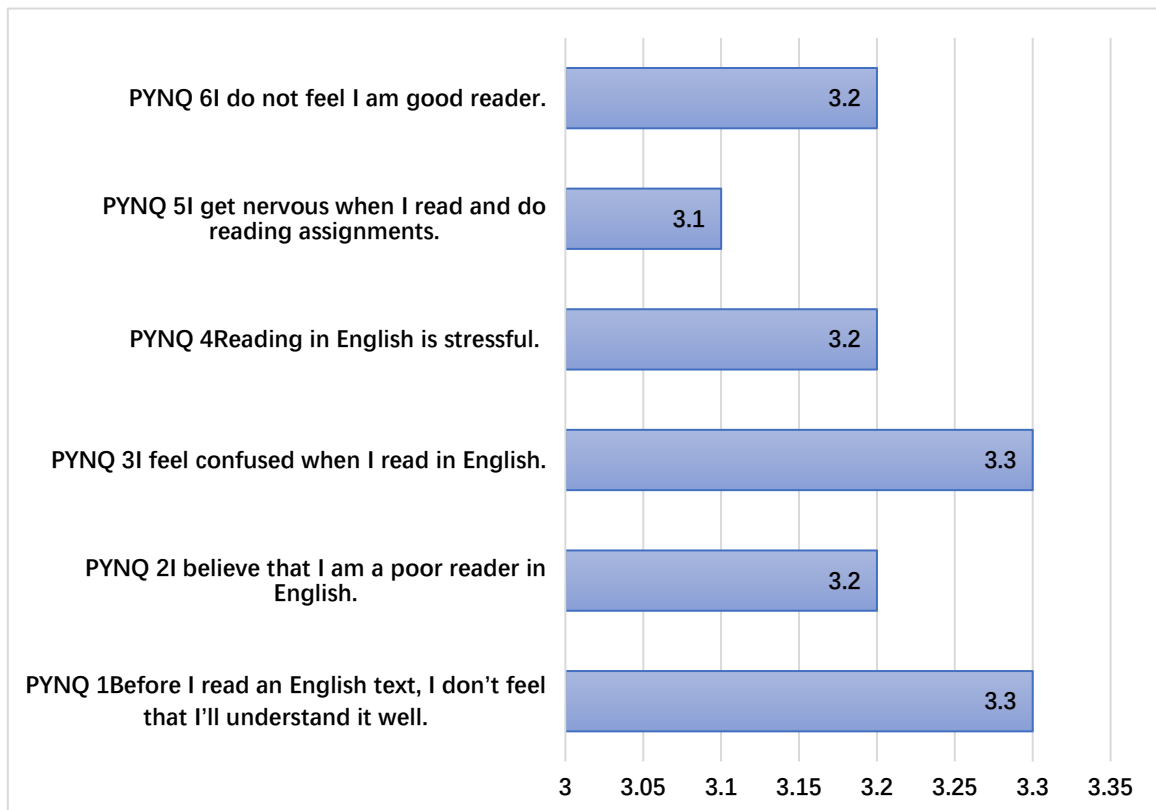
This section presents data to answer research question 2: How do the EFL learners' psychological state influence their perception of reading? According to Kassem (2013), psychological states can be categorised into (i) positive and (ii) negative. In the context of this study, six items are analysed to reveal positive psychological states.

##### (i) Positive Psychological States



**Figure 7.** Mean for Psychological States-Positive

Figure 7 shows the mean for positive psychological states. The highest mean is 3.5 for “I feel proud inside when I think about how well I read”. This is followed two items with the mean of 3.3 and they are “I feel calm when I read” and “I feel good inside when I read”. The lowest mean of 2.9 is for “I feel good about my ability to read”.



**Figure 8.** Mean for Psychological States-Negative

## (ii) Negative Psychological States

Figure 8 shows the mean for negative psychological state. Two items share the same mean of 3.3 and they are “Before I read an English text, I don’t feel that I’ll understand it well” and “I feel confused when I read in English”. Three items have the same mean of 3.2 and they are “I believe that I am a poor reader in English”, “Reading in English is stressful” and “I do not feel I am good reader”.

#### 4.4 Findings for Relationship between Progress and Psychological States

This section answers research question 3: Is there a relationship between progress and psychological state in reading? In order to determine the significant associations in the mean scores for progress and psychological states (positive and negative), correlation coefficient was conducted. According to Jackson (2015), positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. The stronger the positive correlation, the more likely the stocks are to move in the same direction.

**Table 3.** Correlation for Progress and Positive Psychological States

		Progress Mean	Psychological States POSITIVE Mean
ProgressMean	Pearson Correlation	1	.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	660	660
PsychologicalStates POSITIVEMean	Pearson Correlation	.676**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	660	660

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 above shows the correlations for progress and positive psychological states. Analysis of the mean scores showed a strong correlation coefficient of .676\*\*. In addition to that, the significant rate of p-value of .000 shows that there is a high significance.

**Table 4.** Correlation for Progress and Negative Psychological States

		Progress Mean	Psychological States NEGATIVE Mean
Progress Mean	Pearson Correlation	1	-.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.160
	N	660	660
Psychological States NEGATIVE Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.055	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.160	
	N	660	660

Table 4 above shows the correlations for progress and negative psychological states. Analysis of the mean scores showed a strong negative correlation coefficient of  $-.055$ . In addition to that, the significant rate of p-value of  $.160$  shows that there is no significance in the relationship.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary of Findings and Discussion

#### 5.1.1 Progress

The first research question investigated EFL readers' perception on their reading progress. Experience is noted as one of the sources which affect the development of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, Freeman et al. 1999). Finding from the first research question revealed that EFL reader made the biggest improvement in vocabulary accumulation. 49% participants reported that they recognized more words than before when reading. 39% of them considered that vocabulary in reading were easier for them to understand. The growth of vocabulary made reading easier for them. However, minor progress was reported on their understanding of difficult reading material (Mean=3). The result supported the findings by previous studies that reading text provides opportunities for advancement in vocabulary development (Duff, Tomblin et al. 2015).

#### 5.1.2 Psychological States

The second research question explored how EFL readers' psychological states influence their reading self-efficacy. Readers' psychological states can be either positive or negative. Shehzad, Alghorbany et al. (2019) found that psychological states are negatively and significantly correlated with reading self-efficacy beliefs. Increase in anxiety level decreases reading self-efficacy and vice versa. Findings from this section shown most of the readers feel proud inside when they think about how well they do in reading. They feel calm when they are reading. However, less than 30% of the participants feel good about their ability to read. 48% of the participants didn't feel they would understand the reading text well before reading. They believed they were poor readers in English, and English reading made them stressful, which indicated a low reader self-efficacy. The result is consistent with participants' self-rating of their English proficiency. 40% of them considered they were poor in English.

#### 5.1.3 Relationship between Progress and Psychological States

The third research question focused on the relationship between progress in reading and readers' psychological states. A high significance was found between them. When readers are in positive psychological state, they feel good about reading and are willing to reading. This contributed to a better understanding of the text and improvement in reading proficiency. On the contrary, when readers are in negative psychological state, they can be nervous. They find reading stressful or confusing. They are reluctant to read. As a result, less or even no progress will be made. This finding supported the finding by Çakır and Alıcı (2009) that successful experience is one of the influential variables effecting learner's self-efficacy.

### 5.2 Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The development of self-efficacy contributes to improvement in learning. Since progress and psychological states are important source of reader self-efficacy, it appears to be vital for teachers to help students make progress and develop positive attitude towards reading. Learners who have repeated experiences of success can be more positive to reading than those who experienced repeated failure. Therefore, teachers should give students some tasks they are able to perform (Dörnyei 2020). Besides, teachers should give students more constructive feedback that recognizes strengths and areas for improvement and specifies how to leverage strengths toward making the needed improvements. Because constructive feedback reduced students' anxiety on reading and promotes self-efficacy. (Evan Ortlieb & Susan Schatz, 2020).

For future research, investigation can be done on how other sources of self-efficacy, such as observational comparison and strategy awareness influence reader self-efficacy. Furthermore, in view of the quantitative nature of the present study, future research ought to combine interviews with questionnaire to explore the relationship among the variables concerning reader self-efficacy.

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