

**EFFECTS OF SELF-EFFICACY AND SOCIAL PERSUASION ON ENGLISH READING SKILLS:
A CASE STUDY OF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS**Ambreen Kauser¹, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal*²

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Abstract

This research work aims to study the effects of self-efficacy and social persuasion on perceived reading skills of intermediate level students of colleges in Chiniot, Pakistan. This research work utilizes its conceptual framework from Bandura's (1994) concept of self-efficacy and applies it to 175 intermediate students. Overall, the study used quantitative approach. A questionnaire was designed which included items related to the concepts of reading skill, self-efficacy and social persuasion. The data was analyzed by using SPSS. To see the influence of self-efficacy and social persuasion on reading skill, Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were applied. The results indicate that majority of students understand that it is essential to have proficiency in English reading skills to master English language. Their self-efficacious beliefs, perceived reading proficiency and social persuasion also seem interrelated. The results also revealed that both social persuasion and self-efficacious beliefs strongly influence reading skills. Between these factors, self-efficacious beliefs are more influential in strengthening reading skills of young learners. The study suggests that teachers should encourage their students and make them realize that they are capable enough to perform the assigned tasks of reading.

Keywords: self-efficacy sources; reading comprehension; qualitative inquiry; L2 reading; reading skills

1. Background of the Study

Reading is a complex language skill consisting of various sub-skills. It is a cognitive process of decoding symbols for constructing meaning from the given text. According to Lestrud (2013), reading skill leads a person to interact and gain meaning from written language.

Guthrie & Klauda, 2013, believe that use of discipline specific text facilitates reading skills as it improves the level of self-efficacy in young learners. Reading skills come under the umbrella of receptive skills. In learning any language, whether it is mother tongue, a second language or a foreign language; receptive skills: reading and speaking skills need to be mastered first. Then, one should go for learning productive skills: writing and speaking skills. It is very essential to observe this natural order to save extra effort.

In the case of English language learning in Pakistan at intermediate level, the learners should first focus on reading skills then they should go for writing skill. Reading of text books is an effective way to teach English. If text books are taught in a good way, the students will unconsciously acquire most of initial rules of grammar so they would be able to deal with problems relating to their future progress

in reading by themselves (Bhatti, 2016). Reading self-efficacy refers to the students' perception of their effectiveness and abilities to read the given passages and to do the assignments in ESL class. Pajares and Guthrie (2006) and Wigfield (2000) pointed out that by increasing self-efficacy of learners, their reading motivation can be enhanced. At higher academic levels, reading skills and self-efficacy are imperative to each other. Higher self-efficacy level leads to better reading performance and in return reading proficiency inculcates strong self-efficacious beliefs. Mills et.al (2007) thinks that self-efficacy, which is the effective variant of meta-cognition, is known to be crucial for success in academic reading at secondary and tertiary levels.

Verbal or social persuasion refers to positive and constructive feedback from a person who is important as well as credible for the learners.

According to Mizumoto & Takeuchi (2009), teaching different learning strategies to the students also boosts up their self-efficacy. Teachers can play very important role in fostering self-efficacy in learners by giving them constructive feedback about their performances. According to Bandura (1977), a significant factor that impacts self-efficacy, is persuasion, or the messages that other important selves give to the learners. According to Klauda (2013), assuring students of success increases their self-efficacy. In this regard, teacher is a very important person for the students so far as learning and guidance is concerned. Therefore, teacher needs to be very careful about selection of the words while giving feedback to the learners.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is aimed at exploring significance of English reading skill in learning English language in Punjab, Pakistan where English enjoys the status of being official language. It also aims to gauge influence of efficacious beliefs on reading skills. It also tries to find how far a teacher can inculcate efficacious beliefs in young learners at Higher Secondary Level in Pakistan.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study has the following objectives:

- To investigate how far reading skill is important in the eyes of learners at intermediate level
- To investigate the interrelationships among English language reading skills, reading self-efficacy and social persuasion
- To find out whether reading skill is influenced by self-efficacy and social persuasion

1.4 Research Questions

This research tries to find answers to the following research questions:

- 1) How far English reading skills are important for learning English language at intermediate level?
- 2) What is the relationship between social persuasion and reading skill?
- 3) How do self-efficacious beliefs and social persuasion affect the reading skill?

2. Literature Review

For learning a language importance of receptive skills: reading and listening cannot be ruled out. Oral and written input is an essential part of communication goal of the standards for foreign language learning (National Standards, 1999). Mastery over receptive skills is a doorway to acquiring productive skills: speaking and writing. Students who do well in reading are more likely to better

achieve in other academic areas, like math and science, and to be more engaged in academics in general (Child Trends Data Bank [CTDB], 2011; Grimm, 2008; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Oxford (1995) reported that expertise in reading and speaking is strongly correlated with trusting that one has the ability to learn a language well. Students who are good readers tend to graduate from high school and college at higher rates and are more likely to secure jobs after graduation (CTDB, 2011).

Since Pakistan is primarily a non-English speaking country, chances for enough exposure to oral skills are meager. Our educational system places exceptional emphasis on written skills. To maintain a balance for ensuring better learning of English language, reading skill needs to be paid proper attention. Standard 1.2 of the communication goal, emphasizes the importance of student's comprehension of written and spoken language on a variety of topics. According to the national standards (1999), students' ability to "control" what they hear and read has an impact on students' development of comprehension. Students' self-perception of their abilities to properly process and actively control the oral and written input may provide valuable information to the language teachers and may have significant implications in foreign language classroom. A majority of students cannot properly pronounce even those written English words which have been incorporated to our Urdu or Punjabi vocabulary.

Curriculum of English Language at intermediate level in Pakistani context has historically favored intensive reading approach. F. A/F. Sc. students typically read from their textbooks. Intensive reading as a methodology is teacher centered approach, because the instructor directs most activities in the class, including what to read, when to read, how to read, and what grammar, vocabulary, text organization or comprehension points are to be discussed. College students at intermediate level need to thoroughly understand grammar, vocabulary, punctuation marks, and meanings of words. Technique of intensive reading caters all above-mentioned requirements. Therefore, college teachers need to pay more attention to intensive reading at intermediate level. Usually, F.A and F.Sc students are not very proficient in English reading, and teacher has opportunity to personally supervise students during English period, teacher needs to apply intensive reading techniques in classroom to foster better English language skills. All the elements required to promote intensive reading skill are available in intermediate classrooms. There is a short text in the form of books designed by Punjab Textbook Board. Everyday students have to read given lesson, and above all there are exercises at the end of each lesson to gauge how for a learner has learned English. In the given time, the teacher can make the students read aloud the assigned lesson and rectify the mistakes relating to grammar, punctuation, pronunciation and meanings of difficult words. Afterward, exercises and questions answers given at the end of each lesson help teacher foster the skills of skimming, scanning and comprehension. Reading in classroom context generally focuses on reading aloud under the supervision of teacher.

Intermediate students, in various public and private educational institutions in Pakistan, lag behind in reading skill. Due to certain factors, they focus all their energies on cramming the given topics particularly answer to the questions given at the end of each lesson. Therefore, their knowledge of English language in the term of pronunciation, intonation pattern, morphology and syntax is usually very limited. They cannot properly pronounce the words, they cannot read text with proper pauses, intonation and stress pattern; consequently, they can hardly understand whatever they read. Besides, learning grammatical rules is both conscious and unconscious process. It requires a lot of practice in the term of reading and writing in order to learn the crammed grammatical principles. Cramming the rules is not sufficient for getting command over grammar; students need to read more and more text to ensure practical application of the rules.

A fundamental element of behavior is choice made by learners. Learners opt for those tasks which they perceive they can handle. Then comes choice of strategy to perform the task, positive or negative self-efficacious beliefs affect it as well. Individual with positive beliefs will try many new ways or techniques to carry out tasks, consequently the chances of success will increase. With negative beliefs, individuals will avoid novel ideas, so they will be left with very limited methods and fewer chances of success. This also affects their development by avoiding the task; the individuals cannot get feedback to counteract the negative self-efficacy beliefs (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situation (Bandura, 1983). Self-percept of efficacy is not merely an inert estimate of abilities and desired course of action, but it arises as a result of individual's interaction with the environment. Self-efficacy research in academics has important implication for providing the students with counseling for exploring better career prospects. Moreover, it can be used to develop career intervention strategies. Studies in various areas have tried to explore the relationship among efficacy beliefs, related psychological constructs, academic motivation and achievement.

Individuals also create and develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the verbal persuasions they receive from others. These persuasions involve exposure to the verbal judgments that others provide. Effective persuasions should not be confused with knee-jerk praise or empty inspirational homilies (Bandura, 1997). Verbal/social persuasion refers to feedback or instructions which are intended to support an individual's ability to perform a given task. It is conscious attempt by an individual to change attitude, belief and behavior of another individual through transmission of a message. Another scholar defined social persuasion as successful intentional effort at influencing someone's thought, attitude and ultimately action in the situation when persuade has some measure of freedom to act or think. Though it is a weaker source of efficacy than mastery or vicarious experiences.

As we proceed in twenty first century, we need to understand that the role of teachers has changed class room. They have to be more interactive with the students. They need to adopt new role of a psychologist besides being a leader. They can spell new spirit of inspiration in the students by motivating them. Teachers' role is important in the classroom not only for the reason that they impart language instruction to the students but also because they motivate the students to learn the language. Teacher must cultivate student's beliefs in their capabilities while at the same time ensuring that the envisioned success is attainable.

3. Research Methodology and Conceptual Framework

The research dwells upon quantitative paradigm. The data of 175 students were collected in the form of questionnaire. The collected data were converted into numerical form to analyse on SPSS software. A code-book for the responses of questionnaire was also prepared.

3.1 Participants

Selection of sampled population was on the basis of convenient sampling. It was not possible to go for random sampling. The data of rural population was collected from two public sector colleges in the district Chiniot. The population for the study includes 175 students of intermediate level. It has been particularly tried that sampled population should be heterogeneous to ensure representation of the both male and female; rural and urban; English medium and Urdu medium, and science and humanity group students. There are 84 male participants and 91 female participants. 88 participants

belong to rural area whereas 87 students hailed from urban area. Age of the students varies from fifteen years to twenty years.

Table 3.1 Information about Participants

Background information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	84	48
Female	91	52
Age		
15-17	124	70.9
18-20	51	29.1
Medium		
Urdu	73	41.7
English	102	58.3
Previous Schooling		
Matric	122	69.7
O-Level	53	30.3
Group		
Science	126	72
Arts	49	28

3.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study lies on the concept of “self-efficacy” introduced by Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1977). It tries to explore the how far positive self-beliefs can contribute to improve reading abilities of the learners at intermediate level, and how for a teacher can inculcate reading self-efficacy in students by using verbal persuasion. He suggested that human beings are not just reactive to environment but they are able to exert control over their environments, they are more likely to secure positive outcomes. He proposed that “people are agentic operators in their life course, not just on-looking hosts of brain mechanisms orchestrated by environmental events” (Bandura, 1997, p. 5). Bandura asserts that reciprocity does not indicate that reciprocal influences are of equal strength and occur simultaneously.

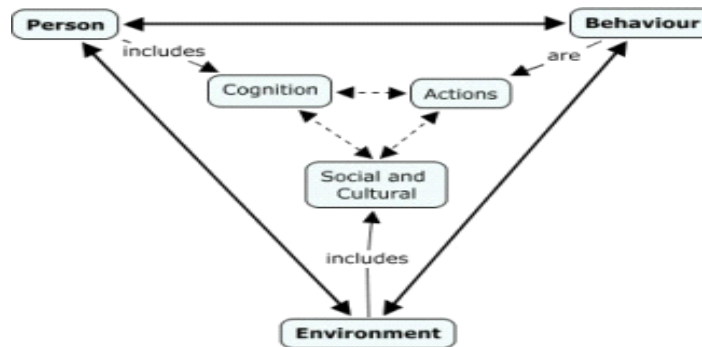


Figure 3.1 Reciprocal Determinism

4. Data Analysis

In this section, the results of the collected data have been presented. The questionnaire consists of two parts: A and B. The information collected in part A only constitutes the background of the study, because it is desirable to have relevant information about participants to find which psycho-social

factors yield to a certain type of personality. The answers to part B, directly relate to the topics under study. 40-items presented in this section seek information about learners' attitude towards reading skill, self-efficacious beliefs and social/ verbal persuasion.

The first research question tries to explore how much importance the students attach to the reading skills. To find answer to this question; overall man value and frequency of the responses of the related items have been calculated. The items #1,4,9,12,15,17,18,21,30,33,35,36 have the statements which estimate individual's attitude towards reading skill. Frequencies and mean values of the items relating to 'Reading Self-efficacy' and 'Social persuasion' have also been calculated and analyzed to find out how much confident the students are about their reading skills, and how far teacher's feedback is important to them. In this research work, the terms 'Reading Self-efficacy' and 'Self-efficacy'; 'Reading Skills' and 'Importance of Reading Skills' have been used interchangeably to denote same variables. Following is the tabular presentation of mean values and frequency of responses.

Table 4.1 Presentation of Responses (Reading Skills)

Sr. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Value
1	It is very important for me to become good English reader.	137	33	3	2	1.26
2	I believe that mastery over English reading skills is a key to learning the language	81	78	10	6	1.66
3	I always read the English text before doing exercise given at the end of each lesson in my syllabus.	79	62	29	5	1.77
4	I read English to increase my grades in exams.	84	68	16	7	1.69
5	I like being the best at English reading.	83	65	24	3	1.68
6	I enjoy reading in the classroom	82	56	25	12	1.81
7	I like doing extra-curricular reading in English language.	53	73	37	12	2.04
8	Usually, I learn different things by reading English.	69	81	12	13	1.82
9	My English reading skills help me understand help me the content of other subjects.	85	66	20	4	1.67
10	I pay special importance to English reading skills as compared to other language skills.	59	75	33	8	1.94
11	I am always ready to put in extra effort to enhance my English reading skills.	71	75	20	9	1.81
12	I present myself voluntarily when teacher asks for English reading in the class.	62	85	22	6	1.84

4.1. Importance of Reading Skill

In almost all the responses, the majority of the learners either strongly agreed or simply agreed to the statements. The responses to the very first statement: It is very important for me to become a good English reader; reveal that only for 2.86% of total participants, reading skill was not important. This percentage is quite meagre. Overall, it can be claimed that the learners are very much aware of significance of English reading skills to achieve their academic targets. The overall mean value of the response is 1.26. It is the lowest of the mean values of all statements. It shows highest percentage of the students agreeing to the statement.

In response to the statement: I read English to increase my grades in exams; as many as 87% candidates favoured the concept. However, as few as 13% students disagreed to the concept. It is not clear whether these 13% students read English beyond academic achievements or they do not go for reading at all. The response to the statement: My English reading skills help me understand the content of other subjects is also quite affirmative. 49% students strongly agreed to the statement, and 38% simply agreed. 11% students disagreed with the concept and as few as only 2% of students disagreed strongly. The responses suggest that learners understand the fact that English language learning is a very helpful for them to understand other subjects as well.

The results indicate that Pakistani students of F.A/ F.Sc give a lot of Importance to reading skills. However, it can be inferred from data analysis that more students agree to the statements relating to belief system as compared to the statements asking for taking practical steps. This variation is shown in the difference of the mean values of the responses. The lower mean value shows that more students agree to the statement and vice versa. For example, the statements like: "I present myself voluntarily when teacher asks for English reading in the class" and "I like doing extra-curricular reading in English language" have higher overall mean values of 1.84 and 2.04 respectively as compared to statements like: "It is very important for me to become good English reader" and "My English reading skills help me understand help me the content of other subjects" with mean values 1.26 and 1.67 respectively. The difference between the highest and the lowest mean values is 0.78.

Table 4.2 Presentation of Responses (Self-efficacy)

Sr. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Value
1	I can read English stories given in my text.	69	93	10	3	1.70
2	I can understand whatever I can read in English.	63	89	18	5	1.80
3	I can guess the meaning of unknown word given in the text.	37	85	45	8	2.14
4	I can make summary of whatever I read in English	47	90	32	6	1.98
5	After reading the English lesson I, I can answer the questions given at the end of the text.	76	71	21	7	1.76
6	I can understand the grammatical structure of the sentences I read in English.	55	80	34	6	1.95
7	I can recognize the class of each word while I read English.	48	86	34	7	2.00
8	I can pay proper attention to the stress patterns while reading English.	53	85	29	8	1.95
9	I learn from English reading tasks more than other students in the class.	52	93	24	6	1.91
10	I can properly pronounce each word while reading English.	45	93	26	11	2.02
11	I can read English stories books besides textbook.	50	76	39	10	2.05
12	I can understand relatively difficult text book if I try hard.	70	76	24	5	1.80
13	I can develop mental picture of the story I read in English.	65	76	23	11	1.88

4.2 Self-efficacy

In response to the statement: I can read English stories given in the text book, 92.6% of participants believed that they can read the stories given in their syllabus but 7.4% of respondents were not confident about their ability to read. We can interpret from the data that students have quite strong sense of self efficacy about their reading abilities. The overall mean value of the response is 1.7. The mean value shows that majority of the students agreed that they can read their text books. Among the statements relating to self-efficacy, this one has highest number of positive responses. In response to the statement: After reading the English lesson I can answer the questions given at the end of the text, data indicates that 84% of the participants have quite strong sense of self-efficacy regarding reading comprehension. It is a positive result; majority of learner believe that they can understand when they read their book.

The statement: I can guess the meaning of unknown words given in the text, tries to explore about an important skill of guessing meaning of unknown words. Here, the responses of the learners are quite unexpected. The responses to this statement evoked the highest rate of negative responses in the whole questionnaire, and overall mean value of the responses is 2.14. 30% of the students believed that they could not guess the meanings of an unknown word from the text. It can be inferred from the results that vocabulary development is a major problem which keeps the learners from understanding whatever they read. The statement: I can properly pronounce each word while reading English, sheds light on self-efficacious beliefs about pronunciation. Overall mean value of the responses is 2.04. This mean value indicates that pronunciation is another significant problematic area like vocabulary building in English language learning.

Table 4.3 Presentation of Responses (Social Persuasion)

Sr. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Value
1	My teacher's feedback is of great source of encouragement for me in reading English.	104	49	13	9	1.58
2	I can read the given text in the class room in the presence of my teacher.	76	79	14	6	1.71
3	My teacher always comes up with prompt feedback when English reading session is going on in the classroom.	72	72	22	9	1.81
4	When I read English text, teacher pays proper attention to the way I read.	98	51	16	10	1.65
5	Teacher's proper attention boosts up my confidence for my future reading tasks.	83	69	18	5	1.68
6	While reading text I always look up to teacher for guidance.	92	57	23	3	1.64
7	In the case of mistake, my English teacher corrects me on the spot.	102	50	18	5	1.58
8	The correction of teacher, during English reading, motivates me to pay more attention to the reading tasks	85	60	24	6	1.72
9	I am happy when someone recognizes my English reading	84	72	12	7	1.67

	accomplishments.					
10	My teacher's reminding me of my past successful experiences boosts up my motivation to read English.	77	78	17	3	1.69
11	When I feel difficulty in English reading, my teacher draws my comparison with other successful students.	63	78	26	8	1.88
12	The comparison with successful students boosts up my English reading skills.	65	81	22	7	1.83
13	Teacher's praise makes me feel that I have potential to become a good English reader.	82	56	28	9	1.79
14	Teacher's encouraging statements make me feel relaxed while I read English.	78	70	23	4	1.73
15	Teacher's appreciation is a great source of motivation for me.	97	58	12	8	1.60

4.3 Social Persuasion

The responses of the students regarding this section show that social persuasion is also a significant element for contributing to learners' good result in English language learning. The responses to the statement: My teacher's feedback is of great source of encouragement for me in reading English, show that a vast majority of the students give great importance to teachers' feedback and opinion. More than 87% of the participants believed that teacher's feedback is of great importance for them.

The statement: In the case of mistake, my English teacher corrects me on the spot; tries to explore how far the students believe that their teachers give them instant and honest feedback. Again as many as 102 students strongly agreed that their teachers correct them. 50 participants agreed, 18 respondents disagreed and only 5 students strongly disagreed.

The survey indicates that verbal appreciation by the teacher is considered to be very significant for young learners. Most of the participants acknowledged that their teachers' appreciation of their efforts is very important for them. It is reflected by overall mean value of 1.58 of the responses of the two statements: "My teacher's feedback is of great source of encouragement for me in reading English", and "In the case of mistake, my English teacher corrects me on the spot". The difference between the highest and the lowest the mean values of the responses is only 0.3. The data analysis suggests that both students and the teacher understand the importance of praise and encouragement offered by the teacher; however, the teachers do not use different strategies to boost up learners' self-efficacious beliefs.

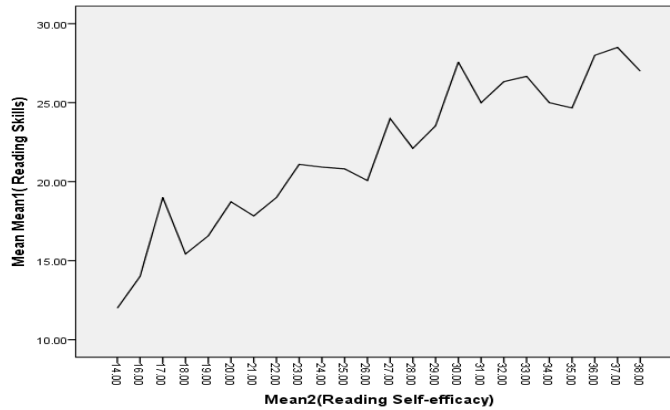
There have been created three variables. Items relating to each variable have been added together to calculate the mean product on SPSS. Then, these products have been assigned codes as Reading Skill, Self-efficacy and Social Persuasion. To find, whether reading self-efficacy affects reading skills, Pearson's correlation has been calculated between Reading Skills and Reading Self-efficacy. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of a linear relationship between paired data. It is denoted by "r" The results of the Pearson correlation have been presented below.

Table 4.4 Correlation between Reading self-efficacy and Reading Skill

Correlation		Reading Self-efficacy	Reading Skill
Reading Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.671**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	175	175
Reading Skill	Pearson Correlation	.671**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	175	175

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

The results indicate that there is strong positive correlation between the both variables. The increase in one variable leads to an increase in the other one. Students with higher reading self-efficacy have better reading skills. The magnitude of correlation is 0.671, which shows strong positive correlation. It indicates that self-efficacy leads to 1 unit increase in reading skill.



4.5 Relationship between Social Persuasion and Reading Skills

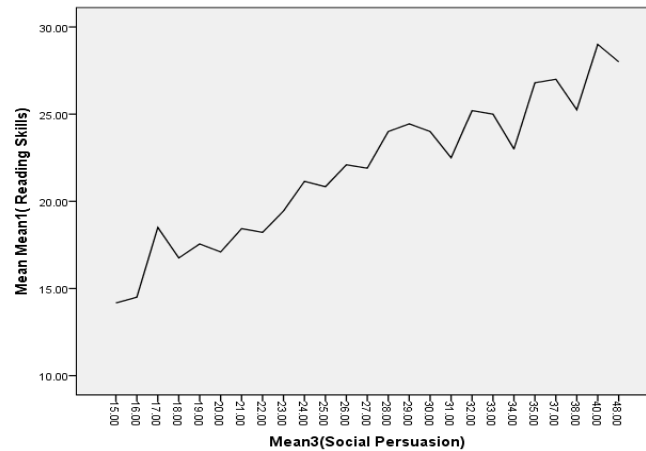
To find out if a relationship exists between social persuasion and reading skill; again, Pearson’s correlation has been calculated between the mean values of the both variables. The value of Pearson “r” is 0.604. Though this value is lower than previous value of 0.671, yet it also indicates a strong correlation. It indicates that 0.6-unit increase in verbal persuasion leads to one-unit increase in reading skill

Table 4.5 Correlation between Social Persuasion and Reading Skill

Correlations		Reading Self-efficacy	Social Persuasion
Reading Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	175	175
Social Persuasion	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	175	175

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

The value of Pearson's correlation coefficient, $r=.604$. This is positive correlation; the results indicate that social persuasion also positively influences student's reading skills. Increase in social persuasion leads to boast up in reading skill or confidence about reading capability.



4.6 Effects of Self-efficacy and Social Persuasion on Reading Skills

Since we want to calculate influence of self-efficacy and social persuasion on the reading skills, reading skill has been taken as dependent variable and rest of the two variables have been taken as independent variables. To find the type of relationship between the predictors: social persuasion and self-efficacy, and the dependent variable, reading skill. These are interpreted step by step to find out how far self-efficacy and social persuasion affect reading skills in the students at intermediate level in the sampled population. The regression analysis is aimed to calculate the magnitude and the type of relationship existing between independent and one dependent variable.

5. Conclusion

The data indicate that a majority of students is aware of the key role played by English reading skills for academic achievements in English and all other subjects with English as medium of instruction. Reading skills of the learners can be polished by boosting students' confidence in their own abilities and the level of confidence can be increased by giving appropriate, positive and instant feedback to the students. Cultivation of higher and positive self-efficacious beliefs in intermediate level students coupled with constructive feedback can yield to great achievements at intermediate level in the field of English language learning in Pakistan. The results of this research also prove the importance of reading skill as data reflects that 170 out of 175 students agreed that they understand that English reading skill is important for learning the language. The students are ready to work for improving English reading skill because they understand its significance. However, the data also suggests that the students are more ready to agree with the statements relating to belief system as compared to the statements asking for taking practical steps.

This study showcased the effect of self-efficacy and social on reading skills of the sampled population of Pakistani students. If a teacher constantly tries to convince the students that they are sufficiently capable of performing given reading task, they will definitely show better results by putting forth extra effort to be successful. The results drawn from data analysis prove the hypotheses true. Frequency analysis of Likert Scale responses indicates the high level importance of reading skill. Pearson's correlation between self-efficacy and reading skill is also quite significant. Pearson correlation calculated between social persuasion and self-efficacy is also significant and shows strong positive relationship between both variables. The study concludes that teachers should understand the significance of reading skills and adapt their teaching methodology accordingly.

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