

Reading Strategy Use, Including Annotating, and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Ninth-Grade EFL Students' Reading Comprehension

Imelda Sabrina Sibarani^{*(1)}
Universitas HKBP Nommensen
Pematangsiantar
Imeldasabrina22@gmail.com

Indriani Lumbantobing⁽²⁾
Universitas HKBP Nommensen
Pematangsiantar
Indrianilumbantobing19@gmail.com

Leni Sinaga⁽³⁾
Universitas HKBP Nommensen
Pematangsiantar
Sinagaleni17@gmail.com

Ucok Gunlicen Simbolon⁽⁴⁾
Universitas HKBP Nommensen
Pematangsiantar
gunlicens@gmail.com

Fransisca Berutu⁽⁵⁾
Universitas HKBP Nommensen
Pematangsiantar
fransiscabrutu@gmail.com

Abstract

Many Indonesian junior high school students struggle to understand English texts, yet few studies have examined what predicts reading comprehension at this level. This study examined whether reading strategy use, including annotating, and self-efficacy predicted the reading comprehension of ninth-grade EFL students, both separately and jointly. A quantitative correlational design was used with 70 students selected through cluster random sampling from a population of 174 ninth-grade students at a public junior high school in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra. Data were collected using a 24-item reading strategy questionnaire adapted from the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), a 28-item self-efficacy questionnaire, and a 25-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test on analytical exposition texts. The data were analyzed with simple and multiple linear regression at $\alpha = .05$. Reading strategy use alone significantly predicted reading comprehension, $R^2 = .278$, $F(1, 68) = 26.18$, $p < .001$. When both predictors were entered together, reading strategy use ($\beta = .226$, $p = .032$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .558$, $p < .001$) each made a significant unique contribution, and together they explained 50.0% of the variance in reading comprehension, $F(2, 67) = 33.55$, $p < .001$. Self-efficacy was the stronger predictor. The findings suggest that students' confidence in their reading ability matters at least as much as the strategies they know. EFL teachers are therefore encouraged to combine explicit instruction in annotating and other reading strategies with deliberate efforts to build students' reading self-efficacy.

Keywords: annotating; EFL; reading comprehension; reading strategies; self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important skills for junior high school students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. Most of the English input these students receive comes from written texts, such as textbooks, worksheets, and examination passages. Their success in English, and increasingly in other subjects, therefore depends heavily on how well they can understand what they read. Reading is not simply a matter of decoding

printed words. Readers construct meaning by combining what the text says with what they already know, and this process involves both cognitive and social factors (Kusumarasdyati, 2023).

Reading comprehension can be understood as the ability to take information from a written text, make sense of it, and use it in a way that shows understanding. Zheng et al. (2023) describe reading comprehension as the ability to grasp both the literal and the inferential

meaning of a text. This happens as readers process individual sentences and, at the same time, build a mental model of the situation the text describes. Good readers, in other words, do not stop at what is stated directly. They read between the lines, connect ideas across sentences, and form an overall picture of the writer's message. Zheng et al. (2023) also note that reading comprehension plays an important role in building knowledge, developing language ability, and supporting later academic and career success. For EFL learners, this process is especially demanding. They must deal with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures while trying to follow the message at the same time. In classroom terms, comprehension shows in what students can do with a text: identify its main idea, locate specific information, work out the meaning of words and references from context, draw inferences, and summarize the text in their own words.

Preliminary observations at a public junior high school in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra, suggested that many ninth-grade students had difficulty with exactly these tasks. Most of them did not know or apply strategies for reaching their reading goals, and many appeared to lack confidence when asked to identify main ideas, locate supporting details, determine word meanings, or draw conclusions. In many lessons, students were asked to read a text on their own and answer the questions that followed, without being taught any comprehension strategy. Teachers seldom activated students' background knowledge before reading, and lessons were largely teacher-centered, leaving students mainly listening to explanations. Students' English achievement reflected these conditions. As shown in Table 1, the mean reading score of ninth-grade students was 60 in the first semester and 65 in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, both below the school's minimum mastery criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal*, KKM) of 75. Reading

was also the lowest of the four skills in the first semester.

Table 1. Ninth-Grade Students' Mean English Scores by Skill, 2024/2025 Academic Year

Semester	Reading	Speaking	Listening	Writing	Mean
I	60	55	65	65	61.25
II	65	60	70	72	66.75

Note. KKM = 75. Source: school records.

Two factors that may help explain such difficulties are the reading strategies students use and the beliefs they hold about their own ability to read. Reading strategies are deliberate actions that readers take to understand a text and to overcome problems when comprehension breaks down. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) group these strategies into three categories: global strategies, which readers use to plan and monitor their reading, such as previewing a text or setting a purpose; problem-solving strategies, which they use when a text becomes difficult, such as rereading or adjusting reading speed; and support strategies, which involve using outside aids or physical actions, such as underlining, taking notes, or using a dictionary. Studies in several EFL contexts have found that students who use reading strategies more often tend to comprehend texts better. Oranpattanachai (2023) found a significant positive relationship between overall strategy use and reading comprehension among Thai university students. Aman and Lemu (2023) reported that high-achieving Ethiopian EFL students used a wider range of strategies, and used them more often, than low achievers. More recently, El Boukhrissi and Brigui (2025) found that Moroccan high school students' awareness of global reading strategies was the strongest correlate of their reading scores.

Among the many reading strategies available, this study gives particular attention to annotating. Annotating is a strategy in which readers mark a text as they read: they underline

or highlight key information, circle unfamiliar words, and write short notes, questions, or reactions in the margins (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004). In the framework of Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), annotating falls mainly within support strategies, although the decisions behind it, such as judging which ideas are important, also draw on global and problem-solving strategies. Annotating has two features that make it suitable for EFL learners. First, it slows readers down and directs their attention to the structure and key points of a text. Lloyd et al. (2022) found that eighth-grade students who were taught to annotate became more engaged with complex texts and achieved higher comprehension, because annotating helped them identify key points, break difficult passages into smaller parts, and stay focused. Second, annotating turns reading into an active process. Mardiah and Melati (2023) describe annotating as an active reading strategy through which readers engage with the text and improve both their comprehension and their retention of information. Because students decide for themselves which information matters and restate their understanding in their own words, their notes also give them a visible record of what they have and have not understood.

Choosing an effective strategy, however, is not enough on its own. A strategy is useful only if students are willing and confident enough to apply it, especially when a text becomes challenging. Li et al. (2022) found that sixteen weeks of explicit reading strategy instruction improved Chinese university students' reading comprehension but did not significantly change their reading motivation or self-efficacy. The authors attributed this to an interplay of individual and contextual factors. This finding suggests that teaching strategies does not automatically make students more confident or motivated readers, and that teachers also need to attend to students' internal, affective factors.

One of the most important of these internal factors is self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as people's beliefs in their

capability to organize and carry out the actions required to reach a given goal. In reading, self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs about their ability to understand texts and complete reading tasks successfully. These beliefs matter because they shape how much effort students invest and how long they persist when they meet difficulties. Giladi et al. (2022) found that EFL learners who felt more confident about learning English put more effort into their studies, and that this effort, in turn, led to better reading comprehension. Oranpattanachai (2023) similarly observed that students with high reading self-efficacy were more likely to persist and work out the meaning of a difficult passage, whereas students with low self-efficacy tended to avoid challenging texts. In a study of Chinese university students, Han (2021) found that among several types of reading motivation, only the factor combining efficacy and engagement was significantly related to reading proficiency.

Reading strategy use and self-efficacy are also closely connected to each other. Zhou and Zhang (2025) followed Chinese university students over time and found that reading self-efficacy and reading strategy use influenced each other reciprocally. They recommended that EFL teachers combine strategy training with instruction designed to build students' self-efficacy. Earlier studies that examined the two variables together reached somewhat different conclusions about their relative importance. Shang (2010) and Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012) found that both strategy use and self-efficacy were related to the reading comprehension of university EFL learners. In a study of Indonesian senior high school students, however, Tobing (2013) found that self-efficacy remained a significant predictor of reading comprehension when both variables were analyzed together, whereas strategy use did not.

Despite this growing body of research, three gaps remain. First, most studies of reading strategies and self-efficacy have involved

university or senior high school students, and studies involving Indonesian junior high school students are still limited. Junior high school is an important stage, because it is when students begin reading longer and more complex English texts, including argumentative genres such as analytical exposition. Second, few studies have examined annotating as part of students' overall strategy repertoire in this context. Third, evidence on the relative contribution of strategy use and self-efficacy is mixed, so it is not yet clear which factor teachers should prioritize. This study addresses these gaps by examining reading strategy use, including annotating, and self-efficacy as predictors of the reading comprehension of ninth-grade EFL students at a public junior high school in Pematangsiantar. It addresses three research questions:

- (1) Does reading strategy use, including annotating, significantly predict students' reading comprehension?
- (2) Does self-efficacy significantly predict students' reading comprehension when reading strategy use is taken into account?
- (3) Do reading strategy use and self-efficacy jointly and significantly predict students' reading comprehension, and which of the two is the stronger predictor?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quantitative correlational design with regression analysis. Reading strategy use (X1) and self-efficacy (X2) served as predictor variables, and reading comprehension (Y) served as the criterion variable. A correlational design was chosen because the aim was to examine how well naturally occurring differences in strategy use and self-efficacy predicted students' comprehension, not to manipulate either variable. Accordingly, the results are interpreted as predictive relationships rather than as evidence of cause and effect.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar, a public junior high school in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The population consisted of all 174 ninth-grade students, distributed across five classes. The sample was drawn through cluster random sampling, in which intact classes rather than individual students are selected at random (Gay et al., 2012). The randomly selected classes yielded a final sample of 70 students.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect the data: a reading strategy questionnaire, a self-efficacy questionnaire, and a reading comprehension test.

Reading strategy questionnaire. This questionnaire measured how often students used reading strategies when reading English texts. Its items were adapted from the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). Because several of the original items were too general, they were modified to suit reading comprehension in the EFL context. Annotating was represented within the support-strategy category, which covers behaviors such as underlining or highlighting key information and writing notes in the margins. The final questionnaire consisted of 24 items, eight for each of the three SORS categories (Table 2), and was translated into Indonesian. Students responded on a five-point frequency scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*rarely*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*often*), and 5 (*always*). To facilitate the analysis, the scores were converted to a 1–100 scale (Arikunto, 2010).

Table 2. Blueprint of the Reading Strategy Questionnaire

Category	Example of strategy	Item numbers	Total
Global strategies	Previewing the text, setting a purpose for reading	1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22	8
Problem-solving strategies	Rereading, adjusting reading speed, guessing meaning from context	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23	8
Support strategies (including annotating)	Underlining or highlighting, writing margin notes, using a dictionary	3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24	8
Total			24

Table 3. Blueprint of the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Dimension	Indicator	Item numbers	Total
General self-efficacy in learning English	Optimism	3, 10, 17, 24	4
	Emotion	1, 8, 15, 22	4
	Work satisfaction	2, 9, 16, 23	4
Reading-specific self-efficacy	Progress	7, 14, 21, 28	4
	Observational comparison	6, 13, 20, 27	4
	Social feedback	5, 12, 19, 26	4
	Physiological states	4, 11, 18, 25	4
Total			28

Self-efficacy questionnaire. This questionnaire measured students' beliefs about their ability to learn English and, in particular, to read English texts. It consisted of 28 items covering two dimensions and seven indicators (Table 3). The general dimension was adapted from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), and the reading-specific dimension was adapted from the four sources of self-efficacy described by Bandura (1997), as operationalized in the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995). All items were reworded to refer to English learning and English reading, and were translated into Indonesian. Students responded on a four-point scale: 1 (*not at all true*), 2 (*hardly true*), 3 (*moderately true*), and 4 (*exactly true*). As with the strategy questionnaire, total scores were converted to a 0–100 scale.

Reading comprehension test. Reading comprehension was measured with a 25-item multiple-choice test based on analytical exposition texts, the genre prescribed for ninth grade in the curriculum. The texts were adapted from ninth-grade English textbooks and similar sources. The test covered five indicators adopted from Nuttall (2005), with five items each: identifying the main idea, locating specific information, determining the meaning of vocabulary in context, identifying references, and drawing inferences (Table 4). Each item had five options (A–E) with one correct answer. Each correct answer received one point, and the total was converted to a 0–100 scale.

Table 4. Blueprint of the Reading Comprehension Test

Indicator	Item numbers	Total
Identifying the main idea	5, 10, 15, 20, 25	5
Locating specific information	4, 9, 14, 19, 24	5
Determining vocabulary meaning in context	3, 8, 13, 18, 23	5
Identifying references	2, 7, 12, 17, 22	5
Drawing inferences	1, 6, 11, 16, 21	5
Total		25

Instrument adaptation. All three instruments were based on established sources: the SORS (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002) for reading strategy use; the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995), and Bandura's (1997) theory for self-efficacy; and Nuttall's (2005) reading skills for the comprehension test. Adaptation consisted of simplifying the wording for junior high school students, relating the items to English learning and reading, and, for the two questionnaires, translating the items into Indonesian.

Data Collection Procedure

Because the students were attending online classes at the time of data collection, all three instruments were administered through Google Forms. The English teacher shared the links to the two questionnaires and the reading comprehension test in the students' WhatsApp group and asked them to complete and submit the forms.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 22. Before hypothesis testing, the data were checked against the prerequisites of linear

regression, namely normality, linearity, and the absence of multicollinearity between the two predictors. Simple linear regression was then used to answer the first research question, and multiple linear regression with both predictors entered simultaneously was used to answer the second and third research questions. The relative strength of the two predictors was compared using their standardized coefficients (β), and the unique contribution of each predictor was estimated with squared semipartial correlations (sr^2). All tests used a significance level of $\alpha = .05$: when $p < .05$, the null hypothesis was rejected and the predictor, or set of predictors, was considered to contribute significantly to reading comprehension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Prerequisite Tests

Before the hypotheses were tested, the data were checked against the prerequisites of linear regression. The normality and linearity requirements were met, so the analyses proceeded with simple and multiple linear regression. Multicollinearity was also not a concern. The standardized coefficients and the explained variance of the two regression models imply a correlation of roughly .50 between reading strategy use and self-efficacy, which corresponds to a variance inflation factor (VIF) of about 1.3, far below the conventional limit of 10.

Research Question 1: Reading Strategy Use and Reading Comprehension

The first research question asked whether reading strategy use, including annotating, significantly predicted reading comprehension. Simple linear regression showed that it did, $F(1, 68) = 26.18, p < .001$ (Table 5). Reading strategy use explained 27.8% of the variance in students' reading comprehension, and the correlation between the two variables ($R = .527$) indicates a moderate positive

relationship. Students who reported using reading strategies more often tended to obtain higher comprehension scores. The first null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 5. Model Summary of the Simple Regression of Reading Comprehension on Reading Strategy Use

<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adj. <i>R</i> ²	<i>SE</i> est.	<i>F</i> (1, 68)	<i>p</i>	β
.527	.278	.267	9.66	26.18	< .001	.527

Research Questions 2 and 3: Joint and Unique Contributions

The second and third research questions were answered with multiple linear regression, entering reading strategy use and self-efficacy simultaneously. The model as a whole was significant, $F(2, 67) = 33.55$, $p < .001$ (Table 6). Together, the two predictors explained 50.0% of the variance in reading comprehension ($R = .707$, adjusted $R^2 = .485$; Table 7), which corresponds to a large effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 1.00$). The third null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 6. Analysis of Variance for the Multiple Regression Model

Source	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	4,397.110	2	2,198.555	33.545	< .001
Residual	4,391.233	67	65.541		
Total	8,788.343	69			

Table 7 shows the contribution of each predictor when the other was held constant. Self-efficacy was a significant predictor of reading comprehension ($\beta = .558$, $t = 5.400$, $p < .001$), so the second null hypothesis was also rejected. Reading strategy use remained a significant predictor as well ($\beta = .226$, $t = 2.192$, $p = .032$), although its standardized

coefficient was less than half that of self-efficacy.

Table 7. Multiple Regression of Reading Comprehension on Reading Strategy Use and Self-Efficacy

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> ²
(Constant)	5.053	8.431		0.599	.551	
Reading strategy use	0.254	0.116	.226	2.192	.032	.036
Self-efficacy	0.654	0.121	.558	5.400	< .001	.218

Note. $R = .707$, $R^2 = .500$, adjusted $R^2 = .485$, *SE* of the estimate = 8.096. sr^2 = squared semipartial correlation, the proportion of variance in reading comprehension explained uniquely by each predictor, calculated as $t^2(1 - R^2)/df_{\text{residual}}$.

The squared semipartial correlations clarify how the 50% of explained variance was distributed. Self-efficacy uniquely accounted for about 21.8% of the variance in reading comprehension, and reading strategy use uniquely accounted for about 3.6%. The remaining 24.6% was shared by the two predictors, reflecting their overlap. Consistent with this, adding self-efficacy to the model raised the explained variance from 27.8% (reading strategy use alone) to 50.0%, an increase of about 22 percentage points. In short, self-efficacy was clearly the stronger predictor, while reading strategy use still made a small but significant unique contribution.

Discussion

This study examined whether reading strategy use, including annotating, and self-efficacy predicted the reading comprehension of ninth-grade EFL students. Three main findings emerged. Reading strategy use was a moderate predictor of comprehension on its own. Self-efficacy was the stronger of the two predictors when both were considered together. Finally, the two variables jointly explained half of the variance in students' comprehension scores,

with a substantial part of that variance shared between them. Each finding is discussed below in relation to previous research.

Reading Strategy Use and Reading Comprehension

The first finding, that reading strategy use significantly predicted reading comprehension ($R^2 = .278$), is consistent with studies in a range of EFL contexts. Oranpattanachai (2023) found a significant positive relationship between overall strategy use and comprehension among Thai university students, and Aman and Lemu (2023) found that Ethiopian high achievers used reading strategies more frequently and more widely than low achievers. El Boukhrissi and Brigui (2025) likewise reported a clear link between strategy awareness and reading performance among Moroccan high school students. The present study extends this pattern to Indonesian junior high school students reading analytical exposition texts. Notably, the relationship found here ($r = .527$) was stronger than the low correlation reported by Oranpattanachai (2023) for university students. One possible explanation is that junior high school learners, who are still developing as readers, may depend more on deliberate strategies, whereas more proficient readers process much of a text automatically. This interpretation, however, needs to be tested directly.

The nature of annotating offers one way to understand why strategy use matters for comprehension. When students underline key ideas, circle unfamiliar words, and write short notes in the margins, they must decide what is important and put their understanding into their own words. Lloyd et al. (2022) found that annotating helped students identify key points, break down complex texts, and slow down enough to focus, which in turn raised their engagement and comprehension. Mardiah and Melati (2023) similarly describe annotating as an active strategy that supports both comprehension and retention. These processes map closely onto the indicators of the reading

test used here. Identifying the main idea requires judging which sentences carry the central point; determining word meaning and references requires attention to how words connect across sentences; and drawing inferences requires connecting stated information with what readers already know. Annotating also leaves a visible record of what students have and have not understood. A paragraph that a student cannot summarize in a short margin note, or a section full of question marks, signals where rereading or help is needed. In this way, annotating supports not only comprehension but also comprehension monitoring.

At the same time, the moderate size of this relationship, and the small unique contribution of strategy use once self-efficacy was added ($sr^2 = .036$), indicate that knowing and using strategies is only part of the picture. This is in line with Li et al. (2022), who found that strategy instruction improved comprehension but did not, on its own, increase students' motivation or self-efficacy. It also reflects the classroom conditions observed at the school, where strategies were rarely taught explicitly. Students who reported frequent strategy use may have discovered these strategies on their own, and such students may also be the more confident and motivated readers. This possibility leads directly to the role of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy and Reading Comprehension

The second finding was that self-efficacy significantly predicted reading comprehension even after strategy use was taken into account, and that it was the stronger predictor ($\beta = .558$, compared with $\beta = .226$ for strategy use). Self-efficacy alone uniquely explained about 22% of the variance in comprehension, roughly six times the unique share of strategy use. This finding agrees with Tobing (2013), who found that among Indonesian senior high school students, self-efficacy remained a significant predictor of reading comprehension when strategy use and self-efficacy were analyzed

together. It also agrees with Oranpattanachai (2023), who reported a much stronger correlation between reading self-efficacy and comprehension than between strategy use and comprehension, and with earlier studies of primary school students in Norway (Solheim, 2011) and ESL learners in Malaysia (Habibian & Roslan, 2014).

Why might self-efficacy matter so much for these students? Bandura (1997) argues that self-efficacy beliefs influence how much effort people invest in a task and how long they persist when they encounter difficulty. Reading an analytical exposition text in a foreign language is, for most ninth-grade students, a task full of such difficulties: unfamiliar words, long sentences, and arguments that must be followed across several paragraphs. Giladi et al. (2022) found that EFL learners with higher English learning self-efficacy invested more effort, and that this effort explained their better reading comprehension. Oranpattanachai (2023) similarly observed that students with high reading self-efficacy persisted in working out the meaning of difficult passages, while those with low self-efficacy tended to avoid them. The low baseline achievement at the research site, where mean reading scores were below the KKM in both semesters, makes this mechanism especially relevant. Students who have repeatedly failed to reach the minimum standard may come to see English texts as beyond their ability. This belief can lead them to give up early on a test item, even when they possess the knowledge needed to answer it.

Not all previous studies, however, have found that self-efficacy predicts comprehension. Carroll and Fox (2017) found that reading self-efficacy predicted children's word reading but not their reading comprehension. Differences in age, language background, and the way self-efficacy is measured may account for such inconsistencies. In the present study, the self-efficacy questionnaire combined general beliefs about learning English with beliefs that were specific to reading. Han (2021) found that

the efficacy-related component of reading motivation, rather than other motivational components, was what related to reading proficiency. This suggests that the reading-specific items may have carried much of the predictive power observed here. Giladi et al. (2022) likewise found that self-efficacy specific to language learning, but not general self-efficacy, was related to EFL reading comprehension. Future studies could separate the two dimensions to test this possibility.

Joint Contribution of Reading Strategy Use and Self-Efficacy

The third finding was that the two predictors together explained 50% of the variance in reading comprehension. This result supports previous studies that examined both variables together (Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012; Shang, 2010; Zarei, 2018). The decomposition of this variance is particularly informative. Nearly half of the explained variance (about 24.6 percentage points) was shared between strategy use and self-efficacy rather than belonging uniquely to either one. In practical terms, students who used reading strategies more often also tended to feel more capable as readers, and these overlapping characteristics together accounted for a large part of their comprehension scores.

This overlap is consistent with the reciprocal relationship reported by Zhou and Zhang (2025), who found that reading self-efficacy and strategy use influenced each other over time. Strategies give students practical tools for dealing with difficult texts, and successful use of those tools can strengthen students' belief that they are capable readers. Greater confidence, in turn, makes students more willing to try strategies such as annotating when a text becomes challenging, instead of giving up. Seen this way, the two factors are best understood not as competing explanations but as mutually reinforcing parts of a single process. Teaching annotating without attention to students' confidence may produce students who know a strategy but do not use it under

pressure. Encouraging confidence without teaching strategies may produce students who are willing but lack effective tools.

The remaining 50% of the variance points to factors that were not examined in this study. Vocabulary knowledge and grammatical knowledge are obvious candidates. Zheng et al. (2023), for example, found a large overall correlation between grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension across 86 studies. Background knowledge of the text topic, reading motivation more broadly, and the quality of classroom instruction are also likely to play a role.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, because the design was correlational, the results show that strategy use and self-efficacy predict reading comprehension, but they cannot show that either variable causes better comprehension. Students who comprehend well may, for example, develop higher self-efficacy as a result of their success. Second, annotating was measured as part of students' overall reading strategy use rather than as a separate variable, so the study cannot isolate the specific contribution of annotating. Third, strategy use and self-efficacy were measured through self-report, which may be affected by students' wish to give socially desirable answers. Fourth, all instruments, including the reading test, were completed online. As a result, the testing conditions were less controlled than in a supervised classroom test. Finally, the sample consisted of 70 students from intact classes at a single school, which limits how far the findings can be generalized to other junior high schools in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that both reading strategy use, including annotating, and self-efficacy predict the reading comprehension of ninth-grade EFL students, and that self-efficacy is the stronger of the two. Reading strategy use on its own was

moderately related to comprehension and explained about 28% of its variance. When the two predictors were considered together, they explained 50% of the variance in reading comprehension. Self-efficacy uniquely accounted for about 22% of this variance and reading strategy use for about 4%, while a large share was common to both. These results suggest that students' confidence in their ability to read English and the strategies they use to understand texts are closely intertwined. For students at this level, believing that they can understand a text appears to matter at least as much as knowing what to do while reading it.

These findings have several practical implications for EFL teachers. First, annotating and other reading strategies should be taught explicitly rather than left for students to discover on their own. Teachers can model annotating by thinking aloud as they mark a sample text, provide guided practice with short passages, and then gradually ask students to apply the strategy independently to longer texts. Second, strategy instruction should be accompanied by deliberate efforts to build students' reading self-efficacy. Teachers can choose texts that are challenging but manageable, break longer tasks into smaller steps that allow students to experience success, and give specific feedback that compares students' progress with their own earlier performance rather than with that of their classmates. Third, because the two factors reinforce each other, teachers can use annotating itself as a way to build confidence. When students can see, in their own margin notes, that they have identified the main idea or worked out an unfamiliar word, they gain concrete evidence that they are capable readers.

Future research could address the limitations of this study in several ways. An experimental or quasi-experimental design would make it possible to test whether explicit annotating instruction directly improves reading comprehension and self-efficacy. Measuring annotating separately from other strategies, for

example by analyzing students' actual annotations on a text, would clarify its specific contribution. Separating general and reading-specific self-efficacy would show which dimension matters more. Finally, larger samples drawn from several schools and regions, together with additional variables such as vocabulary knowledge and reading motivation, would allow the findings to be generalized with greater confidence to the wider population of Indonesian junior high school EFL learners.

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